FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / K–2 / 18

# Sky Above the City

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: K–2 | 3–4 sessions, 35–45 minutes

Media: washable art media and cut-paper supplies

## The artistic problem

Build a layered city or landscape silhouette beneath an observed sky.

**Essential question:** How do overlapping shapes and values create distance?

**Place-based cultural lens:** Compare roofs, trees, wide Louisiana skies, bridges, and rural horizon lines.

## Learning targets

- Investigate the question: How do overlapping shapes and values create distance?
- Apply layering, tonal contrast, horizon, shape silhouettes in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve layering and name one next step.

## Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Build a layered city or landscape silhouette beneath an observed sky.
- Artwork includes three layers and an intentional light-to-dark progression.
- Process evidence shows two different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate layering and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

## Standards & studio habits

Louisiana K–4 cluster: VA-CE-E1, VA-CE-E3, VA-CE-E5, VA-AP-E6

Studio Habits of Mind: Observe, Envision, Express, Reflect. 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
- washable art media and cut-paper supplies
- 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 overlapping shapes and values create distance? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

**02 / Investigate** Compare roofs, trees, wide Louisiana skies, bridges, and rural horizon lines. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

**03 / Skill Studio** Demonstrate layering, tonal contrast, horizon, shape silhouettes. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

**04 / Generate** Develop two possibilities for the challenge: Build a layered city or landscape silhouette beneath an observed sky. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

**05 / Plan** Compare sketches to the success check (three layers and an intentional light-to-dark progression); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

**06 / Produce** Produce an original visual response using layering, tonal contrast, horizon, shape silhouettes; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

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

**08 / Revise** Revisit the specific checkpoint: Three layers and an intentional light-to-dark progression. 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 layering? What will you try or investigate next?

## Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

| Session | Teaching move | Capture evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Day 1 | **Notice + explore**<br>Compare roofs, trees, wide Louisiana skies, bridges, and rural horizon lines. | Record one noticing and a quick mark-making sample. |
| Day 2 | **Skill studio + choices**<br>Demonstrate layering, tonal contrast, horizon, shape silhouettes. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates. Children develop two possibilities. | Photo or scan of two studies, with a selected idea. |
| Day 3 | **Make + conference**<br>Create the artwork; show one decision at a time. | Teacher notes use of layering. |
| Day 4 | **Critique + revise + share**<br>Peer observation, visible change and oral/visual reflection. | Save before/after samples and next goal. |

## Key technique to model

layering, tonal contrast, horizon, shape silhouettes

## Access without lowering the artistic goal

Allow urban, rural, coastal, or imagined settings equally. 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

Avoid presenting a single postcard skyline as the only image of Louisiana.

## Stretch & explore

Create the same view at sunrise or dusk.

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.