

Leaf Prints

Gel plate printing with acrylics

Lesson Designer: BeeLee Tullos

Grade Level: 2-12

Enduring Understanding:

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

Essential Question:

How can artists use natural materials, such as plants, to create multiple works of art?

Arts Discipline Standards: Visual Arts

Anchor Standard 2: Organize & develop artistic ideas & work.

Artists experiment with forms, structures, materials, concepts, media, and artmaking approaches.

Grade 3: Creating 2: Demonstrate skills using available resources & tools to investigate personal ideas through the artmaking process.

Grade 3: Creating 4: Demonstrate an understanding of the safe & proficient use of materials, tools, equipment, and studio space.

Non-Arts Discipline Standards: Science

Science 3.7.2: Identify types of evidence that demonstrates that plants have inherited traits.

3.7.3: Describe similarities among various plants

3.7.4: Compare traits of various plants

Requirements: Materials and Supplies:

- Assortment of pliable leaves
- Gel plate
- Tubes of acrylic paint
- Acrylic or watercolor brush
- Soft rubber brayer
- Heavy weight white paper cut to fit the gel plate
- Sheets of transparency film, plexiglass, or Styrofoam 9" X 12" tray
- Blue tape
- Sheets of copy paper
- Wipes or paper towels



Requirements: Prerequisite Knowledge - Arts:

Identify primary & secondary colors.

Introduce the basic techniques of relief printing.

Arts Vocabulary addressed: relief printmaking, monoprint, brayer, gel plate, registering a print, primary & secondary colors, texture

Requirements: Prerequisite Knowledge - Non-Arts:

Discuss different types of plant and tree leaves in terms of shape, size, color, and pattern of veins.

Procedures: Introductory Activity:

Discuss relief printmaking and how it is different from a drawing or painting. Point out that students probably made their first print when they were very young by dipping their fingers in something like ketchup or sauce and making a fingerprint on the table. Introduce printmaking terms.

Look at the different characteristics of various leaves: shape, color, size, pattern of veins.

Procedures: Sequence of Activities:**Before you begin printing - Prepare the printing area:**

- Make a tape border for the outside edge of the paper.
- Draw an outline of the gel plate in the middle of the paper.
- Put the transparency over the paper outline.
- Use a second transparency sheet or Styrofoam tray for rolling out the paint.
- Tear sheets of paper in half: 6" X 9" or 5 1/2" X 8 1/2".

One Color Leaf Print: Print Using one Dark Color

1. Place the gel plate on top of the transparency film in the space outlined.
2. Put several small globs of dark colored paint on the other sheet of film. A mixture of black and another color may also be used for this print.
3. Use the brayer to smooth out the paint.
4. Apply the paint evenly to the gel plate.
5. Place leaves vein side down on top of the gel plate.
6. Place a sheet of paper on top of the gel plate. Use the masking tape guide to put the paper in the correct place. With your hand - rub the paper to transfer the paint to the paper. Tape the top of the paper with a strip of masking tape.
7. Pull back the paper.
8. Remove the leaf or leaves. The impression of the veins will be left on the gel plate.
9. Pull the paper back onto the gel plate.
10. Rub the paper to transfer the impression to the paper.
11. Pull back the paper.
12. Remove the masking tape. Let the print dry.



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Two-color Print:

Part 1: Begin Printing the Light Color

1. Place the gel plate on top of the transparency film in the space outlined.
2. Put several small globs of light-colored paint on the other sheet of film to the left of the gel plate.
3. Use the brayer to smooth out the paint.
4. Apply the paint evenly to the gel plate.
5. Place a sheet of paper on top of the gel plate. Use the masking tape guide to put the paper in the correct place. With your hand - rub the paper to transfer the paint to the paper. Tape the top down using masking tape.
6. Pull back the paper-like flap attached at the top.
7. Clean your brayer on the copy sheet to remove the paint color.
8. Use a wipe to clean the gel plate.

Part 2: Print the Darker Color

- Place small blobs of a darker color paint on the transparency. Smooth the paint using the brayer. Put an even layer of paint on the gel plate.
- Add leaves - vein side down to the gel plate. Pull over the paper and rub. Rub especially hard over the leaves to transfer the paint to the bottom of the leaves.
- Pull back the paper. You will have silhouettes of the leaves outlined on your paper.
- Remove the leaves. Put the paper back onto the gel plate and rub one more time. This transfers the designs of the veins to your paper.
- Sign your dry prints, using a pencil. Write the title in script on the white border - in the middle right up close to the print. You may put the title in quotes.
- On the left side write M/P (monoprint) and on the right side sign your name.

Culminating Activity: Performance Task:

Make another monoprint. Repeat: changing colors and leaves. Attach your favorite print to the front of your accordion book.

Culminating Activity: Evaluation:

The completed print will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Clarity of the leaf image
- Smooth surface of the paint. Overly thick or “gloppy” paint does not make a good print.
- Contrast between leaf image and background color.

