



OGDEN MUSEUM ONLINE LESSONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

FLOWING RIVER | CLEMENTINE HUNTER

ABOUT THE ART

This long painting reveals many stories of everyday life that the artist remembered from her childhood and the Cane river that ran through these experiences. The color palette is limited to the paints that Clementine Hunter had available. In this work, we see the background filled with salmons, pinks, yellow, green and blues. Hunter definitely used white and mixed her primary colors to create these secondary and tertiary background hues. The figures and events are created with a more primary color palette. This painting is a fantastic example of stacked perspective, many different events and scenes unfold on top of each other but are separated by the wavy lines of the river. Another beautiful detail about this work is that the direction of the brush strokes is visible as is the blending of colors in the background. This is one element of what makes a painting unique from a drawing or a photograph. In most cases we get to see how the artist applied the paint to the surface; in strokes, side to side, up and down, etc.

Clementine Hunter was born in 1886 near Natchitoches, Louisiana. She spent the majority of her life working on the Melrose plantation as a farm hand and domestic helper. Hunter had no formal education, she only learned how to read and write in her fifties. Clementine picked up painting in her late forties. Friends of the owners of the plantation came to paint one season and left their supplies for Clementine to experiment with. Clementine was a Self-Taught artist, and the first African American Artist to have a solo exhibition in the New Orleans Museum of Art. Clementine's artwork depicts stories and scenes from plantation life in the early 20th century.





QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What experiences from your childhood bring you joy?
- How can you tell a story in a work of art?
- What do you love to do outside right now? Who do you do it with? Yourself, siblings, friends, family?
- What river or body of water do you live closest to?

ART ACTIVITY

OVERVIEW

Students will create an elongated painting or drawing of a river and outdoor scenes from their lives that are fond memories or bring them joy. Students will practice making artistic choices relating to orientation of the image, color choices for the background and foreground, learning and using stacked perspective and incorporating narratives into a work of art.

SUPPLIES

- Large brown paper bag or long thin piece of cardboard or watercolor paper
- Pencil
- Paintbrushes
- Acrylic or tempera paint or markers or colored pencils or water color paint
- Cup for water
- Paper towels
- A covered work surface to paint on
- Palette to mix colors (old Tupperware lid, paper plate, etc.)

PROCESS

1. Ask students to cut open a brown paper bag and cut out a long strip. If they are using another type of paper, also have them cut a wide thick strip of paper for their art (3/4 of the paper width).
2. Turn the paper horizontally (hamburger) and vertically (hotdog). Choose what direction they want to orient their paper.
3. Using a pencil draw a river form that crosses from top to bottom and side to side of the paper.
4. Ask them to start imagining (but not drawing yet!) 3-4 activities they love or enjoy outside, maybe near their house, a favorite park, etc.
5. Make sure they have a protected workspace and apron or old t-shirt ready if they are painting.
6. Students begin by drawing a river through and across the entire piece of paper. Encourage them to make one big wavy line that links two or more edges of the paper together. Then trace the line a few inches apart to create the river shape.
7. Ask students to set up their palette with the primary colors and white. Next, they will mix colors on their palette to create a blue/s for the river and 2-3 different more neutral colors for the background.



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8. Instruct students to paint the background and river first. Use big bold strokes and cover the entire surface!
9. Once this first layer has dried paint a few different scenes from your childhood that bring you joy, or a few different activities you want to do outside. Don't worry about details, just use a thinner paintbrush to paint the basic shapes with different colors.
10. Ask students to create at least three different scenes scattered throughout your painting. Let it dry. Come back to it in a while and add more and accent what you have with some final details.
11. Have students create a title for their piece and sign and date the artwork on the back.

*NOTE:

THIS ENTIRE PROJECT CAN BE DONE WITHOUT PAINT! USE CRAYONS, COLORED PENCILS OR MARKERS AND FOLLOW THE SAME STEPS.

KEY TERMS

Self taught art is created by an artist who has had little to no formal art training.

Stacked perspective is an art making technique used to show distance. Objects placed at the bottom of the canvas are in the *foreground* and seen as closest to the viewer, while images painted at the top are in the *background* and are the furthest away.

Primary Colors Red, yellow and blue. From these colors all other colors are made.

Secondary Colors Colors that are created by the mixture of two primary colors i.e. red and yellow make orange, yellow and blue make green, blue and red make violet, etc.

Background The part of the picture plane that seems to be the farthest from the viewer.

Middle ground Area of a two-dimensional work of art between the foreground (closest) and the background (furthest receded).

Foreground Part of a two-dimensional artwork that appears to be nearer to the viewer or "in the front" of the image.

Brushstroke the paint left on a surface by a single application of a brush or palette knife

Tint A slight or pale coloration; a variation of color produced by adding white to it and characterized by a low saturation and high lightness.

Perspective A system for representing three-dimensional objects viewed in spatial recession on a two-dimensional surface.



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SEE CLEMENTINE HUNTER'S FLOWING RIVER IN THE PERMANENT COLLECTION AT THE OGDEN MUSEUM OF SOUTHERN ART THROUGH JULY 5.

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QUESTIONS? EMAIL [EDUCATION@OGDENMUSEUM.ORG](mailto:education@ogdenmuseum.org).