

***Drawing with Dirt***  
*Using Alabama soils to create art*

**Lesson Designer:** Tara Sartorius

**Grade Level:** 2-12

**Enduring Understanding:**

Creativity and innovative thinking are essential life skills that can be developed.

**Specific understandings to this lesson:**

The earth itself is full of colorful supplies that cost nothing.

Creativity does not require specialized materials.

**Essential Question:**

How does making art attune people to their surroundings?

**Specific to this lesson:**

How can we depict a landscape using the materials of the landscape itself?



**Arts Discipline Standards: Visual Arts**

**Anchor Standard 2:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work. Artists and designers experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and artmaking approaches.

**Anchor Standard 10:** Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

**Grade 2: Creating**

5. Create an artwork using found and/or recycled objects.
6. Integrate art vocabulary while planning and creating art.
  - a. Elements of art: line, shape, neutral colors, value, texture.
  - b. Picture compositions: overlapping, background, horizontal, vertical orientation.
  - c. Colors in the color wheel: primary, secondary, warm and cool.

**Non-Arts Discipline Standards:**

**Science:** erosion, plants, soil, water

**Science Standard 13, Grade 4:** Plan and carry out investigations to examine properties of soils and soil types

**Science Standard 10, Grades 9-12:** Construct an explanation from evidence for the processes that generate the transformation of rocks in Earth's crust, including chemical composition of minerals and characteristics of sedimentary, igneous, and metamorphic rocks.

**Requirements: Materials and Supplies:**

- A minimum of three different colors of soil
- Metal tablespoon from your kitchen
- 5 plastic condiment containers with lids, 2 oz. size
- 3 pieces of thick paper (cardstock, watercolor or heavier) 4" x 5.5"
- Thin scrap paper, 8.5" x 11", pre-creased in middle, open under the thick paper
- HB Pencil
- White glue
- Popsicle stick to spread glue
- Acrylic or watercolor paints: red, yellow, blue, black, and white
- Rinsing water in a used 32 oz. yogurt or cottage cheese container
- Paper napkin or towel for blotting

**Requirements: Prerequisite Knowledge – Arts:**

Art Vocabulary: horizontal, vertical, texture, landscape, unity, composition, tint, shade, primary colors, secondary colors, complementary colors

Understanding of line and shape

**Requirements: Prerequisite Knowledge – Non-Arts:**

**Parent material** – Various forms of rocks: igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic

**Soil** - Layer of unconsolidated material found at the Earth's surface that has been influenced by the soil forming factors: climate, relief, parent material, time, and organisms. Soil normally consists of weathered mineral particles, dead and living organic matter, air space between particles, and the moist soil solution.

**Procedures: Introductory Activity:**

Discuss the power of water and weather to erode and break down parent material into smaller and smaller particles until they become the size for fine sand and dirt. Also discuss the reasons different soils have different colors. Demonstrate and paint along to create earth tones before painting with actual dirt.

**Procedures: Sequence of Activities:****Part 1: Mixing primary and secondary colors to create earth tones**

1. Open watercolor set and prime the 3 primary colors (yellow, red, and blue) and the 3 secondary colors (orange, violet, and green)
2. In the lid, create 3 "puddles" of the primary colors. Add the secondary colors to those puddles in varying amounts to make earth tones. Apply sample colors to different parts of one 4" x 5.5" paper. Mix as many different earth tones as possible.
3. Save the excess colors you mixed to use in part 2.



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## **Part 2: Drawing with Dirt and earth tones**

1. In three of your plastic 2 oz containers, collect 3 samples of different colored soils from your neighborhood or other areas around your community. Use your tablespoon to “dig” your earth samples.
2. Place paper in a horizontal direction and use the pencil to draw two curvy lines from side to side, dividing the space into three spaces, not necessarily evenly sized. Make the lines curved or bent to give a feeling of hills or mountains.
3. Decide which sections your soils will fill. Fill one section by squeezing out lines and then spreading glue with the paintbrush. Dip your paint brush in water to thin the glue and help it spread evenly. RINSE the paintbrush right away!
4. Begin with one color and aim for decent coverage by tapping out the soil on top of the glue. Pour the excess soil onto your 8.5” x 11” paper and then return it to the 2 oz. container using the crease as a funnel.
5. In the other two sections of the paper, use the glue in different ways, and leave some open spaces to fill in later with other soil or with paint.
6. If painting, try mixing and matching your soils, and create some new earth tones (mix complementary colors) as well.
7. Use the other two 2oz. containers to mix some new soil colors.
8. You may need to let your piece dry overnight before adding new colors of soil or paint.
9. Keep with earth tones. Create as much variety as possible, keeping in mind the unity of your overall composition.

### **Culminating Activity: Performance Task:**

Create a new, larger piece using earth and pre-mixed earth tones in paint, depicting a landscape (or any other image) that is familiar to you in real life.

### **Culminating Activity: Evaluation:**

Questions to discuss:

1. How might the colors of different people’s soil differ (or how might they be similar) in various places of Alabama?
2. How did the paint and the soil complement each other on your art?
3. Try to mix paint colors to match your soil samples. Did you find yourself mixing colors you didn’t use? What images, other than a landscape, might you create?
4. Look at the work of Alabama artists, Jimmy Lee Sudduth and Dick Jemison, to see how they mixed soils and paint to make their art. How are they similar? How are they different?



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