



Repainting Our World

Created by

Madison Addesi, Julia Chiodo, Katya Giannakopoulos, and Emma Stroyan

Grades and Subject Areas

Grades 4-6

Language & Art

Duration

Five 45-minute periods + more time for art-making, if needed

Hope Statement

Our hope for students participating in this lesson is that they will learn that a class on the topic of climate change does not have to be sad and there is optimism to be found in the world through their actions.

Acknowledgements



This lesson was created by **teacher candidates in the Environmental Education concentration** of the Faculty of Education, Queen's University (2024-25), instructed by **Dr. Heather McGregor**. The lesson belongs to a set of lessons created by the class to demonstrate how teachers can be inspired in their climate teaching by youth-created art or stories. **The art and stories created by youth (grades 7-12)** and these lessons aim to help students imagine a positive future in the face of climate change—a future without the use of fossil fuels, where biodiversity is restored, and where humans live in caring communities. The art and stories in these lessons were created for the [Youth Imagine the Future](#) festival in Kingston, Ontario.

Thanks to **Jerri Jerreat and the Youth Imagine the Future team** for supporting this lesson plan initiative, and securing permission to use these art works and stories.

Thanks to **April McInnes** for designing the lesson plan template.

Thanks to the **Environmental Sustainability Committee of the Faculty of Education** for their support.

We hope teachers will be as inspired by young people's visions of the future as we are!

Our Inspiration

Title of Short Story and Author

“[Paint](#)” by Angela Ge

“[Paint](#)” by Angela Ge is a story about creation, destruction, and hope.

At first, there is a painting that shows a beautiful, lively world full of nature—trees swaying, clear waters shimmering, and animals roaming freely. However, over time, tall buildings and roads take over, covering the vibrant colours with dull grey. Pollution chokes the air and water, and nature begins to disappear. Storms rage, the skies darken, and the painting becomes a chaotic mess—a reflection of the damage done to the world by harmful human activity.

A girl finds the fallen canvas, and though it looks lifeless, she notices traces of the old colours still peeking through. Inspired to bring life back to it, she picks up a paintbrush and starts adding her vision of a better world. She blends nature with modern life, painting trees, flowers, and renewable energy like solar panels and wind turbines. Animals return, and the world begins to heal.

In the end, the painting becomes a symbol of hope and balance. It shows that even after destruction, we can create something new and beautiful by learning from the past and working toward a better future.

A fundamental theme we are using for our lesson plan is hope. Although situations may seem dire now, we are capable of making changes for a healthier future.

Lesson Context

Guiding Question

How can we use art and an artist's statement to understand and address the impact of human activities on the environment, and how can we creatively represent the transition from destruction to renewal?

Curriculum Objectives

Language and Literacy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2023)

Students will analyze the themes of environmental change and renewal in "Paint," focusing on the use of imagery, tone, and metaphor.

- **Grades 4-6, C1.1:** Read and comprehend various texts, using knowledge of words, grammar, cohesive ties, sentence structures, and background knowledge
- **Grades 4-6, C1.4:** Explain how images, graphics, and visual design create, communicate, and contribute to meaning in a variety of texts

Visual Arts (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009)

Students will create a piece of art inspired by the story, showing a transition from destruction to renewal.

- **Grades 4-6, D1.1:** Create two- and three-dimensional art works that express feelings and ideas inspired by their own and others' points of view.

Our Environmental/Climate-focused Learning Outcome

Students will explore the impact of human activities on the environment by analyzing literary themes of change and renewal, developing sustainable solutions, and creating visual art that portrays the transition from environmental destruction to renewal.

Preamble or Lesson Overview

This lesson invites students to explore connections among stories, art, artist's statements, and environmental awareness. Students will engage in creative and reflective activities to examine the impact of human actions on our planet. Students reflect on how the protagonist in the short story "Paint" by Angela Ge experiences loss and hope through the destruction and eventual renewal of the painting. Drawing from this inspiration, students create their own landscapes. Through this exercise, students explore their emotional responses to the concept of environmental decline and the potential for positive change. Students will analyze environmental artworks to deepen their understanding of how visual elements convey meaning and emotions. They will then reflect on their own creations, articulating their intentions and artistic choices in a written artist statement. This process encourages them to connect their personal expressions to the broader conversation about environmental responsibility and hope for renewal.

Lesson #1

(45 mins)

Materials Required

- Teacher must create an example artwork for this lesson
- Project example artworks from the [Youth Imagine the Future Festival's website](#)
- YouTube video ([Google Earth Timelapse](#))

Preparation (Creating a sample painting)

Read the short story "[Paint](#)" and create a sample painting inspired by it. This should be on a large landscape piece of painting paper with a line in the middle to depict two versions of the same landscape. Use recognizable elements and principles of design to create the two images. On the left side of the paper, create an unhealthy landscape using only shades of grey, black, and white. On the right side of the paper, create a healthy landscape using any colours available. Write an artist's statement about what inspired your painting.

Hook (20 mins)

With the students, scroll through some examples of environmentally themed artworks created by youth from previous Youth Imagine the Future festivals. Quickly discuss the works and encourage students to communicate their feelings and ideas about the specific art. Then read aloud the short story "[Paint](#)" to the students. Ask students what stands out from the story.

Explain and Explore (25 mins)

Have a class discussion about what a healthy versus unhealthy planet looks like to students. Invite students to describe some of their favourite landscapes, such as waterfalls or lakes, and explain how these healthy landscapes make them feel. Ask questions such as: What actions do you take to help keep the planet healthy, and what does this look like?

Invite students to think about an unhealthy part of the planet and what it looks like. Depending on the sensitivity and needs of your students, carefully decide how deep or long to guide this conversation. Perhaps some of them have heard of places where pollution or garbage is prevalent, such as the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. Show other examples of photographs or paintings that depict environmental themes (e.g., landscapes before and after change), or use the YouTube timelapse video in the materials section for inspiration. After showing the video, ask the students how they feel about the changing landscape.

Using some examples from the whole group discussion, explain the importance of a healthy environment and also how/why some landscapes are diminishing due to climate change (pollution, deforestation, etc.). Explain that they will be creating art in future lessons related to this theme.

Lesson #2

(45 mins)

Materials Required

- Project the Jeff Hong artwork “The Hundred Acre Deforestation” and artist’s statement provided [here](#)
- Student notebooks or sketchbooks

Hook (5 mins)

Display the art piece [The Hundred Acre Deforestation](#) by Jeff Hong using the link provided (first without the artist’s statement), and lead a class discussion using the following questions:

- What do you notice first about this artwork?
- How do you think the art is supposed to make you feel?
- What message do you think the artist is trying to convey?

Explain (25 mins)

Explain to students that Jeff Hong is a former Disney animator who worked on many movies and whose childhood was significantly influenced by Disney movies. He created a series of artworks called “Unhappily Ever After,” and this artwork featuring Winnie the Pooh tries to bring our attention the issue of deforestation.

Share that Jeff Hong says:

“I like playing with concepts that deal with juxtaposition and taking something out of their element into something completely opposite of what they’re used to in order to give them a new meaning.”

Show students the artist’s statement provided in the sheet [Appendix?](#) attached to this lesson. Lead a discussion on what students learned from the statement or how it added to the meaning they took from looking at the artwork initially.

Consolidate the discussion by explaining how a good artist’s statement can help the viewer understand the artist’s message.

Ask students: if you were going to add to this painting with a version of the landscape that had been renewed or made healthy again, what would it look like?

Conclusion (10 mins)

Encourage students to begin planning their own painting by choosing a location or landscape to feature. It could be close or far away, but regardless there should be a reason they chose it that they can explain. Ask them to write down in a notebook where they are choosing, and why. They could also begin a sketch of their painting.

Lesson #3

(45 mins)

Materials Required

- Student notebooks or sketchbooks
- Your sample painting and artist's statement that you created prior to the lesson

Hook (10 mins)

Share with the students your example artwork that you completed prior to this lesson and explain what inspired you, and how you decided to depict a form of destruction (or unhealthy conditions) and a form of renewal (healthy environment) in a landscape.

Ask students to tell you what they notice. Then share your artist's statement and determine what they learned from seeing it alongside the painting.

Artwork Planning (30 mins)

- Explain that in their painting that will be created next week, on the left side of the paper students will create an unhealthy landscape using only shades of grey, black, and white. On the right side of the paper, students will create their healthy landscape using any colours available.
- Ask students to return to the preliminary notes or sketch they made last class, with a possible location for their painting. Give them time to decide if that location is still their decision and if they have a good reason for it.
- Ask students to begin thinking about what environmental message their painting will have. Continue to write down notes or add ideas to their sketch. They can begin to define this message, or change it, as they further plan their painting.
- Project or post the principles of design (as a reminder), that the students would have already learned prior to this lesson.
 - line, shape and form, space, colour, texture, value (for all)
 - balance (for Grade 6)
 - proportion (for Grade 5)
 - emphasis (for Grade 4)
- Ask students to plan the next part of their painting by selecting which elements of design they will feature, or focus the most on, in the painting. Students should add this intention to their notes or sketch.

Conclusion (5 mins)

Ask students to form pairs or groups, in order to share with a peer what they are planning for the painting. Encourage students to ask thoughtful questions about their peers' choice of locations, design principles, environmental messages. Provide sample prompts if your students need them. Explain that next class will be used to make the paintings!

Lesson #4

(45 mins + more if needed)

Materials Required

- Large landscape paper
- Paints
- Paintbrushes
- Water

Preparation (5 mins)

Remind students how to share the space while painting, how to clean their brushes, and how to properly dispose of their paints if necessary.

Painting (35 mins)

Hand out one large landscape piece of painting paper to each student and ask them to add a line in the middle to create two sides - one for the destruction side, and one for the renewal side. Remind students that on the left side of the paper, they will create an unhealthy landscape using only shades of grey, black, and white. On the right side of the paper, students will create their healthy landscape using any colours available.

The remaining class time (plus more, as needed) can be used for creating the painting.

Conclusion (5 mins)

Ask guiding questions such as “How did you feel when painting the left side of your canvas, what about the right side?”, “How would you feel if the landscapes around us were not filled with these beautiful colours that we see?”, “Where you able to use all the same elements on art for both paintings?”

Clean up workstations.

Lesson #5

(45 mins)

Materials Required

- Table kit (pencils, pens, crayons, markers, sticky notes, etc.)
- Student paintings, already created
- Worksheets provided [here](#)

Explain (5 mins)

Review the two worksheets provided with students, to ensure they understand what each part of the worksheet is asking. Discuss alternative ways the students could write their artist's statement, if that is an option. Remind students that they took notes or sketches in previous lessons they can use to complete the worksheets. Instruct them that

Engage (30 mins)

Hand out or post each of the paintings so that students can see them.

Provide students with time and a quiet classroom environment to individually complete their worksheets or artist's statements in the forms/options provided.

Those who finish early could be encouraged to exchange their work with a peer, or provide peer feedback. For example, they could discuss:

- What message or feeling do you think your partner is trying to express through their art? What makes you think that?
- How does the use of colour, shape, or contrast in the artwork contribute to its overall meaning?
- What part of the artwork do you notice first, and why do you think that stands out?

Conclusion (10 mins)

If time allows, invite a few students to present their paintings and artist's statements, or post all of them for a gallery walk.

As a class, discuss:

- What did you learn about how art can send a message?
- How did analyzing other artists' and other classmates' work help you think about your own?
- What was easy and what was hard about creating the two landscapes?



Jeff Hong's message

“The hope of these works is to make people think about how their small decisions in everyday life can have a profound effect on our planet and what we can do to help reverse these problems. Using Disney characters puts a new perspective on problems we may not normally feel connected to because it’s happening elsewhere. But once I put these cartoon characters that we all grew up with and love, these issues become a little bit more personal to us,” the artist explains. If his collages break your hearth, try to put all the pieces back together. If the happy ending is taken for granted in fairy tales, you must fight to conquer it in the real world.”

(Lifegate.com, 2018)



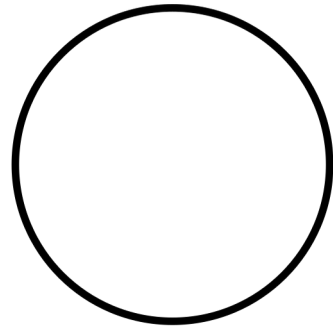
ARTIST STATEMENT



Artist Name: _____

Artwork Title: _____

*Draw an emoji
that shows how
you feel about
your art!*



A LANDSCAPE I CARE ABOUT

Three things I can do to protect the places I care about:

-
-
-

The **landscape** that I painted is _____

because _____

ELEMENTS OF ART

My artwork includes the following
elements of art (circle all that apply):

VALUE

SPACE

COLOUR

TEXTURE

FORM

LINE

SHAPE

I created _____
(name one element)

by using this **technique**:

PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

One **principle of design** you see in my artwork is (circle one):

EMPHASIS RHYTHM/REPETITION VARIETY BALANCE

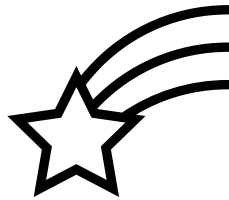
MOVEMENT UNITY/HARMONY PROPORTION CONTRAST

You can tell because_____

TWO STARS AND A WISH

These are two features of my artwork that I really like:

Here is one thing I wish to work on for future artworks:



Your message to the environment

This image shows a single, blank page from a lined notebook. The page is white with horizontal ruling lines spaced evenly down its length. On the left side, there is a dark green or greyish binding strip. At the bottom center of the page, there is a small, semi-circular notch cutout. The corners of the page are rounded.

Thank you to Tiina Kukkonen for this resource.

Assessment and Accommodation

Assessment Description

Assessment as Learning: Students complete an artist statement (Artist Statement Template on pages 9 and 10 above) that allows them to assess elements of art, emotions, and their overall feelings towards their art work.

Assessing Artwork

1. Is a heartfelt environmental message evident in their artwork?
 - a. If not, can the student describe their reasoning for their artwork.
2. Did the student incorporate principles of design?
3. Did the student incorporate elements of art?
4. Artist Statement Template (or other option approved by the teacher) is marked for completion as long as there is a clear correlation between their responses and their own artwork.

Your Message to the Environment: Students can write how they want to protect the environment, what or how they love the environment, etc.

Assessment of Learning (optional): A during school gallery walk could be held with other classrooms so students have an opportunity to share their art work and their artist statement. This is the time for the teacher to assess their oral language skills and overall artwork and statement.

Accommodation Suggestions

Students can have a scribe for their artist statement, extra time will be provided if necessary, and any student who feels uncomfortable with the gallery walk will be given the opportunity to just share their art work with the teacher.

References

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