

## Inspiring Landscapes: Activity Ideas

Here are some suggested activities to encourage further investigation and development of ideas. Some landscapes have inspired artists for generations, such as The Great Trossachs Forest, but artists have always taken inspiration from their local environment too. Why not take your class out and make use of your school grounds or a nearby park or woodland to inspire art work? Remember to risk assess each activity beforehand!

### Looking more closely at your school grounds or a nearby greenspace

There are many simple activities you can do to encourage pupils to observe the natural environment in a more focussed and creative way. For example you can give out pieces of cardboard with double sided sticky tape and ask pupils to create their own colour chart (**nature's palette!**). You could organise a **scavenger hunt** where pupils work in pairs to look for a set list of things within a bounded area - a leaf with the longest outline, something soft, something beautiful, something that makes you smile...

Or why not take the class for a walk in your local greenspace and collect things as you go. Wrap these around a short stick using different colours of wool to create a unique '**journey stick**' (an Australian Aboriginal tradition). Pupils can tell a story of their walk using the journey stick to remind them of where they went and what they saw.

### Make a collage

Collect natural materials from the school grounds or a local greenspace and incorporate these into a mixed media collage of a landscape, based on one of the photos provided in this resource. Alternatively you can make bark rubbings from the local area and include these in a collage. To make a bark rubbing find a mature tree with an interesting texture, hold a piece of paper firmly up to it and rub the flat length of a wax crayon across the paper.



### Make your own cyanotypes

Light sensitive or 'sun print' paper is available from many big stationary suppliers or over the internet. Collect natural materials with interesting outlines. Place the objects on a piece of sun print paper, leave out in the sun on a calm day for 10 minutes and then 'develop' the image by washing in plain water.

### Environmental sculptures

Use natural materials to make environmental sculptures. Pupils could make 2D pictures using the ground as a canvas, framed by sticks, or 3D sculptures. You can show work by Andy Goldsworthy to inspire pupils. Pupils can work in small groups to produce the art work, and could come up with a specific 'commission' for another group. Take photos as lasting evidence of the work produced.



### Draw with charcoal

Make the link that charcoal is made from burnt wood. You can also mention that charcoal can come from sustainable or non-sustainable sources - lots of tropical mangrove forests are being destroyed to make charcoal that we use for barbeques in the summer. Go outside and do some observational drawings of trees using charcoal. You could also use the landscape photos provided as a basis for charcoal drawings.

### Make artist's charcoal

If you're feeling confident you could try making your own artist's charcoal! You would need an air tight metal container such as a travel sweet tin

or biscuit tin with one hole pierced in the top, a fresh supply of willow twigs or another tree species (willow is best), secateurs, potato peelers and access to a bonfire, wood burning stove or open fire.



*Charcoal making- the different stages - a willow twig complete with leaves, a stripped twig and the finished product in use.*

Harvest young thin stems of willow, strip all the bark off using potato peelers and fill your metal container as full as possible. You want to exclude as much oxygen as you can from the firing process so try not to leave any gaps. Pupils can easily be involved in this stage - using secateurs and potato peelers to process the willow and pack the tin.



*Charcoal making- the tin packed with stripped willow*

The next stage is the firing. Depending on your risk assessment and how confident you feel about fire lighting with your pupils, you could either do this yourself away from school or with the pupils in the school grounds. Whittle a short fresh green stick to a point so you can use it to plug the hole in the tin when the time comes.

Once the fire has been burning long enough to have some hot embers, put the tin, with its lid on, into the fire using thick leather gloves. The hole at the top should be open to allow water from the willow to escape as white smoke or steam. When the smoke starts to look less white and more grey or black it's time to plug the hole in the top. Then just leave the tin for another 20-40 minutes, keeping the fire stoked and hot. Extract the tin from the fire carefully and wait until its cool before opening!

### **Organise a class trip to The Great Trossachs Forest!**

If the class works well in the school grounds or a local greenspace, you could organise a trip to visit The Great Trossachs Forest. There pupils can do observational drawing and painting of Loch Katrine and Glen Finglas first hand, and visit the spot where Ruskin posed for Millais in 1853. See the online resource 'Bringing a class to The Great Trossachs Forest' for more information and sources of support.



*Charcoal making- the drawing charcoal post firing.*