

LESSON PLAN:

My Roots to Branches

by Katie Seastrand

Using Abelardo Morell's photograph of an oak tree, students will think about the roots of a tree and the branches/leaves to relate to themselves and their influence on their community. This lesson plan includes discussion and artmaking.

Objectives:

Student will...

- closely observe and discuss the photo *Tent-Camera Image on Ground: Oak Tree, The Huntington Botanical Gardens, California*
- talk about the influences in their life that make them feel rooted and supported
- create an artwork that represents influences in their lives and the ways they can positively impact their community

Grade level:

2nd–5th

Duration:

50 minutes

Materials:

- Printed image (enough for small groups) of *Tent-Camera Image on Ground: Oak Tree, The Huntington Botanical Gardens, California*, UMFA2020.6.9 – found on the UMFA Website – Art – Collections
- Post-It notes
- Pencils
- Large/Jumbo popsicle sticks (7 for each student)

Materials cont.

- Scissors
- Glue bottles
- Markers
- Colored construction paper

Vocabulary/Key Terms:

- **Tree roots:** Tree roots anchor the tree in the soil, keeping it straight and stable, and absorbing water. Tree roots also take nutrients and chemicals out of the soil and use them to produce what they need for the tree's growth, development, and repair. (fairfaxcounty.gov)
- **Tree branches:** Parts of a tree that grow out from its trunk and have leaves, flowers, or fruit growing on them. (Collins Dictionary)
- **Leaf:** a flattened structure of a higher plant, typically green and blade-like, that is attached to a stem directly or via a stalk. Leaves are the main organs of photosynthesis and transpiration. (Oxford Languages)
- **Photograph:** a picture made using a camera, in which an image is focused onto film or other light-sensitive material and then made visible and permanent by chemical treatment, or stored digitally. (Oxford Languages)
- **Camera Obscura:** a darkened room with a small hole or lens at one side through which an image of the scene outside is projected onto the opposite wall. The image appears inverted (upside-down) and reversed (left to right) because light moves in a straight line through the hole.
- **Stability:** the quality, state, or degree of being stable. The strength to stand or endure.

Activity**Part 1 | Small Group Discussion**

- Working in small groups, have students look carefully at a printout of Morell's *Tent-Camera Image on Ground: Oak Tree, The Huntington Botanical Gardens, California*.
- As a group, use three Post-it notes to write an answer to each question below:
 - What is something that you see in this artwork?
 - What is an idea you have about this artwork?
 - What do you wonder about this artwork?

Part 2 | Large Group Discussion:

- On a whiteboard have students organize their Post-its into the three question categories. You can have students share and then put theirs onto the board.
- Discuss some of the comments and the artwork together. Focusing specifically on what the students see and think is going on.
- Share information about the artist and work, specifically about the camera obscura, from the artwork background in the additional resources.
- Why might an artist want to show the ground with leaves in addition to the tree?
- How does a tree connect to the ground and why is it important?
 - One reason is that the roots connect the tree so it can get nutrients and stability.
- Who are some people in your life that you feel you are “rooted” to?
 - How are you rooted/connected to them?
 - How do they support you and help you live a happy, stable life?
 - Is there anyone we feel rooted to even if we don’t personally know them? Like a book character or celebrity?
- Let’s think about our ground. How is where you are “planted” important? What do we receive from our community?
- What about the leaves: What part do they play in the tree? How do they help our community? How do we influence/help others and our community?

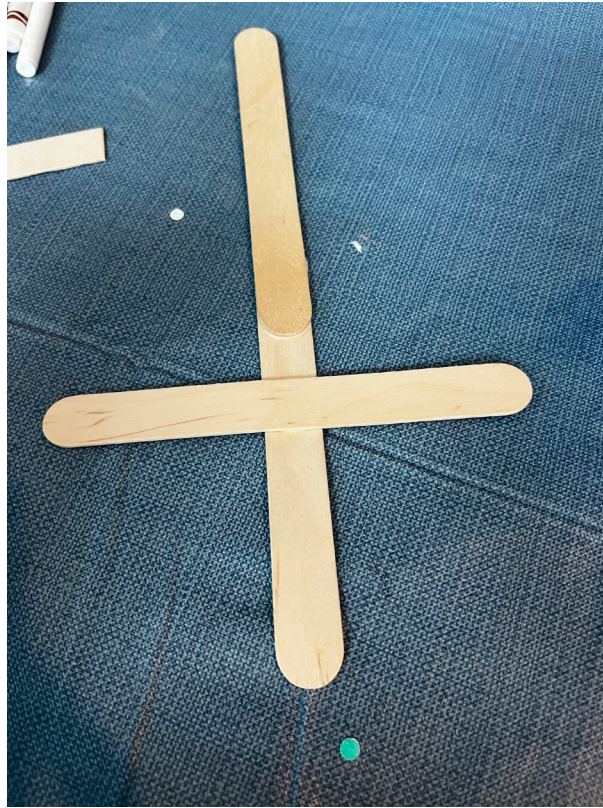
Part 3 | Art Making

- We’ll be using popsicle sticks to make trees showing our roots of important people in our lives to our branches of how we influence others.
- Students will need 7 popsicle sticks each. It may also help to illustrate instructions on the whiteboard.
- Start by gluing two popsicle sticks into a +.

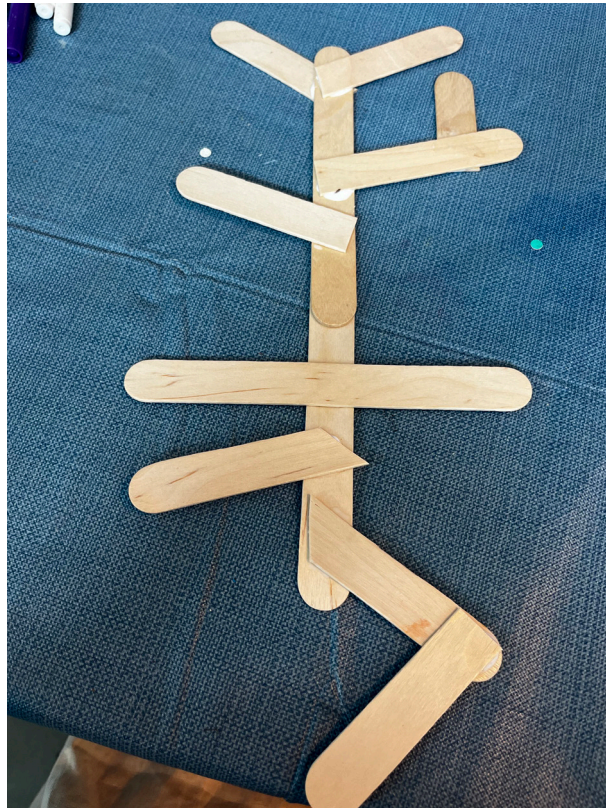


Part 3 | Art Making cont.

- Add on to one of the popsicle sticks by gluing another lined up over top and overlapping about an inch, making it more like an upside-down lower-case t.



- Take your remaining 4 popsicle sticks and cut each into two pieces (making 8 total), these sizes can vary though none should be shorter than 2 inches.
- The horizontal line is the ground, everything above it is the trunk and branches, and everything below are the roots. Let's add our tree roots! On the line of the t that's shorter and below our horizontal line, glue three of your popsicle sticks. At least one needs to be glued onto the main popsicle stick. The others can also be glued onto the main stick or extended from one that is (see example).
- On the opposite long line of the t, the "trunk," glue your remaining popsicle sticks for branches. At least three of these need to be glued to our trunk, the other two can also be glued onto the trunk or extending from the other three.



Part 3 | Art Making cont.

- Once all the popsicle sticks are glued down, grab some markers, preferably thin.
- On your horizontal ground line, draw some things about your home and where you are "planted." What do you love about it? What makes it unique?
- Assign each of your three roots a person that you feel connected to. Draw a symbol to represent them, whether a portrait or something else, and write down their name and how they've impacted your life or supported you.
- On your branches, write and draw symbols for how you positively influence your household, classroom, and community. Write at least one for each and then choose which category you want your additional two to be.

Additional Resources

[State Core Links:](#)

- Second Grade
 1. English Language Arts:
 - Speaking and Listening Standard 1: Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 2 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
 - Speaking and Listening Standard 2: Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
 2. Social Studies
 - Standard 2: Students will recognize and practice civic responsibility in the community, state, and nation.
 3. Visual Arts
 - Create (2.V.CR)
 - Respond (2.V.R.)
 - Connect (2.V.CO.)
 4. Science
 - Strand 2.2 Living Things and Their Habitats
- Third Grade
 1. English Language Arts:
 - Writing Standard 4: With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.
 - Writing Standard 8: Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories.
 - Speaking and Listening Standard 1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
 2. Social Studies
 - Standard 2: Students will understand cultural factors that shape a community.
 - Standard 3: Students will understand the principles of civic responsibility in classroom, community, and country.
 3. Visual Arts
 - Create (3.V.CR)
 - Respond (3.V.R.)
 - Connect (3.V.CO.)

Additional Resources cont.

- Fourth Grade
 1. English Language Arts:
 - Speaking and Listening Standard 1: Participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations, using age-appropriate vocabulary, on topics, texts, and issues.
 - Writing Standard 3: Write narrative pieces to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, clear event sequences, and provide a resolution.
 2. Social Studies
 - Standard 3: Students will understand the roles of civic life, politics, and government in the lives of Utah citizens.
 3. Visual Arts
 - Create (4.V.CR)
 - Respond (4.V.R.)
 - Connect (4.V.CO.)
 4. Science
 - Strand 4.1 Organisms Functioning in Their Environment
- Fifth Grade
 1. English Language Arts:
 - Writing Standard 3: Write narrative pieces to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, well-structured event sequences, and provide a resolution.
 - Speaking and Listening 1: Students will learn to collaborate, express and listen to ideas, integrate and evaluate information from various sources, use media and visual displays as well as language and grammar strategically to help achieve communicative purposes, and adapt to context and task.
 2. Visual Arts
 - Create (5.V.CR)
 - Respond (5.V.R.)
 - Connect (5.V.CO.)

Resources:

- <http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/index.php/the-illusive-and-expanding-marvels-of-abelardo-morell/>
- <https://www.abelardomorell.net/videos>
- <https://www.abelardomorell.net/about>



Artwork Spotlight:

Abelardo MORELL (Cuban American, born 1948), *Tent-Camera Image on Ground: Oak Tree, The Huntington Botanical Gardens, California*, 2012, photographic print on paper. Purchased with funds from Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl and the Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment Fund for the Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl Photograph Collection, UMFA2020.6.9

- Cuban-American artist Abelardo Morell (born in Havana in 1948) captures the enduring magic of photography by innovatively blending longstanding and recent technologies. He uses an old technique of the camera obscura along with a digital camera to explore the very essence of photography as “light drawing.”
- Morell’s photography records his new approaches to the traditional subject of landscape. Morell invented his tent-camera to take these techniques outside.

Artwork Spotlight cont.

- "The entire tent, about the size of an inverted wastebasket, becomes part of a mechanism that includes a tent-like enclosure, a lens system he made part of the tent, and a digital camera set up to shoot the contents of the tent.... In each tent camera work, there are at least two visual elements, usually three, and often more. First, there is the ground on which the tent is erected. This may fill the picture frame, or it may be partially covered by a layer of something else... All sorts of pavements as well as soil covered by various scattered matter, including stones and leaves, can be seen among the various works. In the top of the tent, a periscope reflects a camera obscura image from outside, and the two orientations, horizontal and vertical, produce a paradoxical, often vertiginous combined scene to be photographed by the digital camera inserted next to the periscope." – Geoff Wichert "The Illusive and Expanding Marvels of Abelardo Morell"

(<http://artistsofutah.org/15Bytes/index.php/the-illusive-and-expanding-marvels-of-abelardo-morell/>)

- Because of this technique developed by Morell, we can see both the tree in this photo and the ground scattered with red leaves. Why might someone want to use this process?

Contributer Bio:

Katie Seastrand has worked at the Utah Museum of Fine Arts since September 2019. She studied Art History and Museum Education and is very passionate about arts education and integration. Katie grew up in Utah with many educator family members and loves to support educators in any way possible. In her spare time she loves to knit, bake, and read!

This Lesson Plan was created for the October 25, 2023 UMFA Evening For Educators: Symbols of Family. The evening was inspired by the special exhibition *Tatau: Marks of Polynesia*, on view from August 12, 2023 to December 30, 2023.

Heading image | Oceania, Samoa, (1st half of the 20th century), detail of *Siapo (tapa cloth)*, dye, paper mulberry bark, resin. Gift of Richard E. Brown in memory of Ellis O. and Sarah N. Brown, UMFA2006.3.4



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