

Adopt an Artwork 2025 -2026

Flower Cardboard Relief Sculpture

"Lotus Beds on the St. Jones River" by Pennewill Brown Leach

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Middletown High, Appoquinimink School District

10-12

Visual Art

OVERVIEW

Students will study "Lotus Beds on the St. Jones River" by American artist Ethel Pennewill Brown Leach. They will analyze its color, texture, and composition. Students will create small studies in value and color creating various compositions. Students will then explore the art of relief sculpture by constructing layered and textured landscape/flowers, exploring how to create depth and atmosphere using recycled cardboard and acrylic paint.

TIME REQUIRED

4-6 class periods (90 minutes each)

STANDARDS FOR INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

- Standard 1- Cr1 –Generate and Conceptualize Artistic Ideas –Use multiple approaches to generate creative ideas that build on personal, cultural, or historical context.
- Standard 2-Cr2 –Organize and Develop Artistic Ideas –Experiment and collaborate to develop artistic ideas using various materials, techniques, and processes.
- Standard 3- Re7 –Perceive and Analyze Artistic Work–Analyze how formal elements and principles of design contribute to artistic meaning.

STUDENT “I CAN STATEMENTS”

- I can create sketches that explore different viewpoints, compositions, and layering options.
- I can plan how to layer cardboard to create depth, form, and dimensionality.
- I can describe the shapes, textures, and spatial relationships used in my sculpture.

MATERIALS

- Corrugated cardboard (various thicknesses)
- Scissors and/or X-Acto knives (with safety instructions)
- Glue guns or tacky glue
- Pencil and eraser
- Cutting mats
- Acrylic paint, brushes, palettes
- White paint or gesso (for priming)
- Water containers & paper towels
- Kid-safe cardboard cutter
- Flower reference images (real or printed)
- Reference image of “Lotus Beds on the St. Jones River”

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Lesson 1: Introduce Ethel Pennewill Brown Leach and her role in American Impressionism. (Warm-up)

Lesson 2: View and discuss the painting “Lotus Beds on the St. Jones River”.

Lesson 3: Complete Artistic Analysis Worksheet for “Lotus Beds on the St. Jones River.”

Lesson 4: Sketch thumbnail ideas for a flower relief sculpture; emphasizing foreground, middle ground, and background. Add value to some, and color to others using colored pencils.

Lesson 5: Select one idea to develop for relief sculpture.

Lesson 6: On an 18” by 18” cardboard, sketch simplified layers of the flower design.

Lesson 7: Cut shapes for background and flowers.

Lesson 8: Glue layers from back to front, peeling some surface paper for texture.

Lesson 9: Add more layers for flowers and details.

Lesson 10: Apply gesso to unify the surface.

Lesson 11: Paint using Impressionist-style brushstrokes and bright color contrasts.

Lesson 12: Add highlights to suggest reflections and light.

Lesson 13: Complete reflection prompts:

- What was most challenging about capturing depth?
- How does your work reflect the mood of Leach's painting?

ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

- Formative- Artistic Analysis Worksheet
- Formative- Thumbnail sketches
- Summative - Finished flower cardboard relief

VOCABULARY

- Relief Sculpture- A type of sculpture where the shapes or images are raised above a flat surface. It is not fully 3D like a statue—you look at it mostly from the front, and the raised areas create depth and shadows.
- Foreground, Middleground, Background- The three main depth areas in an artwork:
 - Foreground –closest to the viewer and usually most detailed.
 - Middleground –the space between foreground and background.
 - Background –farthest from the viewer, often lighter or less detailed.
- Impressionism -An art style from the late 1800s where artists tried to capture the feeling or “impression” of a moment. It often shows visible brushstrokes, bright colors, and natural light effects.
- Texture- How a surface feels or appears it would feel. Texture can be actual (touchable) or visual (looks textured but flat).
- Layering- Building-up an artwork by placing materials, colors, or shapes on top of each other to add depth and dimension.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Leach, Ethel Pennewill Brown. *Lotus Beds on the St. Jones River*. 1931, oil on canvas, 20 ×30 in., Biggs Museum of American Art, Dover, Delaware. Biggs Museum of American Art, Galleries at the Biggs Museum of American

Art. Accessed 20 Nov. 2025.

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- Leach, Ethel Pennewill Brown (artist page). *Ethel Pennewill Brown Leach*. Delaware Art Museum, eMuseum. Accessed 20 Nov. 2025.
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- "Leach, Ethel Pennewill Brown, 1878–1960 (painter)." SIRIS — Smithsonian Institution Research Information System, Artist/Inventory entry. Accessed 20 Nov. 2025.