



Birch Trees with Kes Woodward

GRADE: 6 and up

TIME: several sessions

Developed by Linda Pfisterer

<p>KIT INCLUDES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lesson plan • vocabulary board • Kes Woodward board • step-by-step teaching boards • Woodward reproductions (5) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Burnt Norton --Hot Springs Woods --Woods at Creamers --Spring Light—West Ridge --Snow Up On Birches • birch trees photo board • DVD 	<p>MATERIALS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • masking tape, 3/4” and 2” wide • watercolor paper, cut to 7”x10” (substitute construction paper, but it doesn’t work as well) • brushes (round), large and small • fine tip black ink pens • water cups • paper towels • construction paper for mounting painting: black and pastel colors
--	---



LESSON DESCRIPTION:
Students learn about Fairbanks, Alaska painter Kes Woodward and how he paints birch trees. They practice watercolor techniques, and discuss composition and perspective as students create a water color birch tree painting.

<p>VOCABULARY: realistic, abstract wet-on-wet, wet on dry masking out foreground middle ground background</p>	<p>ART ELEMENTS:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Line <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Shape/Form <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Color <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Value <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Texture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Space/Perspective</p>	<p>ART PRINCIPLES:</p> <p>___ Pattern ___ Rhythm/movement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Proportion/Scale <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Balance ___ Unity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emphasis</p>	<p>CONTENT CONNECTIONS:</p> <p>Science: trees, nature, light, shadows</p> <p>THEMES: Nature</p>
--	--	--	---

OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

1. Students will learn about Fairbanks artist, Kesler Woodward and the birch trees he paints.
2. Students will practice the rule of thirds in planning a composition.
3. Students will use perspective concepts such as page placement, size, color and detail to show near and far.
4. Students will use watercolor painting techniques such as wet-on-wet, wet-on-dry and color mixing.

PREPARE:

1. Familiarize yourself with the lesson and paint an example. This will help assure student success.
2. Cut watercolor paper into 7”x10” pieces (can use construction paper, but it doesn’t work as well).
3. Collect several rolls of masking tape – one per student if possible.
4. Students need watercolor paints and a mixing tray if not on tray.
5. Get decent round brushes that hold water.
6. Gather water cups, paper towels, and fine tip black pens.
7. For mounting paintings:
 - cut black construction paper so there is only a 1/4” border around the painting.
 - cut pastel paper so there is at least an inch border beyond the black border.

ENGAGE AND EXPLORE:

Display the birch tree paintings by Kes Woodward and discuss with students (2 shown below):



Spring Light – West Ridge
Kesler Woodward, 1992



Hot Springs Woods
Kesler Woodward, 1992

Today we will be painting landscapes of birch trees. Birch trees are common in the Fairbanks area and Kes Woodward likes to paint “Portraits” of birch trees. Answer some of these questions as you look closely at his paintings.

Definitions: Realistic means that objects look real. Abstract means that an object does not look real but you recognize it.

1. Which paintings look most realistic and why?
2. Which paintings look slightly abstract and why?
3. Name some of the colors he used in the birch trees? The snow?
4. Which painting appears the most detailed and why?

As we paint our birch trees today, we might incorporate some of Kes Woodward’s colors and ideas.

The following statements were written by Kes. Read them now or later while students are working.

Birches by Kes Woodward

I paint birch trees for two reasons. First, I think they are among the most beautiful things I’ve ever seen. They’re not at all white and black, as most people think of them, but have the most amazing range of beautiful colors, textures, and individual forms of any tree I know. I call a lot of my birch tree paintings “birch portraits,” because the trees seem to me so individual. As with people, you can see a lot of the history of their lives in the way they look.

The other reason I paint birch trees is that they are so abstract. When I began painting, I made abstract paintings for a long time, before I started painting realistically. Birch trees, since they are so varied in form and color, allow me the freedom to experiment and invent with my paint, color, and texture, and still make an image that people can understand and relate to. When people who don’t know my work ask me what I paint, I tell them I paint big, abstract paintings that happen to look like birch trees. Most of my paintings look very realistic from a distance, and very abstract when you stand close to them. I like being able to have it both ways.

Becoming an Artist by Kes Woodward

I didn't grow up wanting to be an artist. In fact, if anyone had told me when I was a senior in high school that I would be an artist, I would have been shocked and offended. I liked science and math, had never been interested in art, and started college as a chemistry major. I took an art class to be with the woman whom I later married, since she was an art major at the time. (She is now a pediatrician.) She also took me to my first art museum, as a 19 year-old.

When I began taking art, I had a wonderful painting teacher who convinced me by example, in his work and in his teaching, that art was something a bright, ambitious person might spend his life trying to do. I discovered that drawing and painting were not magic talents that people did or didn't have, but that they were skills that could be learned, like anything else. I discovered that creativity, desire, and hard work were much more important than so-called "talent."

I've since devoted myself to making art, writing about art, and teaching art for more than thirty years. When I retired a year and a half ago from teaching at the University of Alaska after twenty years, it was to paint full time. I try to be in my studio by 8 every weekday morning, and to work until about 5 every day. I believe that inspiration comes in the working, rather than needing to be found before you start.

CREATE:

Set up the step-by-step teaching board and/or play the demonstration DVD for each step.

1. **Taping the painting:** Use the 3/4" masking tape to tape all four sides of the watercolor paper to the desk to keep it flat as the painting progresses, and especially as it dries. If you pull it off the desk before it dries flat, it will remain lumpy.

Considering composition rules:

a. The rule of thirds and how it helps composition: A simple way to make your painting look attractive is to follow the rule of thirds. It involves placing your subjects a third of the way into the picture composition. This rule is also used to determine the ratio of sky and land. The sky would be 1/3 down from the top and the land would then begin 2/3 from the bottom. If the sky is very important, it might be 2/3 down and the land would then begin 1/3 from the bottom.

b. Another rule of composition is to avoid placing important objects directly in the center of the composition, keeping the painting asymmetrical.

2. **Masking out the trees:** cut the side of the 3/4" masking tape to imitate irregular sides of the trees. The second side of the tree could look irregular by controlled tearing of the tape.

a. Foreground trees: trees closest to the viewer should be wide in size and go near the bottom and off the top of the watercolor paper. Size and placement make objects appear near or far. Use the 1/2" wide masking tape to make the major branches on the foreground trees in a "V" formation and the thin scraps of tape for the narrow branches.

b. Middle ground trees: these trees begin a third of the way up and continue on and go off the top of the composition. Make sure all of these trees go up and off the top of the paper.

c. Background trees will be painted in later.

3. **Sky Wash:** Remember, colors are darkest and more intense at the top of the sky. The closer to the horizon, the lighter they become. More water in your brush makes the colors lighter. Begin by putting a water wash over the entire sky area.

a. Simple sky: Begin with blue on the brush. Put the first stroke across the top of the sky. Continue by adding water, not more paint with each stroke. This makes a graded wash.

b. Morning sky: Put a water wash on the entire sky. Begin with yellow in the middle of the sky. Then put a watery red along the horizon. To blend the two colors, make one brush stroke between the red and yellow. Then put blue at the top of the sky. Make a brush stroke between the yellow and the blue.

REMEMBER, ONE BRUSH STROKE AND YOU ARE DONE -- little repeating strokes make the background look dull and scrubbed.

4. **Land Wash:** Decide what time of year – winter/fall/summer you want to paint. When painting the snow, leave part of the white paper showing. Wet the land area and apply paint by making strokes, being sensitive to the irregular land. (Pretend you have a “shaky” hand.) This is painting wet-on-wet.

a. Winter colors: Blue, blue/gray and purples are used. Leave small areas of white showing.

b. Fall colors: Leaves are covering the ground, so use oranges, browns and yellow. Colors in the background are not bright, so tone colors down by adding blue for the distant colors. Let paintings dry.

While the background is drying, discuss Kes Woodward. Read the biography board. He writes about what made him decide to become an artist and why he paints so many birch trees.

5. **Tree Shadows:** Decide if your sun shines from the right or left. Shadows begin at the base of the tree and continue out on the opposite direction of the sun. Paint trees in the far distance with blue-gray colors. They are high or in the upper third of the painting and very small in size. Let this dry.

6. **When dry, peel the tape** off very slowly and gently to avoid tearing the paper.

7. **Paint trunks of birch trees.** Wet the shadowed half of the tree. Apply light value of color (tree color could reflect sky color). Notice the colors Kes uses. Then paint the shadowed side (1/3) in a darker value. The wet-on-wet colors should blend and give you a gradated (a subtle change from light to dark) curved look to the tree. Then add a little bark texture with the fine point of the smaller brush. Let this dry.

8. **Use the black ink pen for detail.** Draw thin black branches and the peeling bark on the trees in the foreground. The trees in the background should not show detail because they are so far away.

Sign your painting (neatly and not too large) with your name and the date. Dry on the desk until the next day.

When it is completely dry, very slowly and at a slant, peel off tape around the painting. Glue the small black paper to the back, leaving a border. Glue a pastel paper behind the black paper for a nice matted and framed look.

CLOSE:

Hang final paintings. They also make beautiful small cards to sell if you scan each painting and shrink them so several fit on a page to color Xerox. Cut out each small 3"x4" painting, mount with two colors on white card stock. Sell as a set.

Teacher administered assessment tool

DN	OK	UP	Lesson _____ Teacher _____ Grade _____ Date _____ Number of Students _____
			Using the thumbs up, ok, and down technique, ask your students the following questions and record their answers. (K=knowledge, S=skills, C=creativity, A=attitude, E=engagement)
			1. Can you explain why Kes Woodward paints birch trees? (K)
			2. Did you use the rule of thirds when you planned your birch tree painting? (S)
			3. Did you use perspective concepts to show near and far? (S,E)
			4. Did you use painting techniques such as wet-on-wet and color mixing? (K,S,E)
			5. Did you listen carefully and follow directions? (A)
			6. Did you finish your painting in your own unique way? (C)
			7. Did you work hard during this lesson? (E)

Teacher self-critique

8. My teaching of this lesson:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
needed improvement							was highly successful		

9. What would I do differently next time?

ALIGNMENT:**Alignment of Standards:**

Art: A1,2,3,4; C2; D6

English: C

Science: A, B

Alignment of GLE's:

Reading: R2.1

Science:

CREDITS:

Project ARTiculate is supported by the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, the Alaska Arts Education Consortium, and a U.S. Department of Education Development and Dissemination Grant

