

Four seasons tree paintings



Context

This activity was inspired by Monet's series paintings, including the *Haystack* series, the *Poplar* series, the *Rouen Cathedral* series and the *Houses of Parliament* series. In these series Monet painted the same subject matter repeatedly, at different times of the day or different times of the year. This enabled him to record how the subject changed in appearance in differing light and atmospheric conditions. At some sites Monet worked on multiple canvases at once.

Materials

Two sheets of black A3 cover paper folded in half vertically per student. (It wasn't common for the Impressionists to use black paper, so if you prefer, use dark green, blue or purple.)

Two sheets of A3 cartridge paper cut in half vertically per student (four pieces each)

HB pencils

Glue sticks

Paper for practice drawing

A variety of paints (summer, winter, autumn, spring colours)

- acrylics for the sky and ground backgrounds
- gouache for detail work

Dry pastels (or oil pastels if preferred)

Cotton buds for painting detail



Scissors

Round and flat sponges for painting



Other resources

Reproductions of series paintings by Monet Plastic sleeves for storing student work in progress

Note to teacher

- This activity will take several art lessons to complete. The tree for one season should be completed before the tree for another season is started.
- Always demonstrate each process/step. Demonstrating throughout the lessons creates better understanding. This is especially important with younger students. Demonstrate the first step, then allow students to explore that step. They then return for the demonstration of the next step.

Step 1. Explore and discuss paintings by Monet

 Explore and discuss reproductions of paintings by Monet, showing a particular site or subject at different times of the day or year. Note the different colours used on the same subject matter. What sort of colours has Monet used in each image in the series? Are they harmonious, complementary, warm or cool? Suggest why Monet may have chosen these colours.

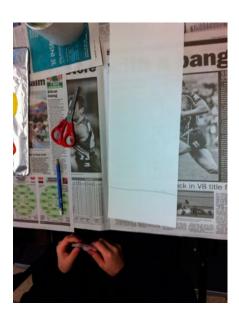
Step 2. Creating the horizon line

• On the four halves of A3 cartridge (portrait format), draw a horizon line with a pencil. This should be the same on each of the four pieces of paper as it will be the same view of the same tree at different times of the year.

Step 3. Creating silhouettes for the trees

- Practice drawing a silhouette of a tree on practice paper.
- When you are happy with its form, draw the tree onto one side of the two folded sheets of black A3 cover paper.

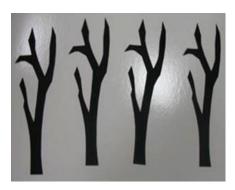




Holding the four layers of paper together, cut around the lines to create four tree silhouettes.
 Store the trees for each student in a plastic sleeve with the student's name on it.







Step 4. Painting the background

- Choose one season to begin with; for example, winter.
- Take one piece of the white cartridge and mix white paint with another colour.
 Sponge this onto the paper in the sky area.
- Using another sponge, mix white paint with another colour and sponge this onto the paper in the ground area.
- Place on drying rack to dry.







Step 5. Adding colour to the background

Choose a mixture of pink, orange, purple and white dry pastels (or oil pastels if preferred). Using one colour at a time, draw short controlled marks over the painted background so that the painting starts to shimmer with soft colours. You may wish to place all of the marks in one direction for the sky and in another direction for the ground.

Step 6. Adding the tree silhouette

 Position and glue one of the tree silhouettes onto the completed background.

Step 7. Painting details and texture on the tree

- Using a flat sponge, dip one end carefully into brown gouache and make short marks on the tree shape to suggest the texture of bark.
- Using a cotton bud and white paint, paint lumps of snow in the boughs and flat areas of the tree.
- Allow to dry on drying rack.















Repeat steps 3-7 for each season

Select and add colours and details according to each season.

Spring

- Use scissors and scraps of black paper to cut small branches. Paste onto the tree these will be the new spring shoots – the more the better.
- Use a cotton bud and light green gouache to paint the new leaves just starting to open. You may wish to add sprigs of blossom.











Summer

- Use a round sponge dipped into yellow gouache and light and dark green gouache to create leaf foliage on the tree.
- For finer detail of leaves, use a cotton bud.
- Use another cotton bud to paint ripe fruit.











Autumn

 Use gouache to mix a variety of autumn colours. Use a variety of sponges to create foliage on the tree and on the ground (fallen leaves). Try not to blend the colours too much, otherwise they become muddy.













Plein-air painting and warm-up activities







Context

Monet and the other French Impressionists loved to paint outdoors, or *en-plein-air* (in the open air), to capture the light and colour of the landscape. Collapsible metal tubes for paint were introduced in the 1840s, making it easier for artists to store and transport paint for working outdoors. Monet loved painting water and built several floating studio boats so he could paint various vistas along the River Seine. When working outdoors with students, use watercolour discs that are compact and easier to transport than oils or acrylics. Warm-up activities (see below) are recommended to prepare students for working outdoors.

Materials

Watercolour paint discs
Small-sized watercolour paper (for example, 210 x 100 mm)
Scrap paper for testing paint colours
A support surface for painting, such as a cutting board
Masking tape
Paper towel for drying brushes

Equipment

Water bottle/containers for transporting water Water pots Soft hair watercolour brushes in different sizes Chairs

Other resources

Colour wheel

Reproductions of plein-air paintings by Monet



Step 1. Preparing for painting

- Tape a piece of scrap paper onto the top of the support board.
- Roll two pieces of masking tape together to create double-sided tape. Stick these onto the back of the watercolour paper, and then fix this to the support board as well.
- Choose a view.
- To encourage exploration of colour mixing and the use of a variety of tones, restrict the amount of colours that can be used. In the illustrated examples you will see the three students were each limited to using two complementary colours: red/green, blue/orange and violet/yellow. This encouraged different thinking about the colours of objects and avoided the convention of green trees with brown trunks, green hills and blue skies.







Step 2. Working with watercolour paints

- There are many videos on the internet that demonstrate the various steps in watercolour painting, but there are a few basic steps which are the focus of this activity.
- Using a variety of pale, watery washes, paint in the basic shapes of the landscape or subject matter, using the side of the brush rather than the pointed tip.
- Create a foreground, middle ground and background.
- Use the tip of the brush to paint the details of the subject matter, but keep a loose sketchy style.
- Apply broken colour with the tip of the brush when necessary; for example, watery reflections.
- Use a deeper colour to suggest shadows where relevant; for example, under tree branches.







• It is common for young students to paint a sky at the top of their painting and to leave the area below it white. Encourage them to fill this white area by adding water with a brush and 'washing' the paint down until it meets the horizon line.













Warm-up activities for plein-air painting

The following activities are suggested as warm-ups to be done by students prior to painting outdoors. They have been designed to help students explore art elements and techniques used by Monet. These activities aim to develop confidence in working with loose applications of paint, using layering and broken-colour techniques, and working with either a range of complementary or harmonious colours rather than using black to darken colours.

1. Pattern activity

- Explore the painting by Claude Monet titled Field of yellow irises at Giverny, 1887
- http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/exhibitions/monets-garden/explore/ themes/the-view-from-a-train-discovery-of-giverny
- Examine patterns created by the direction of brushstrokes. Note patterns that differentiate
 the foreground, middle ground and background. Also note the size of brushstrokes (larger in
 the foreground, smaller in the background).









Use a variety of patterns and lines in varying directions to create a landscape scene. Referencing different visual resources, such as photographs of fields of flowers, photographs of landscapes or seascapes, or even reproductions of paintings by Monet, create either an abstracted pattern of the original image or a different interpretation of the subject matter. Choose between Progressos on watercolour paper (the rough surface encourages a broken-colour technique) or Progressos on coloured cover paper (coloured cover paper will create a more dynamic image).

Points to consider:

- Mixing complementary colours or harmonious colours in varying combinations when working on different sections.
- Applying marks/lines in different directions to accentuate different sections of the subject matter.
- Using a white Progresso to highlight pattern if needed.

2. Drawing from life - creating a garden scene

- Monet once said his garden at Giverny was his 'greatest masterpiece'. With this activity students can create
 their own garden masterpiece.
- Use cuttings from the garden and, if necessary, photographs of flowers and plants as the basis of an observational drawing using a black permanent marker. (Even though the French Impressionists did not generally use black in their art-making, this activity employs a black permanent marker rather than, for example, a pencil as it allows the image to be seen when it is covered later with tissue paper).



Points to consider:

- Draw the object from the angle it is seen, rather than what it might look like from another angle.
- Draw objects in front of one another when they appear that way such as leaves in front of other leaves, or leaves in front of stems.
- Once a garden scene has been created, use wallpaper paste and coloured tissue paper to collage over the top of the drawing. Colours may be chosen for specific areas; for example, darker colours in the background and lighter colours in the foreground.



• When the paste is dry, use Progresso pencils to apply the broken colour. This step can take some time, especially if luminosity and a shimmering effect are desired.



3. Cropped composition

- It is often thought that the innovative compositions of many French Impressionist paintings were inspired by photography, which was invented in the 1830s. The way views or images were 'framed' by a camera lens led to 'snapshot' views characterised by unusual viewpoints, informal and spontaneous arrangements and cropping of subject matter at the edges of an image.
 In paintings such as *Irises and malva*, 1917 and *Waterlilies and agapanthus* (1914–17) Monet often framed the image so that the plants the main subject are in the corner of the composition and only part of the plant is shown. This has resulted in an asymmetrical composition which appears more informal than if the whole subject was centred in the middle of the canvas.
- Monet's loose application of paint often appears very spontaneous, yet it is very calculated, measured and controlled. The painting tools and method of this painting activity will help students achieve a similar aesthetic.



- Look at a range of photographs of flowers that have cropped compositions, or give students a viewfinder so they can crop the composition themselves.
- Using A3 cartridge (or pale cover paper), Viponds paints and a flat sponge, start by mixing a range of colours for the plants. In *Irises* notice how Monet has used deep blue-greens for the stems of the plants which are not in the sunlight and lighter greens for the tips of the leaves which are in the sunlight.



Apply the paint freely in thick, gestural strokes from the bottom up. As the Viponds paint will dry quite
quickly, colours can be layered easily. Repeat until happy with the amount of foliage created.



- Apply a range of light blues (or chosen colours) to the background using the flat sponge as well as your fingers.
- Use a piece of twisted paper and dip this into the chosen flower colour. Carefully and lightly sponge the flowers into place with this twisted paper.



4. Atmospheric painting

• Monet's Roses, 1925–26 was completed in the year before the artist died. Monet spent his career capturing various atmospheric conditions in his paintings. He not only captured the light at certain times of the day or year, but also a distinctive mood. In Roses branches of profuse pink rose blooms are depicted against a pale blue sky. The loose brushstrokes create a soft blurring of forms in the painting, and romance and nostalgia seems to emanate from the canvas.



- Look at either photographs of flowers or reproductions of paintings of flowers by Monet for inspiration for an atmospheric painting of flowers.
- Place a small amount of quick-drying paint such as Viponds in a plastic container with a raised centre (such
 as those depicted here). This raised surface can be used to mix colours before applying the paint without
 contaminating the paint in the container.



• Use your fingers to mix the paint and to apply it directly to the watercolour paper. Use a rubbing technique to apply the paint. Begin with the main colour first and then the background, then the finishing colour for the flowers.



 Using their fingers rather than brushes encourages students to concentrate less on detail and more on the form or impression of the subject matter.





Japanese bridge reflection painting



Context

The Japanese-inspired bridge that Monet designed for his waterlily pond at Giverny was the subject matter for many of his paintings. Monet painted this bridge repeatedly in different seasons, in different weather conditions and at different times of the day. The reflection of the bridge appears in many of his paintings. Inspired by the bridges represented in Japanese woodblock prints, which were often covered with wisteria vines and surrounded by weeping willows, Monet planted wisteria and weeping willows in his own garden. *Waterlily pond, symphony in rose*,1900, shows the wisteria growing over the bridge. Monet never travelled to Japan, although a Japanese gardener did travel to Giverny to give Monet advice about designing the waterlily pond.

Materials

A3 cartridge paper
Small amount of coloured tissue paper and cover paper (for waterlilies and waterlily pads)
Dark acrylic paint
Watercolour pencils (or oil pastels)
Poster paints
Glue sticks

Equipment

Flat sponge brushes Medium-sized soft hair brushes suitable for washes Palettes Water pots

Other resources

Photographs of Japanese bridges and reflections. Reproductions of paintings by Monet of the Japanese bridge at Giverny.

Step 1. Explore and discuss paintings by Monet of the Japanese bridge at Giverny

• Explore and discuss paintings by Monet which feature his Japanese-inspired bridge, such as *Waterlily pond, symphony in rose*, 1900. Observe the way the bridge is reflected in the water below. List the colours that Monet has used to create light and dark areas. Describe what is in the foreground, middle ground and background of the painting. Note how the sunlight is seen lighting up the background and the foreground of the painting.

Step 2. Painting the bridge and printing a reflection

• Fold a sheet of A3 paper in half.

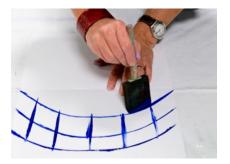




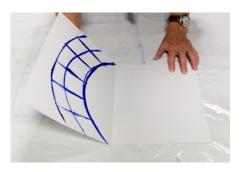
• Using some dark acrylic paint and a flat sponge brush, paint a simple outline of a Japanese-inspired bridge on the top section of the painting.



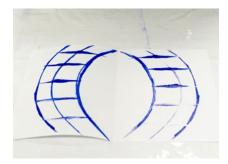




Fold the paper again, while the paint is still wet, to make a monoprint of the bridge on the bottom half of the paper and create a reflection.







Step 3. Painting the water

When your painting is dry, use poster paints to wash in the water.

Step 4. Finishing details

- When dry, collage waterlily pads and flowers using tissue and glue sticks.
- Oil pastels, paint and watercolour pencils can be used to add further layers of colour and details such as weeping willow branches, wisteria and reeds.





Waterlily collage



Context

At his home in Giverny, Monet created a large pond for growing aquatic plants, including waterlilies. The waterlily pond became the main subject of Monet's paintings in his later life. Monet's waterlily paintings often have no horizon line but reflect the light and colour of the sky.

Materials

Several pots of coloured paint (especially blues and purples)
Four sheets of A3 paper per student
Coloured pencils for writing names
HB pencils
Paper for practice drawing
Glue sticks

Equipment

Spoons, one per paint pot Foam rollers, one between two students Scissors

Other resources

Reproductions of Monet's waterlily paintings, in particular *Nymphéas*, 1903 Photographs of waterlilies and waterlily pads (leaves). Close-up photographs of water that show patterns of light and colour. Plastic sleeve for each student to store collage materials.

Note to teacher

- This activity will take several art lessons to complete.
- Always demonstrate each process/step. Demonstrating throughout the lessons creates better
 understanding. This is especially important with younger students. Demonstrate the first step then allow
 students to go and explore that step. They then return for the demonstration of the next step.

Ensure you have allowed space for drying a large number of paintings.

Step 1. Observe and discuss paintings of waterlilies by Monet

Observe and discuss Monet's waterlily paintings and his use of a bird's-eye view with no horizon line. Observe and discuss the shapes and tones of colour found in close-up photographs of water.

Step 2. Painting the pond water for the background of the collage

Choose a paint colour for the pond water to either harmonise or contrast with the colour of the waterlily flowers. Using a spoon and two colours of paint (for example, white and purple), place small amounts of paint all over the paper. The paper should be covered with little blobs once this step is completed.

Carefully roll once or twice with a foam roller over the paper to join the blobs together so all the white areas of the paper are covered.





Step 3. Painting the paper for the waterlilies

Repeat the steps above to make three further paintings, as outlined below, changing the colours of the paint accordingly for each (more colours can be used on these paintings).

Waterlily pads 1 (lighter version)









Waterlily pads 2 (darker version)







Waterlily flowers
Clockwise from top left (around six images on two tiles)









At the end of this process, four paintings per student will have been completed. Allow these to dry.



Step 4. Collage method for waterlilies

Cut the waterlily flower painting and the waterlily pad paintings 1 and 2 (completed previously) into four pieces each.



Place the previously painted pond water painting on the table and place four pieces of the waterlily pads painting no. 1 onto this sheet of paper.

Look at photographs of waterlily pads for inspiration. Using the practice paper, draw a large waterlily pad. Next, draw a waterlily pad onto the back of the four cut-up sheets of lily pad painting no. 1. Cut these out and arrange onto the pond water painting. Do not stick down, just arrange.



Next, draw a lily pad onto the back of the four cut-up sheets of lily pad painting no. 2. Cut these out and arrange onto the pond water painting. Do not stick down, just arrange. Look at the photographs of waterlily flowers for inspiration. Using the practice paper, draw the outer shape of a large waterlily flower.



Next, practice drawing three petals of the waterlily flower. Next, practice drawing two individual petals of the waterlily flower (teachers to demonstrate first). Once completed, draw these shapes onto the back of the four cut-up sheets of waterlily flower paintings.



Cut these out and arrange onto the pond water painting.





Once happy with the arrangement, paste into place using glue sticks.

Related projects
Use this method to create collages of other subjects:











Houses of Parliament painting and pastel

Context

Claude Monet went to London several times in his life. On his first visit he travelled there with his artist friend Camille Pissarro. They went to art galleries together and saw works by J M W Turner (1775–1851) and John Constable (1776–1837). Monet and Pissarro were particularly interested in and inspired by the atmospheric and misty landscapes of these two artists, their loose brushwork and everyday subject matter.

Monet painted approximately one hundred paintings of various sites along the River Thames while in London. He painted some subjects, such as the Houses of Parliament, repeatedly, at different times of the day and in different types of weather. During his visits pollution from the factories that had proliferated as a result of the Industrial Revolution created a dramatic visual effect around the city's historic buildings. Smoke and fumes from the factories combined with London's fog shrouded buildings such as the Houses of Parliament, creating a ghostly, mystical quality. This not only intrigued Monet but it also interested many tourists who flocked to London to see this new visual phenomenon.

Materials

Oil pastels
Poster paints
A4 paper for practice drawing
A3 cartridge paper
Black paint

Equipment

Flat sponge brushes Palettes Water pots

Other resources

Visual resources/photocopies of grand buildings that have interesting shapes; such as churches, mosques and castles. The detail on the building is less important than the silhouette.

Reproductions of paintings by Monet that show buildings reflected in water, including *The Houses of Parliament, reflections on the Thames*, 1905 http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/whats-on/exhibitions/monets-garden/explore/themes/invention-of-a-landscape-the-seine-valley.

Photographs of water surfaces showing reflections and patterns of light and colour.

Note to teacher

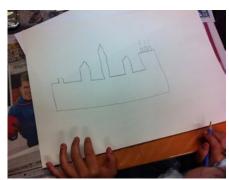
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- Always demonstrate each process/step. Demonstrating throughout the lessons creates better
 understanding. This is especially important with younger students. Demonstrate the first step then allow
 students to go and explore that step. They then return for the demonstration of the next step.

Step 1. Drawing the buildings

• Observe the shapes and forms of different buildings in the visual resources. On a piece of A4 drawing paper, design and draw the outline of a new building inspired by the shapes and forms observed. Combine different features of buildings such as peaks, points and bold architectural features to creating a new silhouette.







Step 2. Painting the buildings and printing a reflection

- Next, fold an A3 sheet of cartridge paper in half horizontally then unfold it. Place the drawing of the building design above this sheet of paper as a reference for painting.
- Using black paint and a flat sponge brush, place a small amount on the edge of the flat sponge and paint/draw the outline of the building shape onto the top section of the folded A3 cartridge paper. The design does not have to be copied exactly. Fill in this outline with black paint to create a silhouette of the building design.







• Fold the paper again to create a monoprint of the image. The printed image will become the reflection of the building in the finished work of art. Don't worry if the print hasn't printed exactly – in fact, it is better if the printed image is quite faint as this effect looks more like a reflection on water (i.e., ripples in the water distorting the actual mirror image).





Allow to fully dry before attempting the next step.

Step 3. Painting the background and foreground

• Choose one or two colours of the poster paints and wash in the background and foreground area.







(Alternatively, the background could be done prior to painting the building).

Step 4. Adding pastel to create coloured reflections

- Observe and discuss Monet's use of broken colour in paintings such as Vétheuil, 1879. Monet was intrigued by how the sunlight changed the colour of stone buildings at different times of the day and different times of the year. It is thought that Monet painted this scene from his floating studio boat on the River Seine. Notice how Monet has used a broken-colour technique for the water in the foreground and has blended colours differently in the background and the sky.
- Before adding pastel to create the reflections on the final work of art, warm up by practicing different effects with the oil pastels on a separate sheet of paper or card. Observe reflections and patterns of light and colour on water in paintings by Monet and in photographs of water. Using oil pastels and a limited range of colours, practice using a broken-colour technique to create the effect of reflected light and colour on water. Try applying different colours in short, sharp, controlled marks in groups of colours; for example, harmonious colours or complementary colours.



• For the foreground area in the final work, choose a range of oil pastel colours (such as blues, oranges, white and pinks) and use the broken-colour technique to create the water reflection – similar to the effect that Monet used in *Vétheuil*. Note: Use the pointed end of the pastels to create the broken colour.







• Use the side of the pastel to create this atmospheric effect in the sky area. Note: If the pastels are smudged over the black silhouette, it will give the effect of fog moving or sitting across the buildings.



Student examples





Related projects
Train on bridge reflection



Landscape reflection





Still-life flower painting





Context

It isn't always possible to work outside like Monet and the French Impressionists did, so a large vase of flowers and/or plants is a great alternative.

Materials

Acrylic paints A2 paper Cotton buds

Equipment

Flat palette Foam rollers, two between two students Flat sponge brushes Round sponges

Other resources

Vase of flowers for each table

Step 1. Painting the background

- On a flat palette, pre-mix two separate colours for the background use white to tone them down.
- Using a foam roller, roll one of the colours onto half of the paper. Use another roller to roll the other colour
 onto the other half of the paper. Touches of the alternative colour can be rubbed into the background to give
 a more painterly effect.





Step 2. Painting the flowers

- On another flat palette, prepare paint for flowers (always have lots of white on hand to tone down colours when needed).
- Apply a small amount of paint to a flat sponge brush and paint in stems of flowers. Use a variety
 of sponges and cotton buds to create flowers and foliage.





Step 3. Painting the vase

• Use a clean flat brush to paint the vase. Note: If the vase is painted last, it encourages a freer, more painterly approach to the flowers and foliage.





Finished examples



























Through the porthole collage



Context

Monet loved to visit the Normandy coast at various times of the year, but particularly in winter. He captured the sea in its many forms, be it a calm, tranquil sparkling sea, glistening with sunlight, or a rough, wild sea with raging waves, such as that in his painting *Rough weather at Étretat*, 1883 http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/4190.

Materials

Square card (cut to create a circular frame)

Backing card (white or coloured, the same size as the square card for the collage base)

HB pencils

Varying shades of tissue paper (light and dark blue, purple, orange, yellow, white, red and pink) Glue sticks or wallpaper paste

Equipment

Scissors (for trimming any loose tissue paper)

Other resources

Reproductions of landscapes and seascapes including paintings by Monet of the river and coast such as *Vétheuil*, 1879, and *Rough weather at Étretat*.

Step 1. Explore and discuss landscapes and seascapes

- Explore and discuss reproductions of landscapes which feature a horizon line, ideally seascapes and riverscapes. Discuss the difference in the colour of the sky and the water. Note that Monet used small brushstrokes of differing colours to depict the watery foreground in *Vétheuil*. It is thought that Monet painted this work from his studio boat.
- Think imaginatively as though on a boat at sea, looking out through a porthole window. Imagine you can only see sea and sky. Think about the type of seascape that you would like to create and the colours you would use to create this seascape.

Step 2. Preparing the collage base

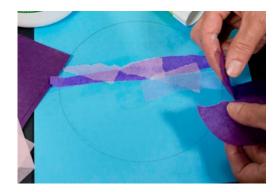
- Place the circle frame over the backing card and draw a circle onto the backing card using a pencil.
- Draw a line across the backing card to create a horizon line.



Step 3. Creating the water and sky with tissue paper collage

- Choose coloured tissue paper appropriate to the type of sea to be represented. For example, a calm sea at sunset in summer might have colours such as orange, purple, yellow and pink mixed with blue and white.
- Tear these tissue papers into small pieces.
- Take time to try different arrangements of colours.





• Use glue sticks or paste to stick and layer the tissue paper. Layering the tissue achieves the appearance of water.



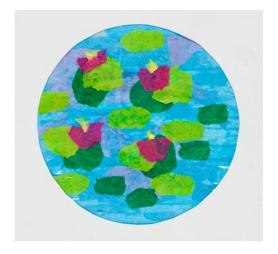


• Once the background is completely covered, the frame can be glued on. It is important to keep the frame clean – students may need assistance with this step, depending on their age.





Related projects



Layered waterlily collage



Tissue paper collage with paint