

Family Art from Home

Spring Break Adventure: Drawing a New Mexico Landscape

by Ophelia Cornet

With many of us taking advantage of our beautiful state and abiding by CDC rules to stay close to home this Spring break, we might be taking some fun road trips! A meaningful thing to do while travelling or spending time in nature is to capture the landscape as you go. This is a relaxing activity that helps you connect to your surroundings.

Supplies Needed

- Construction paper, assorted colors
- Pencil and eraser
- Scissors
- Colored pencils, pastels etc.
- Glue stick

Introduction

When drawing landscapes, everything has to be simplified. For example, the leaves of trees are only intuitively drawn. The Chamisa bushes on the plains, the Yuccas, and the Sagebrush all become shapes rather than being filled with detail. We are using colored construction to draw simplified shapes and then cut them out. This is to facilitate the correct placement of things with consideration to size and distance. Note that you can also draw directly on your paper rather than doing a collage if you prefer.

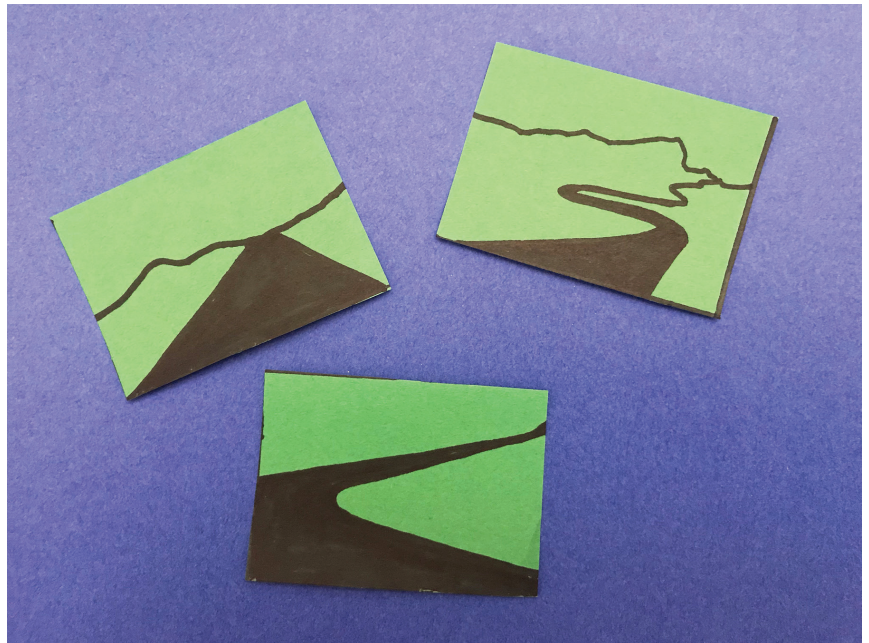


Image 2

Step 1: Making color choices.

Begin by choosing your background paper color. Then choose which colors of paper that will be used for various plants, objects, etc. You should also consider where to place the horizon in the drawing/collage. The horizon is the line where the sky and land meet. Depending on where you place the horizon, you can show more of the sky or more ground.

Step 2: Will you have a road, river, or path as a central focus?

If you decide to draw a road, path, or river, draw it onto a new sheet of construction paper so you can practice. Simply cut it out and glue it down onto your landscape, placing the widest part along the bottom of your paper and the narrow end up to the horizon line. See Image 2 for examples. Notice how this creates a sense of depth. In reality, the road/river/path will stay about the same width through the landscape but to the viewer it appears to become smaller the further away it is. Once you have your central element glued down you can have fun placing everything else.



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Step 3: Creating perspective with different sized objects.

Draw some large plants on your construction paper to place in the foreground, the part of a view that is nearest to the observer, at bottom of the page. Next, draw some of the same plants in a smaller size to convey perspective and depth. Glue these higher on the page to show that they are further away. See Image 4.

Note: It's fun to google plants of New Mexico and see what you are coming across on your road trip!



Image 4

Step 4: Now it is time to add the background and accents of color to your artwork!

We will take into account atmospheric perspective which deals with how the appearance of an object is affected by the distance between it and the viewer. Leonardo da Vinci noticed this phenomenon and dubbed it The Perspective of Disappearance! It states that things that are far away have much less detail, less contrast, and are of a lighter value.

So, when you are drawing the background, keep the pressure light on your pencil and the details sparse. Try adding some more color to your larger plants and some simple details on your road/river/path. You may notice mountains or other features in the distance when you look at New Mexico scenery, and adding these will ground your landscape and provide interest. See Image 5.

Now make sure that your art materials and final project don't fly off into the New Mexico Spring winds! Happy travels and nature viewing!



Image 5