

The Twin Sisters: Landscape Paintings

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TOPICS: Watercolour painting; Pattern transfer; Layering; Depicting a landscape

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts **GRADE(S):** 4-7

UNIT DURATION: 4 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK: Roy Henry Vickers is a world-renowned printmaker, painter, carver, author born in 1946 in Greenville, BC. His father was a fisherman with half-Tsimshian, half-Heiltsuk ancestry; his mother, a teacher of British heritage. In 1973 Roy began studying traditional Native art at the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art in Ksan, BC. Influenced by his mixed heritage, he developed a unique artistic style, which is immediately identifiable through its clean lines, vivid colours, and natural themes drawn from the rugged beauty of BC's West Coast.

The Twin Sisters depicts a moody blend of stylized landscape with ghosts of Northwest coast First Nations imagery emanating subtly from the background. Twin Sisters refers to a Coast Salish legend extolling the virtues of peace among nations and has long been a favourite story of Vickers. The Twin Sisters have become more commonly known as the "Lions", whose mountainous ridges rise above Capilano Lake in North Vancouver.

In this lesson sequence students will explore how to create a monochromatic landscape using watercolour and ink. Students will experiment with a variety of techniques including watercolour washes and pattern transfers. Students will learn how to break up compositional space, create a landscape in perspective, and use layering in their art.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge, and perspectives. (Arts Education 4)
- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities. (Arts Education 4)



Roy Henry Vickers, *The Twin Sisters*, 2008, 9 colour serigraph print, 19 x 28 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Explore identity, place, culture, and belonging through arts experiences
- Intentionally select artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to express meaning in their work

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Elements of visual art; principles of design
- Traditional and contemporary Aboriginal arts and arts-making processes

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- What painting techniques can be used to convey depth and space in a landscape?

FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital image of *The Twin Sisters* by Roy Henry Vickers
- digital projector / laptop
- 11.5"x15" pre-cut thick white paper (i.e. cardstock or opaque vellum) (1 per student)
- pencils
- premixed tempera paint
- small sticks (1 per student)
- watercolour paint
- brushes
- water pots
- black ink
- styrofoam or printing foam
- *The Two Sisters* by E. Pauline Johnson (2016, Waterlea Books)

VOCABULARY:

monochromatic, wash (in painting), perspective, landscape, abstraction, horizon line, tonal value, repetition, stamping, foreground, middle ground, background, perspective, atmospheric perspective

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- <https://royhenryvickers.com>
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>

ADAPTATIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Students with hand function difficulties may need thick handled brushes and sticks.

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro, sketching, planning):

- Display Vickers' print *The Twin Sisters* and read the book *The Two Sisters* by E. Pauline Johnson. Share information about Roy Henry Vickers and his artwork.
- Pose the following discussion questions: Where is the foreground, middle ground, and background in this landscape? Describe the textures that the artist has included in this print. Describe the colours the artist has included in this print. Why might the artist have chosen to use these particular colours?
- Discuss with the students foreground, middle ground, and background in landscape. Talk about how the sections' scale, tonal values, and colours change as they recede.
- In landscape painting, a general rule is to paint the background first, then the middle ground and finally the foreground.
 - The background colours are lighter and in cooler hues (blue-gray).

-The middle ground is darker than the background colours, but lighter than the foreground colours.

-The foreground is the darkest section of the composition (point of emphasis) and is painted in warmer hues (green).

- To plan a composition, students will use a pencil to divide the sheet horizontally into 3-5 sections, drawing light horizontal lines (almost invisible to the eye). Note that the sections could vary in scale. Indicate that the horizon line would be the first line from the bottom of the sheet.
- To create the hills and the mountains, students will break the middle section(s) into 2-3 variable hills. They will use organic lines with steep or gradual slopes. In between the hills in the top third section, students will draw a mountain hill that represents the twin sisters.

LESSON #2 (watercolour painting):

- Students will start painting from the background to the foreground: first the sky, then the mountain, and finally the hills and water. For this step, students will create a chromatic gray colour and apply it in washes. They will add 5-10 drops of water in a painting palette as well as a drop of a colour of their choice (i.e. blue, green, brown, or purple), along with a drop of black (black should be the dominating colour in the palette).
- Note: Instead of creating a chromatic colour with a dropper, students could instead use premixed blue-gray/ black-blue-green tempera paint and apply it in light washes.

• Watercolour application:

From the top to the bottom of the composition, each section will be painted darker. It is a good idea to start painting from the sky (top) to the bottom (water), gradually adding pigments to the premixed wash using a dropper.

-The sky (part of the background): to create an illusion of perspective, students will start the wash from the top edge of the paper, down to the mountain line, with a gradual dark to light tonal value.

-The Twin Sisters' Mountain (part of the background): Students will start the wash from the bottom of the mountain to the top (dark to light) to represent the snow on the mountaintops.

-The Top hill (part of the middle ground): Students will apply the wash from the top to the bottom (dark to light) with a darker hue. Advise them to add a bit of black to the wash.

-The water (part of the foreground): Student will use the same wash to paint the water with an even application.

-The middle hill (part of the middle ground): Students will apply the wash from the top to the bottom (dark to light) with

a darker hue in comparison to the top hill. Advise students to add more colour pigment to the wash.

-The lower Hill (part of the foreground): Students will add more colour pigments to their wash and apply an even wash onto this hill.

LESSON #3 (adding lines with ink):

- Once the paint is completely dry, students will use a stick and ink to apply uneven, expressive lines on the outline of the hills and the mountain.
- Provide a demo of line drawings with ink and stick. Explain how by moving and twisting the stick, students could create expressive lines. Have students practice with ink and stick on a spare piece of paper.
- Remind students that as the lines recede, they become narrower.
- Students may use a stick and ink to draw tree branches and bushes onto the piece (see Roy Henry Vickers' print for inspiration).

LESSON #4 (adding texture):

- Once the ink is dry, students will choose a design motif/symbol and stamp it onto a relevant part of the composition (i.e. fish stamp onto the water) using the cut-out Styrofoam or printing foam and premixed tempera paint.
- Provide a demo of stamping with Styrofoam.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

At the end of Lesson #2 pose the following reflection question: What are some strategies that you can use to show mountains that are close up and far away in a painting?

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

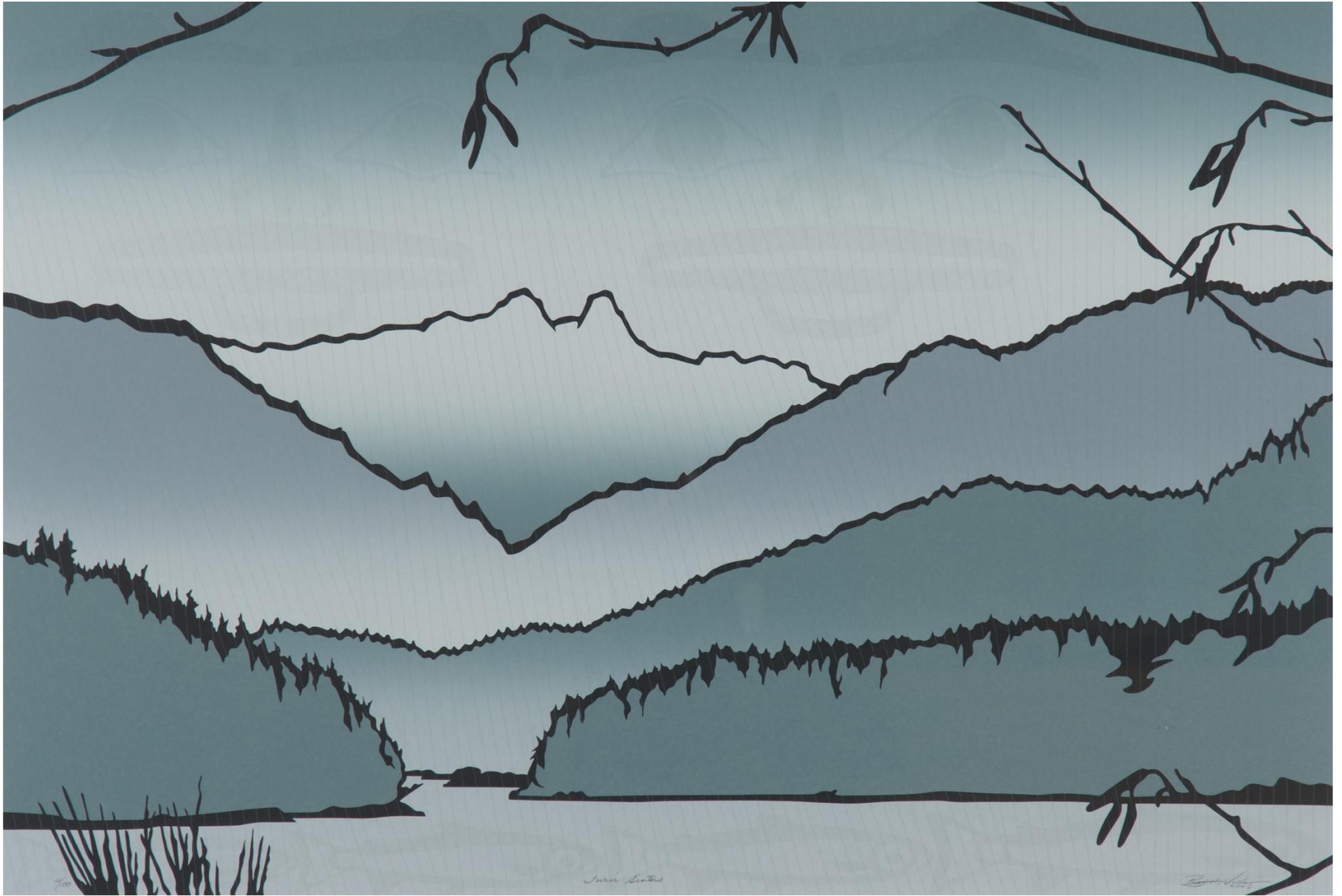
After students complete their collages pose the following reflection questions: How did you use layering to develop your paintings? How did you use texture and pattern to develop your paintings? What is a new artmaking strategy that you have learned in this process?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:

Connected to their investigation of Vickers' print and *The Two Sisters* story, the class may continue to learn about the cultures and stories of Coast Salish peoples including the Squamish and Tseil-Waututh.



Teacher Sample



Roy Henry Vickers, *The Twin Sisters*, 2008, 9 colour serigraph print, 19 x 28 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.