

NATURE ACTIVITIES

LIVE TREE DRAWING & BARK RUBBING

Learn how to draw a tree from observation! If you have little ones, you can make bark rubbings as a sensory experience of getting to know the texture of a tree.

PART ONE - TREE DRAWINGS

Have you ever sat down to draw a tree? This is an activity welcomed for all ages to enjoy. Bring out your drawing supplies and paper and find a nearby tree to draw outside!

Resources/materials needed: Drawing paper, pencil, charcoal, eraser, colored pencils, and/or markers, portable hard surface

Skills: Cognitive, Motor Skills, Environmental Appreciation, Creativity, Self-Expression, Imagination, Hand-Eye Coordination, Technical Skills, Observation

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Pick a spot! Find a place with a view for the tree. Depending on the age of the artist, each drawing will be different in observational skill level. If you are working with younger kids, they work better from the memory of their experience, so let the creativity flow no matter what the age!

Step 2: Take a seat with your drawing supplies. Start observing the tree. It's general shape, its texture, colors, and the space around it.

Step 3: Start blocking in your general shapes. Think about the picture plane (the edges of the paper) and coming up with a composition where you can fit in the tree. What shape is the trunk? What is the general shape of the top of the tree? Do the spaces in between the branches have interesting shape?



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Photo Credit: The Artful Parent

Are you including shapes in the background? What are the relationships between objects and space?

Sometimes it helps to use the side of your pencil to get a broader mark when you block in shapes. If you're using pastels, you can use them horizontally to make big marks describing shapes. Some abstract artists make work by stopping at this step. Feel free to do so!

Step 4: After you're done blocking in, it is time to start adding more detail. Draw the shapes of the branches. You can do this with a sharper pencil or the side of the pencil still to get the organic lines. Really observe and go slow at first, trying to follow the branch with your eye and transcribe it with your pencil on the paper.

Step 5: Once you have the shape and the branches of the tree and whatever you want to add in the background, it's time to start adding shading and focusing on the texture, light and shadow of the tree.

Start by putting the mid tone of value (value is the light and dark scale without color) If you squint your eyes you can see what is really dark, middle and fully light. Keep it simple with 3 tones. Then work in delicately where your light spots are (this may be an light outline with your pencil) After this is done, start laying in your shadows with a dark pencil or whatever you're using.

Once these are all working together, it will pop into dimension. Now you can go in with a white pencil or pastel and add in more highlights. You can also erase to achieve highlights. You can keep going back and forth adding more detail and shading until you feel that you're finished. Blending certain places together results in a smoother transition. Balancing blending and hard line results in texture and form. You can choose to include the background or not if you just want the tree.

Step 6: Share your drawings and keep doing more! Practice makes perfect! You can take these inside and make a painting from them and add color if you wish or use it as a preliminary drawing for a painting or another drawing you will do. The possibilities are endless. Have fun and experiment!

Reflection: What did you learn about drawing that you didn't know? Was drawing from observation



Photo Credit: Art for Kids Hub

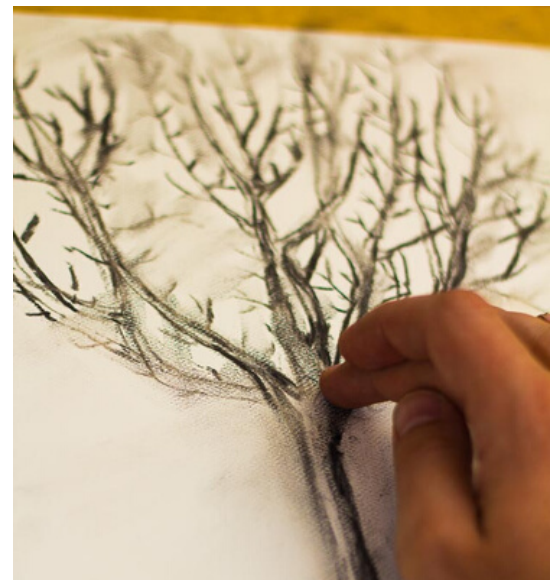


Photo Credit: Art for Kids Hub



Photo Credit: David Neace Kentucky Drawings

challenging? What did you observe about the tree? Do you know what kind it was? Do you understand value?

PART TWO - BARK RUBBINGS

Want a sensory and cool nature activity for kids? This is a hands-on activity using observing and experiencing tree bark with crayons and paper!

Resources/materials needed: Crayons, paper, trees

Skills: Cognitive, Motor, Hand-Eye Coordination, Environmental Appreciation

DIRECTIONS:

Step 1: Find a tree with interesting bark! Some have deep ridges, some are flaky, some are very tight, some are more smooth. Experiment with different trees if you have a variety around you.

Step 2: Go up to a tree with the paper and crayons of your choice and start rubbing over the full paper on top of the bark. What does different amounts of pressure do to how the bark shows up? Keep experimenting! If you are working with young children have them really engage with the bark and the sensations and talk to them about what they are noticing about the texture. If you know tree identification, give small lessons on which tree is which.

Step 3: Take your drawings inside and compare them. These can be saved in a nature journal where all of your nature-based artwork is stored. A Tree ID journal can be put together also. The rubbings can be cut up and made into collages, or have trees drawn on top of them. There are so many possibilities. Let the creativity flow!

Kid's Reflection: Talk about your experience. What bark worked the best which does not? What tree were you working with? Did you enjoy the sensation of the bark? What would you like to make these pieces into? Did you have fun?



Photo Credit: Canva



Photo Credit: Craft Invaders



Photo Credit: I Can Teach My Child

Resources:

artfulparent.com/slanted-kids-drawing-table-ergonomic-portable/
icanteachmychild.com/outdoor-tree-bark-rubbings/

craftinvaders.co.uk/bark-rubbing-exploring-trees/
artforkidshub.com/teaching-kids-how-to-draw-from-life-how-to-draw-a-tree/
<https://paintingvalley.com/tree-color-drawing#tree-color-drawing-28.jpg>