

# A WALK IN THE WOODS

## Activities



Vivienne Morgan, Bemidji, Minnesota. *Seeing Woods for Trees*, 2011, Archival pigment print, detail.



A Walk in the Woods

Activity One: WHAT'S THIS?



Alex Soth  
Minneapolis, Minnesota  
*Holt Cemetery, New Orleans,  
Louisiana, 2002*  
Chromogenic Print  
16 x 20 inches



Guillermo Srodek-Hart  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
*Armadillo Shells, 2006*  
Archival Pigment Print  
39 x 49 inches



## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity One: WHAT'S THIS?

#### At the Exhibit:

When we see photographs we usually see what we call snapshots, or camera pictures of people or things we want to remember. When we see paintings, we also see images of what the artist may have wanted to remember, but also of a story or thought he or she would like us to understand. An artist takes time to get a message across, in this case, without using words.

It is important that we, as viewers, take time to look carefully at any piece of art. You can be surprised at how much information you can find. It is sometimes like a puzzle!

Look closely at the two pictures by Alec Soth, *Holt Cemetery, Louisiana* and Guillermo Srodek-Hart, *Armadillo Shells*. In both of these images the artists used the same media (materials). After comparing the two pictures, begin a discussion by asking yourself or pointing out the difference between a photograph and a painting.

- Do you think these are paintings?

For instance, looking closely, check for some texture that may look like brush strokes. Point these out. Are there raised parts of the picture that look like layers of paint. Where?

Are there some things in the image that could be real? Or can you find things that look as if they were made by an artist who has a great imagination? Point those out.

If you find these things, chances are, it is not a painting.

- What makes you think they are photographs?

Do photographs have real texture or raised surfaces as paintings might have? Is it possible to paint as much detail as you see here? Could they be either a photograph or a painting? Explain why you think so.

- Pick one of the pictures. Explain what is happening in the picture.

Why is the tree important in each piece, if it is? What purpose does the tree have in the picture? For instance, why is there a graveyard in Alec Soth's piece and why are there armadillo shells in Guillermo Srodek-Hart's picture?

Soth and Srodek-Hart are photographers and these are types of photographs.

- Practice 1: Guess what is happening here. There are really no right or wrong answers. Just have fun guessing, which is the first step to understanding.
- Look carefully at both of the pictures
- What is happening in each of these? Point out the part of the picture that makes you think what is happening.
- What other clues tell you something about this picture. Point these out.
- What do you think the photographer was trying to say?

**Explanation:** In Alec Soth's piece one might think that the tree provides shade for the graves, or one might also think that the tree is very old, as are the graves. This tree has moss hanging on it, which is typical of trees in the southern United States. It is a photograph taken near or at a prison graveyard.

In Guillermo Srodek-Hart's image the armadillo shells are hanging from the trees. If the wind is blowing enough to rattle the shells, or if something touches them, wild animals will be scared away and people working or camping beneath these trees will be warned. This tree is important as it holds the shells and has just the right branches on which to hang them.

#### After your visit:

Choose two more photographs from a magazine or other source that are quite different from each other, such as city and country, night and day, or happy and sad. Engage in a discussion about what is happening and point out clues that tell you that. How are the two pictures the same and how are they different?

## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Two: WHAT IS A PRINT?



John Snyder  
Decorah, Iowa  
*Horse*  
Woodcut  
31 x 20 inches

A print is a picture that is also called a multiple because usually more than one of the same image is made. Artists make more than one for many of reasons. An example might be a poster, a newspaper, or something that the artist wants to be seen in lots of places. Other reasons are that if there are more than one print of the same picture, then the artist might sell or give more, instead of having only one copy.

Types of prints are: lithographs, etchings, intaglio (pronounced in-tol-e-o), silk-screen also called serigraphy, and woodcuts/linoleum cuts also called relief printing. There is one other kind of print called a monoprint, which means one print.

Look at John Snyder's print of a horse head.

- Do you see any paintbrush-like strokes? What do you see? Is the image made up of lots of little marks, or big flat surfaces? How many colors does the artist use? Why do you think Snyder did not have a background? Can you guess how this image was made?

This is a woodcut. That means the artist took a flat piece of wood and used sharp tools to carve out all the areas that are not black. Then he rolled ink on the surface of the wood with something like a rolling pin, which would only cover the parts that were NOT carved. The ink would not go into the carved lines. A piece of paper is put on top of this face down. The back of the paper is rubbed or pressed until most of the ink is transferred to the paper. When the paper is lifted off the wood you will have a print, the reverse of what the artist carved.

## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Two: WHAT IS A PRINT?

#### After your visit:

To understand the transfer that takes place in a print process, and because sharp carving tools are not safe for smaller children, we can make a monoprint instead. Many students have already printed with foam or potato prints, but this process is a little more involved. It stands up to several printings and provides much better prints.

#### Materials for a Monoprint

- Sheets of mylar (thick plastic) or pieces of plexiglass at least 6 x 6 inches or larger.
- Printing inks, tempera paints or acrylic paints
- Rags or paper towels to clean mylar or plexiglass plates
- A good, not too porous paper such as sulfide student drawing paper. Construction paper and manila paper do not work well as they flake and peel.
- Terrycloth towels (lots)
- Pencils (optional)
- Soaking tray, shallow pan or something with sides larger than the paper.
- Small to medium paint brushes

#### Procedure Two only

#### Procedure One:

Have children lightly draw (or skip the drawing part altogether) and have them paint a picture on the plate. IT IS IMPORTANT TO LET THEM KNOW THEIR IMAGE WILL PRINT BACKWARD OR OPPOSITE OF THEIR DRAWING, SO IF THEY USE WORDS THEY MUST WRITE THEM BACKWARD.

Place a piece of paper firmly on the drawing that is on the plate, being careful not to move it. At first gently press it down all over, then put pressure on it to rub the drawing off of the plate onto the paper. Too much rubbing will smear the picture, which actually can be a desired effect for some.

Slowly peel a corner off, securing the rest of the print down; peek to see if the image has transferred. If so, slowly peel the paper off of the plate. You have a monoprint. Set it aside to totally dry.

If there is time, or if the print was not what the child wanted, wash off the plate with water, dry it completely and make another one.

NOTE: This will look different from the original drawing due to smearing, so demonstrating in advance is suggested so that children won't be upset with the changes in the final product. The print can be altered after it is dry simply by making changes on the paper itself, which is referred to as "hand tinting."

#### Procedure Two:

The instructor should try this option beforehand to make sure it works with the paper and paint or ink that you are using.

Try the above, only this time let the paint or ink dry completely on the plate.  
Soak the paper in a tray for a very short time (1-3 minutes).

Pull the paper out of the soaking tray by the corner and drain as much excess water as you can.

Lay the wet paper on a terrycloth towel and, using a rolling pin, roll out even more moisture.

Print as you did in Procedure One. Paper will be more fragile as you are printing, but usually this method brings colors out more clearly. Dry print overnight.



A Walk in the Woods

Activity Three: WHAT COULD THE ARTIST BE THINKING?



Adan Kemp  
Grand Forks, North Dakota  
*View from Lincoln Park Boat Ramp*  
Mixed Media  
31 x 40 inches



Nancy Frieze  
Cranston, Rhode Island  
*Sky That Soars*  
Monoprint and gouache  
18 x 24 inches

## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Three: WHAT COULD THE ARTIST BE THINKING?

#### At the Exhibit:

Artists, writers and musicians make art for many reasons. A number of artists make art that is a picture of a certain place. For instance, *View from Lincoln Park Boat Ramp* by Adam Kemp is about a specific place. Adam often begins his paintings outdoors at the site he is painting. This is called plein aire painting. Mr. Kemp paints landscapes, which means he paints scenes from outdoors, country and city.

Nancy Friese also has made a gouache painting/monoprint of a landscape containing a cottonwood tree that might remind you of a place or something you have seen.

Other artists might give us a feeling of a memory of a special place. These may be abstract artworks. Abstract means it is something that might suggest or remind you of something, but is not actually a picture or sculpture of it. Some of the African work in this exhibit might remind you of a face, a mask, or the patterns might remind you of a pattern on a jacket that you own.

Take a look at Adam Kemp's and Nancy Friese's paintings. Choose one and ask yourself, or discuss with others some of these things.

- What is happening in this picture?
- What things show me that? (point them out)
- What feeling does this give me?
- What things in the picture make me say that? Color? Images?
- If I were going to paint this place, or another one, what would it be?
- What feelings would I try to get across? Fear, happiness, peace or something else?
- What things would I do in my painting to make those feelings happen to others who look at it?



## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Four: ABSTRACT, STYLIZED, AND AWESOME

So many things that we use every day are made from plastic or metal, but you can find many things made from wood as well. In our distant past, and even now, people in some parts of the world, Africa for instance, make masks and items from what they find around them – in this case wood. This exhibit has a lot of wood sculptures from many different cultures, some old and some contemporary or newer. Some of the older pieces were actually used for different purposes such as to hold things, and others were used for ceremonial purposes, such as the masks. You will find pieces made of wood in this exhibit that represent both kinds of uses.

Most of these pieces are abstracted or stylized.

An abstract image is usually one that begins when an artist has a realistic image in mind but wants to change it so that it gives us the impression of the real image, though it is not always an exact copy. Sometimes when someone abstracts something it allows us to be reminded of more things, of feelings or emotions.

A stylized image is one that everyone will understand and that usually represents one thing or idea. For instance, no matter how many different pictures of hearts you may see, most people know that a heart symbol stands for love. With the African sculptures in this exhibit the chicken sculpture has the beak and topknot of a chicken, but it represents different ways in which chickens look. However, when we look at it, we all know it is not a buffalo, but a chicken!



Unknown Artist  
Africa  
*Untitled*  
Carved Wood  
34 x 12 x 15 inches



## A Walk in the Woods

### Cont. Activity Four: ABSTRACT, STYLIZED, AND AWESOME

#### At the Exhibit:

#### Practice 1: Discussion and Good Guesses

Look at the dish-shaped wood sculpture.  
Compare that to the group of long poles with round, flat ends on them.

- What do you think of these sculptures?
- How do you think they are used?
- Are they tools, toys, or just things to look at?
- Where do they come from?
- What are they made from?
- What do they remind you of?  
(Remember: all answers are correct.)
- If they are to be used, how would you use them?



Unknown Artist  
Africa  
*Wari Game Board*  
Carved Wood  
9 x 34 x 12 inches

#### After your visit:

#### Practice 2: Making Papier Mâché Masks with Gallon Milk Jugs

At the exhibit you have seen a lot of African art. In Activity 4 you learned about abstract art, which is art that gives an impression of something without being very realistic. An abstract face, for instance, might have two marks or holes for eyes and no nose or mouth at all, but we still would know it was a face. So, let's make a mask.

- Find a gallon milk jug and wash it out VERY well so that there will be no sour milk smell. Make sure it is totally dry.
- Lay out newspaper or other surface protectors on your desk or table.
- Cut the gallon container lengthwise (from top to bottom) into two pieces so that the handle is in the middle of one of the pieces, like a big nose. The other piece will be sort of bowl-shaped. This is the backing for two masks.
- Look at the pieces and pick what you want for the base for your mask. You might want to cut eyes and a mouth, or just paint them on later. Ask for help cutting if you need it. Accidental cuts can be repaired with masking tape since they will be covered with paper.
- Tear strips of newspaper about 1 inch wide and 6 to 8 inches long. (Later you might want to make smaller pieces too.)
- Make a paste with 2 cups flour and 1 cup water; mix it well so it is the consistency of buttermilk. Or, better yet, make a mix of water and white glue (you can buy this at any hardware store in a gallon container).
- Put this in a large, shallow bowl or foil roasting pan.
- Taking one piece of paper at a time, slide it through your mixture of glue.
- Hold it above the bowl to let the excess water drain, then, use your thumb and forefinger to squeeze out more moisture.
- Place the strips across the milk jug. Repeat until all is covered. Smooth out the surface, then make another layer in the other direction and smooth out.
- Make a third layer out of newspaper, or printer paper, going the other direction again. Let dry overnight or longer.
- Once dry, cut off any edges that might be sharp.
- Paint and decorate with buttons, beads, yarn, sticks or anything else.

## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Five: INTO THE WOODS

*A Walk in the Woods*, contains artworks done by artists who make images and constructions that are about wood or that include wood as their material.

In fairy tales, legends, and folktales the woods or forests often have a very important purpose. Little Red Riding Hood ventures deep in the forest where dangers lurk for her. Snow White finds strange little men who shelter her in their forest home, a place for her away from the evil queen. In Norway, forest trees take on shapes and even come to life as trolls at night. Yet tall tales such as Paul Bunyan and the story of Johnny Appleseed depict a lighter, more positive story about trees. What happens in the woods in Dorothy's journey to the Wizard in Oz? What happens when Hansel and Gretel get left in the woods? Can you remember other stories about forests and woods?



Vivienne Morgan, Bemidji, Minnesota. *Seeing Woods for Trees*, 2011, Archival pigment print, 24 x 33 inches.



## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Five: INTO THE WOODS

#### At the exhibit

- Look at Vivienne Morgan's picture of the forest.
- What kind of art is this? Painting, print, photograph, or sculpture?
- Point out why you think this?
- What is happening in this picture?
- What is happening or about to happen behind those trees in those woods?

#### After your visit:

##### Practice 1: Folktales

Read some stories or folktales where trees or forests play an important part for the story. Without using the illustrations that you may find in the story, make your own art piece as if you were the book's illustrator. Make sure your piece includes trees.

- What colors were important for you to use?
- Explain why the woods (trees) are important; what part of the story were you depicting in your art?
- Have you ever had a similar experience where you, for instance, were afraid of the forest? Or do you love to go on nature hikes in the forest?

##### Practice 2: Your Walk in the Woods

Write your own story called *A Walk in the Woods*.

Some of the things you will need to do at the beginning are:

Imagine the place where your story happens and describe it so people reading your story can imagine it just as you do.

Introduce your character or characters (this need not be a real person, it could be an animal or some other being).

Make a list or outline of what you want to happen in your story. Just think of a beginning, middle and end. An example might be:

Beginning: (where and who)

- A place: In a deep, dark forest
- The character: Orville the Opossum

Middle: (what is going to happen or the problem or activity)

- Action: Orville gets lost
- Orville meets many animals who give him wrong directions
- Orville gets scared and scary things happen because he has a very vivid imagination
- Someone nice comes to help him

End: (find the solution to problem)

- Orville finds his way home, thanks his new friend and learns a lesson

Illustrate your story or make a book cover to illustrate it.

## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Six: POETRY IS FUN

Let's Imagine a picture like this description below from the poem *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

By the shores of Gitche Gumee,  
by the shining Big Sea water  
Stood the wigwam of Nokomis,  
daughter of the Moon, Nokomis.  
Dark behind it rose the forest,  
rose the dark and gloomy pine-trees,  
Rose the firs with cones upon them...

Some poems do not rhyme, and some do. Most poems have a rhythm, sort of like music. Often we can make a simple poem with rhythmical beats just by counting the syllables in each line. Poems describe pictures and feelings using just the right words. For instance, can you picture the forest in the poem by Longfellow? Can you imagine the color of the trees and sky? Can you imagine the temperature? Can you write a poem?

Here are some helpers:

First of all, try to remember somewhere you have been or have seen that has to do with trees or forests, or something made from wood, or something you have read.

Maybe that is a backyard tree with a tire swing.

Now, once you have found that idea, make a list of words that remind you of that tree. Examples might be:

Swing, Shade, Fun, Friends, Tree, Touch the sky with my toes, Twist, Back and Forth, Yard, Tire, Jump, Jump off, Summer, Spring, Fall.

If you were writing a poem, first you might write what you know. Let's pretend you and your friend had a tire swing in your yard and you played and twirled and jumped off it, and it was spring.

If you want to write a rhyming poem, let us start with the words above. Decide what you want to say about it. For instance, it might be like this:

I have a tree in my backyard. It has a swing made out of a truck tire. My friend Joe likes to come over to swing. In the summer we do that a lot. Sometimes we see squirrels and birds in the tree, but we scare them when we start to swing. The swing has a rope that holds it. I like to go really high, high enough to touch my toes to the leaves. So far I have tried to do that but my toes won't touch, but I will keep trying. I love the swing and the tree.



## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Six: POETRY IS FUN

Now see if you can make sort of a rhyming game or puzzle out of this. Start by thinking of rhyming words.

I have a tree in my back yard (find words to rhyme with yard)  
hard, lard, card, guard,

It has a swing (try to rhyme with swing)  
thing, pling, ring, cha-ching, ding, king, sing, wing

That is where I like to play (to rhyme with play)  
bay, day, hay, jay, lay, may, say,

My friend is named Joe  
go, toe, low, blow, flow

I like to swing high  
fly, sigh, by, try, guy, sky

See if you can make a poem with these or other words. You are the boss and the poet. Figure out what you want to say, then go back and think about how you will arrange your idea. It is like a puzzle.

You'll want to put rhythm into your poem. First write down your sentences and how you want to say them with rhyming words.

For example, these thoughts really aren't very rhythmical. Example: I have a swing in the yard. I like to swing high but it's hard to do it. I wish I could touch the sky. I should just try it. You are almost there but, although the words yard, hard, sky and try all rhyme, when you read it, it is not too interesting. Try to count syllables and use different connecting words. You might have to rearrange some thoughts and words, or leave some out or add a few words.

Here is one example of what you could do to make a poem using some words you found. Read it out loud to yourself. Can you hear how much nicer it sounds.

I have a swing in my backyard (8 syllables)  
To swing real high is very hard (8 syllables)  
It feels like I can touch the sky (8 syllables)  
I think I can, if I just try (8 syllables)

It is not easy to be a poet, but it is fun. Most poets and people who write song lyrics spend a lot of time finding just the right words. And you did it!

## A Walk in the Woods

### Activity Seven: LEAFY GREENS

This is an activity that is best started outdoors but given our winters where many trees have lost their leaves, one may find pictures online, in books or magazines instead of actual leaves.

#### **Practice 1:** Circle of Science (and Literature)

Find a leaf, preferably a real one. If you cannot find a real leaf in good condition look for a good picture to cut out or copy. Identify the leaf using online sources, a tree identification book or magazine.

- Take a large piece of paper. Place your leaf (or picture or drawing) in the middle of the paper. You might measure to make sure where the exact middle of the paper is by using your ruler.
- To do this, measure the distance from the left side to the right side of the paper. What is half of that distance? Make a little mark.
- Measure the distance from the top to the bottom of the paper. What is half of that distance? Make a mark.
- Both marks should be the same.
- Glue or tape your leaf so it covers that spot.
- Draw a circle around the leaf, leaving a little space around it so it looks better.
- Now draw a bigger circle around that, leaving a lot of writing space between the first circle and the outside circle.
- With arrows or lines write words or phrases that describe the leaf, or how you feel about it and write these descriptions inside the larger circle. Examples might be: dark green, rough edges, feels scratchy, pretty, or shaped like an almond.
- You can keep making more circles to draw or write more about your leaf, or you can write a little paragraph or sentence about your leaf. How about trying a poem?

#### **Practice 2:** Leaf collection and identification

Take a walk with your class or in your neighborhood to collect as many different types of leaves as you can. Be sure to bring along a shoe box or a bag or two.

You might want to bring a pencil and paper to make notes or drawings.

See if you can find at least ten different kinds of leaves growing on trees or bushes.

- Put your leaf carefully in your bag. Remember, write down, or draw the shape of the tree. For example, if you stand way back and look at the tree is its shape umbrella-like (most elms) or does it have drooping branches (willow) that make a dome. Or you might note that it has really rough bark (cottonwood) or black and white bark (birch). Are the leaves shaped like the palm of your hand (maple)? Are they heart-shaped (lilac)?  
Are the leaves like needles, round or flat?
- Tape or glue your leaf onto a piece of strong paper or tag board, leaving a large space around it to write in.
- Find a leaf identification book or look online so that you can find and write the name of what you think best fits the leaves you have found.
- If you took notes or drawings, or found more information during your search, write them down as well.

You have now made an awesome scientific study of leaves and tree identification.



## A Walk in the Woods

### Activities Eight, Nine, and Ten

#### Activity Eight: PUT A PICTURE TO WHAT YOU HEAR OR READ

Writers sometimes write about a place. In fact, most stories give you an idea of what a place looks like. Some just give you a feeling of a place without much actual description. Here is one from the book *Hans Bricker, or the Silver Skates*.

Great flapping windmills all over the country make it look as if flocks of huge seabirds were just settling upon it. Everywhere one sees the funniest trees, bobbed into fantastic shapes, with their trunks painted dazzling white, yellow, or red.

Or find the description of the garden in the book, *The Secret Garden*, chapter 9.

Choose a story, book or poem where place or a feeling of a place is described (a brief resource list of suggestions can be found at the end section).

- Decide on a drawing or painting medium, pencil, pastel, or paint for instance.
- Read, or have someone read to you, a description of a place or a feeling. It does not have to actually talk about a place; it could be something as simple as “once upon a time in a dark forest...” or “It was a dark and gloomy night.”
- Use your imagination to make as detailed a picture as you can of a place in the story.
- Share your picture with others to see if you were able to tell a picture story, complete with moods (feelings).

#### Activity Nine: BUILD YOUR OWN SECRET FOREST

There are many kinds of forests and many kinds of “trees”. A cactus is a desert tree, There are trees in the southern part of the United States that have hanging moss on them. There are groves of fruit trees, there are jungles and pine forests.

Find a shoe box or small box to make a model of your own forest idea. You might take a walk, or look at an artist such as Henri Rousseau, or find pictures of a rainforest or desert in the southwest United States for ideas. Paint the inside of your box and design the interior using sticks, spools, wire, cutouts, magazine pictures or other objects you find to build a three-dimensional diorama (or model) of the woods you would like to walk into. Now find objects such as tiny plastic animal toys, matchboxes for a pirate’s treasure chest, bottle caps that might become beds for squirrels, little rocks to make walking paths, real leaves and branches that might hide in a witch’s house or a cave. Beware! You may make something quite scary.

#### Activity Ten: MUSIC AS I SEE IT

Music, more than any other source helps us both remember places or events, and invites us to imagine places and things. For instance, the music in the *Halls of Mountain King* from the Peer Gynt Suite, by Norwegian composer Edvard Greig, might remind someone of trolls dancing in the woods, especially if they grew up in Norway. Other suggestions are found in the resource list at the end of these materials.

- While listening to this or other music, develop a picture of a place that the music suggests to you.
- Share your picture with others to see if you were able to tell a picture story, complete with moods (feelings).

## **A Walk in the Woods**

### **Resources:**

#### **Forest and Trees**

Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Anderson and well known children's tales:

*Little Red Riding Hood*

*Hansel and Gretel*

*The Three Bears*

*Snow White*

#### **Loved Books and Stories**

*The Jungle Book*: Rudyard Kipling

*The Elephant's Child*: Rudyard Kipling

*One Green Mesquite Tree*: Gisela Jernigan

*Just So Stories*: Rudyard Kipling

*The Man Who Planted Trees*: Jean Giono

*The Three Toymakers*: Ursula Moray Williams

*Night Tree*: Eve Bunting

*The Ghost-Eye Tree*: Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault

*The Secret Garden*: Frances Hodgson Burnett

*Spirit of the Cedar People*: Chief Lalooska

*Echoes of the Elders: The Stories and Paintings of Chief Lalooska*: Chief Lalooska

*D'Aulaires Book of Trolls*: Ingrid and Edgar D'Aulaires

*Hiawatha*: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (there is a shortened illustrated children's book by Susan Jeffers)

#### **Non-Fiction**

*People of the Totem*: Norman Bancroft-Hunt

*A Field Guide to North American Trees*: Bruce Kershner

*Tree Identification Book*: George Symonds

*Trees of North American*: Frank Brockman

*Winter Tree Finder*: May T. Watts

*Illustrated Book of Trees*: Carey Grimm

*Midnight Forests: A Story of Gifford Pinchot and Our National Forests*: Roberta Casila and Gary Hines

#### **Music to Paint By**

*Peer Gynt Suite: In the Halls of Mountain King*: Edvard Grieg

*The Four Seasons*: Antonio Vivaldi

*Night on Bald Mountain*: Modest Mussorgsky

*Symphony #6: Pastoral*: Ludwig Beethoven