FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 6–8 / 31

Saltwater, Freshwater Atlas

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 6–8 | 5–7 sessions, 45–60 minutes

Media: drawing, print, collage or approved digital media

The artistic problem

Design a visual atlas page comparing two Louisiana water habitats.

Essential question: How do artists visualize scientific differences accurately?

Place-based cultural lens: Use verified Louisiana coastal and watershed sources for habitat distinctions.

Learning targets

- Investigate the question: How do artists visualize scientific differences accurately?
- Apply annotated diagrams, limited palettes, scale marks in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve annotated diagrams and name one next step.

Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Design a visual atlas page comparing two Louisiana water habitats.
- Artwork includes two evidence-based habitat differences and a clear visual key.
- Process evidence shows three different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate annotated diagrams and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana 5–8 cluster: VA-CE-M1, VA-CE-M3, VA-CE-M5, VA-AP-M1

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Envision, Engage & Persist, Reflect, 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

- Drawing paper or sketchbook for idea studies
- drawing, print, collage or approved digital media
- Samples and images from reliable sources, with attribution
- Tools appropriate to local safety rules and grade level
- Choice of visual, oral, or written reflection tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Present the artistic question: How do artists visualize scientific differences accurately? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

02 / Investigate Use verified Louisiana coastal and watershed sources for habitat distinctions. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

03 / Skill Studio Demonstrate annotated diagrams, limited palettes, scale marks. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

04 / Generate Develop three possibilities for the challenge: Design a visual atlas page comparing two Louisiana water habitats. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

05 / Plan Compare sketches to the success check (two evidence-based habitat differences and a clear visual key); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

06 / Produce Produce an original visual response using annotated diagrams, limited palettes, scale marks; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

07 / Critique Partners identify where the artwork communicates the intended idea and locate evidence of annotated diagrams in the work.

08 / Revise Revisit the specific checkpoint: Two evidence-based habitat differences and a clear visual key. Make one visible change after critique and preserve the initial view for comparison.

09 / Present Present with a title, medium, one key artistic decision and any needed credit or contextual limitation.

10 / Reflect Reflect: What evidence proves you improved annotated diagrams? What will you try or investigate next?

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Frame the question** How do artists visualize scientific differences accurately?; Use verified Louisiana coastal and watershed sources for habitat distinctions.	Evidence/interpretation log.
Day 2	**Studio technique** Demonstrate annotated diagrams, limited palettes, scale marks. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.	Practice sheet with labels about choices.
Day 3	**Generate + commit** Sketch three meaningfully different outcomes.	Three proposals and criteria-based choice.
Day 4–5	**Sustained production** Build the work and conference about annotated diagrams.	Process photos and source annotations.
Day 6	**Interpret + revise** Peer feedback related to Two evidence-based habitat differences and a clear visual key.	Annotated first and revised states.
Day 7	**Present + reflect** Curate the work with evidence and ethical source credits.	Final artifact, rubric and next-step statement.

Key technique to model

annotated diagrams, limited palettes, scale marks

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Include community relationships to water without assuming common experiences. Offer physical samples, captioned images, accessible demonstrations, flexible planning modes, and alternate materials while retaining the common visual learning target.

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

Do not invent scientific measurements or label invented creatures as real.

Stretch & explore

Create a companion plate about seasonal change.

Design provenance: Original Studio Fieldnotes investigation developed for the 50-lesson library; informed by the teacher-supplied ten-stage Artistic Investigations architecture and reflective Studio Habits framework.