

Julia Sanders

Aurora Borealis - Torn Paper Chalk Pastel Landscape

3rd Grade

Chalk Pastel

3 - 45 minute classes

Big Idea: Throughout time and across cultures, people have created art inspired by natural wonders.

Lesson Summary: Students will learn about the science behind the natural wonder of Aurora Borealis and will create a northern lights landscape using torn paper and chalk pastels. Through this process students will learn about chalk pastel, will learn how to make a landscape drawing, and will engage and explore using torn paper to make the shapes. Students will ultimately connect their observations of nature to art making.

Rationale: Using natural wonders to inspire art creates connection between science and art and encourages students to see the world and nature as a source of inspiration for art making.

Artists: Frederic Edwin Church, "Aurora Borealis", Eugenia Gorbacheva, "Northern Lights #45", Kerry Milligan, "Midnight Borealis Painting"

Key Concepts:

- The science of the northern lights
- Art is inspired by the environment around us
- Mixing colors by blending pastels
- Creating a landscape with torn paper
- Creating a reflection in water/symmetry

Essential Questions:

- How can art and science be represented together in art making?
- How can art represent natural wonders?
- How can you be inspired by natural wonders in your art?

National Standards:

VA:Cr2.1.3a Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

Interdisciplinary connections: This lesson connects to science and solar energy interacting with oxygen and nitrogen to produce auroras.

Pennsylvania Standards:

9.1.3.A Know and use the elements and principles of each art form to create works in the arts and humanities - color form/shape.

3.3.3.B Students who demonstrate understanding can obtain and combine information to describe climates in different regions of the world.

Objectives: Students will...

Knowledge: Examine what causes Aurora Borealis or Northern Lights by watching a science video.

Skills: Experiment with chalk pastel and blend colors. They will build shapes with torn paper.

Disposition: Analyze the idea that as artists they can take inspiration from nature and natural wonders around them or about places they learn about.

Assessments:

Pre-Assessment: Day one is a practice day to determine student's abilities with chalk pastel blending and following the art making directions.

Formative Assessment: Teacher will walk around to be sure that each step is being followed before moving on to demonstrate the next step. Real-time feedback will be given between demo steps.

Summative Assessment: Students will complete a self-reflection worksheet. Drawings will be graded with a 4-point rubric.

Week 1-3 - 3 classes 45 minutes each

Assessment:

Support students one-on-one by providing answers to questions and feedback during work time. Check for correct procedures of using torn paper and chalk pastel and encourage experimentation.

Teacher Research & Preparation:

- Make Canva presentation
- Create exemplars
- Cut paper and sort pastels
- Research scientific information
- Research historical artifacts
- Create a rubric
- Create photo references
- Create reflection worksheet

Day 1:

Motivation/Engagement: TW show engaging video with dramatic music as students come in. SW watch the video.

Development:

SW watch science video. TW discuss the reactions, ask a few questions, and demo on how to make the sky, blend pastels.

Culmination/Close: TW ask students to think about the final picture they want to make the next class and the colors and composition they will create.

Day 2:

Motivation/Engagement: TW review historical and contemporary art. Read from an explorer's journal.

Development: TW discuss artist's works, demo on how to make the sky & watery reflections.

Culmination/Close: TW ask students to think about the details they want to add to their artwork the next class - stars, trees, lights.

Day 3:

Motivation/Engagement: TW replay first video and show photos of procedural steps.

Development: TW demo how to make snowy mountains, reflection of snowy mountains stars, trees, and lights. TW show reference photos as inspiration.

Culmination/Close: Students will complete a self-reflection worksheet.

Instructional Resources:

- Vimeo video - <https://vimeo.com/21294655>
- Kid's Academy video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THLLmoY4M4M>

Student Supplies:

- Tan paper 6x12"
- Black paper 9x12"
- Chalk pastels in warm and cool colors with black, white and gray
- Large folded paper to store artwork

Vocabulary:

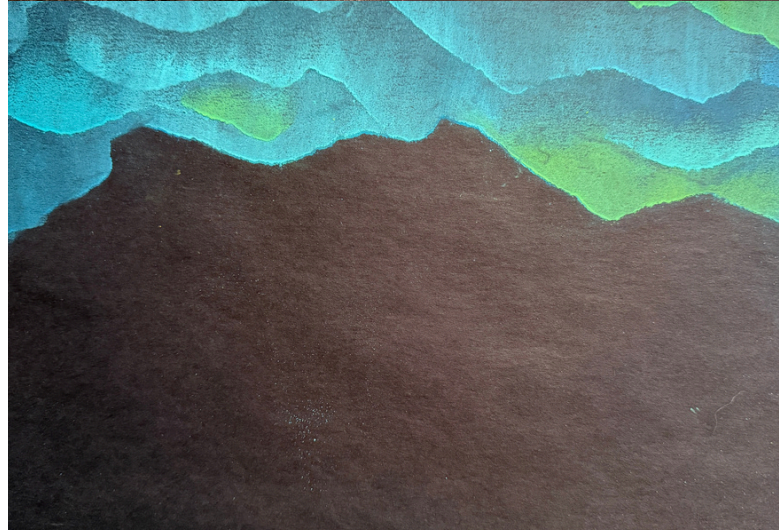
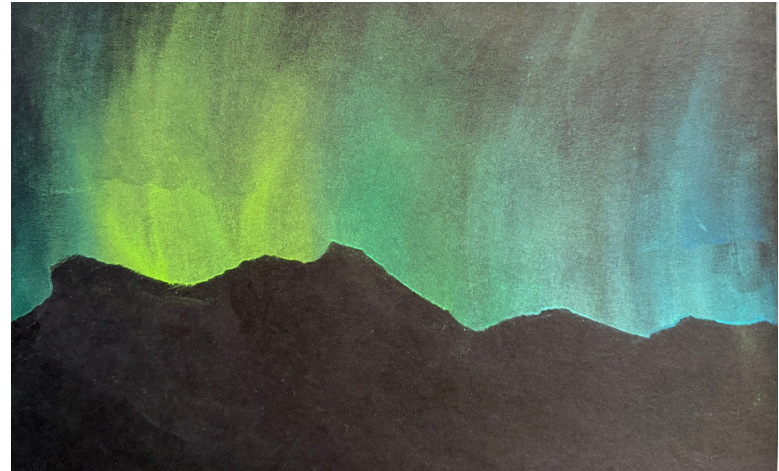
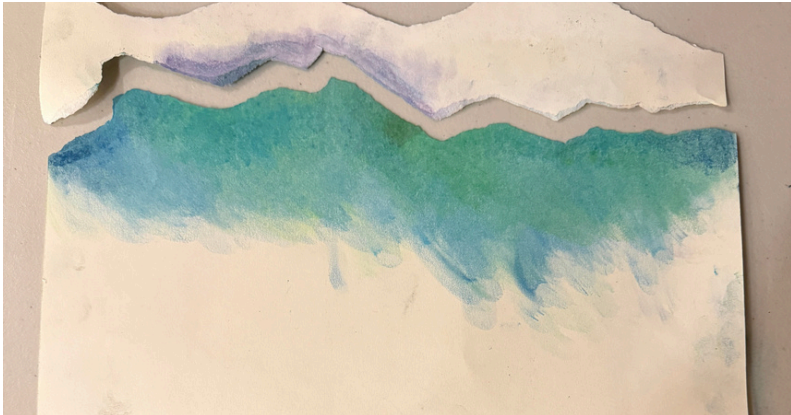
- Aurora Borealis/Northern Lights
- Chalk pastel
- Horizon line
- Oxygen
- Nitrogen

Modifications:

Adaptive - students make only sky and silhouette mountains. Additions as capable.

Gifted - students make layered sky with 3+ details.

Teacher Exemplars

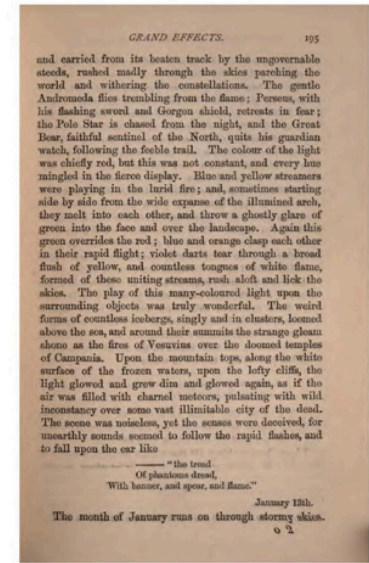
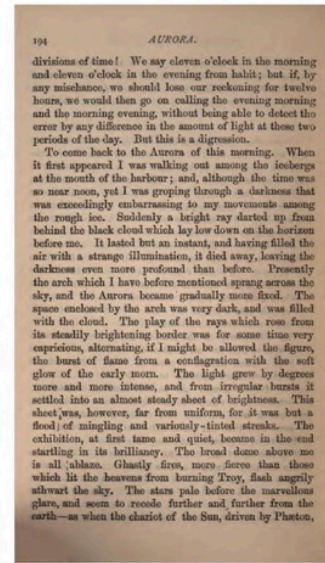




Drawings found in caves in Western Europe, from around 30,000 years ago, in the Cro-Magnon era, believed to depict the northern lights. Credit...NASA <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/20/us/northern-lights-aurora-inspiration-history.html>



Frederic Edwin Church, "Aurora Borealis", 1865, oil on canvas



"The Open Polar Sea: A Narrative of a Voyage of Discovery Towards the North Pole, in the Schooner "United States", by Isaac Israel Hayes, pp. 194-195. <https://archive.org/details/openpolarseaana01hayegoog/page/n226/mode/2uptext>



Frederic Edwin Church, "Aurora Borealis", 1865, oil on canvas
Close-up of Explorer's Ship



Kerry Milligan, "Midnight Borealis Painting", 2024,
acrylic on canvas



Eugenia Gorbacheva, "Northern Lights #45", 2024,
watercolor on paper

Reference Photos



4 Point Rubric

4 – Student used exceptional care and craftsmanship in creating a pastel landscape using a torn edged paper and careful blending of colors. It included a horizon line, vibrant sky, snowy mountains, and reflections in water. At least 3 additional details were added; such as stars, city lights, trees, cabins or other objects.

3 – Student created a pastel landscape using a torn edged paper and blending pastels correctly with care and effort that included a vibrant sky and at least 1 additional detail; such as snowy mountains, reflections in water, horizon line, stars, city lights, trees, cabins or other objects.

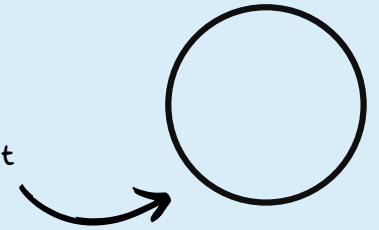
2 - Student created a sky using the ripped paper technique correctly with care and effort shown to blending upwards and choosing colors. No horizon line, water feature, reflection, snowy mountain or additional details were added.

1 – Student created a sky using some ripped paper and by blending pastels but without care or attention to the techniques. No water feature, reflection or additional details were added.

0 – No effort or appropriate techniques are used in creating an Aurora Borealis sky.

My Art Reflection

Draw the face that shows how you feel about this art project



happy



sad



mad



excited



nervous



silly



calm



disappointed

I feel this way about my artwork because...

write here

What did I like about working with chalk pastels?

write here

Now that I have made art about the Aurora Borealis, what is another natural wonder that I could be inspired to make art about?

write here