

Lesson Plan: Birch Bark Drawings

Grade level: 6-12



Duration: 3-4 class periods

Media Type: birch bark or similar

Subject Integration or Collaboration: Social Studies

Objective: To create a birch bark drawing inspired by artist Philip Savage

Assessment:

Rubric:

4-Standards are exceeded

3-Standards are met

2-Standards may be met at a very low quality or with some exceptions

1-Standards are not met

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Vocabulary:

Visual Arts Elements/Principles:

color	shape	line	texture	balance	unity	proportion	form
value	space	contrast	emphasis	movement	pattern	rhythm	

Materials and Procedure:

paper, colored pencils, markers, graphite pencils, dull tool to scrape onto bark

Day 1: Share the following *Making It Up North* video about birch bark artist Philip Savage with students.

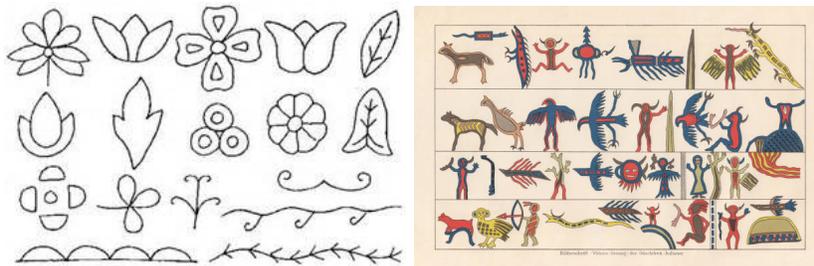
<https://makingit.wdse.org/watch/birch-bark-art-making-it> (6:27)

Discussion Questions:

What did you notice about Philip's artwork? How did he come to make artwork from birch bark? What types of designs does Philip create? What types of tools does he use to create his designs? What vocabulary words does he use when describing his work? What does Philip say about creating his work? Is this a relaxing activity for him? What do Indigenous/Ojibwe/Anishinaabe people use birch bark for? How did Philip's birch bark top hats come to be? What other type of hats does Philip create? What is "wearable art"?



Give each student some paper to sketch ideas for creating designs on birch bark. Philip created floral designs and other symmetrical designs on his birch bark pieces. What will your sketches look like? Will your ideas change as you sketch? Will you include plants? Animals? Both? Will your designs be symmetrical or asymmetrical? Students will need access to design samples, either on paper, from the internet, or both.



Day 2-4: Students create a finished drawing created on birch bark (or similar material).



Extensions:

- Students present their final artwork with peers. Students share their ideas and processes; What worked well? What did not work well? If you were to create another birch bark artwork, what would you do differently? Would you change your initial idea?

- **Books**

The Mishomis Book by Edward Benton-Benai

This Land is My Land by George Littlechild

The Four Hills of Life by Thomas Peacock and Marlene Wisuri

- **Websites/links:**

[Grand Valley State University Art Gallery](#)

[The Canadian Encyclopedia \(Ojibwe information\)](#)

[Minnesota History Center](#)
[History of Information timeline website](#)
[PBS Ojibwe History](#)
[Minnesota Historical Society](#)
[mnopedia](#)

Further Understanding:

Enduring Understanding: Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and art-making approaches.

Essential Question(s): How do artists work? How do artists and designers determine whether a particular direction in their work is effective? How do artists and designers learn from trial and error?

[National Standards for Visual Arts link](#)

Sample Standards:

VA:Cr1.1.4a Brainstorm multiple approaches to a creative art or design problem.

VA:Cr2.1.5a Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

VA:Cr3.1.4a Revise artwork in progress on the basis of insights gained through peer discussion.

VA:Re9.1.6a Develop and apply relevant criteria to evaluate a work of art.

Minnesota Social Studies sample standards:

6.3.4.10.1 Describe how land was used during different time periods in Minnesota history; explain how and why land use has changed over time.

6.4.1.2.1 Pose questions about a topic in Minnesota history, gather a variety of primary and secondary sources related to questions; identify possible answers, use evidence to draw conclusions, and present supported findings.