



LESSON 18 LEVEL C PRINT MAKING

NATURE PRINTS

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN: printing with natural materials, using a brayer

WHAT YOU WILL NEED: fresh leaves, weeds, and/or grasses that have been pressed overnight between newspapers, under a weight; a stack of quarter sheet newspapers; assorted colors and textures of printing papers; water-based printing inks (black and colors of your choice); two rubber brayers to roll ink, available at crafts or art supply store; a piece of formica or a shiny plastic mat for an ink pad; damp sponge or towel

TIPS: Press a variety of fresh leaves and grasses overnight between newspapers, under a weight. (Dry plants won't work. They will crumble.) Organize your painting area so you can move in one direction. See the photograph* for a simple arrangement of the materials needed. Ink the slab by rolling out on the pad enough ink to coat the brayer with a glossy "snakeskin" texture.



Teacher Demonstration

GETTING STARTED: Look at the examples and analyze how they were done. Can you see that, basically, they were made by rolling ink onto one leaf at a time on newspaper. The leaf was then placed ink-side up on a clean stack of newspaper. If it was a single leaf or plant specimen to be printed, the printing paper was put on it and rolled with a clean brayer or pressed with fingertips. (To print a collection of leaves, more experienced print artists may prefer to place the inked leaf directly, ink side down, onto the printing paper. Cover it with a clean newspaper and roll with a clean brayer. Can you visualize this

process?) Read the directions before you begin to print and see the procedure "in your mind's eye" as you follow the steps.



1. Be sure to roll out enough ink to coat the brayer several times, but don't waste ink by spreading it too close to the edge of the ink pad.

2. Put a flattened leaf vein-side up, on a piece of newspaper. Roll the inked brayer over it in several directions until the leaf is covered with shiny ink. Put the brayer back on the ink pad.



Student Example



Arrangement of Printing Work Space

3. Lift the leaf over to a clean sheet of newspaper. Clean your fingers with a damp sponge or towel.

4. Put a piece of printing paper on the leaf and roll over the paper with a clean brayer. Or press firmly all over it with your finger tips.

5. Examine your print. Should you have used more ink, or less?

more pressure? Use the same or another leaf and repeat the process until you are pleased with the results.

6. Dry the prints thoroughly before matting them. Print artists write the title of their work at the bottom of the print with a number that indicates which print it was in the edition (series.) (1/10 means the first print of a series of 10 prints; 15/16 means the second to last print in a series of 16.)

CLEAN UP: Wash the brayer and ink pad in with running water. Throw out leaves and used newspapers. Clean your hands (What do you mean, "They're not that dirty?") Put away the materials which you may use another day.

TALK ABOUT IT: Now that you know the basic process, how would you vary it to make your prints more complicated? Different shapes of leaves? More interesting papers?

MORE IDEAS: Prepare a larger 30.5 x 46cm (12" x 18") printing paper. Wet it and drop brushloads of watercolor paint on it. Let the paint run and blend to make a colorful background for prints of several kinds of leaves. Or, after the ink is dry, paint the negative shapes between the leaves with autumn colors.

CONNECTIONS: Make a collection of prints or pressed leaves to illustrate a variety of leaf shapes and vein systems: simple; compound; palmate; pinnate; serrate; and so on. A beginner's botany book will be helpful.

