



Image Credit: John Kelly Fitzpatrick, Untitled (Clearing the Land), no date, oil on canvas, 1999.2.1

Alabama Landscape

OVERVIEW

This lesson will focus on Alabama's geographic regions and history providing inspiration to create a landscape.

STANDARDS

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can we pull inspiration from the landscape and history to create a work of art?

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students Will:

- Learn how to compose a landscape work

STANDARDS: FOURTH GRADE | VISUAL ARTS AND SOCIAL STUDIES

4th Grade | VISUAL ARTS 5, 12 | SOCIAL STUDIES 11, 12

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ART DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What does this painting depict? Describe any details you see.
- How many figures can you see?

- Where does this scene take place?

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Painter and educator John Kelly Fitzpatrick devoted his career to presenting the life of his rural central Alabama home in his art. During the 1920s and throughout the Great Depression, Fitzpatrick focused his attention on Alabama's rural landscape and its inhabitants during a socially and economically turbulent period in the state's history. John Kelly Fitzpatrick was born in Wetumpka and Fitzpatrick took pride in his lineage: his grandfather, Benjamin Fitzpatrick, was governor from 1841 to 1845 and later a U.S. Senator. In March 1918, he enlisted with the U.S. Army and served in France in World War I. Fitzpatrick was severely wounded by shrapnel during a battle in July of that year. As a result, he was permanently scarred on his face, neck, and chest. This experience colored his outlook profoundly, and he later wrote that his physical suffering caused him to lose interest in the material world and focus instead on the beautiful and spiritual aspects of life.

Beyond this minimal formal training, he acquired knowledge and appreciation of contemporary painting trends while traveling in Europe during both 1926 and 1930. He was inspired largely by Impressionist painters and Post-Impressionists such as Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, and Henri Matisse, whose works were prominently featured in the Paris art world in the 1930s. Above all, Fitzpatrick adopted these French artists' love of brilliant color to structure his compositions and to create forms.

Although he occasionally painted portraits and still-life compositions, Fitzpatrick's primary subject was the Alabama landscape, specifically the areas around his home in Elmore County. He painted rural dwellings, county crossroads settlements, and genre scenes that depict the day-to-day life of the predominantly black population that labored in agricultural activities in the area. Fitzpatrick did very little preliminary drawing when composing his paintings; instead he created his forms directly on the surface using a variety of brushstrokes ranging from short, choppy strokes to give a sense of weight and volume to his forms, to long, sweeping applications of paint for expanses of landscape and sky. He applied paint thickly and built up layers to create an uneven surface texture known as impasto.

CURRICULUM CONTENT

Alabama has a rich and diverse landscape to be drawn upon when creating.

FAST FACTS

Nickname: The Heart of Dixie

Statehood: 1819; 22nd state

Population (as of July 2015): 4,858,979

Capital: Montgomery

Biggest City: Birmingham

Abbreviation: AL

State bird: yellowhammer

State flower: camellia

This southern state is bordered by Tennessee in the north, Georgia in the east, Florida and Mobile Bay in the south, and Mississippi in the west.

The Highland Rim in the northwest is where you'll find the Tennessee River valley, while the Cumberland Plateau in the northeast is named for its flat-topped plateaus. Just southeast is the Appalachian Ridge and Valley, which includes the Coosa River and iron-rich Red Mountain. The Piedmont Upland, in the central eastern part of the state, is a hilly area with Alabama's highest peak, the 2,407-foot Cheaha Mountain. The rest of the state is called the East Gulf Coastal Plain, which contains both flatlands and hills plus the Alabama, the state's largest river at 314 miles long.

About 70 percent of Alabama is covered in forests, so it's no wonder the state is known for its timber. Alabama's vast forests would cover Rhode Island, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and Connecticut!

Alabama is also rich in limestone, coal, and iron ore, which are the three raw materials needed to make steel. In fact Alabama is home to three of the nation's top pipe-making companies.

Two of North America's rarest species—the Perdido Key beach mouse and the Alabama beach mouse—hide out in Alabama. Coyotes, armadillos, deer, feral pigs, and American alligators also roam the land. Birds such as kites, bald eagles, and hawks dot the skies, and the Gulf Coast waterdog and the 20-inch eastern hellbender—the biggest salamander species by weight in North America—are underfoot.

Bamboo and mistletoe grow in the state as well as other parts of the country, but the carnivorous Alabama canebrake pitcher plant, the Alabama gladebush, and the Cahaba prairie-clover can only be found here. The state's hundred-plus types of trees include pines, red cedars, magnolias, and live oaks, which are often draped with long, gray Spanish moss.



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ART INSTRUCTION

MATERIALS

Scrap paper, tissue paper, watercolors, oil pastels, scissors, glue

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1** Find inspiration from Alabama's diverse landscape to create from. Students can search for their reference in their artwork or references can be provided by the instructor.
- 2** On blank piece of paper, students can begin by drawing lightly with a pencil their outline of their landscape.
- 3** Students can work from the background (sky) to the foreground on their work of art. If students are creating with mixed media, they can fill the sky with blue tissue paper. Using scrap paper to form mountains or trees, then additional elements to create their landscape from their reference photo.

Once their artwork dries, they can color on top with oil pastels to add additional texture and color.



TERMS

REALISTIC - art work that attempts a photographic likeness of the subject matter; sometimes refers to the choice of subject that is commonplace as opposed to courtly and idealized.

ABSTRACT - artwork where objects have been changed or modified so they no longer look realistic. An abstract work of art does, however, use a recognizable object or thing as its reference or origin.

LANDSCAPE - a work of art showing nature and the land such as the ocean, mountains, trees, and sky.

COMPOSITION - the arrangement of the elements of art and the principles of design within a given work of art.

FOREGROUND - the part of a picture which appears closest to the viewer and often is at the bottom of the picture.

MIDDLE GROUND - Objects in the middle ground appear to be behind objects in the foreground

BACKGROUND - The background is the part of the painting farthest from the viewer. Objects in the background are usually smaller and less distinct than other objects in the work.

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