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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

## OVERVIEW

*A Watercolor Statement*

**Title:** *A Watercolor Statement*

**Grade Level:** 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>

### Purpose

Students will explore various elements of art, such as color, texture, and space, and gain an understanding of these elements through observation and examination of paintings by Charlie Russell and through guided practice in watercolor painting.

### Description of the Unit

In this unit, students create their own watercolor painting after building on their knowledge of the elements of art, the color wheel, and brush techniques. Students experiment with color mixing and creating multiple textures. They examine many paintings by Charles M. Russell while learning visual thinking strategies and vocabulary. Throughout the process students expand their awareness about what their own art means to them through group communications, self-questioning, and the production of an artist statement. As a culminating event, students exhibit their work for an audience in a gallery walk. The combination of thoughtful writing paired with a gallery walk will give students the confidence and ability to talk about their work.

**Time:** 9 classroom hours

### Standards Addressed

#### Visual Arts Standards

- Design project steps and criteria to reach an identified goal and investigate personally relevant content for art-making.
- Apply criteria to plan revisions for artwork or designs.
- Evaluate methods for preparing and presenting artwork based on criteria.
- Explain and cite evidence about how exhibits reflect history and values of a community.
- Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment.
- Collaborate to interpret artworks.
- Develop criteria to evaluate artwork.

#### English Language Arts Standards

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.
- Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

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- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

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## Russell for Learning Unit: *A Watercolor Statement* *A literacy-based unit utilizing the arts*

**PRE-TEACH LESSON:** Introduce Charlie Russell and the Russell for Learning Unit.

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson, students will be able to recount the highlights of Charles M. Russell's life and times and to describe the qualities that made Charlie Russell an important figure in Montana and the American West.

Time: 50 minutes

Materials/Resources:

- C.M. Russell and the American West: An Unfinished Work:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxSgyk91DdM>
- Paper
- Pencil
- Chart paper
- Evidence Chart

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE THE UNIT (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Start the unit by explaining its purpose and activities.

#### Suggested Dialogue

We are beginning a Russell for Learning Unit called *A Watercolor Statement*. In this unit we will combine reading and writing with painting to gain skills in all areas. In this lesson, we will figure out what qualities made the artist Charlie Russell so important to the American West and why he is still important today. In this unit we will use the art of Charlie Russell to learn vocabulary regarding the elements of art and techniques for creating our own watercolor.

### STEP 2: INTRODUCE THE PRE-TEACH LESSON

**Process:** Give an overview of the lesson objective: Explore the qualities that made Charlie Russell an important figure in Montana and the American West.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Today we are going to explore the qualities and characteristics that helped Charlie Russell to become an influential artist in Montana's and America's history. **By the end of today's lesson you will be able to say, "I can use words and phrases to describe qualities of Charlie Russell and his art."**

### STEP 3: INTRODUCE CHARLIE RUSSELL AS AN IMPORTANT HISTORICAL FIGURE (30 MINUTES)

**Process:** Play C.M. Russell and the American West: An Unfinished Work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RxSgyk91DdM> and take notes to gather evidence of Charlie's life and work as an artist. Refer to the **Evidence Chart** in the student notebook as a graphic organizer.

Guide students through a process in which they use evidence from the video to make inferences about (a) the values of the American West and Montana as a newly formed state and (b) Charlie Russell as a person and artist. As the class watches the video, follow these steps:



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1. Periodically stop and record what students learn about Charlie or Montana. Ask the question, “What have you learned?” Use the Evidence Chart to record student responses.
2. Use what the students have learned to draw conclusions that connect Charlie to the values of Montana. Ask the questions, “Based on what you just learned, what can you conclude about the values of either Montana or Charlie as a person? What other questions do you have?” Create a list of qualities about Charlie. Decide which qualities help to confirm him as an important historical figure.
3. Record definitions for each quality so that students can use the words independently as the unit progresses. As students develop more nuanced understandings, feel free to add to the definitions.

### Suggested Dialogue

*Introduce the video.*

About ten years before Montana became a state – over 100 years ago – a young man named Charles (Charlie) Russell came here from St. Louis, Missouri. He was 16 and he wasn’t doing well in school; in fact, he disliked school so much that he started skipping. Today, some people think that he might have had a learning disability because he struggled so much. Although he wasn’t doing well in core subject areas, he was constantly doing creative things. He would take beeswax from his sister and create little figures of animals. He liked to sketch and draw the people and landscapes around him. One day his father decided that he needed to be set straight and so he put Charlie on a train with a family friend to go work on a ranch in Montana for the summer. He never called Missouri home again. As we learn more about Charlie in this brief documentary, I’ll pause and we’ll talk about what we are learning about Montana at this time in history, and about Charlie as a person and an artist. After the video, we’ll talk about what makes him important to Montana.

*Watch video. Pause at the following points:*

(1:37) What have we learned about Charlie so far? Why do the narrators refer to Montana as “territories”? (*Students respond. Share with students a little about the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. A map may be helpful.*) What is a quality about Charlie as a person that we can infer? (*If students give a quality like “brave,” prompt them to provide evidence, and record on chart.*)

(2:37) Let’s pause and write down these four important parts about Montana during this time. We’ll come back to these again throughout this unit. Is there anything we can infer about changes in the American West taking place at this time? And what have we learned about the values of Charlie or Montanans? (*Students respond.*)

- Disappearance of the buffalo
- Conquering of the Native tribes
- Barbed-wire fencing of the open range
- End of the “Old West” as it was

(3:52) Why were artists painting “history in the making”? Why does this art historian (*Joan Troccoli*) say that they wanted to “capture it before it’s gone”? (*Students respond. Share with students that photography was still new and not available to everyone. The average price of a black-and-white camera ranged from \$600 to \$2,000 and the average monthly wage for a cowboy in 1880 was \$30 a month.*) What is a quality we can infer about Charlie based on this new information? What about the changing world of Montanans? (*Students respond. If students give a quality like “brave” prompt them to provide evidence, and record on chart.*)

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(6:22) What does the art historian (Rick Stewart) mean when he says, “Whether it’s all real or not”? Does anyone have any idea what it means to “romanticize” something? *(Students respond. Share that romanticism means to think not just factually about something or someone, but also to think with feelings.)*

(11:25) What are we learning about the opinions and values of Charlie? How did he feel about the drilling for oil? *(Students respond. record.)*

(15:27) Why does Kathryn Red Corn, director of the Osage Tribal Museum, say that Charlie’s paintings showed her that he “understood Indians”? What does it say about the importance of the buffalo? *(Students respond. Record)*

(18:19) What are we learning about the landscape of Montana, especially as a “stage”? What does “foil” in this context mean? *(Share that “foil” in this context means to serve as a contrast. Make note of this as it will be helpful in analyzing Charlie’s paintings in future lessons.)*

*(end of video)* What else did we learn about Charlie? What do you notice about the way he signed his name at the bottom of his paintings? What could be the meaning of that? *(Students respond. Record)*

## STEP 4: STUDENTS MOVE INTO CREATIVE COMMUNITIES (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Guide students to sit in small groups of 4 to 6. Students support one another as they discuss which qualities best represent Charlie Russell.

### Suggested Dialogue

Now that we have watched the video and we know a little more about Charlie Russell, America’s Cowboy Artist, let’s get into small groups and discuss which qualities best represent Charlie Russell.

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## LESSON 1: Introduce Watercolor; the Element of Art – Color

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will be able to identify primary, secondary, and tertiary colors.

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials/Resources

- Watercolors in red, yellow, and blue
- Color Wheel Worksheet
- Paint trays
- Paintbrushes
- Containers of water for rinsing brushes
- Paper towels
- Chart paper for listing art vocabulary and elements of art
- *Prairie Fire*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Medicine Horse*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Four Generations*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Blackfoot Country*, painting by C. M. Russell

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 1 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Give an overview of the lesson objective, which is to learn about watercolors and the color wheel.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Today we are going to learn to create a color palette. Your homework for tonight will be to capture a moment in time of the Montana sky. **By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to say, "I can mix colors to create a color wheel and identify the three types of colors."**

### STEP 2: STUDENTS MOVE INTO CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

**Process:** Guide students to sit in small groups of 4 to 6. Students will support one another as they paint and reflect on their R4L (Russell for Learning) work.

### STEP 3: INTRODUCE THE COLOR WHEEL AND TEACH ELEMENTS OF ART – COLOR AND CONTRAST; USE SELECTED CHARLIE RUSSELL PAINTINGS TO STUDY HIS USE OF COLOR (30 MINUTES)

**Process:** Using the three primary colors, guide students in creating their own color wheel. The wheel will contain a total of twelve colors (three primary, 3 secondary, and 6 tertiary). Make sure each color is labeled with both the color's name and either "primary," "secondary," or "tertiary." Use selected paintings by Charlie Russell that show his use of color and texture.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Have you ever mixed two colors of paint together to find yourself with the color of mud? Once you learn the basics of color theory, you'll never make mud again, unless you want to! (*Write "color" on the chart.*) Let's begin by looking at the sheet of paper I am now handing you. It looks a bit like a clock. You may notice there are three large circles at twelve, four, and eight o'clock.

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You might also notice that there are three medium circles at two, six, and ten o'clock. And notice there are six small circles at one, three, five, seven, nine, and eleven o'clock.

Next, let's put small dollops of our three colors, red, yellow, and blue, in three separate wells in our paint trays. These three colors are our primary colors. (*Write "primary color" on the chart.*) Working one color at a time we'll get just a small amount of paint on the tip of our brush and wet our brushes with a little water, dab the excess water on a paper towel, and then fill in each of the three largest circles. Red will be twelve o'clock, yellow at four o'clock, and blue at eight o'clock. Let's remember to make sure our brushes are clean of each color before moving on to the next one.

Now, we'll create our secondary colors: orange, green, and violet. (*Write "secondary color" on the chart.*) We'll do all the mixing of the colors in our paint wells, not on the paper itself. Let's start by mixing red and yellow and fill in two o'clock with the color orange. Rinse your brush! Next we'll mix yellow and blue to make green and fill in six o'clock. Rinse your brush! For our last secondary color, we'll mix blue and red to make violet and fill in ten o'clock.

Finally, we need to create our tertiary colors. Tertiary means third in color. (*Write "tertiary color" on the chart.*) These colors cannot be made until we've completed the secondary colors, which we just did. Just like before, we'll work clockwise through our color wheel, mixing red-orange (one o'clock), yellow-orange (three o'clock), yellow-green (five o'clock), blue-green (seven o'clock), blue-violet (nine o'clock), and red-violet (eleven o'clock). Note that we always list the primary color first.

As our paint dries, let's talk about a few more art vocabulary words. The color wheel is split into two sides: *warm colors* and *cool colors*. Name something in nature that is warm or hot. (*Students may respond with fire, desert, sun or sand.*) What colors are they? (*Students respond with red, orange, or yellow.*) That's right - red, orange, and yellow are called *warm colors*. Now name something in nature that is cool or cold. (*Students respond ice, water, trees, grass, clouds, rain, or glaciers.*) What colors are those things? (*Students respond with blue, green, or violet.*) That's right - blue, green, and violet are called *cool colors*. (*Write "warm colors" and "cool colors" on the chart.*)

*Look for color in Prairie Fire and introduce the element of art – "contrast."*

Let's look at Charlie Russell's painting *Prairie Fire*, using what we've learned about the color wheel. Where did Charlie use cool colors? Which cool colors did he use? Where did he use warm colors? Which warm colors did he use? Where does the painting draw or pull your eye to?

I want you to notice where Charlie put a warm color next to a cool color. What does that do? My eyes are drawn to the buffalo that are surrounded by a warm glow against the cool backdrop. We might guess that Charlie wanted us to see the buffalo as the main focus of the painting. When an artist wants to create emphasis in their picture, they use contrast, this is when they put a warm color next to a cool color. That makes us, the viewers, notice it right away. (*Write "contrast" on the chart.*)

*Optional: Examine another Russell painting to reflect on warm versus cool colors and contrast.*

Let's go back and label our color wheels with the color name, as well as **P**, **S**, or **T** for "primary," "secondary," or "tertiary." Remember that we always list the primary color first when naming tertiary colors. (*For example, it isn't green-yellow; it is always yellow-green.*)

### STEP 4: CLEAN UP MATERIALS (10 MINUTES)



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**Process:** Clean up materials. Decide how to organize the process, with students taking the various clean-up responsibilities. Establish a routine to aid in future clean-ups.

## STEP 5: PREPARE STUDENTS TO CAPTURE A MONTANA HORIZON AS HOMEWORK (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Prepare students to take a picture of a horizon with their smart phone or digital camera, as they will need it for lesson 3. Encourage them to be mindful of the time of day they choose, and to capture the horizon, not just the sky. Point out the horizon line in several piece of Charlie's paintings with a large ruler or long strip of paper so students can see the proportions of the sky versus the land.

### Suggested Dialogue

In a future lesson (indicate to students which day), we will be painting a Montana sky just as Charlie Russell did. Let's look at a couple of his paintings to get us inspired. This one is called *Medicine Horse*. It depicts a Native American Scout sitting atop his horse, watching and listening. What time of day do you think it is? What about what the video we watched earlier said about the landscape as a "stage" or "foil"? Where do you see contrast in the land and the subjects? Now take a look at this painting: *Four Generations*. What time of day is it? What kind of stage does this landscape provide? Also notice the horizon line (where the land meets the sky). What is the percentage of land to sky in this one? Maybe 50:50? What about the last one, *Medicine Horse*? The horizon line is always straight, even if it is obstructed by mountains or water. The horizon line should very rarely be at the center of a painting. For reasons we'll get to later, the line is best placed about one-third up from the bottom or one-third down from the top. It is important to remember the horizon as you take your picture. Finally, let's look at *Blackfoot Country*. These are members of the Blackfoot tribe. Charlie spent the winter of 1887 with the Blackfoot people, and it's possible that he may have witnessed this moment and then later painted it. What time of day is it? What about the landscape as a "stage"? What do you notice about the horizon line? What is the percentage of land to sky in this one? Maybe 70 percent land and 30 percent sky?

So then, your assignment is to take a picture of a sunrise or sunset on your smartphone or digital camera. Just remember to please be thoughtful about the time of day as well as the horizon line. I challenge you to take a picture of a place that inspires you!

*Note: If any or all students do not have access to smartphones or digital cameras, you may want to have a backup idea for these or all students. It is also good to think about how they will access these photos once taken, will they print them off? What type of technology or accessories will you need?*

## STEP 6: CLOSE LESSON 1

**Process:** Wind up the lesson with a look forward describing the next lesson.

### Suggested Dialogue

In our next lesson, we'll look at Charlie Russell paintings and discuss another element of art.



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## LESSON 2: Introduce the Element of Art – Texture

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will be able to use texture in their painting to show detail of the natural world.

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials/Resources

- Watercolor paper
- Pencils
- Watercolors in red, yellow, and blue
- Paintbrushes
- Paint trays
- Containers of water for rinsing brushes
- Sponges
- Paper towels
- White crayons
- 3 x 3 inch pieces of cardboard
- Chart paper for listing art vocabulary and elements of art
- *Prairie Fire*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Medicine Horse*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Four Generations*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Blackfoot Country*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Indian Camp*, painting by C. M. Russell

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 2 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective, which is to learn about different watercolor techniques that give texture to paintings.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Today we are going to learn how to use watercolor techniques to create texture. **By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to say, "I can use watercolor techniques to create texture."**

### STEP 2: EXPERIMENTING WITH WATERCOLOR TECHNIQUES AND THE ELEMENT OF ART – TEXTURE (30 MINUTES)

**Process:** Using selected Charlie paintings, guide students through six different ways to use watercolor paint to depict the natural world. Have them label each with the watercolor technique used and descriptive language that expresses the texture the technique creates. These labels will remind them in future painting.

- dry brush
- wet-on-wet
- sponge
- blotting
- crayon resist
- cardboard

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## Suggested Dialogue

Let's take a fresh piece of watercolor paper and use our pencils to draw lines that divide the space into six sections. Draw one horizontal line and then two vertical lines. Each section will be a different technique of painting.

We will treat this process as a time to share ideas. There is no wrong or right. We won't worry about being perfect or 100 percent accurate. This is just to experiment with paint and to see what the brush, paint, and water can do.

The first box in the upper-left corner will be your choice of grass, branches, or fur. Let's look at Charlie's painting *Medicine Horse* again. Where do you see grass, branches, or fur? What about hair? Can you describe the texture of it? How would it feel to touch it? (*Students respond.*) How would you describe the color of the grass, branches, fur, or hair? Show me exactly where you are looking. Let's revisit *Four Generations*. Where do you see grass, branches, fur, or hair? Describe the colors you see. How would you describe the texture? What would it feel like to touch it? (*Students respond.*)

*Instruction on the element of art – texture.*

What do you think the purpose of texture is in a painting? (*Students respond.*) Artists use texture to connect the viewer to our senses – not just the sense of sight, but other senses too. Can you see any evidence of motion in *Four Generations*? (*Students respond horses, hair, clouds.*) The texture of something in a painting tells us what it might be like to touch the thing with our hands or feel it with our skin, like wind or dirt. (*Write "texture" on the chart.*)

Let's revisit *Prairie Fire*. Where do you see grass, branches, fur, or hair? Describe the texture of it. Describe the colors you see. Do you see motion in this painting? If so, where? (*Students respond.*)

*Leave this image up or choose a different one to project while students work on the following activity on their own.*

Now choose either grass, hair, fur, feathers, or something similar to paint. Use what you've learned about color mixing to create a natural color for your choice. Now that you've got your color, we will paint using a technique we call "dry brush." Your brush should be almost completely dry to start. Dip it in color and then drag over the paper towel to remove excess water. Use the whole box with many strokes until you create the texture of your choice. This is where experimenting comes in. What you brush on may not look like a branch or fur the first time. So try again, maybe with a lighter or heavier stroke. You may need to get more paint on your brush. Make sure that you dab it on the paper towel first before touching down on the paper.

Let's work on our next technique: "wet-on-wet." It is done exactly how it sounds which is to apply a wet brush on wet paper. This technique causes the paint to spread out. This is ideal when you want your colors to bleed together to create a wash effect. Do you see any bleeding of colors in *Prairie Fire*? (*Students respond.*) What colors did Charlie use in the sky? (*Students respond.*) Let's look at *Medicine Horse*. Notice the sky. Can you see the merging of color? I want you to pick two colors to experiment with. First, let's make sure our brush is clean of our previous color. Now, with clear water, wet the brush and then with horizontal strokes wet the square directly below your dry brush square. Dip your brush into your first color and paint horizontally from the top of your square to at least half way down. Make sure you leave room for the next color. Now, with a clean brush, dip into your second color and begin to paint at the bottom with horizontal strokes moving upward. Be light in your touch when the two colors come together. You can adjust the blending of the two colors by adding more paint if needed.

*Show Four Generations.*

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What do you notice about the texture of the sky and the clouds? (*Students respond.*) It looks sort of like horizontal strokes, but what does it look more like? The clouds, changing sky, and even the treetops can be depicted with the same idea as before, but this time we will put down or brush and use a sponge. We'll call this wet-on-wet sponge. Dip a small section of the sponge in clean water and wet the upper-center square. Now dip your sponge into any color you wish and stamp it down on the paper. Repeat these steps until you have the texture you want.

*Show Blackfoot Country.*

This is a watercolor by Charlie Russell called *Blackfoot Country*. Look at the texture in this one. Where is your eye drawn? How does the artist draw your eye there? Do you sense movement? If so, where? (*Students respond.*) Take a look at the sky in this one. How would you describe the texture? (*Students respond.*) For our fourth square, which will be the lower-middle, we will "blot" our color. "Blot" in this context means to remove wet color using an absorbent material. We will put a wash of color on our paper and use a paper towel to blot away the wet paint. Experiment with any color you wish.

Notice the areas of white in *Blackfoot Country*. Where do you see them? (*Students respond the water, the wagons, or the horse.*) We can't know for sure how Charlie kept these areas such a clean white with paint so close, but one way we can experiment with is to use white crayons. Take a white crayon and draw lines in your upper-right square. These lines can be curved like a riverbank, or they could be straight and long like shooting stars. Now select any color you wish and paint over the entire square. Notice how the paint won't bleed into the areas covered by the crayon. Why is that? (*Explain that the wax in crayons does not mix with water and therefore repels or resists it.*)

*Show Indian Camp.*

This Russell watercolor is called *Indian Camp*. This time let's look at lines. Where do you see curved lines? Where do you see straight lines? (*Students respond.*) To experiment with making straight lines on our charts, we will use a technique with cardboard. Cardboard is a great tool in painting for creating details like doors, fences, roofs, windows, or bricks. Mix one color of paint and water in your palette. Now dip the edge of the cardboard into the mixture and then print details onto the lower-right square of your chart.

Let's go back and label each square: dry brush, wet-on-wet, sponge, blot, crayon resist, and cardboard. Let's also come up with some descriptive words for the different techniques. (*For example: dry brush for grass, hair, fur: soft bristly, smooth, etc. Sponge for clouds: fluffy, soft, etc.*)

## STEP 3: CLEAN UP MATERIALS (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Clean up the materials following the routine from the first painting session.

## STEP 4: CLOSE LESSON 2 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Close the lesson with a look forward to the next lesson.

### Suggested Dialogue

In our next lesson we will start our own painting of a Montana sky, so be sure you have your picture that you were asked to take as homework. Remember to be thoughtful about the time of day and the horizon line.

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## LESSON 3: Paint the Montana Sky

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will be able to locate the horizon line in a painting or photograph and paint a Montana sky in watercolor using color and texture.

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials/Resources

- Watercolor paper
- Watercolors in red, yellow, and blue
- Paintbrushes
- Paint trays
- Containers of water for rinsing brushes
- Pencils
- Chart paper for listing art vocabulary and elements of art
- *Medicine Horse*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Four Generations*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Indian Camp*, painting by C. M. Russell

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 3 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective, which is to learn more about the horizon and depict a Montana sky.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Today we are going to use the pictures you took to begin painting our Montana sky. **By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to say, "I can depict a Montana Sky through watercolor using color and texture."**

### STEP 2: THE HORIZON (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Using selected Charlie Russell paintings, students compare his use of horizon to determine the best use of it in their own compositions.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Let's talk a bit about "horizon lines." The horizon line is an implied line in an artist's composition that separates the sky from the land or water. (*Write "horizon line" on the chart.*) The term "horizon line" is used most often when we're talking about landscape art. So, how do you find the horizon line? Imagine that you and two friends are hanging out on the farm. You are standing and looking out at the fields in the distance. From where you are standing you are going to see about half fields and half sky. Now imagine one of your friends has climbed a tree; from his perch, he is going to be able to see more of the field than you. Your other friend is lying on the ground, propped up on her elbows; from there, she is not going to be able to see as much of the field as you. So this tells us that the horizon line is at our "eye level." (*Write "eye level" on the chart.*) The horizon line will always be parallel to the horizontal (top or bottom) edges of your paper. Even if the ground slants one way or the other, the horizon line does not. Let's look at a few of Charlie's paintings to see how he uses the horizon line.

*Show Four Generations (either projected or provided to each student or pair of students).*

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Remember this painting? It's titled *Four Generations*. This is an oil painting done by Charlie in 1889. Where do you see the horizon? (*Students respond.*)

*If projected, use a yard stick to show or draw a horizon line along the bottom of the lowest part of the hill the subjects are standing on, just where the green touches pink along the left side. If students have their own copies, have them use a ruler to show or lightly draw with pencil the horizon line across their paper.*

Notice that even though there are small dips in the hill, the horizon line lies across the lowest dip and goes straight across; it does not slant along the hill. Where do you think the artist is positioned? (*Students respond.*) Where does the horizon lie in respect to the top or bottom of the painting? (*Students respond.*) The horizon line here seems to cut the painting almost exactly in half.

*Show Blackfoot Country (either projected or provided to each student or pair of students).*

Does anyone remember the name of this painting? (*Students respond.*) Right, this is Charlie's *Blackfoot Country*, painted in 1900. It was done in watercolor on paper. Where do you see the horizon line in this painting? (*Students respond.*)

*If projected, use a yard stick to show or draw a horizon line along the bottom of the lowest part of the mountains in the distance, just where the pinkish-brown touches blue along the left side. If students have their own copies, have them use a ruler to show or lightly draw with pencil the horizon line across their paper.*

Where do you think the artist is positioned for this view? (*Students respond.*) Keeping in mind that the horizon line is always parallel to the horizontal edges of the painting, where is it in respect to the top or bottom of the painting? (*Students respond.*) In this painting, the horizon line is closer to the top of the painting. Does that change how you look or feel about this painting compared to *Four Generations*? How So? (*Students respond.*)

*Show Medicine Horse (either projected or provided to each student or pair of students).*

Does anyone know the name of this painting? (*Students respond.*) This painting is oil on board and was done by Charlie in 1912. It is called *Medicine Horse*. Where do you see the horizon in this painting? (*Students respond.*)

*If projected, use a yard stick to show or draw a horizon line along the bottom of the lowest part of the hill the subject is on – just where the yellow-orange grass touches blue along the left side. If students have their own copies, have them use a ruler to show or lightly draw with pencil the horizon line across their paper.*

Where do you think the artist is positioned to get this view? (*Students respond.*) Where is the horizon line in respect to the top or bottom of the painting? (*Students respond.*) In this painting the horizon line is closer to the bottom. Does the position of the horizon line change the way you look or feel about the painting compared to the other two? (*Students respond.*) If we look at all three paintings, with three different horizon lines, which one(s) is (are) more visibly appealing? (*Students respond.*) There is a rule in art called the "rule of thirds." It's more of a guideline than a rule. Our eyes tend to find more pleasure in things of three. In the rule of thirds, a painting is divided horizontally by two parallel lines and again vertically by two parallel lines giving you a 3 by 3 grid, like tic-tac-toe. By placing your important subjects or lines on these lines or intersections, your art becomes more visibly pleasing. (*Write "rule of thirds" on the chart.*) So, you have to be careful if you choose to put your horizon line in the center of your painting, if it is not exact, it can come away as making your painting look like you tried to place it centrally but got sloppy. By placing your horizon line either closer to the top or bottom of your painting; it gives emphasis to either the land or the sky.



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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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## STEP 3: PAINTING THE SKY (20 MINUTES)

**Process:** Guide students to select the size and shape of their painting, to be based on the image they captured earlier of a Montana sky. Then, while carefully observing their own picture, lead them to decide upon the placement of the horizon, the color palette, and watercolor technique to paint their personal picture of a Montana sky.

### Suggested Dialogue

We are now ready to paint our very own Montana sky!

First, we need to decide on the size and shape of our portrait. Looking at your picture, what shape do you think would best frame your sky? Horizontal or vertical? Square or rectangle? 4 x 6 inches, 3 x 5, or some other size? Right now we aren't looking at any landscape in the picture-rather, we are looking just at the horizon line and up. You can experiment with the cropping feature on the phone or camera if you would like to experiment with square versus rectangle, or a landscape versus portrait view. Take a piece of copy paper and lightly sketch some shapes with your pencil if it is helpful to have a general outline of some key features you want to paint. Once you've done that, transfer your sketch to a fresh piece of watercolor paper. Otherwise, start mixing your color palette and get ready to paint.

*Students paint sky portraits.*

As you paint your sky, continue to study the texture of the clouds, the merging of color and the areas of light and dark (or contrast) in your picture. Refer to your 2 x 3 watercolor technique chart from earlier to remind you of all the ways you can use paint.

*Students reflect on their paintings.*

## STEP 4: CLEAN UP MATERIALS (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Clean up the materials following the routine from the first painting session.

## STEP 5: CLOSE LESSON 3 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Close the lesson with a look forward to the next lesson.

### Suggested Dialogue

In our next lesson, we will paint our own work based on the digital images you captured before. This time, we will incorporate the land too, not just the sky, and we'll learn some new painting techniques.



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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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**LESSON 4: Instruction on the Techniques of Layering and the Element of Art – Space (Positive versus Negative); Create landscape Watercolor Paintings**

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will be able to depict a Montana landscape in watercolor, using color, texture, perspective, and space.

**Time:** 50 minutes

**Materials/Resources**

- Watercolor paper
- Watercolors in red, yellow, and blue
- Pencils
- Paintbrushes
- Paint trays
- Containers of water for rinsing brushes
- Chart paper for listing vocabulary words and elements of art
- *Medicine Horse*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Blackfoot Country*, painting by C. M. Russell
- *Return of the Horse Thieves*, painting by C. M. Russell

**STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 4 (5 MINUTES)**

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective: depict a Montana landscape in watercolor using prior and new elements of art, perspective and space.

**Suggested Dialogue**

Today we are going to learn about a new technique and a new element of art to create a watercolor landscape.

**By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to say, "I can paint a Montana landscape in watercolor using color, texture, layering, and space."**

**STEP 2: STUDENTS MOVE INTO CREATIVE COMMUNITIES (3 MINUTES)**

**Process:** Guide students to sit in small groups of 4 to 6. Students will support one another as they research, paint, and reflect on their Russell for Learning work.

**STEP 3: TEACH ABOUT HORIZON LINE AND LAYERING (7 MINUTES)**

**Process:** Instruct students about using a horizon line as a place to begin painting a landscape. Next, instruct them on layering, using previous vocabulary of "horizon line" and "texture" and new vocabulary of "background," "foreground," and "space. Students can use either the same picture of a Montana sky as their inspiration or they may choose a new picture. Layering allows the painter to create the illusion of depth and perspective. Also, it is important for the painter to make choices about the order of color, since darker colors will cover lighter colors and there is no turning back.

**Suggested Dialogue**

Today we are going to create a new watercolor! You can use your Montana sky picture from the previous lesson, or you can choose a different picture. This time we will learn how to incorporate the landscape into the picture – but first we have to start with the horizon line. Recall from lesson 3 that the horizon line is where the land meets the sky.



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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

## *A Watercolor Statement*

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Let's take a close look at our pictures and find the horizon line. Is it in the middle of the picture? Is there more sky than land? What is the percentage? We can make a choice to paint more or less sky or land by cropping our pictures according to what looks best to us. Now, let's draw the horizon line on our watercolor paper. Remember that even though mountains and trees can be at different heights, the horizon line is always straight. Let's see if we can draw the line straight across the page, keeping it parallel with the top and bottom edges of our paper. (*Students can use rulers if necessary.*)

Now, let's talk a little about the order of what we paint. If I wanted to paint a tree with a sunset behind it, I would first need to paint the sky and then the tree. I would do this for two reasons: (1) the sunset is in the background; and (2) the tree is a darker color than the sky. When painting we have to take into consideration the "space" in which we are organizing our art. (*Write "space" on the chart.*) So, we must always start with the objects farthest away from us and work our way forward. We will talk a little bit more about space soon. Also, we must keep in mind that once we lay down a darker color, there is no making it lighter once it dries. When working with watercolors we have to "layer" our colors, so we start with our lighter colors and work our way darker. (*Write "layer" on the chart.*) So besides "space" and "layer" we also heard another new vocabulary word, can anyone tell me what it was? (*Students respond, "background."*) In art, the background refers to the area that is farthest away from us, the viewers. The background is generally higher up, the colors are dulled, there is less detail, and subjects are smaller. (*Write "background" on the chart.*)

Let's revisit Charlie's painting *Medicine Horse*. What is farthest away from the viewer? (*Students respond.*) Yes, the sky and mountains are farthest away. How do we know? (*Students respond.*) Still, the mountains are much darker than the sky, so the sky should be painted first. Even though the mountains cover the horizon line, I bet Charlie began painting the yellows and then added the darker mountains as another layer. Where else can you see layering based on the distance or the colors? (*Students respond, "The darker grass painted over the lighter grass" or "the shadows of the mountains," etc.*)

Now let's look at the rest of the painting. If the area that is farthest away is called the background, where the sky and the mountains are, what do we call the area that is closest to us? (*Students respond.*) Yes, we call that area the foreground. The foreground is the area of the painting that is closest to us and is generally in the lower part of the painting. In the foreground we will also see more attention to detail, more vibrant colors, and larger subjects. (*Write "foreground" on the chart.*)

Let's look at Charlie's painting *Blackfoot Country*. What is closest to the viewer? (*Students respond.*) Yes, the horses, the bushes, and the mountain they are standing on are closest. Where do you see detail and brighter colors? (*Students respond.*) What do you think Charlie painted first? What did he paint last? (*Students respond.*)

Let's take a closer look at the pictures we took. What will probably be one of the first things we paint? What will be the last? In your groups, discuss one another's ideas for what to paint first, next, and so forth. (*Students share in groups.*) Take a moment to write down your order of painting. This may change a little, but this will give you a guide when we begin.

### STEP 4: TEACH THE ELEMENT OF ART – SPACE (POSITIVE/NEGATIVE) (3 MINUTES)

**Process:** Instruct students regarding positive painting (that is, filling in shapes) and negative painting (painting an edge to define a shape based on what is left out). Use Russell's *Return of the Horse Thieves* as an example for discussion.

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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## Suggested Dialogue

Positive and negative painting has nothing to do with what is good or not. “Positive” and “negative” in painting refer to where the color is being painted. For example, let’s look at Charlie’s watercolor *Return of the Horse Thieves*.

Show *Return of the Horse Thieves* (color copied or projected).

Where do you see white? (*Students respond.*) Yes, if you noticed the white of the horse, you might have wondered, “Where did Charlie find white watercolor paint?” In watercolor, sometimes painters use the white of the paper. What is interesting about this painting is that we can find both positive and negative painting on the same subject: the horse! The markings on the horse are painted brown which is an example of positive painting – just like coloring in a coloring book. The brown paint fills in the space to create the markings on the horse’s body. (*Write “positive space” on the chart.*) The white body of the horse is a perfect example of negative painting. Charlie used a gray to create not only the outline of the horse but also to create contour lines to show the animal’s musculature. The surface left unpainted is called negative space. (*Write “negative space” on the chart.*)

Now look at your picture. Are there any places you would like to leave the white of your paper showing through? Share your ideas with your group and then take notes for yourself.

## STEP 5: STUDENTS PAINT A LANDSCAPE OF THEIR CHOICE (20 MINUTES)

**Process:** Give students time to create their landscape watercolor.

## Suggested Dialogue

We will now have time to create our own watercolor landscape. Please refer to your notes as you make choices about your layers. I will come around and assist as needed.

## STEP 6: CLEAN UP MATERIALS (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Clean up the materials following the routine from the first painting session.

## STEP 7: GALLERY WALK (5 MINUTES – may continue at start of next class if necessary)

## Suggested Dialogue

Now that everyone has painted a sky and a landscape, let’s reflect on the choices we’ve made. We will use these sentence stems to help us think about how we created these paintings.

In this painting I wanted to capture . . .

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Identify the moment in time your picture shows.)

The quality I wanted to illustrate was . . .

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Describe the texture, movement, color, or combination of qualities.)

*Gallery walk.*

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

## *A Watercolor Statement*

Let's walk around the room and examine how our classmates made choices about color, texture, and space.  
*(Students walk around the room, observing.)*

Raise your hand when you find one piece of artwork that shows an interesting texture. How could you describe it? *(Call on student and guide them to choose a piece other than their own, and to keep their comments based in the established art vocabulary.)* Would the artist like to respond? What kind of sky or landscape were you trying to create in this painting? *(Student who created the painting responds.)* Raise your hand if you see an interesting use of space. *(Call on another student and guide them to choose a piece other than their own, and to keep their comments based in the established art vocabulary.)* Would the artist like to respond? Where did you begin painting to create the background and where did you last paint to create something in the foreground? *(Call on student who painted it. After they share, have students rotate to new paintings.)* Can anyone spot some negative space in a painting?

*Continue gallery walk as time permits using art vocabulary from today's lesson, warm versus cool colors (contrast), texture and movement, and space (background, foreground, negative, and positive).*

### STEP 8: CLOSE LESSON 4 (2 MINUTES)

**Process:** Close the lesson with a look forward to the next lesson.

#### **Suggested Dialogue**

When we come back together, we'll create one final watercolor!



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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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## LESSON 5: Paint Final Watercolor

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** In the course of this lesson, students will paint their final watercolor.

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials/Resources

- Watercolor paper
- Pencils
- Watercolors in red, yellow, and blue
- Paintbrushes
- Paint trays
- Containers of water for rinsing brushes
- Paper towels
- Other watercolor techniques supplies as needed

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 5 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective: to paint a final watercolor, accompanied by an artist statement.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Today we are going to use the pictures you took to paint our final Montana sky painting. **By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to say "I can depict a Montana sky through watercolor using multiple techniques and elements of art."**

### STEP 2: PAINT FINAL WATERCOLOR (30 MINUTES)

**Process:** Remind students of the *elements of art*: color, contrast, texture, space (positive/negative), perspective (background/foreground), and the technique of layering.

#### Suggested Dialogue

We are now ready to paint our final Montana sky watercolor. Let's remember the different techniques from our 2 x 3 chart, and use the techniques in our paintings if we can. Let's also remember the elements of art we have practiced. (*Refer students to the vocabulary and elements of art chart.*) Let's begin painting! We'll have thirty minutes to work. (*Depending on your students, this may need another class time to finish.*)

### STEP 3: CLEAN UP MATERIALS (10 MINUTES)

**Process:** Clean up the materials following the routine from the first painting session.

### STEP 4: CLOSE LESSON 5 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Close the lesson with a look forward to the next lesson.

#### Suggested Dialogue

In our next class, we will begin the writing portion of our project. We will create an artist's statement to accompany our paintings. Both will be showcased in a gallery walk for the class *and* invited guests!

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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## LESSON 6: Self Questioning and Reflection – Begin Artist Statement

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will be able to analyze their own artwork, question their decisions, and reflect on how and what their art makes them feel.

**Time:** (50 minutes)

### Materials/Resources

- Artist Statement Rubric
- Lined paper (2 sheets for each student)
- Pencils
- Painting and artist statement by Nancy Dunlop Cawdrey
- Painting and artist statement by DG House
- Painting and artist statement by Chad Poppleton
- Painting and artist statement by Gary Schildt

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 6 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective: to self-question and reflect on one's own artwork, and to discuss the reasoning and components of an artist statement.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Over the past few days we have been analyzing the work of Charlie Russell and learning new techniques and elements of art. We have also been working to create our own Montana sky watercolor paintings. Today we will reflect on our paintings and ask ourselves questions about our decisions and process. **By the end of today's lesson, you will be able to say, "I can self-question and reflect on my own artwork."**

### STEP 2: SELF-QUESTION AND REFLECT ON OUR MONTANA SKY PAINTINGS (15 MINUTES)

**Process:** Write the six questions on the board. Give students time to look at their Montana sky paintings and answer the questions.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Now that we have completed our Montana sky paintings, we are going to look at them again and reflect on what we did. It is important as artists to think about our processes and decisions. It's also important to consider what our strengths and weaknesses are. Reflecting helps to make us aware of the decisions we are making and why we make them. In doing so, we develop critical thinking skills and can expand on our ideas even more. I would like you all to take out a piece of paper and answer the questions on the board. Take your time and really think about the questions and how to answer them.

*Put the following 6 questions on the board:*

1. *What is the main idea or meaning that you are trying to get across in your painting?*
2. *How did you use color, texture, space, perspective, and layering and why?*
3. *What part of your painting did you find to be the hardest? The easiest?*
4. *Is there anything you would add or take away? Why?*
5. *What were you feeling as you created your painting?*
6. *How has your painting inspired you?*

### STEP 3: WHAT IS AN ARTIST STATEMENT? (25 MINUTES)



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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

## *A Watercolor Statement*

**Process:** Give students the reasoning for an artist statement and the guidelines (*refer to rubric*), and have students begin writing their artist statements.

### **Suggested Dialogue**

We are now going to discuss the writing element that will accompany our paintings – an artist statement. Artist statements are relatively new; they first appeared beginning in the 1990s. An artist statement supports our work by introducing it or describing it. An artist statement helps us as artists to communicate with and connect to viewers, giving them a greater understanding of our work. It should be descriptive and reflective, showing that we are conscious and aware of our decisions as artists. Put simply, an artist statement is what we would say to the viewer about our work if we could tell them in person.

Unfortunately, Charlie Russell is no longer alive to tell us about his paintings. Much of what we do know about Charlie and his work comes from scholars who have spent years studying him and his work, even speaking to those who knew him. However, we can view the work and artist statements of contemporary western artists. What does the word “contemporary” mean? (*Students respond.*) “Contemporary” in this case refers to artists who are living today. (*Write “contemporary” on the chart.*)

Show Field Marshall by Nancy Dunlop Cawdrey.

Nancy Dunlop Cawdrey is a Montana artist from Whitefish. This painting of hers is called *Field Marshall*. She used dye on silk to accomplish this artwork. Let’s take a moment to look at this painting and do some deep observation. Would anyone like to share some of the things that stand out to us about this painting? (*Students respond.*) Now let’s read her artist statement.

Read the artist statement by Nancy Dunlop Cawdrey.

What are some of the things you notice about her artist statement? (*For example, her use of “I” statements, descriptive words, etc.*)

Show Whole of the World by DG House.

DG House is an enrolled member of the Cherokee Tribe of northeast Alabama. She lives in Bozeman, Montana along the Gallatin River. This painting is called *Whole of the World* and is done in oil. Let’s take a moment to look at this painting and do some deep observation. Would anyone like to share some of the things that stand out to us about this painting? (*Students respond.*) Now let’s read her artist statement.

Read the artist statement by DG House.

What are some of the things you notice about her artist statement? (*For example, her use of “I” statements, descriptive words, etc.*)

Show Hazards of the Trail by Chad Poppleton.

Chad Poppleton is from Cache Valley, Utah. This painting is called *Hazards of the Trail* and is also done in oil. Let’s take a moment to look at this painting and do some deep observation. Would anyone like to share some of the things that stand out to us about this painting? (*Students respond.*) Now let’s read his artist statement.

Read the artist statement by Chad Poppleton.

What are some of the things you notice about his artist statement? (*For example, his use of “I” statements, descriptive words, etc.*)

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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Let's look at our final contemporary painting.

*Show Horn Society Women in the Grand Parade by Gary Schildt.*

Gary Schildt is a Blackfeet artist from East Glacier, Montana. This painting is called *Horn Society Women in the Grand Parade*. It is oil on canvas painted in 1997. Let's take a moment to look at this painting and do some deep observation. Would anyone like to share some of the things that stand out to us about this painting? (*Students respond.*) This artwork is one of forty-two pieces in a series by Gary Schildt that represent the most meaningful aspects of the annual Medicine Lodge Ceremony, or Sundance, celebrated in July by the Blackfeet of Browning, Montana. Schildt's Sundance series was painted over a three-year period, from 1995 to 1997. Now let's read the artist statement he wrote for the series.

*Read the artist statement by Gary Schildt.*

What are some of the things you notice about his artist statement? (*For example, his use of "I" statements, descriptive words, etc.*)

*Give students the **Artist Statement Rubric** and let them begin writing their statements.*

Let's take a few minutes to go over our Artist Statement Rubric together. When we are writing our artist statements, we should focus on the facts and state them in language anyone can understand. The statement should be *specific* and *descriptive*. An artist statement is not a set of instructions on how to view our art. Instead, imagine a viewer is asking us questions about our art and we are answering them. We must be sure to speak in first person, as if we are speaking directly to viewers. We should use "I" statements and not "you" statements. Our artist statements are about what our art does and means to us, not what it should do or mean to others. Our artist statements should be three paragraphs with two to three sentences in each paragraph. If we are having trouble thinking about what to write, what can we do? (*Students respond.*) Yes! We can use the questions on the board, and go back and expand on the answers we wrote for those questions. I will add a few more questions to that list that may help you.

*Add the following questions to the list on the board*

7. *What medium or materials did you use to create your artwork?*
8. *Did any of your art skills improve while making this artwork? Did you learn new techniques? If so, which new techniques or skills did you learn?*
9. *What inspires you to make art?*
10. *What have you learned from creating this artwork?*

## STEP 4: CLOSE LESSON 6 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Close the lesson with a look forward to the next lesson.

### Suggested Dialogue

In our next class, we will finish and type our artist statements for the gallery walk.



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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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## LESSON 7: Final Artist Statement

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will finish their artist statements and produce a final polished version.

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials/Resources

- Pencils
- Paper (1 -2 sheets per student)
- Peer Editing Checklist

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 7: (15 MINUTES)

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective: to finish the artist statement and to peer-edit and polish it for a final statement.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Today we are going to finish writing our artist statements and polish them up for presentation tomorrow. *(Give students about **10 minutes** to finish their artist statements.)*

### STEP 2: PEER EDIT ARTIST STATEMENTS (15 MINUTES)

**Process:** Guide students into creative communities of 4 to 6. Introduce the **Peer Editing Checklist**.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Now that we have finished a first draft of our artist statements, we will edit one another's statements. First you will each read your statements aloud in your group. Each of you will receive a Peer Editing Checklist. Give it, along with your statement to another member in your group; that person will check your statement according to the list and will then give you feedback at the bottom. When you have finished editing your fellow group member's statement, return the statement and editing checklist to that artist. The artist will then find one more person in the group to edit their statement. Once two people have edited your statement, you may begin revising it. Remember, when giving feedback, try to be positive.

### STEP 3: REVISE AND POLISH STATEMENTS (15 MINUTES)

**Process:** Instruct students to use their Peer Editing Checklist to revise their artist statements. Remind students what you will be looking for in a finished product.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Now that two people have edited our artist statements, we will start revising them. Please remember what we will be looking for in our finished products. *(Refer to rubric.)* If we do not finish our statements during this class period, we will need to take it home for homework

### STEP 4: CLOSE LESSON 7 (5 MINUTES)

**Process:** Close the lesson with a look forward to the next lesson.

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

## **Suggested Dialogue**

In our next class, we will present our artist statements and Montana sky paintings and reflect on them in groups. We will then hang them for a special gallery walk. You may invite your parents or family members to come at the end of class and view your work!

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

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## LESSON 8: Present and reflect on Artist Statements and Montana Sky Paintings

**LESSON OBJECTIVE:** By the end of this lesson students will present and reflect on their artist statements with an audience.

**Time:** 50 minutes

### Materials/Resources

- Finished Montana sky paintings
- Finished artist statements
- Writing Group Reflection process
- Artist Statement Rubric

### STEP 1: INTRODUCE LESSON 8

**Process:** Provide an overview of the lesson objective: to present statements and reflect on them in groups.

#### Suggested Dialogue

Over the past couple of days, we have written, edited, and polished our artist statements. Today we will present those statements to our groups and reflect on them.

### STEP 2: STUDENTS PRESENT AND SHARE ARTIST STATEMENTS IN A GROUP REFLECTION PROCESS (30 MINUTES)

**Process:** Guide students into creative communities of 4 to 6. Ask students to share their final statements with their peers to elicit feedback on one or two specific words or phrases. Post the **Writing Group Reflective Process** (shown below) on the board as a reference.

#### Suggested Dialogue

We are going to take turns reading our artist statements out loud in small groups. Decide who will go first. That artist will read their statement and everyone else in the group will listen. Then each group member will share one or two words or phrases that stood out to them. The criteria for what stands out are descriptive language, words, or phrases with deep meaning that strike's to the heart of the artist's work or approach. Then you will switch to a new artist to read their statement. You'll repeat this until all have shared.

#### *Writing Group Reflection Process*

1. The artist reads their statement aloud
2. Each of the other group members in turn shares one or two words or a short phrase that stands out to them and why. For example:
  - I like the phrase \_\_\_\_\_ because it made me wonder \_\_\_\_\_.
  - I like the word(s) \_\_\_\_\_ because it (they) made me feel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - I like the word(s) \_\_\_\_\_ because it (they) tell me that \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Switch to a new artist. Repeat steps.

### STEP 3: DISPLAY MONTANA SKY PAINTINGS AND ARTIST STATEMENTS (15 MINUTES)

**Process:** Help students to display their artist paintings and artist statements on a bulletin board in the classroom or hallway.

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# RUSSELL FOR LEARNING

*A Watercolor Statement*

## **Suggested Dialogue**

Now that we have presented our finished work, let's hang them in a place of honor so everyone can admire them! Please come up one at a time to hang your painting and artist statement on the bulletin board. *(There may be parents and family members who have arrived now. Don't forget to welcome your special guests if you have invited them!)*

**Nancy Dunlop Cawdrey**  
**Artist Statement**

Montana is expansive. When I look out over the valleys, the mountains, the skies, my heart and spirit fills with unabashed delight! In my paintings I strive to express that energy and delight, with bright, bold colors and forms, filling the silk canvas and touching all the edges, inhabiting the entire space.

I like to think my art encourages people to fill the space they are allotted – being as big as they can be. When I was a little girl with my large box of crayons, I would tear all the paper off so I could make my marks with the whole side of the crayon instead of the point. I mean to convey strength, confidence, and hope.



## **DG House**

### **Artist Statement**

I am driven to paint in the colors I see in the Northern Rockies of the United States. I have developed these hues based on traditional earthen paints created by the First People in this region. I use both cold wax and oil paint and acrylics to apply multiple layers of paint for deep color depth

My great passion is painting the wildlife and people of the American west. My job is to give a voice to these beings. I paint mostly singular subjects making direct eye contact to create intimacy with the viewer with particular emphasis placed on the eyes.

The work always includes my trademark geometric borders. Although I use this border for composition and color placement, its main purpose is an honoring of the ancestors. The patterns are reminiscent of the designs used on Native American par fleche; traditional raw hide pouches used for storage and transporting items.

My work is line driven and concentrates on shapes. From cave paintings to hide paintings to ledger art and into the contemporary Native American art, strong lines are evident and traditional. I use permanent markers to achieve this outline. I also continue the tradition of using native symbols to broaden the story of the work.

## Chad Poppleton Artist Statement

This year's pieces have a split focus of two things I cherish, wildlife and being on horseback. Nothing seems to elevate the soul quite like a good ride on a solid mount in the backcountry. I've started to add to my repertoire more cowboy and western themed work simply because that's what I am at heart. A Cowboy. "Hazards of the Trail" is a culmination of both wildlife and western art based upon a personal experience a few years ago when a confused bull moose mistook my horses as potential aficionados. It was a little dicey when he appeared across the river to check us out and the new colt was having none of it. Thank goodness Bull Winkle changed his mind. It's an astounding experience to see such a magnificent monarch as this bull in his own court glorified with a crown of nobility born of wilderness.



## Gary Schildt Artist Statement

Much of the creative process of an artist comes from dreaming. All of us at some time or another have wished for something and day dreamed about it. Many of these dreams, however, just lay until they fade into the passage of time. When I look at all the old photos, books and scraps of things I have collected over the years, they are reminders of a beautifully free life when I was a child on my grandfather's ranch at the edge of the Rocky Mountains on the Blackfeet Reservation. My grandfather unofficially named me, "Lone Bull" because I was the only little male child on the ranch. These memories take me back to the roots of my past, and even though I know it is not possible, I long for this return.

This was one dream I did not want to see fade, but wishing alone was not enough. I knew I needed a plan and the inspiration, patience, and sweat to put it together to make this past live again. I read all those beautiful stories of early Blackfeet life by McClintock, Schultz, Bull Child, and others, and looked at the early black and white photos of the Blackfeet people. I wanted to see these small snapshots, showing the reality of this past world, come alive again. Growing up in the 1930's and 1940's, I had seen the last of a disappearing way of life, symbolized most vividly in the old white-haired Indian people sitting on Buttre's bench, perhaps talking about the way it was in the old buffalo days. However, while at home, I never saw the whole picture. It was in my travels that I saw other people preserving and sometimes living their ancient cultures. I knew that I had to do something about the way I felt about my own Blackfeet heritage, the Blackfeet people and my dreams of them as personified in one of their most solemn, religious and joyous ceremonies – the Blackfeet Medicine Lodge Ceremony, called the *Okan*, or the Sundance.

What began as a creative inspiration, ended as a labor of love. I laid aside my artistic license to create the Sundance and followed faithfully the work and materials the masters left as records of life. I claim no authorship of the words that describe my work. Total and absolute credit belongs to the people who laid the groundwork before, the Blackfeet people and to the Sun. My artistic vision has been to fuse all the written works, old photos, ceremonies, and the Blackfeet people into one big collection of new light, color and dimension. To bring life to the fading dream I had so long ago, I have tried to present the Sundance in its entirety.

When people who are familiar with the creative exploitations of native people ask me what the Blackfeet people will think about me painting these ceremonies, I can only think they will feel as I do – that the real Blackfeet have never really been known or seen. Indian medicine is very powerful and not to be fooled with and is jealously guarded by the ones entrusted with it. Our ceremonies are sacred and some are secret. However, the association that they are somehow evil or forbidden comes from the former powers that forbade them and wanted them destroyed. In the beginning, the spirits and medicine were put here to help the people. They know your heart. They want to speak and have you listen, lest they be left to cry alone in the wilderness.

I never thought about how long I would live or how long this project would take. However, I had one friend, Dan, who helped me live, and one woman, Sandy, who had faith in me. When the series of the Blackfeet Medicine Lodge Ceremony, this heart of the Blackfeet people, was finished, the spirit of the Sundance came back to life through canvas and paint. I had put over three years and my heart and soul into it – a very small token for all those who came so proudly before.