

# A Whale's Tale: Mixed Media Collages Inspired by David Blackwood

**CREATED WITH CONTRIBUTIONS BY:** Valerie Batyi, Lauren Eng, and Amelia Epp

**TOPICS:** Representing a story through images and words; Representing a whale in a marine environment; Using a variety of lines to represent texture

**SUBJECT(S):** Visual Arts

**GRADE(S):** K-3

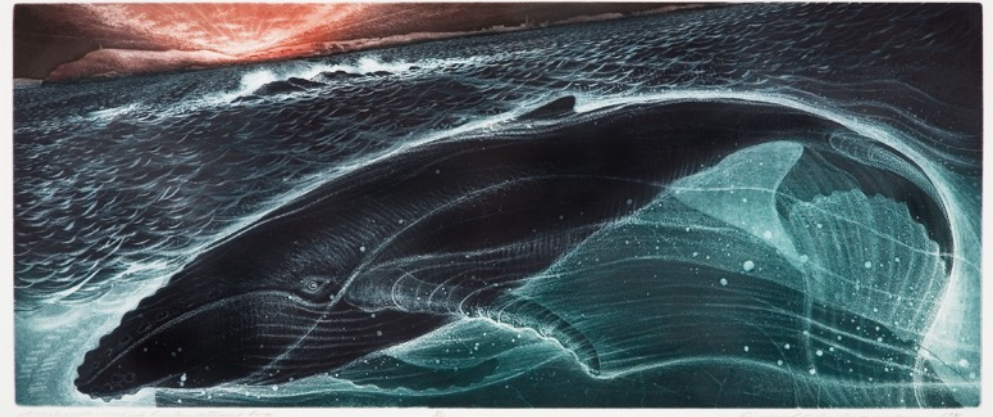
**UNIT DURATION:** 3 lessons

## OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK:

In this unit students will learn about the artwork of artist David Blackwood and his interest in storytelling through visual elements within his depictions of marine environments. Students will create a mixed media artwork depicting a whale in a marine environment, incorporating text, and making use of a variety of lines and warm and cool colours.

Canadian artist David Blackwood is known chiefly for his intaglio prints, often depicting dramatic historical scenes of Newfoundland outport life and industry, such as shipwrecks, seal hunting, iceberg encounters, and resettlement. He considers himself a "visual storyteller," and also produces paintings, drawings and woodcuts.

Born in Wesleyville, Newfoundland, David Blackwood opened his first art studio in 1956, and in 1959 was awarded a scholarship to study at the Ontario College of Art. After graduating in 1963 he remained in Ontario, where he became Art Master at Trinity College School in Port Hope. Blackwood was involved in establishing an art gallery at Erindale College (a campus of the University of Toronto), now called The Blackwood Gallery in his honour. In 1976, the National Film Board of Canada produced a documentary film about the artist, Blackwood, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Documentary Short Subject. He was made a member of the Order of Canada in 1993, and of the Order of Ontario in 2002. In 2003, he became the first practising artist to be named Honorary Chairman of the Art Gallery of Ontario, which maintains a Blackwood Research Centre and a major collection of his work. Blackwood currently resides in Port Hope,



David Blackwood, *Wesleyville, Seabird Hunters Returning Home*, 1991, etching, 15 x 36 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

Ontario and keeps a studio in Wesleyville, Newfoundland and Labrador.

## BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Engagement in the arts creates opportunities for inquiry through purposeful play. (Arts Education K)
- People connect to others and share idea through the arts. (Arts Education 1)
- Inquiry through the arts creates opportunities for risk taking. (Arts Education 2)

## CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Explore elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools and techniques of the arts
- Express feelings, ideas, stories, observations, and experiences through creative works

## CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Variety of local works of art and artistic traditions
- Elements of visual art; line, shape, texture, colour, repetition

## ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- How can you make use of lines and colour to reflect your own personality?
- How does the artist show a story in his painting?

## FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning requires exploration of one's identity.  
Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

## MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- image of David Blackwood's print *Wesleyville, Seabird Hunters Returning Home* (see end of document for large image)
- digital projector/laptop
- 12" x 18" thick white paper (cardstock or Opus Opaque Vellum)
- 8.5" x 11" black construction paper
- variety of warm coloured washable felt markers (pink, yellow, orange, red)
- variety of cool coloured washable felt markers (blue and green)
- paint brushes (1 per student)
- water pots
- glue sticks
- liquid glue
- glue spreaders
- pencils
- scissors
- white crayons (1 per student)
- black permanent marker (i.e. fine sharpies)
- light blue and/or white tissue paper torn into pieces approximately 4" x 2" (wax paper can also be used)

## VOCABULARY:

line (scribble, jagged, wavy, diagonal, flowing, thin, thick, etc.), marine, environment, horizon, background, mid-ground, foreground, narrative, cross-section, texture

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- David Blackwood bio and art: <http://www.davidblackwood.com/>
- David Blackwood bio and art: <https://www3.gordonsmithgallery.ca/Artists4Kids/ArtistPatrons/DavidBlackwood/Pages/default.aspx>
- *Peg and the Whale* by Kenneth Oppel (2002)
- Art terms glossary: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>

## ADAPTATIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Students with difficulties using scissors may need support. Students with beginner language and writing skills may need support forming and writing words on the paper in Lesson #3.

## DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro; creating the whale, boats and islands):

- Optionally begin lesson by reading aloud a picture book featuring a whale such as *Peg and the Whale* by Kenneth Oppel (2002).



- Introduce students to artist David Blackwood and his print *Wesleyville, Seabird Hunters Returning Home*. Project the artwork in the classroom (see end of document for large image) and pose the following discussion questions:

- What is the main focus of this artwork (whale)?
- Is the whale located in the background, mid-ground, or foreground (front)?
- How has David Blackwood allowed us to see above and below the water?
- Can you identify the line that indicates the border separating the views above and below the water?
- What is the horizon line? Can you identify it? What is on the horizon?
- Look carefully at the mid-ground. What details has the artist put on top of the water?
- What colours has the artist used in this picture?
- What time of day do you think it is?
- Observe the lines used in Blackwood's artwork. What kinds of lines has Blackwood used? (i.e. long, short, wiggly, choppy, curvy, etc.)?
- What kinds of lines has David Blackwood used to show texture on the whale and on the water?
- If this image is part of a story, is it the beginning, middle, or ending? Why?
- Share with students the title of Blackwood's print: *Wesleyville, Seabird Hunters Returning Home*. Ask students: what does the title tell us about the story that is shown in this artwork?

- Explain to students that David Blackwood considers himself a "visual storyteller" and that he often creates his artworks to depict a narrative (story).

- Have students write their own short stories about David Blackwood's print. Use sentence frames or brainstorm with students a list of key descriptive words – depending on the grade level of students.

- Explain to students that they will create



Whale in profile cut from black construction paper in Lesson #1. Details have been added using a white crayon.

their own artworks depicting a whale in its environment and that they will incorporate words into their picture that help to convey a story.

- Students will begin by cutting out whales, boats, and island shapes using black construction paper (see teacher sample on following page).
- Provide students with images of whales in profile for visual reference as they draw their own whales (just the outline) on 8.5" x 11" black construction paper (using a white crayon or pencil crayon). Students' whales should be approximately 11" in length and 4" in height. Optionally, students could be provided with whale templates to trace onto their black paper.
- Students should then draw island shapes (3-5) and a boat outline on the same sheet of black construction paper.
- Students should then cut out their whale, boat, and island shapes.
- With a white crayon, students should then add detail and texture to their whale. Refer back to the lines and textures Blackwood included on the whale in his print.
- While students are completing these steps, remind them to consider the story they want to tell about their whale.

#### LESSON #2 (horizon and background creation):

- View David Blackwood's print *Wesleyville, Seabird Hunters*. Ask students:
  - What kinds of lines has Blackwood used to create the water and sky in his print (i.e. short, wiggly, choppy, scribbled, jagged, wavy, diagonal, flowing, thin, thick)?
- Record students' brainstormed list of lines on a white board or on flip chart paper. Have students come up to the board and demonstrate a variety of lines for the class, contributing to a class collection of lines.
- Lightly in pencil, have students draw a line across the 12" x 18" thick white sheet of paper. This will be the horizon line. Like Blackwood's horizon, this line can be drawn at an angle. This line will later be erased.
- Using a variety of pink, yellow, and orange washable markers (warm colours) have students draw repeated lines of their choosing above the horizon. The sky should be lighter close to the horizon line and darker near the top of the paper (see teacher sample).
- Using a variety of blue and green washable markers (cool colours) draw either calm and flowy ocean lines or wavy and choppy ocean lines just below the horizon (see teacher sample). Begin with lighter cool colours at the top of the water and darker cool colours at the bottom of the water (see teacher sample).

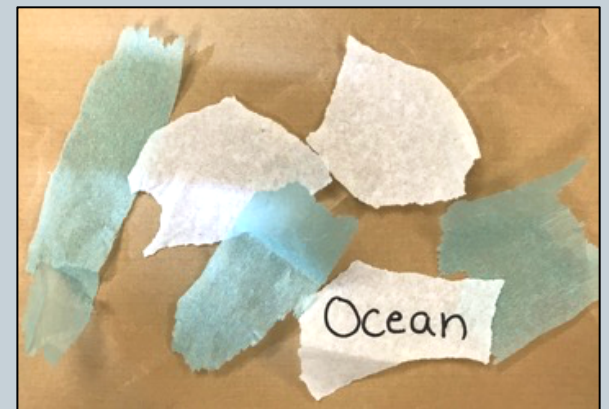
- When students' backgrounds are mostly filled with colour, distribute the water pots and paint brushes. Demonstrate how to dip a paint brush into the water, wiping excess water off on the side of the water pot. Show students how to brush over the warm coloured sky first, blending the colours together. Students should then dip the brush in water again, wiping off excess water. They should then brush across the water portion of the background. The lines will blend into each other. Caution students to not use too much water or the paper will get soggy and rip.
- Place the papers on a drying rack or in a drying area.

#### LESSON #3 (gluing down whales, islands, and boats; creating and gluing down descriptive story words):

- Have students erase the light pencil horizon line drawn on their background in Lesson #2.
- Have students place their cut out whale, boat, and islands onto their backgrounds. Whales should be located near the bottom of the paper in the foreground. Islands and boats should be located near the horizon line in the mid-ground.
- Once students decide upon the placement of their shapes, they should glue them down.
- Have students choose 4-8 pre-torn pieces of light blue or white tissue paper (approximately 4" x 2" in size).
- Refer back to the short stories or key descriptive words that students composed in Lesson #1. Students should choose 4-8 words (1 word per



Teacher sample showing marker lines drawn in warm and cool colours completed in Lesson #2.



Whale in profile cut from black construction paper. Details have been added using a white crayon.

piece of tissue paper) that convey the story they wish to tell through their artwork.

- Students should print each of their chosen words onto a piece of torn tissue paper (1 word per piece of tissue paper). Students can print their words with pencil first and then trace over their words using black permanent marker.
- Students should then use white glue to paste the words down on the ocean portion of the art piece. For a translucent consistency, first apply glue on the back of the tissue paper, then place it down and apply glue on top of the tissue paper.
- Place the papers on a drying rack or in a drying area.

#### **FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:**

Ask students to explain the story of the whale as you make your way around the classroom in Lesson #1.

#### **SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:**

After students complete their artworks, create a discussion circle where the students have the option to share the story of their whale and to reflect on their finished piece. Some guiding questions include:

- What is the story of your whale?
- What kinds of lines did you use in your scene?
- What kinds of colours did you use in your scene?
- How do your words connect to your story?

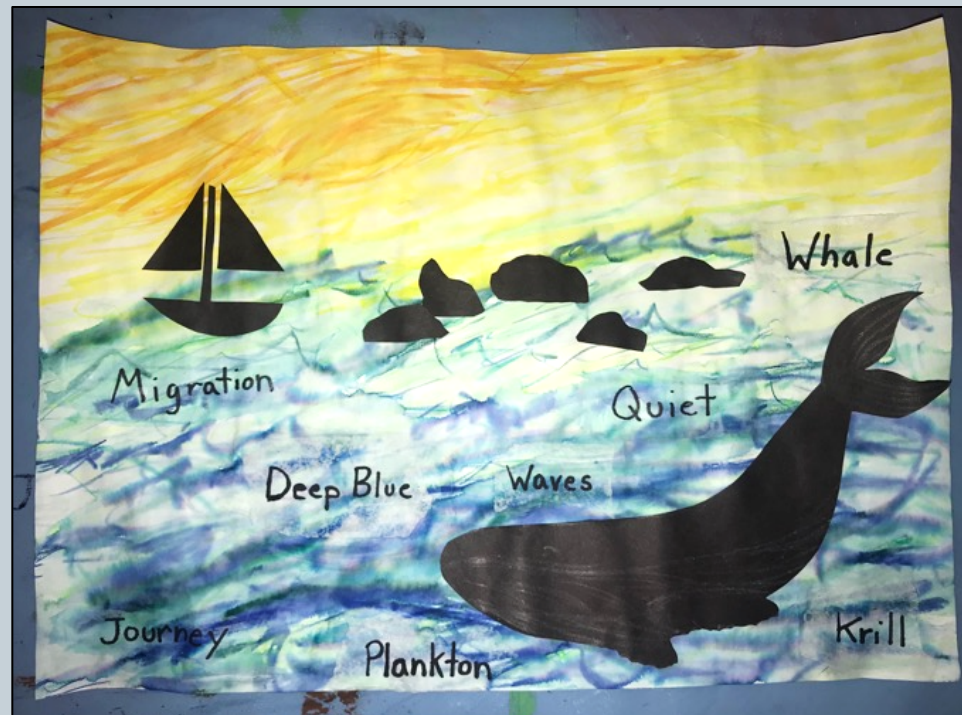
#### **EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS:**

Connect students' learning about David Blackwood's artwork to a discussion of the effects humans have on marine ecosystems. Discuss with students ways to keep oceans clean and ways to recycle products to prevent pollution. Additionally, students could learn about the feeding and migration habits of different species of whales.

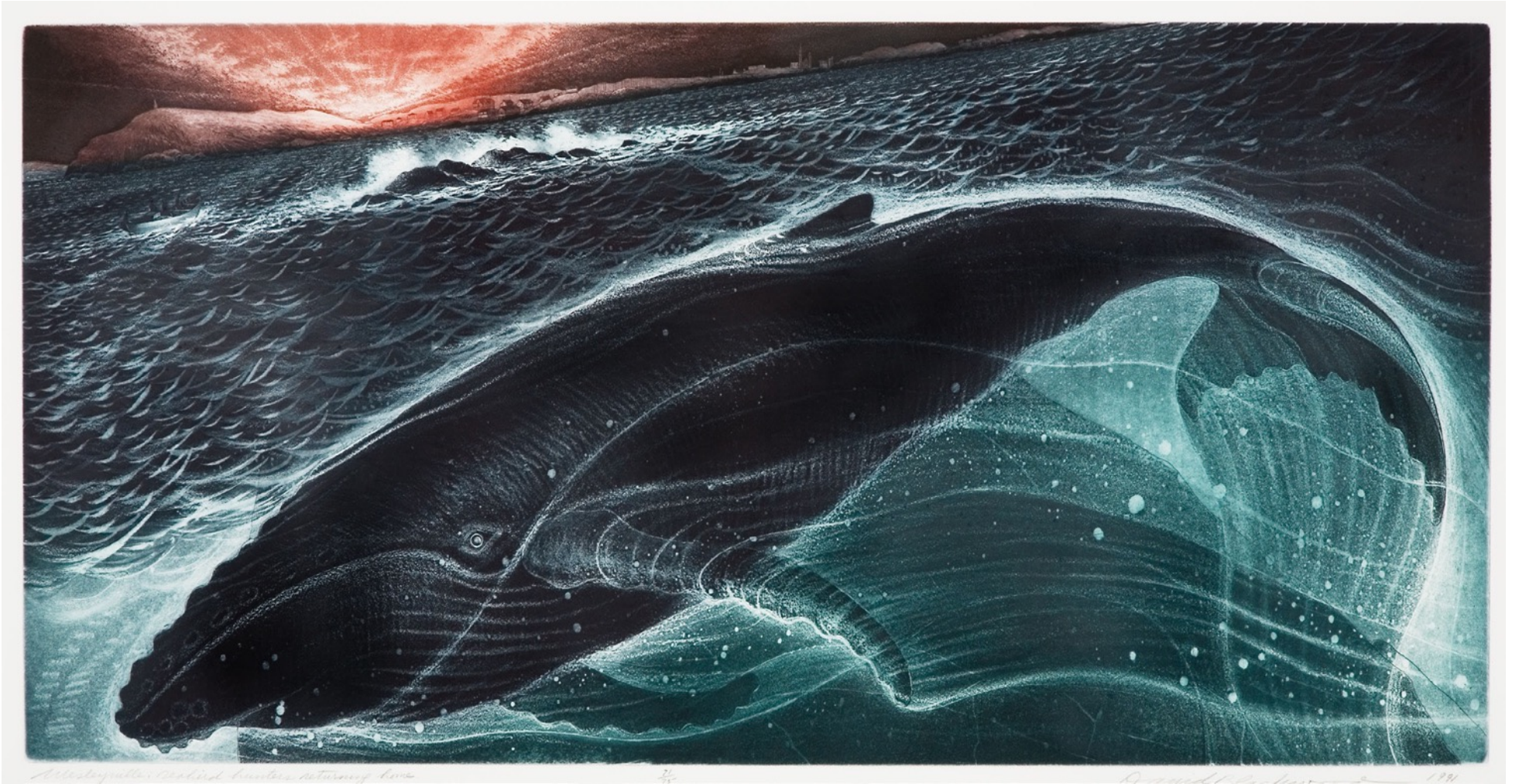
#### **AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:**

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



Teacher sample showing completed artwork at the conclusion of Lesson #3



David Blackwood, Wesleyville, *Seabird Hunters Returning Home*, 1991, etching, 15 x 36 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.