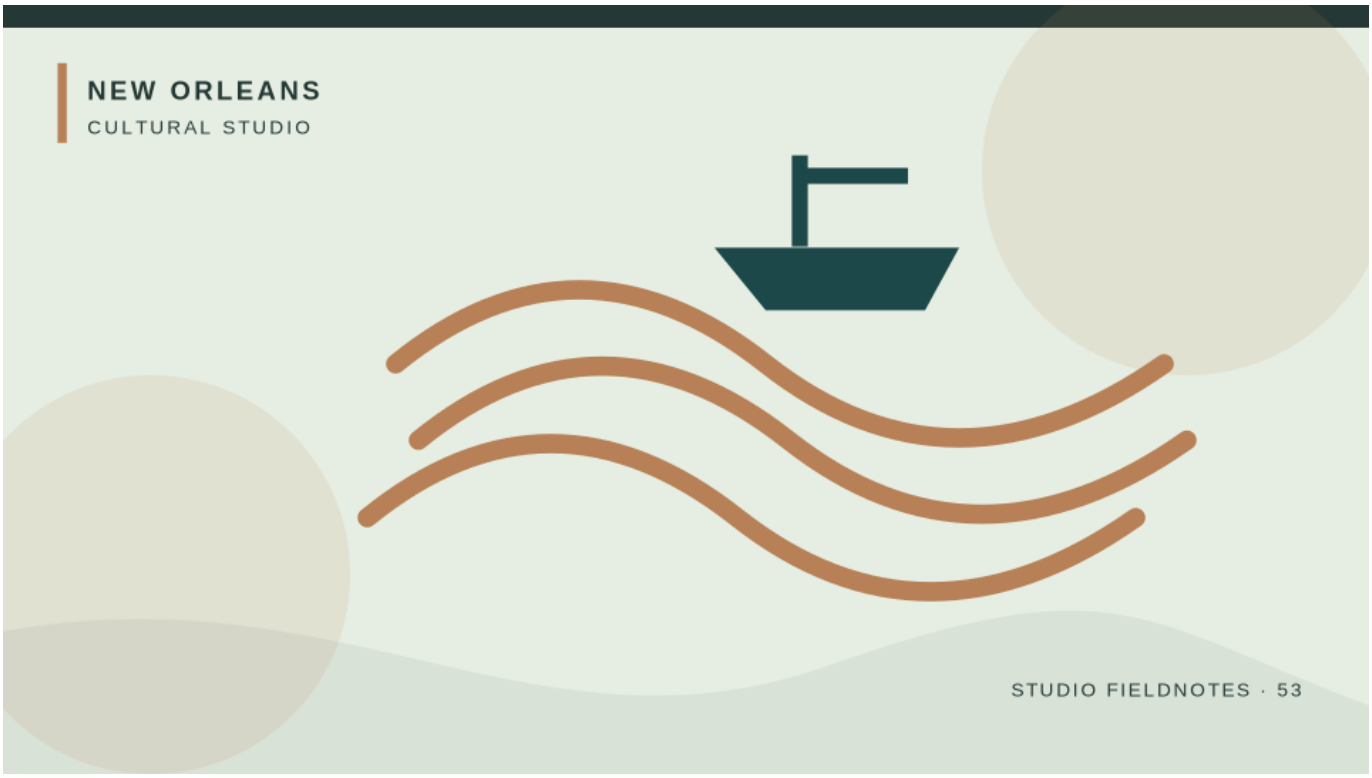
Mississippi River Shapes

NEW ORLEANS CULTURAL STUDIO | LESSON 53 | GRADES K–2 | TEACHER GUIDE



The artistic problem

Create an oversized river collage with layered currents, boat silhouettes, and one small feature that shows scale.

Inquiry & goals

How can a line move like water?

- Students can demonstrate curved line, layering, proportion.
- Students can produce a collaborative river panorama with an individual contribution.
- Students can explain one culturally grounded decision and make one visible revision.

Instructional frame

Grade band: K–2 | Suggested duration: 3–4 lessons · 35–45 minutes | Suggested materials: Drawing, collage, paper, colored media.

Louisiana visual arts standards (grade-cluster benchmark references): VA-CE-E1, VA-CE-E3, VA-CE-E5, VA-HP-E1. Use the relevant grade-level cluster, particularly for Grades 3–5.

Community and cultural context

The Mississippi River shapes New Orleans trade, movement, work, and waterfront life.

Teaching care: Discuss the river as a place of work and ecology, not only a scenic tourist view.

Success criteria

- The work responds to the artistic problem with an identifiable student-authored idea.
- The selected techniques are visible and purposeful: Curved line, layering, proportion.
- A source or cultural context is acknowledged accurately without appropriation.
- At least two alternatives were generated before the final choice.
- One revision is visible and the artist explains what changed.

Studio sequence: 10 purposeful moves

01 ENGAGE Show two contrasting, attributed local sources. Ask what students notice and what they should not assume.

02 INVESTIGATE Students gather visual evidence and identify who made it, what it is for, and whose voice is represented.

03 SKILL STUDIO Model the targeted techniques: Curved line, layering, proportion. Demonstrate a choice, not a model image to copy.

04 GENERATE Students develop at least three distinct thumbnail responses to the investigation.

05 PLAN Compare ideas against audience, meaning, technique, and cultural care; select or combine one plan.

06 PRODUCE Build the work: A collaborative river panorama with an individual contribution. Conduct a mid-workshop conference with visual evidence.

07 CRITIQUE Peer feedback: identify a design choice that works, a question about meaning, and one specific improvement.

08 REVISE Make an observable change to strengthen communication or craft; photograph before and after if appropriate.

09 PRESENT Display with a caption naming source context, intent, and choices. Keep student consent central.

10 REFLECT Explain strongest choice, a changed decision, what the source taught, and a next growth target.

Checkpoints and prompts

- Entry: What do we know about this specific New Orleans history, and how do we know it?
- Middle: Can the viewer see the design decision you intended?
- Exit: Which source and revision changed your interpretation?

UDL and access

Offer multiple ways to plan (sketch, spoken notes, physical mock-up, digital tools); use large-print image descriptions and high-contrast examples; allow written, recorded, or conference-based reflection. Honor religious, identity, bereavement, and trauma-related opt-outs where relevant.

Extension

Invite a community partner or cultural institution to critique the interpretation, with appropriate preparation, permission, and compensation where possible.

Materials and rights

Use school-safe tools and school-approved media. Attribute source materials and respect photographic, artwork, interview, and museum-image permissions. Student artwork must remain original. This packet uses original abstract teaching illustrations, not replicas of regalia or historical documents.