

# THINKING **BIG**, THINKING SMALL ...



## PLAYING WITH SIZE

### Suggested Grade Levels:

### Kindergarten through Grade 2

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

### The Big Idea

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

### Student Learning Targets

I can find a story in a work of art.

I can draw something small big.

I can draw something big small.

I can make my picture stand out.

### Materials

Large white drawing paper  
18 x 24 inches

Colored crayons or oil pastels

Simple flowers to observe and draw

### Vocabulary

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

## Teaching and Learning Process Part I

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

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

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

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

***These flowers are gigantic because...***

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

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

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

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

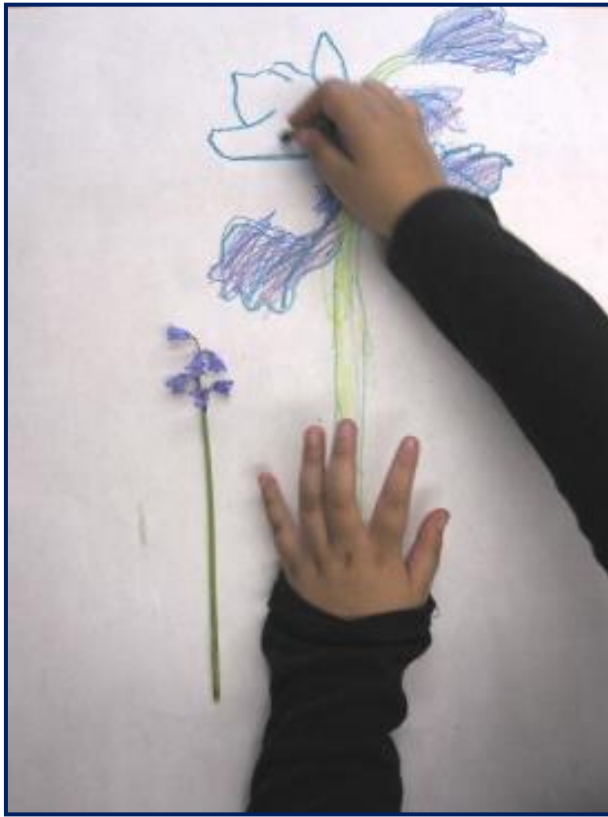
**Students:**  Observe and draw a flower big enough to fill the paper.



#### Studio Tips

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

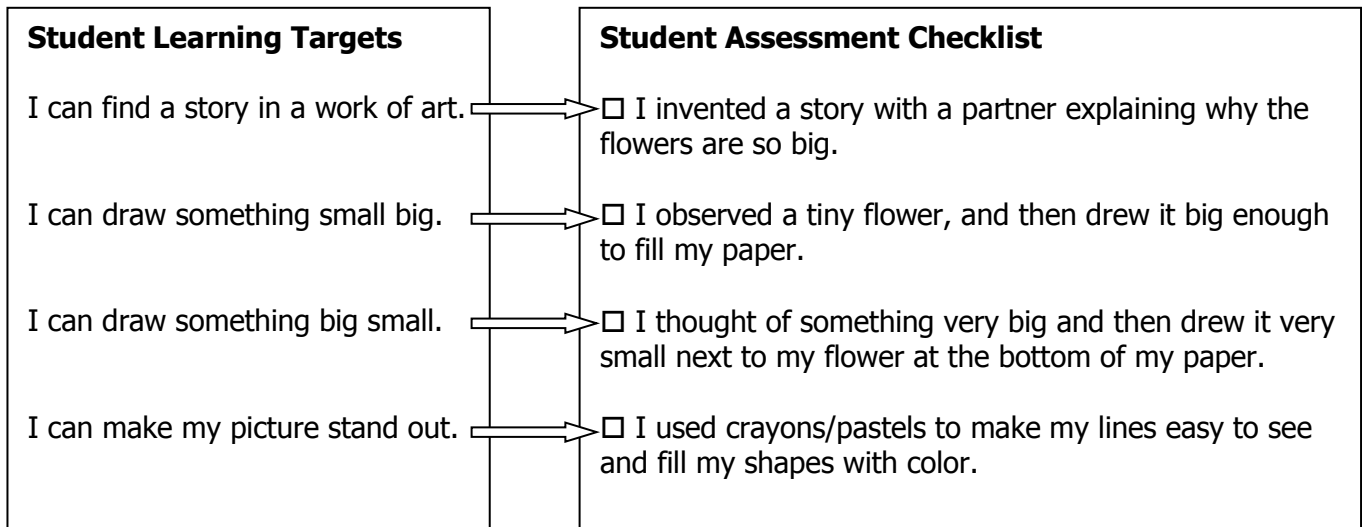
*Press hard with your crayon to make those lines jump out. Fill in your shapes with color also. You can use more than one color in your shapes and lines.*

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

## Part II

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

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



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

**Concludes by asking students:** *How do these sculptures reflect the place they are installed (Connell)? In what ways do the sculptures benefit the people who live there?*

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

**Lesson Alternatives or Extensions**

Make gigantic student height flower drawings, cut them out, and place (plant) them on school walls for maximum effect.

OR

Reverse the subject and size by making giant drawings of human-made objects tools, hardware and add tiny shapes for living things. Perhaps a tiny elephant in the shadow of a giant key....

## **Washington State Arts Learning Standards: Visual Art**

### **Anchor Standard 1: Creating: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.**

Performance Standard (VA:Cr1.2.1): a. Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art.

### **Anchor Standard 2: Creating: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.**

Performance Standard (VA:Cr2.3.K): a. Create art that represents natural and constructed environments.

### **Anchor Standard 3: Creating: Refine and complete artistic work.**

Performance Standard (VA:Cr3.1.2): a. Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork.

### **Anchor Standard 5: Presenting: Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.**

Performance Standard (VA:Pr5.1.1) a. Ask and answer questions such as where, when, why, and how artwork should be prepared for presentation or preservation.

### **Anchor Standard 6: Presenting: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.**

Performance Standard (VA:Pr6.1.2): a. Analyze how art exhibited inside and outside of schools (such as in museums, galleries, virtual spaces, and other venues) contributes to communities.

### **Anchor Standard 7: Responding: Perceive and analyze artistic work.**

Performance Standard (VA:Re7.2.K): a. Describe what an image represents.

## **Washington State Common Core Standards : English Language Arts**

### **Reading: Key ideas and Details**

RL.K.2. With prompting and support, retell familiar stories, including key details.

RL.1.3. Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.

### **Writing: Text Types and Purposes**

W.2.3. Write narratives in which they recount a well elaborated event or short sequence of events, include details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide a sense of closure.

### **Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration**

SL.1.2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

**WHAT REALLY HAPPENED...  
HOW THE ARTISTS GREW GIANT SCULPTURES**



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

***How do these sculptures reflect the place they are installed?***

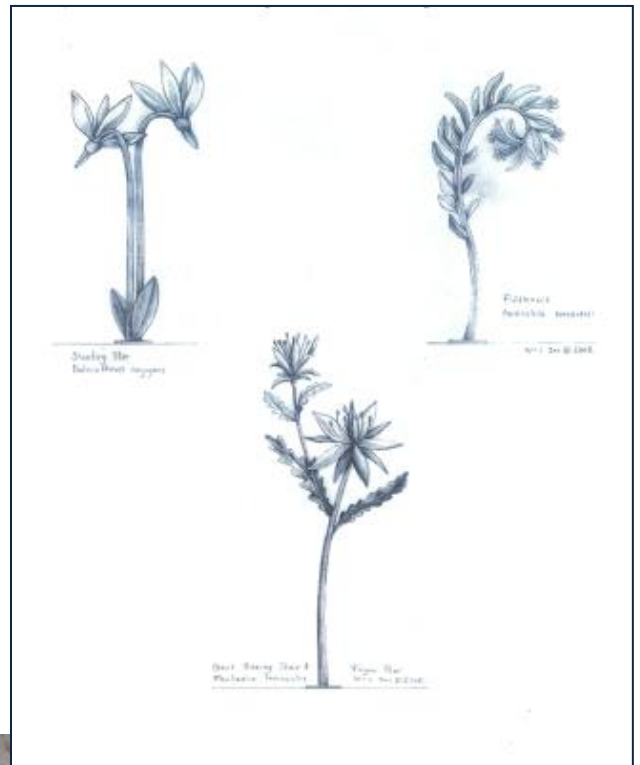
***In what ways do these sculptures benefit the people who live there?***

**Artist Statement**

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

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

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



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

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



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







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



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



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

## Family Communication/Wall Display Text

### THINKING BIG, THINKING SMALL ... PLAYING WITH SIZE

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