

## **GROWING CHAMPION CLASSROOMS: Lesson Plans for Arkansas Educators**

These lesson plans and accompanying poster files are based on the 2012-2014 traveling art exhibit *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey, Drawings by Linda Williams Palmer*. The exhibit was organized for travel by the Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts. "Growing Champion Classrooms" materials fulfill the mission of the Committee: to educate the public about Arkansas women artists and to contribute to the cultural life of our state. The Committee created this outreach material in support of teachers who encourage students to appreciate Arkansas' natural resources.

"Growing Champion Classrooms" includes 2 art lesson plans, visual aids, and activities for K-2, 3-5, and 6-8<sup>th</sup> grade students. While the lesson plans relate to 6 of the 18 images from the original traveling exhibition, all images are provided online and educators are encouraged to use them as is appropriate to enrich units in a variety of disciplines. However, the "Growing Champion Classrooms" lesson plans are primarily organized to encourage original art making in honor of the artist and the art work that inspired this educational component. The plans are designed for traditional and non-traditional educators in our state, identify applicable State Frameworks, and include options for Common Core guidelines.

### **DO TREES HAVE KNEES?**

**Grade Level:** Early Elementary (K-2)

**Subjects:** Visual Arts, English- Language Arts

**Time Required:** 2 sessions, 50 minutes per session

**Authors:** Virmarie DePoyster, Lisa Krannichfeld Walden

The Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts gratefully acknowledges the generous sponsors of "Growing Champion Classrooms" **Entergy Arkansas** and the **School of Forest Resources, University of Arkansas at Monticello**. "Growing Champion Classrooms" is supported in part by the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.



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### Lesson Overview:

Students will learn about color pencil artist Linda Williams Palmer and her works of art. Students will study her piece *Bald Cypress / Needles* and investigate and recognize various types of pattern. Students will discuss the historical background behind this tree as stated by the artist. Students will look at the artist use of color in her drawing and experiment with colors. Students will demonstrate evidence of color identification and control of crayon use by having the opportunity to paint within the boundaries of lines. Students will also create form without an outline by finger painting a tree for a book cover.

### Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Learn about Arkansas champion Bald Cypress tree.
- Reflect on trees in our environment.
- Observe an artist's artwork.
- Investigate, name and recognize different types of pattern.
- Investigate and experiment with colors.
- Experiment with mark making using wet and dry media.
- Learn how to use fine motor skills when using fingers.

### Standards utilized in this lesson:

#### Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.1.f Produce and expand complete sentences in shared language activities.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *kindergarten topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.K.6 Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

#### Visual Arts:

VA.5.K.5 Investigate patterns

VA.6.1.1 Practice representational mark making using various wet and dry media

VA.6.1.2 Experiment with grade-level appropriate elements of art and principles of design in a 2-D product

#### Materials:

- Linda Williams Palmer's *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey* poster, *Bald Cypress / Needles*
- Artist biography, artist's process, attached
- Definition of a champion tree, attached
- Historical background information, on poster
- A gathering of different leaves, looking for different patterns and shapes.
- Crayons

- #2 pencils
- Writing paper
- Paint (blue, green, yellow, brown)
- 3 oz. solo cups, or shallow containers to hold paint
- *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein

**Glossary:**

1. Shape- an element of art that is two-dimensional, flat or limited in height and width. Shapes can be geometric such as a circle or rectangle or free-form.
2. Pattern- The repetition of anything in a design (repetition of line, shapes, color)

**Procedure:**

**Day 1**

1. Display Linda Williams Palmer's poster, *Bald Cypress* and allow students to closely look at the work of art.
2. Start a discussion about trees by discussing the following:
  - Have you ever wondered what the world would be without trees?
    - A summer without trees would be so much hotter.
    - Many animals would be without homes
    - The air we breathe would not be so clean.
  - Do you know what the tallest plant on earth is? Trees!
  - Take a moment to look closely at this poster. What do you notice about this tree?
  - What are some beautiful things about this tree?
  - How does this tree look different from ones you see every day?
  - What types of lines do you see?
  - What colors do you notice?
3. Share with students Linda Williams Palmer biography and the artist's process, attached.
4. Discuss with students what inspired Linda to paint and her journey to documenting Arkansas champion trees. Champion trees information, attached.
5. Now, share with students that Bald Cypress trees are evergreens, often found in watery sites such as swamps where they stand in high water for months. The "bald" species got its name because the trees lose their foliage in the winter.
6. These beautiful trees are also unusual because they produce protrusions called "knees." Linda Williams Palmer waited two years before the water receded enough to be able to photograph this cypress and its "knees." Tree scientists believe the cypress has knees to stabilize the tree. This tree is located at the White River Refuge in Arkansas County.  
Circumference: 516 inches  
Crown Spread: 9 feet  
Height: 120 feet

7. Now, let's look at the different types of lines the artist used.  
Thin, thick, long, short, straight, curvy, zig-zag.
8. Ask students to name out loud colors artist used in poster. Explain that some colors are combined and blended to produce other colors.
9. Talk about the different patterns and shapes in trees leaves.
10. Demonstrate coloring within lines. Explain that artist painted within the lines in trunks and leaves.
11. Distribute cypress tree handout (attached) and crayons.
12. Students will color the cypress tree with crayons: 1) use line to show the form of the tree, and 2) color within that form.
13. Define any art related vocabulary: Shape, pattern, see glossary.
14. Monitor students and help them:
  - If holes in coloring: What do you have to do to fix them?
  - Going outside the lines: Are you going to fast like when you are riding your bike? Slow down to avoid a coloring accident!

## Day 2

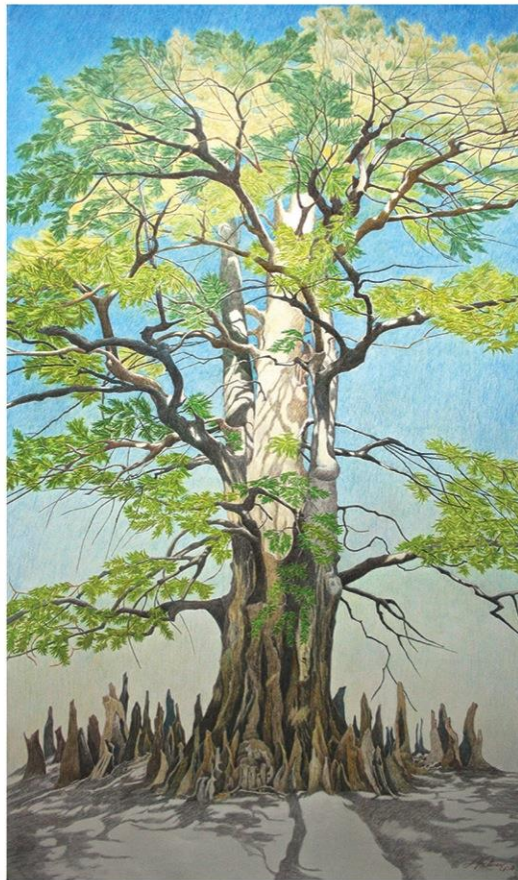
1. Read *The Giving Tree*, by Shel Silverstein for language arts motivation. After reading aloud or having older students read it aloud, explore the meaning of the story. Point out line drawing in book and pattern on leaves.
2. Display Linda Williams Palmer's poster, **Bald Cypress** and allow students to closely look at the work of art. Show pattern in leaves and different use of line. Compare to lines and patterns on book.
3. Start a discussion about the cypress tree by discussing the following:
  - What do you see first about this tree?
  - If you were walking around inside this drawing, what would you see? What would you hear?
  - If you could touch the knees, what do you think they would feel like?
  - How do you think the artist made those patterns in leaves?
4. Explain how the artist used many layers of different colors to create her final color on leaves and trunk. Explain that the leaves pattern grow out towards the sun and away from trunk. Point out the majestic size of the tree and trunk. Notice the pattern of reflections in ground and shadow reflections on trunk of tree.
5. Handout practice paper for finger painting and a small amount of each color paint in solo cups.

6. Explain that today they are creating a book cover of a tree like the cover in *The Giving Tree!* Students will be painting without form to create a tree with pattern on leaves. Explain that artists can use their fingers to paint like they were a brush.
7. Demonstrate how you dip your finger in paint and slide over paper to create a pattern. Demonstrate how to blend blue and yellow paint to create green leaves. Encourage students to mix their own colors rather than painting directly from tube paint.
8. For older students, ask them to create a pattern in background behind tree with different shapes.
9. When work is finished, ask students to create a title for their book cover and write it out.

**Assessment:**

Students will be assessed on:

- Participation in book reading and class discussion.
- Completion of drawing with form.
- Completion of drawing without form.
- Uses patterns in final book cover drawing.
- Written title on book cover.



LINDA WILLIAMS PALMER  
*Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey*  
**BALD CYPRESS**

*(Taxodium distichum)* - Arkansas County, White River Refuge, Ethel 2011  
 Colored pencil on paper by Linda Williams Palmer - 59" h x 36 1/2" w framed  
 Detail: *Needles, Bald Cypress* by Linda Williams Palmer - 14" h x 15 1/2" w framed

CHAMPION STATISTICS

Circumference: 516"    Crown Spread: 9'    Height: 120'    Bigness Index: 63

Cypress trees are evergreens, often found in watery sites such as swamps where they stand in high water for months. The "bald" species got its name because the trees lose their foliage in the winter. I waited two years before the water receded enough to photograph this Cypress and its "knees." The water mark on the trunk shows how deep the water had been. The tallest knee is 10' high. This Bald Cypress is the largest recorded champion tree and some have said that it's the largest living thing in the state. I think it is truly a "Giant of the Forest." - LWP

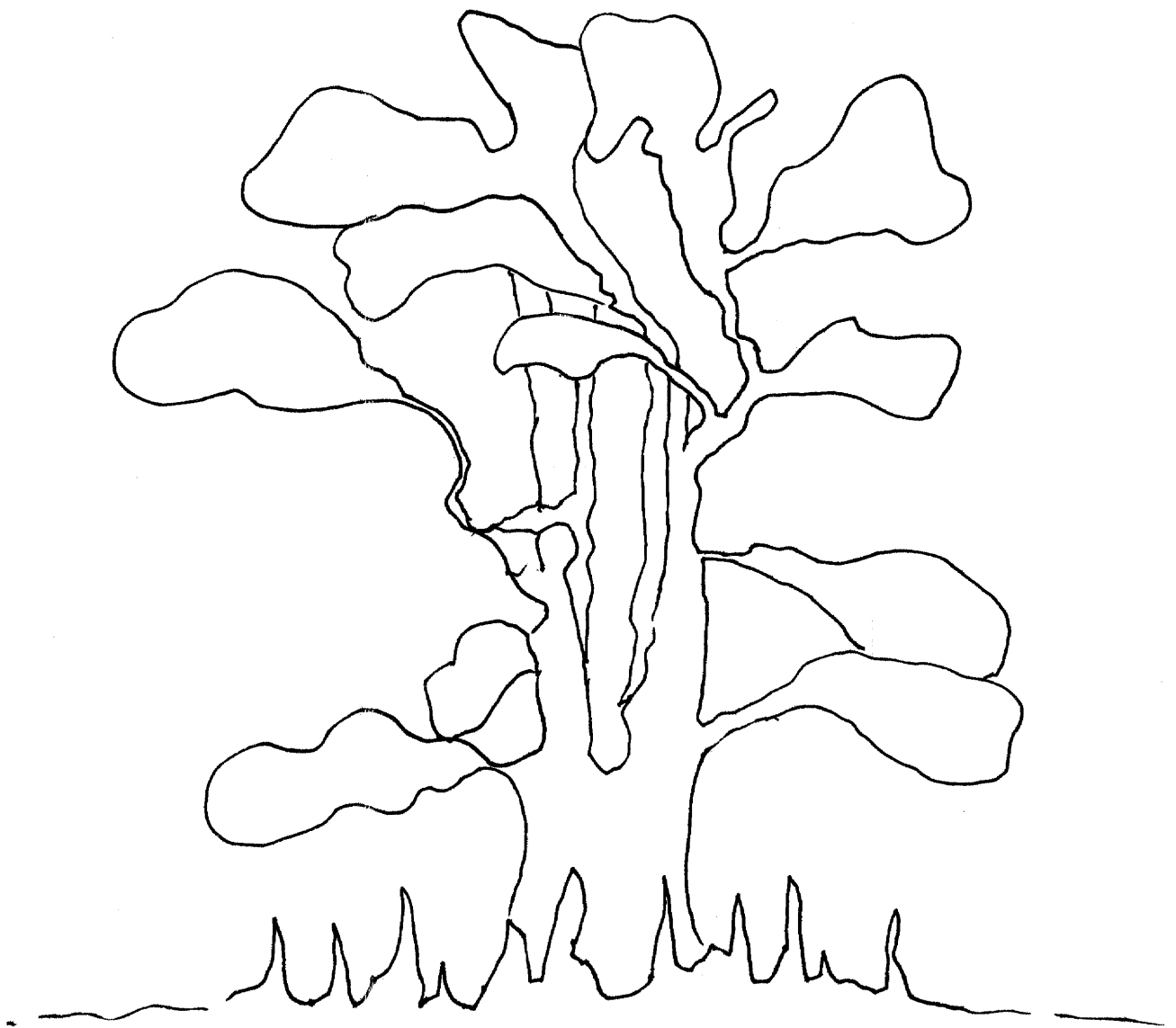


EDUCATIONAL SPONSORS



"Growing Champion Classrooms" materials are based on the 2012-2014 exhibit *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey*, Drawings by Linda W. Palmer, and are provided by Entergy Arkansas and the School for Forest Resources, University of Arkansas at Monticello, with support, in part, by the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage and by the national Endowment for the Arts.





*Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey*  
Drawings by Linda Williams Palmer  
Introduction

Many of us have lived with trees so long that we take them for granted. We climb them as children, and we rest in their shade. We write poems about them, and we harvest them for our fireplaces, our furniture and our paper. We study them in school, and we mark the seasons by their foliage in spring and fall. This exhibit gives us an opportunity to contemplate the trees we sometimes take for granted: to notice their singular beauty and to consider what events have taken place in their presence over time.

Linda Williams Palmer is one of the few artists who have created a series based on individual trees. She is the only artist who has chosen to interpret the largest of each species in Arkansas: the champion trees. This exhibit tells why and how she did it, and shares the results of her artist's journey through excellent colored-pencil drawings of trees that communicate majesty and familiarity at the same time.

Each tree portrait represents a specific place, time of day, and season chosen by the artist — often after multiple visits, copious notes, and interaction with the site. Photographs communicate the scale and size of the actual trees, and hint at the humble locations where they took root. Exhibit writing provides anecdotes and information about the trees and the artist's process. It is our hope that this combination of information will encourage Arkansans to appreciate our state's natural and artistic heritage, and inspire them to celebrate the beauty and history that is sometimes found in their own backyards.

The Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts



*Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey*  
The Artist's Process

Linda Palmer grew up playing in the woods by her family home in eastern Oklahoma. As a first-grader, she played under a large oak tree on the playground. These childhood experiences inspired her interest: many of her drawings included trees. Trees are still a significant part of Linda Palmer's artistic life. She is captivated by how weather and season, light and shadow, and time of day affect the visual impression of a tree. She calls upon her preferred medium, Prismacolor Pencils, to accurately represent her observations while artistically interpreting the majesty of the champions.

Palmer developed her own technique of layering different colored pencils on textured paper. In this series, her mastery enables her to achieve colors found in nature, add implied texture to that of the paper, and suggest the fragility of delicate leaves and blossoms. For example, the trunk of the Shortleaf Pine is composed of 25 different colors. The brilliant autumn leaves of the Cherrybark Oak contrast with the partially-rendered ones to capture the thin dryness that precedes their fall to the ground.

Her technique is time-consuming, and demanding—especially for large work: colored-pencils make slim lines and layering cannot be erased. However, Palmer chose this medium because that's how she pictured the drawings in her mind. She soon realized that the time required by her technique allowed her to interact with her subject, and therefore better translate her feelings and imaginings about each tree onto paper. The largest drawing in this series took her eight weeks to finish, working an average of 5 hours a day 6 days a week, or 240 hours.

Add actual drawing time and preparatory research to understand the investment Palmer has made over the past 5 years to bring this series to the public. Travel (in the thousands of miles), reference photographs, and interviews with landowners and residents combined to create an impression that helped her interpret the special thing she sees in each selected tree. Sometimes it's the trunk that speaks of age and history. Sometimes it's the composition of branches against the sky. Linda Palmer has developed her "artist's eye" through many years of drawing and painting. She knows when a drawing is complete: "...when another stroke would detract from what I want to say." Rather than thinking about the hours put into the work, Linda Palmer measures her success by her pleasure with the result: a drawing that becomes a visual statement honoring nature, memory, and time.

*Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey*  
Champion Trees

An Arkansas champion tree is the largest example of its species. Trained foresters make the final assessment, but often the public is the first to notice a specimen and nominate it for the list maintained by the Arkansas Forestry Commission. A champion tree is re-measured every 10 years to confirm its status: younger examples of the species have champion potential, and existing champions can be felled in a storm or fall victim to an uninformed pruning.

Arkansas champions have been nominated by individuals, art museums, cities, churches and cemetery associations, hunting clubs and wildlife refuges, and the Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs as well as timber and paper companies, national and state parks, and the Arkansas Fish and Wildlife Service. A wealth of information is available through the Arkansas Forestry Commission website to guide those who want to nominate a potential champion. Think of the trees you've seen and consider the three necessary measurements to that process.

- Trunk Circumference (inches): measure at 4.5' above ground level  
If the tree forks at or below 4.5', record the smallest trunk circumference below the fork; if the tree is on a slope, measure 4.5' up the trunk on the high and low sides and average the numbers; if the tree is leaning, measure the circumference at 4.5' along the axis of the trunk at a 90 degree angle to the trunk
- Height (feet): measure from the base of the trunk to the topmost twig  
Use a clinometer, laser, hypsometer. Or use a straight stick! Hold the stick vertically at arm's length: the length of the stick above your hand must equal the distance from your hand to your eye. Walk backward away from the tree until the stick section above your hand is the same length as the tree in your field of vision. From where you are standing, measure the distance to the tree. This measurement is the approximate height.
- Average Crown Spread (feet): measure at points where water drips from the tree's canopy to the ground  
Measure the widest crown spread (greatest distance between any two points along the drip line). Turn the axis of measurement 90 degrees and find the narrow crown spread. Average the two measurements with the formula: (wide spread + narrow spread) divided by 2 = average crown spread.

These measurements combine to calculate the official "Bigness Index (BI)" of a tree with a point system: one point for each inch of circumference, one point for each foot in height, and one point for every 4 feet of crown spread. The "bigness" point system accounts for the differences among species. Tree age calculations are not included in the index: boring into a trunk for a core sample is potentially damaging and not recommended. Bigness defines champions, and was calculated to confirm all 142 of the currently confirmed Arkansas species.

The Arkansas Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts gratefully acknowledges generous support for the educational component “Growing Champion Classrooms”, poster sets and art lesson plans based on the content of the 2012-2014 touring exhibit “*Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist’s Journey.*” Sponsors Entergy Arkansas and the School of Forest Resources, University of Arkansas at Monticello, have made it possible for traditional and non-traditional educators across the state to use the materials to inspire and enrich learning long after the tour concludes. “Growing Champion Classrooms” is supported in part by the Arkansas Arts Council, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and by the National Endowment for the Arts.

