TEXAS SKIES
Exploring Early Texas Art

A Unit of Instruction
prepared for
The Center for the Advancement and Study of Early Texas Art
and
The Texas A&M Research Foundation

by the
North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts
School of Visual Arts
University of North Texas
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Cover Image: Audley Dean Nichols (Nicols) (1875-1941), West Texas Mountains, c. 1928, 20 X 30”, oil on canvas, collection of Doug Mackinnon
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This unit of instruction is designed for early childhood students. Teachers may adapt it for use with other grade levels.

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TEXAS SKIES

Art, Weather, and the Power of Observation

Artists can tell stories in a painting. Even though the artist can’t create the sound of thunder using paint, or make a work of art feel cold and wet like a rainy day, the artist can still create something that helps the viewer remember these things. Art can bring back memories of puffy white clouds of hot summer afternoons, or the sounds of crickets chirping in the night sky. Texas Skies demonstrates how children can use their senses to observe their environment and to learn about early Texas art.

Theme for the Unit (Big Idea/Enduring Idea)

Artists tell a story through universal human experience.

Specific concepts/ideas to be developed in the unit

Artists use color to represent the weather conditions and emotion.

The story an artist is telling is based on observations of the environment and past experiences.

We can make predictions based on observations of patterns in the environment.

We can use color to tell a story about weather conditions and emotion.

Unit Objectives

The student will be able to explain how artists use color to convey emotion and weather conditions. [TEKS: Language Arts K.4 (B); TEKS: Science K.5 (B); TEKS: Art K.1 (B)]

The student will be able to use patterns to make predictions. [TEKS: Science K.5 (B); K.7 (D)]

The student will be able to explain color choices that indicate mood, temperature (season/weather), and time of day in original works of art. [TEKS: Art K.1 (A); Science K.5 (B), K.7 (D)]

Unit Vocabulary

Clouds: Clouds are objects that can be seen floating in the sky. Clouds contain small drops of water. If a cloud contains large amounts of water, it appears darker and gray in color. When the cloud becomes full of big water drops, then it begins to release the drops in the form of precipitation—rain, snow, sleet, or hail.
**Precipitation:** Water or moisture falling from the sky. This moisture can take the form of rain, snow, sleet, or hail.

**Meteorologists:** Scientists who study and forecast the weather. Weather forecasts are often descriptions of the sky such as cloud cover (partly cloudy), and precipitation (50% chance of rain).

**LESSON ONE: FEELING COLORFUL**

Early Texas artists used color to represent the weather conditions and time of day in the Texas skies. Imagine Frank Reaugh as he studied the cattle drinking from the water of the North Fork of the Red River. When the sun began to slowly fade from the sky, he selected warm orange and red hues to tell the story of a peaceful ending to a long day. Artists use color to tell stories about weather and the time of day, but the colors can mean more than that. Colors add to the emotional feeling of the work. Even though the person looking at the picture can’t actually feel the warm sun as it sets in the sky, the orange colors in the painting offer the idea of warmth. Perhaps the viewer can look at the picture and remember experiencing a sunset after a long summer day and feel the warmth and calm suggested in this image.

Frank Reaugh (1860-1945)  
*North Fork of the Red River, 1914*  
16 ¼ X 32", oil on canvas  
Texas State Capitol Collection, The State Preservation Board, Austin, Texas

**Overview**

This lesson will encourage students to observe the weather conditions in their environment. Students will be encouraged to notice how the condition and color of the sky change according to time of day and weather. They will talk about how the color of the sky can influence emotion both in art and in the environment.

**Objectives for Lesson One**

The student will observe and draw changes in the sky during various weather conditions.

The student will be able to connect emotional feelings to the colors in the sky in art and in the environment.

**Learning Activity: Colors and Weather**

When a meteorologist forecasts the weather for the day, they are talking about what is happening in the sky. They explain that days will be sunny and clear, or partly cloudy.
Sometimes they will talk about our chances of seeing some rain. By carefully observing the sky and the clouds in the sky, meteorologists can make predictions about the weather. By carefully choosing colors for the sky, and studying the ways clouds form during each type of weather, artists can help the viewer recognize the type of weather in the painting.

Discussion questions for this activity should focus student attention on color changes according to weather. Display the two images of Texas art by Edward G. Eisenlohr and M. Walton Leader. Encourage students to make connections between the color of the sky in the sample images and the type of weather that is portrayed.

- Which picture shows that it might rain soon? How can you tell? What does the sky look like just before it rains? Are there a lot of clouds? What color are they? What color is the sky?
- Which picture looks like a summer afternoon? How can you tell? Are there clouds in the sky? What color are they? What color is the sky?

untitled, n.d.  Three Elms, c. 1945
10 X 14", oil  30 X 36", oil on canvas
Collection of Doug Mackinnon  Collection of Bill and Mary Cheek

Reproduce the chart, “Keep Your Eyes on the Weather” included with this lesson. Students will use the chart and crayons to draw and color an image of the sky during each type of weather. Encourage students to think about the colors and other things they see in the sky during a rain shower, a thunderstorm, a clear sunny day, and a partly cloudy day. Instruct students to draw what they think the sky would look like under specific conditions. Students will fill each section on the worksheet with color and images representing four weather conditions: sunny, partly cloudy, thunderstorm, and rain. Ask students to explain their images and color choices for each type of weather.
Texas Skies: KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE WEATHER

1. Sunny
2. Partly Cloudy
3. Rain
4. Thunderstorm

Learning Activity: Colors and Emotion
What does the sky tell us about the emotions in a work of art? Sometimes when the sky is white or gray on a cloudy cold day people can feel sleepy, or maybe feel a little sad. A dark green sky can look threatening and scary because of the danger of an approaching thunderstorm. Perhaps a blue sky can make people feel happy, thinking of the things they can do outside on a warm, clear summer afternoon. Discussion questions for this activity should focus student attention on colors in the sky and how colors can influence emotion.

- What type of day makes you happy? How would you describe the color of the sky on this day?
- What type of weather makes you sad? What does the sky look like during this type of weather?
- What type of weather is scary? What color is the sky during this type of weather?

Learning Activity: Color Matching

Cutout and laminate the color swatches included with this activity. Give one swatch to each group of students and ask the students to imagine this color in the sky. Discussion questions involving the color swatches can include:

- What kind of weather do you think this color of sky will bring?
- What emotion would you feel if you walked outside and this was the color of the sky?

Display the large images of early Texas art examples by Frank Reaugh, Audley Dean Nichols, and Edward G. Eisenlohr. These images correspond with the color swatches: refer to the teacher guide for “Texas Skies: Color Matching.” Print and cut apart the student copy of “Texas Skies: Color Matching” and distribute a color swatch to each student or to each group.

Ask each student group to decide which image their color swatch came from; then ask the students to return the color swatch to that image. Discussion questions can include:

- Is this image how you imagined the sky would look in this color?
- How is the artist’s image similar to or different from what you imagined?
- Does the image bring the same emotions you felt when you looked at the color?
- Why do you think the artist used this color in the image?
Texas Skies: COLOR MATCHING

Teacher Guide

Frank Reaugh (1860-1945)
*Lightning*, n.d., 5 ¾ X 9", pastel
Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, West Texas A&M University at Canyon

Audley Dean Nichols (Nics) (1875-1941)
*West Texas Mountains*, c. 1928
20 X 30", oil on canvas
Collection of Doug Mackinnon

Edward G. Eisenlohr (1872-1961)
*untitled*, n.d.
10 X 14", oil
Collection of Doug Mackinnon

Frank Reaugh (1860-1945)
*North Fork of the Red River*, 1914
16 ¼ X 32", oil on canvas, Texas State Capital Collection, The State Preservation Board, Austin, Texas
Texas Skies: COLOR MATCHING

Student Copy. Cut out and distribute color swatches.
LESSON TWO: PATTERNS

Even though we can’t touch the sky, we can make observations about the weather using our senses. We can listen to the wind, feel the cold, see the clouds, smell the air, and use this information to predict what may happen next. For example, if you see gray clouds in the sky and smell the damp air, you might predict that it is about to rain. If you feel the warm sun of midday and the smell outside is dry and dusty, you might predict that the afternoon is going to be much hotter. We are using our memory of patterns found in the environment to make predictions about the weather.

Overview
This lesson will encourage students to observe patterns in their environment and make predictions. By noticing patterns in weather, temperature, and position of the sun in the sky, students will be able to make predictions. Students will be able to infer what might happen next in a story told by the artist through an art image.

Objectives for Lesson Two

The student will be able to describe patterns in weather and environment such as position of the sun in the sky and temperature changes during various times of day.

The student will be able to infer what might happen next in an art image.

Learning Activity: Patterns Everyday
Use discussion questions that will encourage students to think about patterns in their environment, which they can observe daily. These may include:

- Where is the sun located at the beginning of the day? What colors are in the early morning sky? What does the temperature feel like? Which art example reminds you of the morning sky?
- Where is the sun located in the middle of the day? How has the temperature changed? What color is the sky? Which art example looks like the sky in the early afternoon?
- What does the sky look like at the end of the day? Which art example portrays the end of the day just before sunset? Where is the sun?

Take the students outside during different times of the school day to observe the position of the sun in the sky. Tell the students not to look directly into the sun because it can be harmful to their eyes. During the last observation of the afternoon, ask students to predict where the sun will be just before night. Ask the students to predict where the sun will be early the next morning before school.

Learning Activity: Making Predictions
We know from previous experience that if a sky shows the warm tones of late afternoon or early evening, that the sun is setting and the sky will darken into night. Artists can use the memories and experiences of the viewer as part of the story they are telling with the Texas sky. Display the examples of early Texas art by Onderdonk, Eisenlohr, Nichols,
and Reaugh. Ask students to examine the images and make predictions as to what they think will happen next in the story. Sample images and questions are included below.

Julian Onderdonk (1882-1922)
*Morning in Spring*, c.1913
30 X 40", oil on canvas
San Antonio Art League and Museum

This is a picture of a morning in spring. Does it look like the day will be sunny or cloudy? What do you think this day will be like? Do you think it will rain? What color was the sky before the sunrise? What color will the sky become later in the day?

Edward G. Eisenlohr (1872-1961)
*untitled*, n.d.
10 X 14", oil
Collection of Doug Mackinnon

What time of day do you think it is in this image? Will the weather turn sunny or do you think it will rain soon? Why do you think so?

Audley Dean Nichols (Nicols) (1875-1941)
*West Texas Mountains*, c. 1928
20 X 30", oil on canvas
Collection of Doug Mackinnon

What weather prediction would you make for this image? What do you think this day will be like? Will you need an umbrella? Why or why not?
What weather is coming soon in this picture? How would it feel to be in this image? What can you tell about the weather in this picture from looking at the colors in the sky?

**Learning Activity: Texas Weather**

Bring in the local news weather forecast on a videotape to share with the class, or clip the forecast from a local newspaper. Show the students the video segment or the show and read the newspaper clipping. Discuss the words meteorologists use to talk about the weather, like partly cloudy, sunny, or expected showers.

Talk about the symbols and icons used to represent these weather conditions on the weekly forecasts:

- How are the weather conditions similar to the skies in the art examples?
- How are the icons, colors, and weather conditions similar to weather drawings from the “Keep Your Eyes on the Weather” activity?

Use the weather drawings from the finished worksheet “Keep Your Eyes on the Weather” as symbols for each student’s weather forecast. Students can cut around the shapes to create their weather icons, then choose a sample of early Texas art for their forecast.

**LESSON THREE: ORIGINAL ART**

Texas artists used color in their artwork to tell stories about the sky as well as to create an emotional tone. By thinking carefully about color choices when creating a painting of the sky, you too can use color to tell a story.

**Overview**

This lesson encourages students to apply their observations of colors in the sky, and their association of color and weather with emotion, to the creation of original art. The students will apply their observation of patterns in the environment when telling a story about their work.
Objectives for Lesson Three

Students will choose colors and arrange forms to create an original work of art. [TEKS: Art K.2 (A,B,C)]

Students will use vocabulary to explain their color choices in terms of mood, temperature, or time of day. [TEKS: Language Arts K.4 (B, C)]

Students will tell a story about their art image, making predictions as to what will happen next in the image. [TEKS: Language Arts K.4 (B, C)]

Learning Activity: Sky Stories

Before beginning this project, ask students to consider what kind of weather, mood, or time of day they want their sky to represent. Using art examples, ask students which images feel warm, gloomy, cold, or scary. Ask what colors the artist used to create this tone or mood.

Materials:
Watercolor or thinned tempera paint
Thick art brushes
Heavy white paper

Fold each paper once, with the bottom portion taking up around one third of the space on the page. Using crayon, students will draw their landscape image in bottom one third of the composition. Students can also use crayon to add details to the top two-thirds of the composition that will represent the sky. White and gray colors can be used to represent summer clouds, gray storm clouds, rain, or snow depending on the weather conditions the student has chosen to represent.

Students will use watercolor or thinned tempera paints to create a sky for their image. Ask students to consider what time of day, weather condition, or mood they want to represent before making a color selection. Students can experiment by adding more than one color, and watching the results as the watery colors merge and blend together.

After the paint has had time to dry completely, discussion questions should help students reflect on their final work. For example, “How do the colors in your work make you feel? What season or weather did you want to show in your painting? Why did you choose the colors in your work?” Have students tell a story about weather and the sky. What was happening in the image before? What is happening in the image now? What will happen next?
TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR TEXAS SKIES:

§110.2. English Language Arts and Reading, Kindergarten.

(4) Listening/speaking/communication. The student communicates clearly by putting thoughts and feelings into spoken words. The student is expected to:

(B) use vocabulary to describe clearly ideas, feelings, and experiences (K-3);

(C) clarify and support spoken messages using appropriate props such as objects, pictures, or charts (K-3);

§117.2. Art, Kindergarten.

(1) Perception. The student develops and organizes ideas from the environment. The student is expected to:

(A) glean information from the environment, using the five senses; and

(B) identify colors, textures, forms, and subjects in the environment.

(2) Creative expression/performance. The student expresses ideas through original artworks, using a variety of media with appropriate skill. The student is expected to:

(A) create artworks, using a variety of colors, forms, and lines;

(B) arrange forms intuitively to create artworks; and

(C) develop manipulative skills when drawing, painting, printmaking, and constructing artworks, using a variety of materials.

§112.2. Science, Kindergarten.

(5) Science concepts. The student knows that organisms, objects, and events have properties and patterns. The student is expected to:

(B) observe and identify patterns including seasons, growth, and day and night and predict what happens next;

(7) Science concepts. The student knows that many types of change occur. The student is expected to:

(D) observe and record weather changes from day to day and over seasons;
**UNIT ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective:</th>
<th>Novice (Basic Level)</th>
<th>Competent (Median Level)</th>
<th>Exceptional (Highest Level)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student will be able to explain how artists convey emotion, weather conditions, temperature, and time of day.</td>
<td>The student does not comment on artistic method, or the student does not participate. The student may distract others during the activity.</td>
<td>The student identifies at least one method in which artists convey emotion, weather conditions, temperature, and time of day.</td>
<td>The student clearly explains several ways in which artists convey emotion, weather conditions, temperature, and time of day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student will understand that the colors in early Texas art can convey specific emotions.</td>
<td>The student does not comment on color, or may not participate. The student may distract others during the activity.</td>
<td>The student can describe emotions associated with one or more colors.</td>
<td>The student can describe emotions associated with one or more colors. The student can identify these colors used in art images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student will be able to explain color choices that indicate mood, temperature (season/weather), and time of day in original works of art.</td>
<td>The student does not comment on color choice, or may not participate. The student may distract others during the activity.</td>
<td>The student completes at least one work in the color of their choice. They explain how the color is significant to the work.</td>
<td>The student completes one or more works in the color of their choice. The student clearly explains their goal behind their color choices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Children’s Books About Weather


Internet Resources

Web Weather for Kids:
http://www.ucar.edu/educ_outreach/webweather

Weather Wiz Kids:
http://www.weatherwizkids.com/

Reference for Artwork Details

Baker, James Graham. *Virtual Texas Art Museum*, Texas A&M University College of Architecture:
http://archone.tamu.edu/texmus/museum/texmuseum.html
Biographical Material
For
Early Texas Artists Included in the Unit
**ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES: TEXAS SKIES**

**Edward G. Eisenlohr (1872-1961)**

Born in Cincinnati to German-born parents, Edward G. Eisenlohr arrived in Texas at the age of two and settled in Dallas. Taught to draw by his mother, Eisenlohr continued his formal education in Switzerland and Germany. The artist returned to Dallas in 1889 to study with Frank Reaugh and Robert J. Onderdonk. He worked in oils, watercolors, and lithograph. He also created many pencil and graphite drawings while plein-air sketching near Dallas.


**Morris Walton Leader (1877-1966)**

M. Walton Leader was born in Marshall, Texas and moved to Austin when he was still a boy. He studied under Edna Collins, Peter Hohnstedt, Harry Anthony De Young and Frederick Becker. While the artist lived most of his life in Austin, from 1913 to 1917 he lived and studied in New York City and attended the Art Institute of Chicago. He lived most of his life in Austin, where he died and was buried in 1966.


**Audley Dean Nichols (Nicols) (1875-1941)**

Audley Nichols (Nicols) spent his earlier years in New York and Pittsburgh, illustrating for "McClure's," "Cosmopolitan," "Collier's," and other magazines. At age 44, the artist came to El Paso in 1919 to improve his health and stayed there to live and paint the desert landscape of far West Texas.


**Julian Onderdonk (1882-1922)**

Robert Julian Onderdonk was born in San Antonio, Texas. Like many other Texas artists working in this time period, Julian Onderdonk studied under the American Impressionist painter, William Merritt Chase. Chase advocated painting directly out-of-doors with a fresh, direct, elemental approach to nature. Onderdonk’s method of blending tone and color to suggest mood and atmospheric conditions is similar to other Impressionistic works. His pleasing and straightforward images quickly became popular among Texans and his works were shown in galleries throughout the state.
Frank Reaugh (1860-1945)

Frank Reaugh was born near Jacksonville, Illinois. At the age of fifteen he moved with his parents to a small ranch near Terrell, Texas. The artist preserved the cattle drives and fenceless ranges of Texas, developing an international reputation as a painter of western landscape and of cattle. He completed most of his works outdoors and created several inventions for working on the open range such as a portable easel and hexagon pastels. He taught and influenced other Texas artists such as E. G. Eisenlohr and Reveau Bassett.

Printed Resources
For
Early Texas Art
Printed Resources for Early Texas Art

Books By Author


Ratcliffe, Sam DeShony. *Painting Texas History to 1900*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1992.


**Exhibition Catalogues by Date**


“Myron Stout Exhibition” Oil and Steel Gallery, Kent Fine Art, Oct 6-Dec 15, 1990.


“Amy Freeman Lee: Centennial Exhibition, 1981


“33rd Annual Dallas County Exhibition: Painting, Drawing and Sculpture,” April 15 – May 13, 1962.


“31st Annual Dallas County Exhibition: Painting, Drawing and Sculpture” May 22-June 12, 1960.


“State Fair of Texas Art Exhibition” Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1953.

“50 Years of Painting in Dallas: A Retrospective of Paintings and Drawings by Olin Travis” Dallas Museum of Fine Arts. Jan 11-Feb 8, 1953.


**Monographs and Other Publications by Title**


“Western Beef Cattle: A Series of Eleven Paintings by Tom Lea”, Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 1950
**Auction Catalogues by Date**

David Dike Fine Art, 2004

David Dike Fine Art, 2003

David Dike Fine Art, 2002

David Dike Fine Art, 2001