

Collaborative Landscape Mural (inspired by Frances Badger)
developed by Karen Schaschwary, Art Teacher, Chicago Heights, IL



Frances Badger (1904-1997)
above: *Treasure Island* mural, 1935-1938
Oak Park Historical Society

below: sketch for *Autumn in Illinois* mural, 1936
Illinois State Museum



State Standards
25.B.3, 26.B.3d, 27.B.3

National Standards (grades 5-8)
1, 2, 4

Materials

sketch paper, pencils, projector(s), rulers, erasers, white butcher paper, coloring media, paint, paintbrushes, tarps or newspaper, smocks, water cups

Steps

1. Groups of 3-5 students will create a 9"x12" preliminary sketch of a landscape that includes at least two objects in the foreground, one in the middle ground, and one in the background. (The teacher will make transparencies out of these sketches to be projected on the mural paper.)
2. Groups of 3-5 students will create a 3'x4'6" mural painting based on their preliminary sketch.
3. Students will verbally identify and describe the objects in the foreground, middle ground, and background in *Treasure Island* by Frances Badger.
4. Students will verbally compare and contrast the use of space, color, and shape, along with the meaning in two artworks by Badger, *Treasure Island* and *Autumn in Illinois*.
5. Students will explain the meaning and history of the Work Progress Administration/ Federal Art Project, along with Badger's involvement, in a written worksheet.
6. Students will verbally defend their beliefs/opinions on why women's involvement in the WPA/Federal Art Project may have helped shape culture and encourage understanding of life during The Great Depression.

Resources:

<http://illinoiswomenartists.org/dev/author/frances-s-badger/>

http://www.chicagomodern.org/artists/frances_badger

<https://www.illinoisart.org/no-101-frances-badger>

<http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/art/collections/wpa/index.html>

<http://www.keyshistory.org/artwpa.html>

Questions and Answers:

1. **Q:** What are foreground, middle ground and background?

A: Foreground is the closest plane to the viewer in a two-dimensional landscape (closest to the bottom edge of the canvas), middle ground is directly behind the foreground in the middle part of the canvas, and background is the farthest plane from the viewer (closest to the top edge of the canvas)

2. **Q:** What objects can be seen in the foreground, middle ground, and background in *Treasure Island*?

A: In the foreground is grass, sand, people standing, and a skeleton. In the middle ground is water, part of a large rock, vertical logs, and a boat. In the background is sky, seagulls, and distant mountains/rocks.

3. **Q:** How is the use of color, space, and shape similar and different in *Treasure Island* and *Autumn in Illinois*?

A: Color – Both paintings include cool colors, such as light and dark blues, greens, and grays. There is also brown and, some yellow, and red. *Autumn in Illinois* has more green, and *Treasure Island* has more blue. This difference is because one painting is a farm landscape and the other is a sea landscape.

Space – Both paintings are of landscape scenes and have objects in the foreground, middle ground, and background. Objects in *Autumn in Illinois* appear to be farther from the viewer because they are smaller in size. The people in *Treasure Island* are closer to the viewer or larger in size.

Shape – Both paintings include long vertical shapes as trees, logs, and people. Both paintings also include triangular shapes as rocks and wheat plants. *Treasure Island* has shapes that appear rounded and organic because of a blending technique used by Badger. *Autumn in Illinois* appears more flat and geometric.

4. **Q:** What was the WPA/Federal Art project? How was Frances Badger involved?

A: The Federal Art Project was an active government program that took place during the Great Depression or 1930's. The project was created under Franklin D. Roosevelt and employed artists to create murals, posters, drawings, sculptures, etc. all over the United States. The project was created in order to create jobs for artists and stimulate interest in the arts during hard times. Many of the artworks were shown in public institutions. Frances Badger was part of the project and created many murals in Illinois, including *Treasure Island* and *Autumn in Illinois*.

5. **Q:** Do you believe women's involvement in the WPA/Federal Art Project helped to shape culture and encourage understanding of the Great Depression? How?

A: (Answers may vary. Students should be encouraged to explore their opinions instead of find a correct answer.)

Possible answer – Women's experiences in history, shown through artwork, help us to gain a well-rounded understanding of historical events. Women's involvement in the WPA/Federal Art Project help us to see that talented women artists were important in society and were able to create beautiful landscapes that added life and color to hard times. The murals that Badger created, for example, help to show people that art can re-energize communities during times of great need, even today.

Activities:

Begin by asking students what objects are in the front, middle, and back of *Treasure Island*. Teacher will explain foreground, middle ground, and background after students answer. Students will then be asked to identify what is in the foreground, middle ground, and background of *Autumn in Illinois*. The teacher will explain the history of the Work Progress Administration/Federal Art Project and Badger's involvement. The teacher will break students into groups and have them sketch a landscape that includes at least two objects in the foreground, one in the middle ground, and one in the background. The teacher will make transparencies of these sketches using a photocopier. The sketches will be projected and copied onto white 3'x4'6" butcher paper. (Students should use the majority of the butcher paper. The teacher may wish to borrow extra projectors and set up stations around the classroom.) After copying the sketches onto the butcher paper with pencil, students may begin painting in the shapes. Students may wish to tape the butcher paper onto tables or the floor. Students will begin the next class by comparing and contrasting the color, shape, and space in *Treasure Island* and *Autumn in Illinois*. Students will review the history of WPA/FAP before continuing to work. After students are finished with their murals the students will complete a written worksheet about WPA/FAP and answer questions about the importance of women artists.

see below for:

Reflection and Evaluation: Rubric for reflections and evaluation

Worksheets: Frances Badger biography and WPA/FAP worksheet

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

Student work may be assessed with the following rubric and worksheet.

Feature	Novice (1)	Developing (2)	Developed (3)	Exemplary (4)
Structures and Composition: Does the group include at least two objects in the foreground, one in the middle ground, and one in the background?	attempted, little regard for and ineffective use of design elements and principles	limited attention to effective use of design elements and principles	adequate attention to effective use of design elements and principles	exemplary, effective use of design elements and principles
Originality: Does the group show unique thought in their artwork?	attempted, needs more thoughtful approach, no personal expression	limited personal expression, needs more thoughtful approach	adequately developed personal expression in an original manner	exemplary, personal expression is in an imaginative and innovative manner
Process/Media: Does the student use the drawing and painting materials effectively in order to create and enhance shapes, space, and color?	attempted, needs more experience and commitment to better understand media, tools, and processes	limited understanding of media, tools, and processes	adequate understanding of media, tools, and processes	exemplary understanding of media, tools, and processes
Technical Skills/Presentation: Does the group carefully use the materials?	attempted, needs to spend more time on skill development in the use of media, tools, and processes	limited control in the use of media, tools, and processes	adequate control in the use of media, tools, and processes	exemplary control in the use of media, tools, and processes
Individual/Group Work: Does the students participate in the group work or leave work for others?	student does no or very little work to help group members complete artwork	student does minimal work to help group complete artwork	Students does some work to help group complete artwork	Students fulfills their role in helping group members complete the artwork

Name: _____ Date: _____

WPA/FEDERAL ART PROJECT WORKSHEET

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What was the WPA/FAP?

2. How was Frances Badger involved in the WPA/FAP?