FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 3–5 / 04

The Coast Beneath Our Feet

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 3–5 | 4–5 studio sessions of 45–55 min	Media: Mixed-media collage, drawing, printmaking, paper relief

The artistic problem

Create a layered landscape, relief or map-like artwork showing a Louisiana wetland and at least one relationship among water, animals, plants and human activity.

Essential question: How can an artwork make the relationships between water, land, plants and people visible?

Place-based cultural lens: Louisiana coastal wetlands are ecologically and culturally significant. Students examine both natural systems and the people who live and work near the coast.

Learning targets

- Observe and represent three wetland components.
- Use foreground, middle ground and background or transparent layers.
- Explain one interconnected relationship with visual evidence.

Student-visible success criteria

- At least three distinct ecological or human features.
- Two or more clearly separated layers.
- A focal point that makes a relationship legible.
- One revision improving spatial or factual clarity.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana Grade 3–4: VA-CE-E1, VA-CE-E6, VA-AP-E3; Grade 5 (5–8 cluster): VA-CE-M1, VA-CE-M6

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Envision, Develop Craft, Understand Art Worlds. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Coastal diagrams and images from public agencies
- Tracing paper or translucent collage
- Blue/green/brown papers

- Graphite and paint
- Glue sticks; optional paper-building materials

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Show a simple wetland cross-section and ask what is above, on, and under the water.

02 / Investigate Compare coastal photos and a basic map; distinguish evidence, inference and imagination.

03 / Skill Studio Model overlapping and translucent layers, scale clues and key/legend design.

04 / Generate Generate three studies: landscape, cross-section and map-like artwork.

05 / Plan Choose an audience and one relationship to teach through the artwork.

06 / Produce Build a layered scene with purposeful proportion, texture, and a clear focal message.

07 / Critique Partners identify what the layers show and whether the relationship can be inferred.

08 / Revise Refine one position, color or label for clearer communication.

09 / Present Present as a local-environment gallery with short evidence captions.

10 / Reflect Name the visual evidence that most effectively explained the relationship.

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Coastal inquiry** Observe images, map visible layers, compare questions.	Initial “what I see / wonder” chart.
Day 2	**Skill + investigation plan** Model layers, texture and scale; draft three solutions.	Annotated selected plan.
Day 3–4	**Produce model-artwork** Build layers and consult reference; teacher conferences.	Evidence check: features and relationships.
Day 5	**Critique + revise + display** Peer reads the landscape; improve one unclear element.	Final product, artist note and source attribution.

Key technique to model

Collage layering, relief, texture, proportion, emphasis, visual evidence.

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Offer ready-cut texture strips, tactile models, photo labels, large-print diagrams, bilingual vocabulary and alternatives for fine motor tasks.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?
- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

Use current place names and community-led sources; avoid using tribal motifs or naming specific tribal practices without verified primary sources. Focus on place, ecology and relationships.

Stretch & explore

Compare two time periods using public restoration maps, noting what the evidence does and does not prove.

Design provenance: Original grade 3–5 investigation drawing on the source's observation and layered compositional thinking.