STUDIO FIELDNOTES / ARTS INTEGRATION / 3–5

Watershed from Above

Teacher guide · 3–5 · 45–55 minutes × 2–4 sessions

Essential question

How can elevation shape where water goes?

Why this investigation matters

Create contour layers and predict runoff pathways using a water test

The finished work

Layered relief map of a model watershed

Methods and material suggestions

watersheds, flow direction, topography; choose materials suitable for your space: drawing and collage materials, paper, water-based media, or clean reclaimed objects as appropriate.

Learning targets

Students will: analyze a relevant visual or disciplinary source; experiment with watersheds, flow direction, topography; create an original response; give and use evidence-based feedback; and explain one artistic choice.

Teaching progression

01 / Engage

Show the inquiry question: How can elevation shape where water goes? Invite a noticing, a wonder, and an initial interpretation.

02 / Investigate

Examine relevant diagrams, data and field observations. Create contour layers and predict runoff pathways using a water test Students annotate the evidence that supports their thinking.

03 / Skill Studio

Demonstrate watersheds, flow direction with a short material experiment. Students test the technique and record what changes.

04 / Generate

Produce at least two distinct visual approaches to the challenge. Compare how each communicates the idea.

05 / Plan

Choose an approach, identify materials and sketch a sequence of actions. Name one foreseeable difficulty.

06 / Produce

Create the original artwork or design: Layered relief map of a model watershed. Photograph or annotate work in progress.

07 / Critique

Use evidence-based peer feedback: one element that communicates, one question, one suggested next move.

08 / Revise

Make one visible revision in response to critique or new evidence. Record before-and-after choices.

09 / Present

Display or share the result with a student-authored explanation and credits for research sources.

10 / Reflect

Return to the inquiry question and explain what the work now communicates, what changed and what could improve next time.

Standards and adaptation

Visual Arts Creating/Connecting plus Earth Science and Geography reasoning; adapt core standards to the exact course and grade level.

Do not substitute artistic polish for accuracy of evidence; assess each discipline separately.

Differentiation and access

Offer visual exemplars, tactile or large-print materials, verbal/audio explanations, partner brainstorming, alternate motor tools, and choice in subject matter. Ask for three thumbnail ideas, a labeled plan, one prototype, peer feedback, and a visible revision.

Teacher checks

Before: Ask students to answer: How can elevation shape where water goes? Record a drawing, annotation or discussion response.

During: Look for purposeful use of watersheds and a clear link between research evidence and design choices. Ask students to explain an alternative.

After: Compare first plan and revised result; collect a student statement naming one choice, one change, and the evidence that motivated it.

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