

Thinking **BiG**, thinking small ...



Playing with Size

Suggested grade levels:

Kindergarten through Grade 2

In this art lesson, students look at *Prairie Flowers, Potato, and Wheat*, 2009, giant sculptures of native wildflowers created by a team of sculptors, Jean Whitesavage and Nick Lyle. In response to the realistic subject and the gigantic scale, students invent the beginning of a story based on the art and then create their own drawing, exploring the idea of shrinking or growing the size of things.

The Big Idea

Changing the size or scale of something compared to the world around it can engage the imagination.

Student learning targets:

I can find a story in a work of art.

I can draw something small big.

I can draw something big small.

I can make my picture stand out.

Materials

Large, white drawing paper
18 x 24 inches

Colored crayons or oil pastels

Simple flowers to observe and draw

Vocabulary

Contour
Curvy and straight lines
Edge
Environment
Observation
Shape
Scale
Sculpture
Three-dimensional

Teaching and Learning Process Part I

1. Teacher: Guides responding to art with questions to spark classroom conversations.

What happens when we make something that is usually small really, really big? Share a story you know that has giant people, animals or places, or the opposite — things in miniature — in it.

*Let's look at these **sculptures** (**three-dimensional** works of art) by Jean Whitesavage and Nick Lyle and allow them to lead us into our wildest imaginations by thinking they are real flowers. How did they get so big? Did some seeds for giant flowers fall out of some giant creature's pockets? Or was there some special, super soil that regular seeds fell into to grow these giant plants? Or did everything else shrink — fences, roads, cars...?*

Talk with a partner and invent your version of the beginning of the story. It starts like this...

These flowers are gigantic because...

Students: □ Invent a story with a partner, explaining why the flowers are so big.

2. Teacher: Demonstrates observing a small real flower and drawing it big. First I am drawing a **straight** line across the bottom of my paper to show the ground that this flower is growing out of.

*When we look at plants we see **shapes**. I am **observing** by looking very closely at a little flower, and noticing the shapes that I see. I am going to draw the edges or **contours** of the flower very lightly at first and very big to show the shapes that I see.*

*I am drawing these **curvy** flower lines and shapes so big that they almost touch the edge of the paper.*

Students: □ Observe and draw a flower big enough to fill the paper.



Studio Tips

Try rehearsing hand and arm movements that form a big shape or line before touching down on paper. If flower drawings start out small, encourage students to add more flowers that are even bigger.

Encourage thoughtful, purposeful drawing. Remember that overlapping colors and increasing tool pressure are ways to emphasize lines and shapes.



3. Teacher: Guides comparing size of sculptures with things in their environment. *What are some of the clues in the pictures that tell us that the sculptures, Prairie Flowers, Potato, and Wheat, are much bigger than real wildflowers?*

For fun, let's find a way to show that our flowers are even bigger. What could we add right next to our big flowers that would make them seem even bigger? Next we will draw at least one thing that is usually big very small.

Let's brainstorm some ideas: buildings, school buses, flagpoles, towers. Watch as I add a tiny house on the ground next to my flower. Notice how I add details to show what it is: windows, a door. How does that change the way the flower looks?

Students: □ Think of something big and then draw it very small next to their flower.

4. Teacher: Encourages students to make shapes and lines stand out. *We want to draw over our light lines to make them easy to see and understand. Have a friend hold up your drawing and look at it from far away to check whether your big and small lines and shapes stand out. You may need to add more color.*

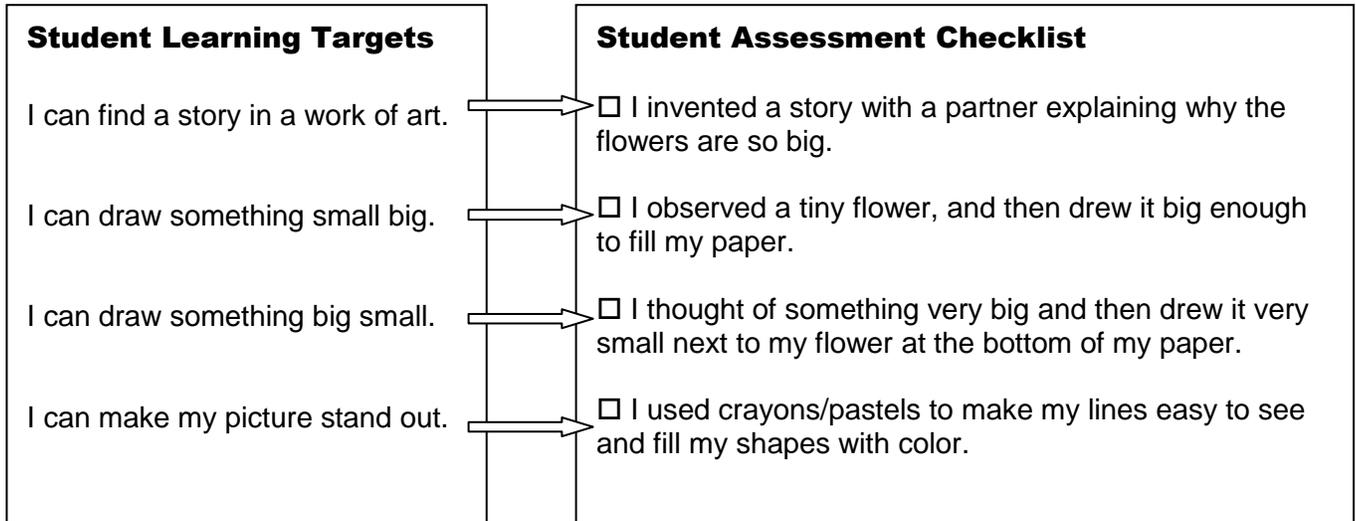
Press hard with your crayon to make those lines jump out. Fill in your shapes with color also. You can use more than one color in your shapes and lines.

Students: □ Use crayons/pastels to fill their shapes and lines clear.

Part II

1. Teacher: Introduces the word "scale" and guides student reflection and self-assessment. *When we shrink or grow the size of something compared to the **environment** around it or others of its kind, we are changing the scale. We made large-scale flowers. A giant is a large-scale human, and an elf is a small-scale human.*

Reflection questions: *What helped you draw the flowers big? How did your picture change when you made something big small and put it next to your flower? Share an interesting technique you discovered using the drawing tools.* **Students:** Participate in reflection and self assessment.



2. Teacher: Closes lesson by guiding investigation of Nick and Jean’s creative process by projecting *What Really Happened: How the Artists Grew Giant Sculptures.*

Displays student art along with the family communication/wall text (below) and the student writing/story ideas explored at the beginning of the lesson.

Lesson Alternatives or Extensions
Make gigantic, student-height flower drawings, cut them out, and place (plant) them on school walls for maximum effect.
OR
Reverse the subject and size by making giant drawings of human-made objects, tools, hardware, and add tiny shapes for living things— perhaps a tiny elephant in the shadow of a giant key....

Washington State EALRS in Visual Art
1.1.1 Concepts and vocabulary: curved, straight, contour line, shape, scale
1.1.2 Skills and techniques: drawing
2.3 Applies a Responding Process
Writing
3.2.2 Builds a rich vocabulary through talking, listening and language activities

What Really Happened...

HOW THE ARTISTS grew giant SCULPTURES

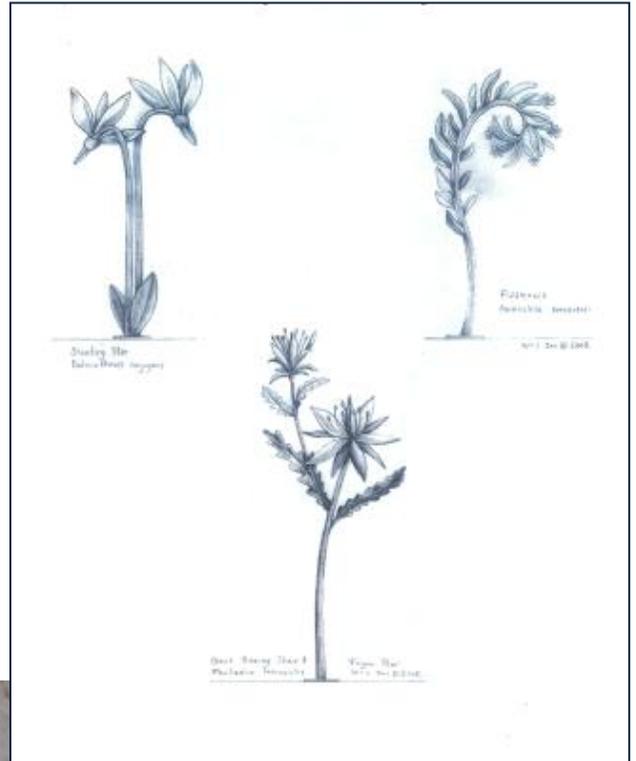
These sculptures can be found along a walking trail at Pioneer Park in Connell, Washington.

Artist's Statement

There are six large sculptures placed along this walking path. They represent some of the native prairie flowers found in this compelling landscape.

First the artists learned about, observed, and drew real wildflowers that live in the prairie around Connell. →

Notice how the metal shapes for the flower sculpture look just like the shapes in the flower drawing — except much bigger!



Notice how the drawing and the man beside the petals and leaves help us understand the scale of the sculptures.



The artists cut the giant plant shapes out of steel and formed the steel by hand-using traditional blacksmithing tools.

The metal shapes become softer when heated. Then they can be hammered and formed into curved shapes like real leaves.





The flower parts are joined together using welding. Welding is where metal is melted and becomes like glue — it holds the parts together. Notice the flower drawings on the studio wall behind Jean.

The sculptures have a special paint and coating that protects them from sun and rain.



When the flower sculptures are installed, their stems are bolted into footings—three-dimensional forms made out of concrete that are sunk deeply into the ground.

Family Communication/Wall Display Text

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PLAYING WITH SIZE

- We looked at *Prairie Flowers*, 2009: giant sculptures of native plants created by a team of sculptors, Jean Whitesavage and Nick Lyle.
- We worked with a partner to find a story from our imagination in the art. We started with: *These flowers are gigantic because...*
- We talked about how artists change the size of objects or living things in relation to their environment. Just like the artists, we observed real flowers, and then made them big.
- We made our flowers seem even bigger by shrinking something that is usually big — like a building or school bus — and put it on the ground, right next to our flower.
- We enhanced our shapes and lines in order to make them stand out.
- We learned that scale means changing the size of something compared to its environment or others of its kind. We learned about the creative process behind the art by looking at photos taken while the sculptures were being made.

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