

The focus of “Endangered Species: Real Life in Two Dimensions” is to create awareness about a critical environmental issue. There is a special urgency to this project because large numbers of animal species are currently endangered or on the brink of extinction.

In addition to being enlightened about this important topic through research, students re-create the beauty of a variety of creatures in their environments through the use of photocollage and value-scale cutouts.

Additionally, this standards-based art project develops students’ artistic perception, awareness of the historical and cultural context of art, and promotes their skills in aesthetic valuing.

SUBJECT MATTER Our class focused on the continent of North America from which to choose endangered creatures. To assure a range of species within our class of 30, I asked each student to sound off one letter of the alphabet, repeating from the beginning when they reached the letter Z.

Then, beginning with their letter,

students used the Internet to locate three possible endangered species, looking at either popular or scientific names for the animals. After consulting with me, students then selected one of their three possible choices, along with reference photographs, best suited for the assigned elements and principles of design.

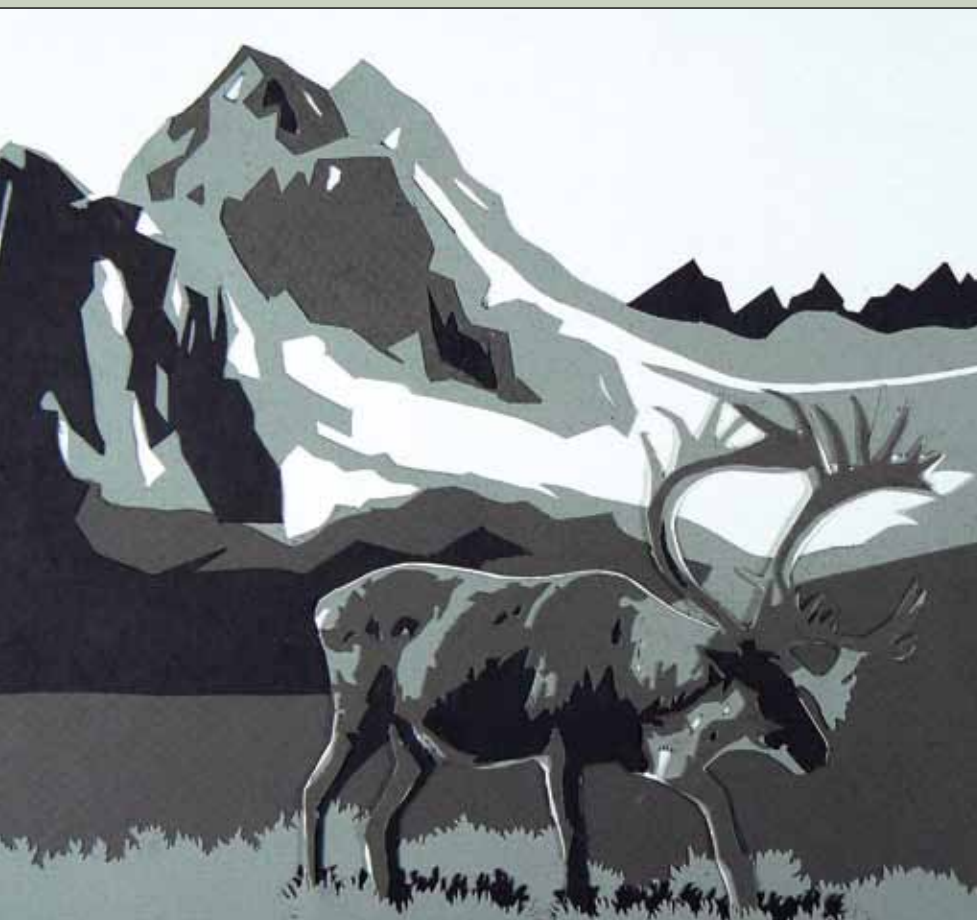
COMPOSITION Several strategies were used to create the cut-paper compositions. Students worked from a single photograph or a composite of different photos to include a variety of shapes that identified an animal (foreground) and its environment (background). Students either simplified or added to their photo



Traced line drawing made from photo composite.



Line drawing over photo composite.



ENDDA Real Life

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

High-school students will ...

- become aware of endangered species by creating a cut-paper composition.
- develop their artistic perception.
- become aware of the historical and cultural context of art.
- develop their skills in aesthetic valuing.

MATERIALS

- Paper and pencils
- Construction paper
- Internet and other research tools

NATIONAL STANDARDS

- Understand and apply media, techniques and processes.
- Choose and evaluate a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

“Woodland Caribou,” by Chasen. Cut construction paper; 4" x 6".



Completed artwork: "El Segundo Blue Butterfly," Jennifer. Cut construction paper; 4" x 6".

THREATENED SPECIES

in Two Dimensions

by Lynette K. Henderson



images. Strategies used for simplifying or adding included combining photos of an animal with other photos of foliage and landscape; on occasion, students invented or repeated images they found of rocks or plants.

LINE DRAWING After completing the desired composition, each student converted the image into a line drawing for the purpose of identifying shapes. The shapes not only identified contours of the animal and surrounding objects, but also light and shadows that helped represent structure. Students utilized one of three strategies to create their drawings: placing tracing paper on top of the photos; creating a carbon backing made of

"Great White Egret," Louise. Cut construction paper; 4" x 6".

pencil; or outlining shapes directly on reference photos.

SHAPE & VALUE After completing a line drawing of an animal in its environment, students planned which shapes would be rendered in the values of black, white and a range of grays, using cut construction paper as a medium. The limitations of these light and dark values helped students focus on shape and space, without the added complexity of color.

Students' value selections depended on several factors: the original lights and darks found in reference photos, patterning in the animals, and whether the shape was to be in either the foreground or background. Students' plans for value distribution included

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SPECIES

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modifications and decision-making as they built up

their compositions (large shapes first, followed by added detail). Before students begin this part of the process, it is important to remind them that it is much easier to make changes if they do not glue anything until all shapes are cut, and the composition appears complete.

MODIFICATIONS Students' choices of endangered animal species and photographs may be simplified for middle-school and elementary-level students. Some suggested parameters are: limit the location where animals may be found, such as only in the local county, state or region;

... students re-create the beauty of a variety of creatures in their environments through photo-collage and value-scale cutouts.

and limit the type of species or subspecies, such as canines, marine animals, reptiles or insects. In terms of composition, parameters may include featuring only the animal, omitting the environment; and limiting values to only black and white, and/or only one type of gray.

CRITIQUE & EXHIBITION Upon completion, students' final artworks are available for critique, followed by an opportunity to modify or change them based on feedback. Lastly, all artworks can be placed on display in a group exhibition with accompanying student explanations of each particular animal—where it is located and why it is endangered. This not only fulfills the original project goals for individual students and the class, but also informs and educates outside viewers about both the beauty of nature, as well as the far-reaching range of its endangerment. ■

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