Pearl at Home

Art projects designed for family fun, for suggested ages of 5 and up to be completed at home with easily-accessible art materials.

CANYON LANDSCAPES

In atlas to accompany *The Tertiary History of the Grand Cañon District*, Clarence E. Dutton,
Washington, DC: 1882

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MATERIALS

- **White paper:** Any paper will work, but use cardstock if you plan to paint after drawing
- **Pencil(s) and eraser:** Use drawing pencils in various values if you have them
- **Optional:**
  - Color media: watercolors, tempera, acrylics, markers, crayons, or color pencils
  - Paint brushes, water, paper towels, and work mat

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Artists like to capture the beauty of our world. **Landscapes** can be depicted in many media, including paintings, drawings, relief sculpture, photography, and more. There are examples of landscape art in many art movements, and many are **representational** – meaning you can easily tell its a landscape and name the objects in the landscape.

In order to create representational or realistic landscapes, an artist needs to understand the concepts of space and proportion in art. Landscapes rely on the observation that objects farther away appear smaller than they actually are, and objects closer to the viewer appear larger in comparison. So by changing the proportion or size of an object – like a tree, building, or mountain – the artist can create the optical illusion of deep space on a flat surface like a canvas or piece of paper. Another way to portray space or depth of field is to overlap objects in the view.

Practice with the two exercises below, and see examples from American artist **Thomas Moran** at the end of this packet!

DIRECTIONS – EASIER VERSION

1. Begin by deciding which way you want the paper to lay. “Landscape” is a horizontal layout, like the way we see the world.

   You can also choose a “portrait,” or vertical, orientation. We call this layout “portrait” because most portraits are painted in a tall rectangular shape. For this example, we chose a landscape layout.
2 On the bottom half of your paper draw 3-5 long, loose blob-like shapes. These will end up being the top of mesas in the canyon. A mesa is a hill with a flat top.

3 Next, draw a horizontal squiggly line all the way across the paper ABOVE the blob shapes.

   Draw a different-looking squiggly line BELOW the blob shapes all the way across the paper.

4 Draw lines to add details and dimension to the canyon walls.

   Start at the top squiggly line at one of the “folds,” and go ALMOST straight down. STOP when you are about to cross any other line. Do all the lines you need from the top line first.

   Make similar lines down from each blob. Finish each level before you go to the next.

   ALL LINES STOP at the bottom squiggly line.
5 Draw an almost-straight line across the paper, an inch or two above the top squiggly line you drew in Step 3.

6 Draw a few mountain shapes above this new line. Keep them small, as we are trying to make the mountains appear far, far away. Look at desert or Southwest landscape pictures for rock formation ideas.

7 Draw some lines that are mostly horizontal, but follow the curves in your mesa shapes and canyon walls. These lines represent where the layers of rock, or strata, change kind and/or color.

8 Use your color medium of choice to add color to your drawing. Look at photos or paintings of canyons for inspiration!

DIRECTIONS – MORE ADVANCED VERSION

1 Decide which way your paper will be oriented: either landscape (horizontal) or portrait (vertical).

Start your drawing by making a TINY pencil mark 1/4 to 1/3 of the way down on the left and right sides of your paper. You can roughly measure from the top; you don’t need a ruler.

Draw a wavy line that will represent hills or mountains on the horizon. We are starting to draw deep space, so the hills or mountains are far away and therefore appear small to the eye.
Next, pick two spots that are 1/4 to 1/2 inch apart slightly below the wavy line you just drew. Make small “tick” marks to help you in the next step.

Start drawing a line from the left side of the paper towards the right side, again slightly below the wavy line above it. It can be a little wavy too. STOP at the tiny tick mark you made on the left.

From the left tick mark, draw a VERY wavy line toward the bottom of the paper. As you draw the line down, angle it towards the left and go off the paper an inch or two above the bottom at the left edge.
4 Repeat the directions from Step 3 on the right side of the paper, almost creating a mirror image. Try NOT to match the waves all the way down, however. The line on the right side should go off the paper at the bottom.

5 Add lines to make the canyon walls. Draw lines downward that start from the points of the wavy line and angle SLIGHTLY toward the opposite wavy line. Do NOT go all the way across to touch the opposite wavy line. See our example on the next page.
The canyon APPEARS to narrow, but you are trying to show that it recedes into the distance. Each side should show the bottom of the canyon wall and where it meets the bottom of the canyon.

6 Finish adding your canyon wall lines, then do some shading to help with the illusion of distance. You can keep your composition as is, or add in color using the medium of your choice. Look at photos or paintings of canyons for inspiration!
Thomas Moran was an American artist known for his landscape paintings and illustrations of the American West. The two paintings seen here were completed by Moran in 1872. There were no color cameras at that time, so explorers took along artists to paint what they encountered on their journeys. Moran was part of the Hayden Geological Survey of 1871, an expedition sponsored by the US government that was tasked with exploring northwest Wyoming. The reports and artwork produced by members of the expedition led to the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872.

The painting at the right is one of many watercolor sketches Moran made in his journal while on the trip. The bottom painting is one he completed after the trip in his New Jersey studio, using his sketches as reference.

Note how Moran has portrayed distance with his use of space, perspective, overlapping, and scale. Look at the sizes of the trees on the different hillsides in each painting and how the river narrows in the top painting. Also notice how the horizon in both paintings is very simple, with no details. This helps show that the horizon is far away.

In the bottom painting there are two people standing on a rocky cliff edge with some horses nearby. Note how small they appear. The scale of the people compared to the scale of everything else emphasizes the immensity of the landscape.
This painting titled *Grand Canyon from Hermit Rim Road* is also by Thomas Moran and was painted in 1912. Note how the artist showed the strata in the canyon walls and established deep distance by using scale in the trees and mountains.