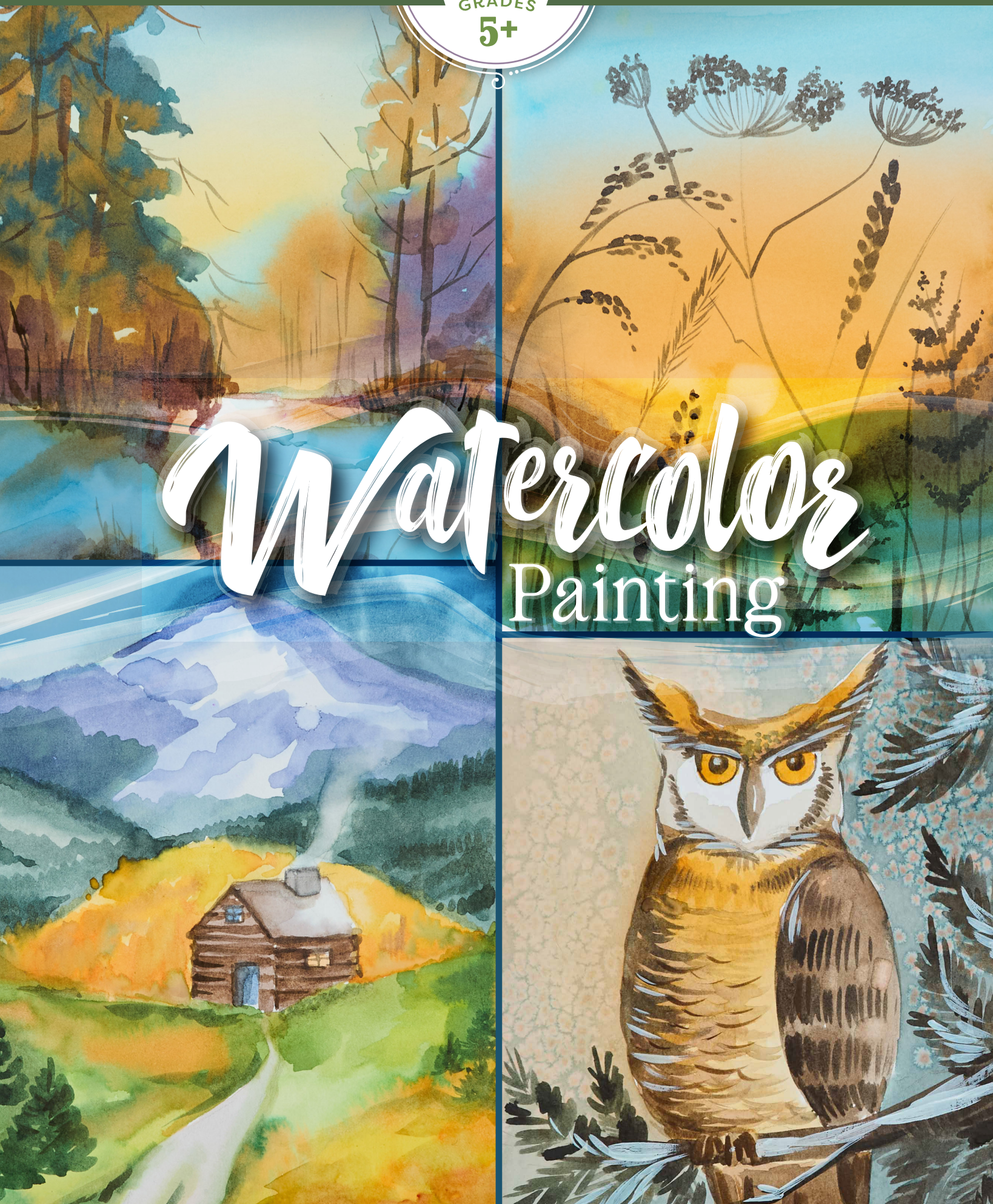
THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL ELECTIVE

GRADES 5+



Watercolor Painting

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ABOUT THIS COURSE

This watercolor course consists of six lessons designed to be completed by the student independently. Parents or guardians can choose to be as involved in the lessons as they would like to be. Students should be aware that their results will not exactly match the results shown in the lessons, which were completed by a professional artist. Painting techniques take time and practice to master, and each individual artist will have their own style. Repeated practice will help students refine their results.

Lesson Overview

Each lesson begins with an overview of a concept or technique used in watercolor painting, along with a small activity to illustrate that concept. To keep the student focused on the material, "Knowledge Checks" appear every few pages. The bulk of each lesson is a step-by-step walk-through of a full watercolor painting. Each project is intended to be completed in a single session. Students should stop to allow the paint to dry only when specifically instructed to do so. Allowing the paint to dry between steps will impact the results, so when possible, parents or guardians should ensure the child has adequate time to complete the full session.

Getting Started

The following page includes a list of supplies needed for the full course. Each lesson begins with a supply list showing what is needed for that specific lesson. Students will need a workspace with a nonporous surface, or they should use a waterproof tablecloth to prevent staining and water damage.

When selecting a watercolor paint set, choose paints that are in the $10–$20 range. Less expensive paints will often have dull pigment and will not give students the best results. Read more about paints on page 10.

Students will need only three paintbrushes for this course. The most important criterion for selecting a brush is the texture of the bristles. They should be soft and hold water well. To read more about selecting brushes, see page 8.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Yevheniia Poliakova is a Ukrainian-born painter and ceramic artist who grew up on a farm nestled among the lush mountain valleys of the Crimean Peninsula. From her earliest years, a pencil and scrap of paper were Yevheniia's constant companions, and she enjoyed sketching landscapes and gospel scenes. She began exhibiting her artwork at the age of 10. Later on, Yevheniia attended university, where she studied painting and graphic arts. This is where her love of ceramics and painting began. Over the years she has worked as a ceramic artist, a wallpaper designer, and a painting instructor. Yevheniia, along with her husband and four children, left Ukraine just before war began in 2022. The family eventually settled in Utah, where they have made a new home.

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SUPPLIES USED IN THIS COURSE

PAINTING SUPPLIES

- Watercolor paint set (16 colors, artist grade)—See "Properties of Watercolor Paint and Paper" on page 10 for more details.
- White acrylic paint (approx. 4 oz)
- Brushes (sizes 0 or 1, 4, and 8)—See "A Note About Brushes" on page 8 for more details.
- Watercolor paper (8"x10")
- 9"x12" backing surface: a watercolor paper, piece of cardboard, or thick piece of cardstock
- Plastic palette
- Art tape or masking tape
- Water cup with water

OTHER SUPPLIES

- Apron and/or plastic tablecloth (optional)
- Paper towels
- Straightedge or ruler
- Circular object approximately 2" in diameter (such as a cup or jar lid)
- Coarse salt
- Pencil and eraser
- Small fan or hair dryer (optional)

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LESSON 2

A HISTORY OF WATERCOLOR: SUNSET

SUPPLIES

- Watercolor paint set
- Brushes (sizes 0 or 1, 4, and 8)
- One piece of 8"x10" watercolor paper and a scrap for testing colors
- 9"x12" backing surface, such as paper, cardboard, or thick cardstock
- Water
- Palette
- Paper towels
- Art tape or masking tape
- Pencil and eraser
- Small fan or hair dryer (optional)

TIP

The same backing paper can be used throughout the course as long as any paint on it has dried.

WATERCOLOR PAINTING THROUGH THE AGES

Watercolor painting is one of the oldest artistic media, though it has not always been as we know it today. Ancient peoples such as the Egyptians combined pigments from minerals and plants with a binding agent such as gum arabic (tree sap) or egg whites and then added water to paint on papyrus and on the walls of their tombs and temples. Scientists believe that Egypt's dry climate helped preserve these ancient paintings, some of which are still visible today. This early watercolor paint was not as translucent as the watercolor paints we use now.



"Tomb of Twosret and Setnakht"
Artist Unknown, c. 1190 BC

In Europe artists began illuminating, or illustrating, manuscripts using similar techniques as early as AD 400. This practice became increasingly popular during the medieval period, when most people still could not read. Scribes and illuminators would add miniature paintings or full-page illustrations to help guide readers through a manuscript.



"Edict of the Lombard King Rothari"
Artist Unknown, c. 643



"Book of Hours, Use of Thérouanne"
Artist Unknown, c. 1470s

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"Palace Children Playing"
Artist Unknown, c. 1000–1300

Chinese artists during the Song dynasty (960–1279) used a slightly different technique that involved mixing ink with water and then painting on silk paper that could be displayed or rolled up into a scroll once it was dry.



"Couple in a Farmyard"
by Paul Sandby (1731–1809), 1782



"The Large Piece of Turf"
by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), 1503

German artist Albrecht Dürer is sometimes called the first master of watercolor. In the early 1500s, he combined watercolor with other media such as ***gouache*** to create paintings showing natural ***subjects***, including landscapes and wildlife.



"Lucerne from the Lake"
by J.M.W. Turner (1775–1851), 1845

As time passed, watercolor became a more mainstream medium, eventually becoming as popular as oil painting. Artists from the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, such as Paul Sandby and J.M. William Turner, helped solidify watercolor's distinction as a serious art form.



"Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia"
by Nicholas Hilliard (1547–1619), 1605–1610

Watercolor paint proved to be compact and portable, making it ideal for small works of art. Before long, miniature portraits became popular throughout Europe. English painter Nicholas Hilliard was well known for creating these finely detailed watercolor portraits of royalty and other aristocrats. He was even appointed to be Queen Elizabeth I's official miniaturist.

Gouache [gwash]: known as opaque watercolor; contains more pigment than traditional watercolor paint

Subject: the focus or topic of the artwork

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ACTIVITY

Take a look at the eight paintings shown. Look closely at the similarities and differences in the painting styles. Judging based on the artistic style alone, try to match each painting with another by the same artist. Painting details (and answers) are shown on the following page. Don't worry if you don't get them all right—instead use this as an opportunity to notice details.



A



B



C



D

E



F



G



H



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LESSON 4

DEPTH AND DISTANCE: SUMMER COTTAGE

SUPPLIES

- Watercolor paint set
- White acrylic paint
- Brushes (sizes 0 or 1, 4, and 8)
- One piece of 8"x10" watercolor paper and a scrap for testing colors
- 9"x12" backing surface, such as paper, cardboard, or thick cardstock
- Water
- Palette
- Paper towels
- Art tape or masking tape
- Pencil and eraser
- Small fan or hair dryer (optional)
- Straightedge or ruler (optional)

DEPTH AND DISTANCE IN WATERCOLOR

As you have painted your way through the previous lessons, you've learned a few techniques for creating the appearance of depth or distance in your painting. In Lesson 1 your mountain gradient helped you see how layers of increasingly darker paint can help add depth. When you painted the sunset in Lesson 2, you learned how to use linear perspective to create depth with lines that converge toward a single point. In Lesson 3 you learned how to alter paint colors and strokes to make near details stand out with clarity while background elements recede.



"Trient"
by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), 1495

In today's lesson you'll put these techniques together to create a beautiful summer landscape. First, take a look at how some watercolorists throughout history handled depth and distance in their work.

This painting of the Italian city Trento (known in German as Trient) is an early example of a watercolor landscape. Albrecht Dürer created depth in this painting using both color and composition. Notice how the colors are generally cooler and lighter farther from the viewer, gradually becoming warmer, darker, and more distinct in the bottom third of the painting. This is called *aerial* or *atmospheric perspective* because it is as if you are viewing the distant elements through the atmosphere. Since the mountains shorten and fade into the background sky, this painting feels like it shows an incredible distance. These converging lines show *linear perspective*, which you learned about in Lesson 2.

KNOWLEDGE CHECK

When painting the background, which of these helps elements recede in a watercolor painting?

A. Painting brighter or darker colors

B. Using less detailed strokes

C. Using less water

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ACTIVITY

See if you can identify which type of perspective is used in the following paintings:

Over a century later, Dutch painter Allaert van Everdingen used watercolors to paint this landscape. Compare it to the previous painting. Which do you feel has more depth? Like Dürer, Van Everdingen used cooler colors in the background and warmer colors in the foreground. He also created a distant perspective by painting the fishermen beside the river. They are very small, so both they and the river seem far from the viewer. This adds depth because you perceive larger objects as being closer to you.



"Landscape"
by Allaert van Everdingen (1621–1675), c. mid-17th century

What type of perspective is most prominent in Van Everdingen's painting? Explain your reasoning.

In the 1700s watercolorist Thomas Gainsborough painted this intricately detailed scene. The composition of this painting uses both atmospheric and linear perspective, but we'll look at it as an example of linear perspective. Instead of having the elements converge at the center of the painting, Gainsborough placed the vanishing point off to the left. It seems as if the viewer could see into the distance if only the dead tree were out of the way. Notice how the trees behind the peasant are taller toward the right side of the painting and grow smaller as your eye moves to the left. Look at the line of the road angling upward from the bottom-right corner of the painting toward the dead tree. These converging lines create a sense of depth.



"Woodland Scene with a Peasant, a Horse, and a Cart"
by Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788), c. 1760

Explain in your own words why linear perspective is prominent in Gainsborough's painting.

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SUMMER COTTAGE



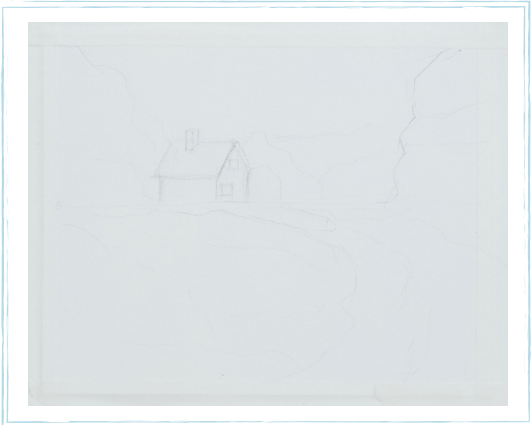
For your fourth project, you will use all three brushes, a piece of 8"x10" watercolor paper, a larger backing paper, tape, a scrap piece of paper, a pencil and eraser, watercolor paints, white acrylic paint, water, a palette, and a paper towel. You may also want a straightedge or ruler if you would like to draw a grid and a small fan to help speed drying time.

Step 1: Prepare Your Paper

- Place the backing paper underneath the 8"x10" paper, carefully taping along each edge. Keep the tape as straight as you can, creating a ¼"–½" white border around your painting. For this project you will be working with the paper in landscape orientation.

Step 2: Sketch Your Composition

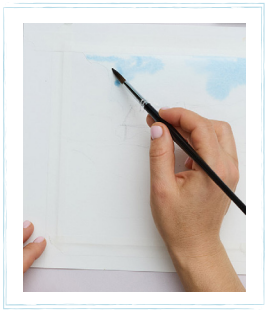
- Take a look at the final painting before you begin. Then complete a light sketch to plan your composition. Remember the rule of thirds. If you need to, you can draw a grid on the paper first, or you can try to visualize the grid in your mind as you plan.



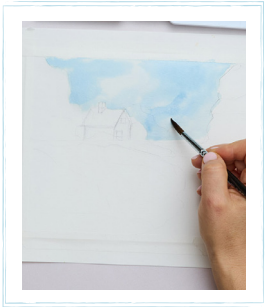
- Sketch a horizontal line fairly close to the center—it does not need to be a perfect line. This will be the horizon line where the cottage sits. Remember: Pencil lines will show through watercolor paint, so keep your pencil lines very faint on the paper. Sketch the shape of the cottage about a third of the way in from the left. The trail lies about a third of the way in from the right. The background hills are about a third of the way down from the top. Also sketch a faint outline of the large trees that sit at each side of the painting.

Step 3: Sky and Distant Hills

- Gently erase the horizon line and any grid lines you drew on your paper.



- Wet the large brush and load a touch of light blue paint on the bristles. Begin at the top of the paper and work your way down, filling the sky with this color to the horizon. Cover the distant hills. You will paint over these later.



- Use a slightly darker blue to paint a second layer on the sky, but leave some spaces without this color, including above the chimney. This lighter area will be the clouds in the sky and the smoke from the chimney. Remember: You want the color of the sky to have variations so that it looks more natural. Allow the sky to dry slightly before continuing.

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Step 7: Atmosphere and Details



- Switch to your smallest brush to add details to your painting. Mix brown with a little bit of indigo. Use this color to add more contrast along the windows of the cottage, at the roofline, and on the chimney.







- Mix green with indigo to create a very dark green color. With this color add more green spots to the greenery around the cottage and in the trees.



- Add some final touches of this very dark green to the lower edge of your painting.

TIP

Remember that this is one way to create depth using aerial perspective: You began with a light-colored base, then gradually built the greenery in layers. The leaves farthest from the viewer are the lightest, and those closest to the viewer are the darkest.

- Now it's time to paint the flowers! Choose some bright colors that correspond with the foundations you painted in Step 6. Use just a little bit of water with the pigment so that the colors are strong and vibrant. Use the tip of the smallest brush to dot flowers along the trail. Dab the paint on the paper lightly. Be bold with colors, including red, orange, pink, purple, and blue. If you find that some spots are brighter than you like, use plain water to brush the paint off the paper. Adding more water where colors meet will help soften the transition between them. Let this layer of flowers dry before continuing.



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LESSON 5

LIGHT AND SHADOW: EARLY SNOW

SUPPLIES

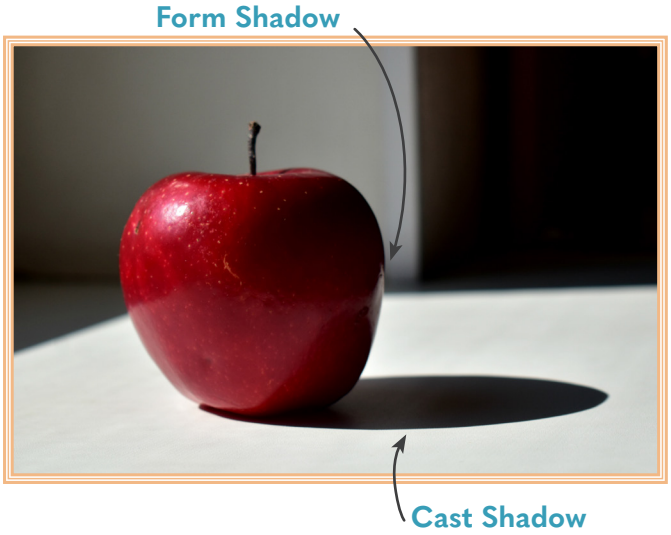
- Watercolor paint set
- Brushes (sizes 0 or 1, 4, and 8)
- One piece of 8"x10" watercolor paper and a scrap for testing colors
- 9"x12" backing surface, such as paper, cardboard, or thick cardstock
- Water
- Palette
- Paper towels
- Art tape or masking tape
- Pencil and eraser
- Small fan or hair dryer (optional)

LIGHT AND SHADOW IN WATERCOLOR

Learning how to effectively depict light and shadow is an important part of learning any sort of painting. In watercolor painting artists convey light and shadow through layers, using different values of similar colors. Remember that value is how light or dark a color is, and in watercolor artists work from lightest to darkest.

You may encounter two types of shadows when trying to paint different subjects. A ***form shadow*** is a shadow that is on an object to help show its shape. This type of shadow appears on the opposite side of the object from the light source and usually has a gentle transition to make the subject look more three-dimensional.

The second type of shadow is a ***cast shadow***. This is the type of shadow that appears on a surface when light shines around or through the subject. This type of shadow can have hard or soft edges, depending on the edges of the subject and the texture of the surface the shadow falls on.



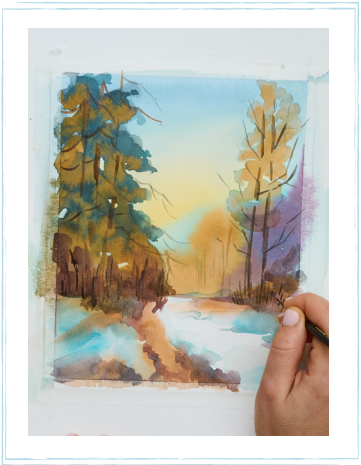


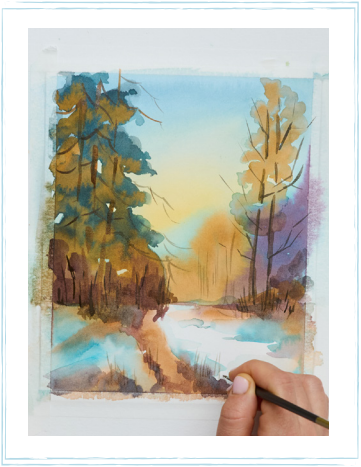
We often think that shadows are just black or gray, but look closely at the child's shadow. What color is the shadow that is cast on the sand? If you look closely, you will see that it is the same color as the sand's surface, only a much darker value.

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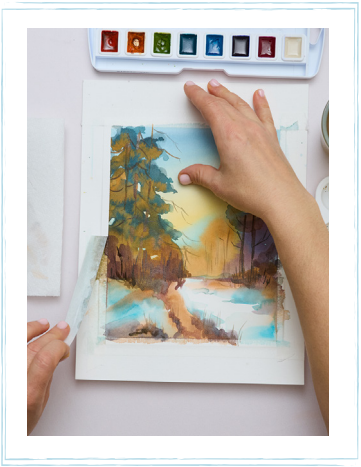


- Next, move to the tree on the right side of the paper. Add more contrast to the trunk using the brown, blue, and indigo mix. On this tree the branches slope upward, growing thinner the farther they are from the trunk.





- Add more water to this brown-indigo mix to thin the paint. Then add light, faint trunks to the group of orange trees in the middle of the painting. Paint thin, dry grass or sticks below the tree on the right and add more grass along the bottom of the paper in front of the snow.



- Clean up all your materials and set your painting somewhere safe while it dries. Then gently remove the tape to see your final painting, and save the backing paper for your next project.



Congratulations!

YOU'VE FINISHED YOUR FIFTH WATERCOLOR PAINTING!

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