

Connect through Art

Watercolour abstract landscape

Lesson plan prepared by Priya Jasmine Andrade for the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Suggested grade / age levels

Grades 5+ (Ages 10+)

Introduction

Toni Onley is a British born painter who spent a lot of his life between Ontario and British Columbia, Canada. He created and exhibited his work and taught art to both children and adults. Other jobs in his career included being a surveyor, draftsman, and a commercial artist. Flying was a hobby of his which inspired his art, completing many sketches while in the air. This practice was deeply influenced by impressionist, non-objective art, and a love for wild nature in B.C.

In this artwork, we see the impression of the mountains in the background, they are different hues of black, dark, and light gray. There is also a little splash of colour in the light blue mountain or sky on the left. The mountain shapes become darker



as they get closer to the foreground to create depth in the artwork. To give a sense of perspective, he paints a reflection of the mountain in the water. To emphasize the mountains instead of the water, the horizon line is in the lower part of the image.

In this activity, we invite you to find a photo of your favourite landscape. Pick one colour that you can create a variety of hues from, as well as an accent colour. This activity uses a wet-on-wet technique, where you apply paint that is wet, to paper that is also wet. This is a fast-paced process so it doesn't take very long to do, and you don't know how it will turn out!

Toni Onley
Kuper Island, British Columbia, 1975
Medium
Watercolour on paper
27.6 x 38.0 cm
Gift of John deWitt, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1985

Set Up

- Access to a sink
- Desk/table covers, like newsprint or vinyl tablecloths
- Paper towel/rags and containers for water and paint
- Clothing suitable for painting, or aprons

Materials

- Heavy paper
- A ruler
- Pencil
- Green painter's tape (masking tape works too, see tip below)
- Sturdy cardboard
- Water-based paints such as watercolour, or acrylic paint, tempera paint in liquid or block form
- Paint brushes in a variety of sizes, including a big brush
- Paint palettes (such wax paper taped to a sheet of cardboard, Styrofoam trays or plates, plastic lids)
- A photo of your favorite landscape

Process

- First secure your paper, on all sides, to the cardboard with the green painter's tape to keep the paper flat while you work.
- Create a slightly smaller rectangle with more tape, this will be the size of your finished painting.
 - Taping Tip: If you don't have green painter's tape, apply strips of masking tape to your clothing and peel it off before securing to your paper. The lint from your clothes prevents the tape from tearing the paper when you remove it.
- Draw the horizon line about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down in your rectangle. The horizon line is where the sky meets the water.
- Set up your palette and choose your two paint colours. To create various hues and shades of your chosen colour, incrementally add a small amount of white (hues) and black (shades) paint to your chosen colour. Repeat this technique with your accent colour.
- To do the wet-on-wet technique, wet your paper thoroughly with water and a big brush.
- Begin painting with the receding background shapes that are very light hues. Dip your paint in the colours and dab them on your wet paper and see what shapes get created, inspired by the landscape image you selected. Enjoy the process and let the wet paint decide how the painting will look.
- To show depth, use darker colours in the foreground, which is closer to the horizon line. These colours are smaller shapes than the ones in the background.
 - Painting Tip: The more water you add to your paint, the lighter the washes. If you make a stroke you don't like - wipe it off, your paper is wet! Keep going until you have enough detail.
- Let your painting dry completely before peeling off the tape.

