

## Textures in Nature

### Part 3: Artistic Studies

The natural world around us is a work of art in and of itself, so artists throughout history have been inspired to mimic and display its beauty using various mediums and styles. Whether an artistic piece is made using a pencil and paper (such as creating nature rubbings, which we explored in [Part 2 of our Textures in Nature series](#)) or the artist uses natural elements in the piece, the idea is always the same: to experience a shared appreciation for nature. Texture is a dynamic and expressive component of art and can be used to study the natural world through its artistic applications.

In this final installment of the series, participants will be studying the environment through artistic theory and application.

#### **Creating Textured Nature Art**

The following activities invite the participant to use their imagination to imitate or create artistic nature studies through various mediums and to analyze the resulting connections between understanding and expression.



*Photo by Rifqi Ali Ridho on Unsplash*

#### **Activity 1: Create Naturally Textured Landscape Art**

This activity offers many opportunities for tactile exploration and artistic experimentation. Participants are encouraged to be creative with the elements used and to expand on the materials.



*Textured landscape painting courtesy of [Justin Gaffrey](#)*

**Procedure 1:** Creating textured paint allows paintings to move from the 2-dimensional realm to the 3-dimensional. Participants can choose what type of paints are used, depending on the desired authenticity or realism of the final product. Adding natural elements to the wet paint changes the composition of the paint and when dry, can be used to depict the true textures found in the natural world. Layering more paint on top of each previous layer can add additional depth and 3-dimensionality to the landscape. Here are some ideas for natural elements that can be added to paint:

- Sand of various grit sizes
- Dry oats
- Flour
- Wood shavings
- Seeds

**Procedure 2:** How does a landscape differ when created using just paint versus incorporating actual natural objects into the piece? Does real grass glued or painted into the canvas create a more expressive texture and dimension in the work? Explore the world outside and see what elements you can collect and use in your artwork to better express your understanding and view of what you see outside. What happens when you use fresh vegetation versus dried? Try combining textured paints and real items from outside to be as realistic or fantastic as you like!

**Discussion:** The following are prompts for discussion and analysis of texture in art and nature.

- Does touching a piece of art influence how you understand the subject it depicts?
- Because of this new dimension, how would you expect light to impact your view of the art?
- In what ways would adding natural elements modify the scale of the subject matter?

## Activity 2: Explore Soil Texture and Sculpture

Soil texture is an important aspect of land management and studying the ecosystem; the differences between the types of soil dictate what plants can grow there and subsequently what animals can survive there! Soil type is determined by differing amounts of 3 components: sand, silt, and clay - ranging from largest particles to smallest, respectively. Sandy soil is very gritty and rough, which means water runs through it quickly and roots have looser soil to anchor in. Silt mixes quickly with water and becomes slippery mud puddles. Clay is the finest of the three types, and becomes sticky and elastic when mixed with water, which is why it can be used to make art!



Photo by Eddie Kopp on Unsplash

**Procedure:** Do you know what kind of soil is around where you live? Go outside and explore! Dig into the earth and feel the texture of the soil with your hands, then add some water to a handful and try to roll it into a ball.

- Is it gritty and can you hear the particles grinding together if you crush it in your fist? Then it's pretty sandy.
- Does it leave a silky layer of dirt on your palms? It's probably silty.
- Can you press it with your thumb and forefinger to create a long, flat ribbon? Lots of clay particles make it moldable!
- Does the soil feel different depending on how deep you dig? What other natural objects can change the texture of the soil?



[Check out this video about how you can make your own clay](#) and then create nature-inspired sculptures!

## Texture in 2D Art

Showing texture in 2D art can be difficult, but all you need is a little practice. If you remember [Part 1 of our Textures in Nature series](#), we discussed *tangible texture* vs. *implied texture*; in 2D art, all texture is implied. Today we will be focusing on 2 different techniques to show texture in 2D art: creating highlights and shadows and utilizing different line strokes. These 2 techniques are often combined to create a more realistic effect. This combination of depicting depth and texture with lines can make a



piece look more 3-dimensional, thus making it *look* like it has tangible texture but in reality, it is just implied.

### Activity 1: Observe Implied Texture

Look at the drawings below. Write your observations about the implied texture in these pieces. Can you describe the sensations related to each?

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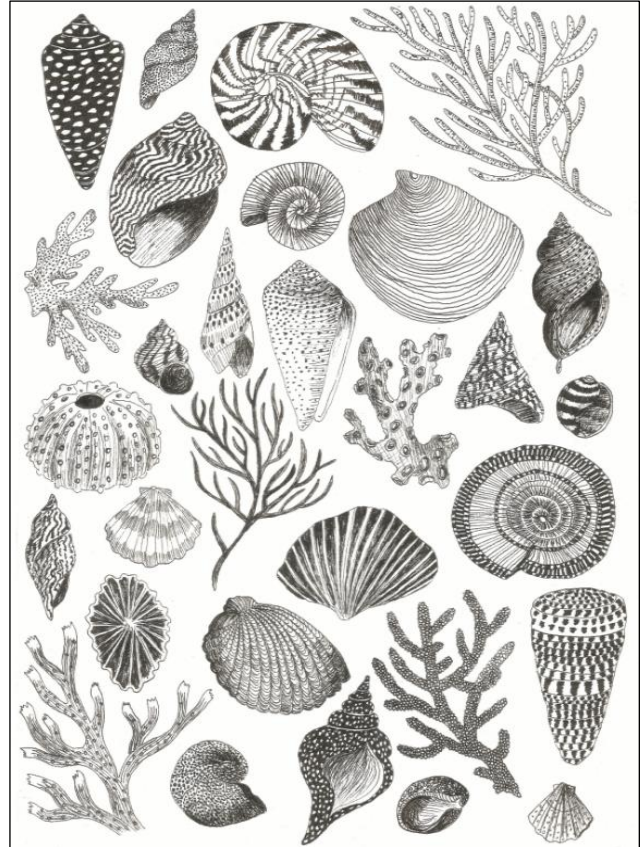
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Additional question: In Van Gogh's painting *Starry Night* (above), he uses a lot of brush strokes of specific lengths throughout the piece. How does he adjust the strokes to create texture and movement?

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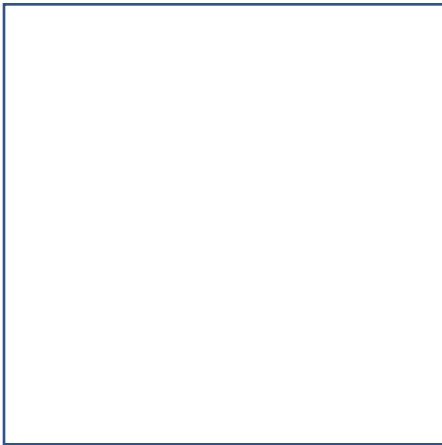


Grab a pencil or pen, open your nature journal or print this page, and bring it with you outside. Find these objects and then observe each one individually and practice drawing their texture in the boxes or space in your journal. Need some inspiration? Watch [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) of How to Draw Textures for tips, or check out [this article](#).

Example: [Fur](#)



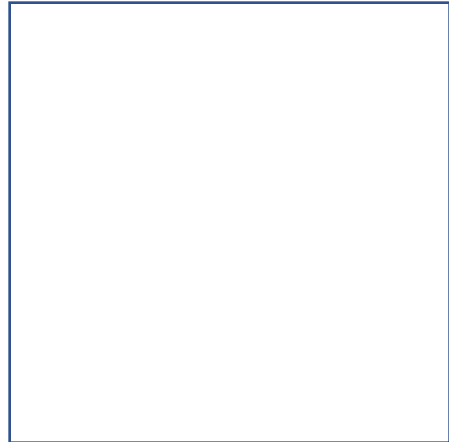
A Feather



Wood Grain



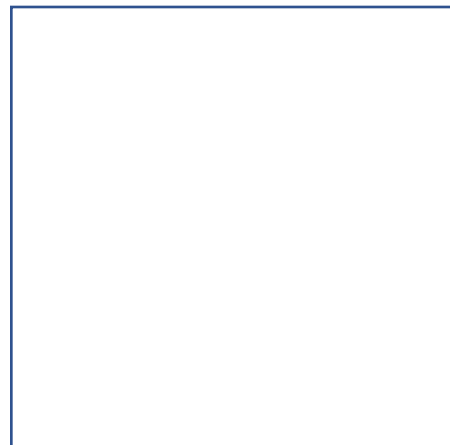
Tree Bark



A Leaf (any type)



A Mushroom or Lichen







### Activity 3: Painting Implied Texture

Follow the steps in [this article](#) to learn how to paint implied texture! In the end it will come down to preference of the medium. Some people enjoy drawing more, while others enjoy painting. It is always a good idea to test out multiple options to see which you like better and which you are more comfortable with. You can always practice the other option to increase your skill set.



You can also combine mediums to create a whole different style. Don't be scared if it doesn't look how you wanted it to after the first few tries. Just keep on practicing! Watch [part 1](#) and [part 2](#) of How to Draw & Paint Flowers with Ink and Watercolor for guidance.



## Viewing Natural Art

Great paintings enhance life and can be enjoyed by anyone. From first glimpse to deeper impressions, there are many aspects that can be discussed with people of all ages. Portrayals of nature are particularly significant in that they may project a point of view or lead to a deeper understanding of the interconnectivity of ecosystems, preservation of native species, and consequences of human footprints.

Try incorporating some of these questions to prompt your investigations.

- Is this painting of a specific place? When was it painted, and do you think it looks the same now?
- Pictures are a good way to capture a moment in time. What story does this painting tell?
- Is the painting just for decoration? In some countries, hanging pictures of fruit and flowers in homes is customary.
- A first decision for an artist may be the size of the work and even the space it will occupy. Small paintings are designed for single viewers while many can gather around an enormous canvas. Historically, large canvases were commissioned by people of wealth because they had expansive walls.
- Did the artist need a lot of workspace to create the painting? Some artists place the canvas on the floor. Jackson Pollock, as an example, was known to almost dance around his paintings creating drips and splashes and swirls all around.
- The shape of the canvas can be used to focus your eye on a given point. If the work is odd shaped, round, or rectangular, where does your eye seem to “go”?
- Do blues cool you off and reds make you feel the heat? Is the work of the natural setting painted with realistic colors? Are the flowers that are depicted actually blooming at the same time? Use a naturalist’s eye to find the facts and fiction.
- What time was the picture painted? Look for the hints of color and shadow. If the painting was created at a different time of day, what new colors would be used or how would the shadows change?
- The view of the painting can be seen in the horizontal line, particularly relevant in landscapes. High, low, and normal viewpoints are used to encourage the viewer to see things in certain ways.

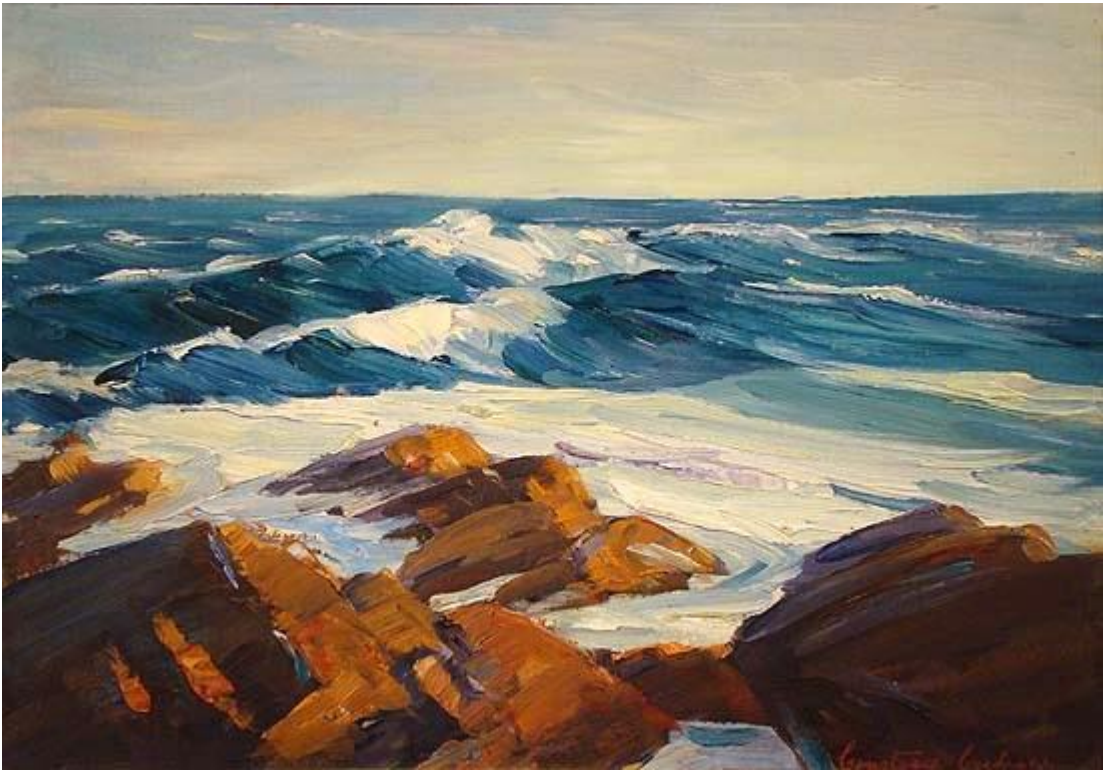
*Adapted from Looking at Paintings, An Introduction to Fine Arts for Young People by Erika Langmuir and Ruth Thomson.*



**Activity 4: Evaluating and Understanding Art Pieces**

Use the questions above in Viewing Natural Art to evaluate the paintings below.

*Rocky Ocean Scene* by Constance Cochrane



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*The Seine* by Henry Ossawa Tanner



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**Discussion:** By now we have learned about 3D art that has tangible texture, and 2D art that has implied texture. Which do you like looking at better? Do you like being able to physically *feel* texture or *understand* texture without having to touch it? Which activity did you like best? Was it a 2D or 3D activity? Do you think you will continue creating different types of art that focus on textures in nature? Remember to always keep your mind open while exploring nature and continue to find inspiration in the world around you!

### **Extensions**

As explored in [Part 1 of our Textures and Nature series](#), the senses of sight and touch oftentimes work closely together to inform our experience of the world. Texture can be implied visually by 2-dimensional art, but what about the experiences of the 285 million people worldwide who are blind or visually impaired? ([Source](#)) In [this article from MutualArt](#), you can find information about various artists and galleries that are working hard to create and promote art that is accessible to all, along with a fascinating video about the work of the Unseen Art Project, a 3D printing initiative dedicated to recreating iconic art pieces that are meant to be touched.

### **Learning Standards**

Consider a few of the NJ Fine Arts Learning Standards, Content Statements and Indicators, as they relate to both the content and activities of Texture in Nature Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3.

#### Aesthetic Response and Technique

- All students will demonstrate and apply and understanding of arts philosophies, judgement, and analysis to works of art...
- Describe feelings and reactions and make necessary thoughtful observations in response to a variety of culturally diverse works of art and objects in the everyday world.
- Works of art may be organized according to their function and artistic purposes.
- Demonstrate how art communicates ideas about personal and social values and is inspired by an individual's imagination and frame of reference (e.g., personal, social, political, historical context).
- Contextual clues to artistic intent are embedded in artwork.
- Art may be used for utilitarian and non-utilitarian purposes.

*There are many ways to integrate Texture in Nature Part 1- 3 activities into your lessons. For that, or for more ideas, contact Kate Reilly, Manager of Education, Duke Farms at [kreilly@dukefarms.org](mailto:kreilly@dukefarms.org)*