

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 6-8th 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.

WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Grade Level: Upper Elementary (3-5)

Subjects: Visual Arts, English- Language Arts

Time Required: 3 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 analyze her piece *Sugar Maple/ Guardian of the Fallen* and learn how the artist's use of shape and space creates emphasis. Students will discuss the historical background behind this tree as stated by the artist. Students will discuss their interpretation of the drawing and discuss items in drawing that reinforce their ideas. Students will show their understanding of how shape and space creates emphasis in an artwork by drawing a grouping of trees in their neighborhood and a gathering of leaves and twigs. The students will create two stories: 1) a story from the perspective of Linda Williams Palmer's Sugar Maple tree, and 2) a story told from the viewpoint of a tree in their neighborhood.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Understand that larger objects placed in the foreground of a drawing create an illusion of depth of space in a work of art.
- Develop vocabulary using a drawing prompt.
- Identify how shape and space are used in art to create emphasis.
- Create a drawing that illustrates their understanding of emphasis, shape and space and how to create an illusion of space.
- Understand how a drawing can tell a story and express student ideas.
- Tell stories based on the featured tree drawing, and describe original stories based on what real trees in students' neighborhood have witnessed.

Standards utilized in this lesson:

Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3.3 -Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.a -Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.5 - With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.

Visual Arts:

VA.5.5.5 - Investigate artists' use of various perspective techniques.

VA.5.5.13 - Identify use of a focal point as a way to create emphasis in works of art.

Materials:

- Linda Williams Palmer's *Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey* poster, ***Sugar Maple / Guardian of the Fallen***
- Artist biography, artist's process, attached
- Definition of a champion tree, attached
- Historical background information, on poster
- Colored pencils, writing pencils
- 9" x 12" white drawing paper
- Writing paper

Glossary:

1. Perspective: the method by which solid objects drawn or painted on a flat surface are given the appearance of depth and distance
2. Foreground: the part of a scene or representation that is nearest to and in front of the viewer.
3. Background: the part of a scene that is farthest from the viewer.
4. Shape: an element of art that refers to an enclosed space that is 2-D, or flat, and therefore, limited to the dimensions of length and width. Shapes can be geometric such as a circle, rectangle or free-form.
5. Emphasis: A principle of design that can be achieved through placement, contrast, size, etc.; the special attention or importance given to one part or element in an artwork.

Procedure:**Day 1**

1. Display Linda Williams Palmer's poster, ***Sugar Maple / Guardian of the Fallen*** and allow students to take time to closely look at the work of art.
2. Share with students Linda Williams Palmer biography and artist's process, attached.
3. Discuss with students what inspired Linda to paint and her journey to documenting Arkansas champion trees. Definition of champion tree, attached.
4. Ask students to share their initial observations about the artworks on poster. Share as many nouns as possible to describe the drawing.
5. Start a discussion about the work of art by discussing the following:
 - Take a moment to look closely. What do you notice about this tree?
 - What do you see in the background? Foreground?
 - What do you think might have happened here?
 - What are your first impressions of the scene?
 - What do you think the artist hoped to convey about this tree?
 - What do you see that supports that idea?
6. Now, share with students that the Sugar Maple is one of the largest hardwood trees in the state. Its generous shade in warm weather and its bright yellow leaves in the autumn make it a very popular ornamental tree in our state.

7. Linda Williams Palmer finished this drawing in 2009 and titled it "***The Guardian of the Fallen***" because it stands among headstones of Civil War soldiers. She chose to draw fallen leaves and the angel pattern on the trunk as a fitting tribute. This tree is located in the Civil War Cemetery (Confederate Cemetery), Washington County; Fayetteville, AR.

Circumference: 97 inches

Crown Spread: 55 feet

Height: 107 feet

8. After sharing Linda Williams Palmer's story behind the drawing, ask students if hearing the real story affects what words or phrases they would use to describe the drawing.
9. Handout writing paper and pencils.
10. Ask students to write a story in first-person from the perspective of the tree in the drawing: over its lifetime, what did it see, hear, feel, and think about? Encourage them to use their own words, different from what was shared earlier.
11. After students complete their first draft, split students in groups of three. Have students share with each other the stories they wrote. Allow students to encourage each other on stories written and give suggestions of how their story might be improved.
12. Homework for Day 2: Ask students to observe trees in their neighborhood. Ask students to notice shapes of trees and size of trees. Ask students to gather 10 different types of leaves and twigs, put in ziplock bag and bring to school. Ask students to recall a happy event that might have happened under those trees.

Day 2

1. Display Linda Williams Palmer's poster, ***Sugar Maple / Guardian of the Fallen, Fallen Leaves***. Direct students again to take a close look at Linda Williams Palmer drawing.
2. In this first step, have students describe only what they see in the work of art. Steer them away from statements about what they feel about the artwork or what they think the artist's creative process, technique, or intention may have been.
3. Reiterate the drawings information shared the day before. Tell students that today we will focus on looking closely at the shapes and elements the artist used to create this drawing.
4. Open discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What do you see first when you look at this drawing?
 - Where does your eye travel to from there?
 - Where is the darkest part in this drawing?
 - Where is the lightest part in the drawing?
 - What shapes and forms do you see in the composition? Where?
 - How big is the tree shape in the foreground vs. the tree shapes in the background?
 - How did the artist create a sense of space?

- Do the lines contribute to an illusion of space?
5. Explain that artist used different size shapes in the drawing to illustrate depth in the drawing and a sense of space. The tree trunk in the front of the drawing is much wider and larger than the trunks in the background of the drawing. Also the viewer is not able to see the upper limbs of the tree in the front of tree, whereas trees in the background show all their limbs. By using different size of shapes in this drawing the artist gives this drawing a sense of depth and space.
 6. Also, point out that the tombstones sizes get smaller as they recede back into space. This further emphasis the sense of depth.
 7. Notice the tree shadows on the ground get lighter and thinner as they go back into space. That helps to give the viewer a sense of depth and helps to move those objects back into space.
 8. Furthermore, the shapes on the foreground trunk are very visible and defined. The shapes in the back trunks are simple shapes, the bark is not as defined.
 9. Define any art related vocabulary: foreground, background, shape, emphasis. See glossary, attached.
 10. Handout drawing paper and color pencils.
 11. Students will create their own works of art showing a sense of depth and space like Linda Williams Palmer used in her drawing by the use of shape and space. How will they draw the items on the background compared to the items in the foreground?
 - Students will arrange their twigs and leaves in a pattern on the table.
 - The leaves and twigs will be arranged and stacked some on top of each other, overlapping, allowing for sections of the leaves to be hidden behind others.
 - Closest leaves to the viewer will be more defined and detailed.
 - Leaves and twigs further back will be smaller and less defined.

Day 3

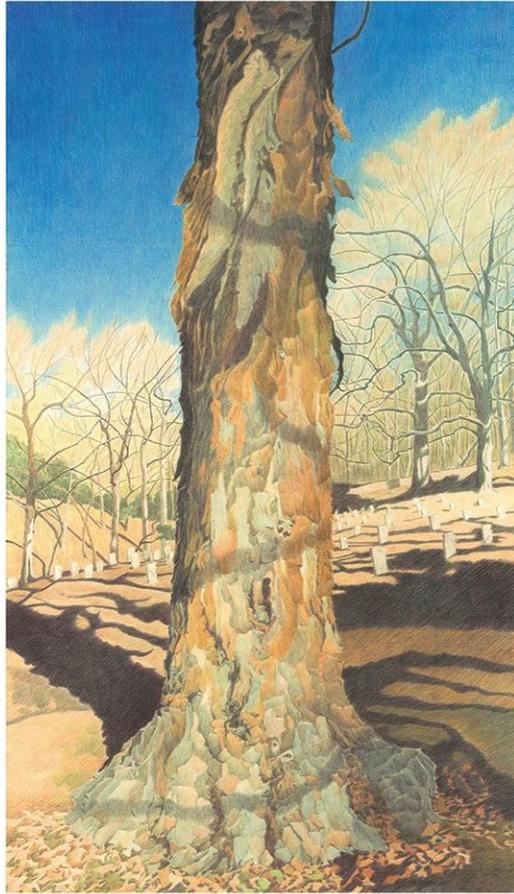
1. Revisit Linda Williams Palmer's poster with students.
2. Point out her use of shapes and decreasing use of shape size to show a depth of space.
3. As things recede in space, they get smaller and lighter in color.
4. The closest items to the viewer are more defined and bigger.
5. Handout paper and colored pencils.
6. Students will create a drawing of a grouping of trees in their neighborhood from homework observation or using Linda's poster as an example and create a sense of depth. Allow 20-30 minutes for this.

7. Handout writing paper and writing pencils.
8. Students will write a short story of an event their neighborhood tree might have witnessed. The story needs to be written from the tree's viewpoint.

Assessment:

Students will be assessed on:

- How well they described their stories.
- Did they write both stories from the perspective of the tree?
- Did they use shape and space to show depth and a sense of space in the drawings?
- Did students collect leaves and twigs and create drawing using them?
- Did students create a drawing of neighborhood trees showing depth?



LINDA WILLIAMS PALMER
Arkansas Champion Trees: An Artist's Journey
SUGAR MAPLE

(*Acer saccharum*) or "Guardian of the Fallen" - Civil War Cemetery (Confederate Cemetery)
 Washington County, Fayetteville 2009

Colored pencil on paper by Linda Williams Palmer - 60" h x 38 1/4" w framed

Detail: *Fallen Leaves, Sugar Maple* by Linda Williams Palmer - 15" h x 15 1/2" w framed

CHAMPION STATISTICS

Circumference: 97" Crown Spread: 55' Height: 107' Bigness Index: 218

The Sugar Maple is one of the largest hardwood trees in the state. Its generous shade in warm weather and its bright yellow leaves in autumn make it a popular ornamental. Its wood is hard, strong, close-grained and tough, and in great demand for flooring and furniture. I call this tree "The Guardian of the Fallen" because it stands among the headstones of Civil War soldiers. It seemed appropriate to select fallen leaves to draw, and the angel pattern on the trunk was a fitting tribute. - 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.

