The background of the page is a rich, textured oil painting of a forest. In the foreground, a stream flows through a clearing, with several large, gnarled, fallen tree trunks and branches scattered across the grassy bank. The water reflects the surrounding greenery and the overcast sky. In the mid-ground, more trees stand, their leaves in various shades of green and brown, suggesting an autumn or late summer setting. The background is filled with a dense canopy of trees, with light filtering through from the top left corner, creating a soft, atmospheric glow. The overall style is detailed and expressive, characteristic of the Hudson River School or similar 19th-century landscape painting.

INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY
FOR GRADES 1–12

Living Things & Habitats

through the art of

Homer Watson

**STUDY THE
CHARACTERISTICS
OF PLANTS**

TEACHER INTRODUCTION

Using Homer Watson's art as a starting point, this independent activity will examine plants and what they need to live in a healthy ecosystem. This activity has been written to complement the Art Canada Institute online art book *Homer Watson: Life & Work* by Brian Foss and adapted from the Teacher Resource Guide titled "Learn about Living Things & Habitats through the art of Homer Watson." For additional learning materials, please see the Art Canada Institute [Teacher Resource Guides](#).

In this activity, students will explore artworks by Homer Watson and learn the basic needs of plants, their physical characteristics (stem, leaf, etc.), and how to identify them. Students will undertake specific research on plants to gain a more general understanding, and the class will learn from each other about a variety of plants.

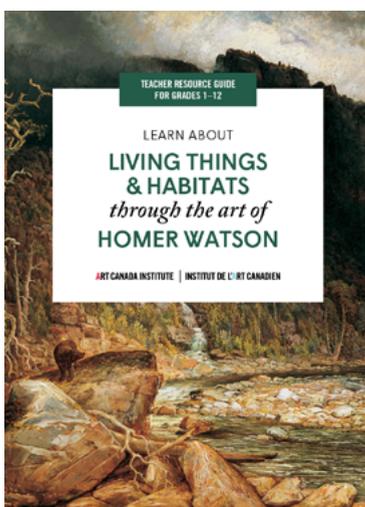
Please note that it is suggested that you prepare a supplementary activity for your students to help them identify plants. This can be shared through a synchronous class, an asynchronous video posted to your digital space, or an additional handout.

Within this activity, your students will have the opportunity to engage in critical discussion. Several platforms, such as Jamboard, Parlay, and Flipgrid, may be used to help foster rich dialogue among students throughout this activity.

Students will also have the opportunity to share their work with their peers at the end of this activity. Applications for creating a communal gallery space include CoSpaces Edu, Google Classroom, and Seesaw.

Curriculum Connections

- Grades 1–4 Language Arts
- Grades 1–4 Science
- Grades 1–4 Visual Arts
- Grade 4 Social Studies
- Grades 7–8 Science
- Grades 7–12 Visual Arts
- Grades 9–12 Biology



DOWNLOAD GUIDE

ADAPTED FROM

Learn about Living Things & Habitats through the art of Homer Watson

Grades 1 to 12

THEMES

- Ecosystems
- Habitats
- Living things
- Plants



At his home in Doon, Watson built his own studio and a gallery to show his paintings.

EDUCATION:
Self-taught, but studied works by other artists



In 1923, he bought his first car, which he used for far-ranging painting trips.

GET TO KNOW THE ARTIST



“ I always felt the line and rhythm of forms of earth... and I hope to get others to see it, too. ”

BORN: January 14, 1855
DIED: MAY 30, 1936
PLACE OF BIRTH & DEATH: Doon, Ontario

HOMER WATSON



As a child, Homer Watson practised his artistic skills by drawing copies of magazine illustrations.



He was committed to the environment and helped protect Cressman's Woods, an area near where he lived. Today it is called Homer Watson Park.

BEST KNOWN FOR:
Landscape paintings representing southern Ontario

INDEPENDENT STUDENT LEARNING ACTIVITY

STUDY THE CHARACTERISTICS OF PLANTS

Homer Watson (1855–1936) was one of the country’s most important nineteenth-century artists, and he is best known for his landscapes of Canada. Although Watson did not work in a revolutionary style, his views about land were ahead of their time. He believed in maintaining sustainable relationships with nature and in preserving the environment. The lands of southern Ontario were very important to him personally, and he knew them well.

Using various works by Homer Watson, you will learn the basic needs of plants, their physical characteristics (stem, leaf, etc.), and how to identify plants based on their various characteristics.

Materials Needed

- Computer, iPad, etc.
- Paper
- Pencils, pencil crayons, markers, watercolour paints, etc.

Learning Goals

1. I can identify the characteristics and needs of various plants.
2. I can use my critical-thinking and creative skills to analyze an artwork.
3. I can explain why certain plants grow in specific places.
4. I can accurately sketch a plant to show its characteristics.
5. I can work co-operatively and collaboratively with my peers.

Success Criteria

1. My sketches show careful observation of the natural world.
2. My written response is clear and well edited.
3. I use proper terminology when discussing plant characteristics in my written response.
4. I can show respect and cultural sensitivity when discussing Homer Watson’s career and art.
5. I am respectful and use appropriate language in my responses on the discussion board.

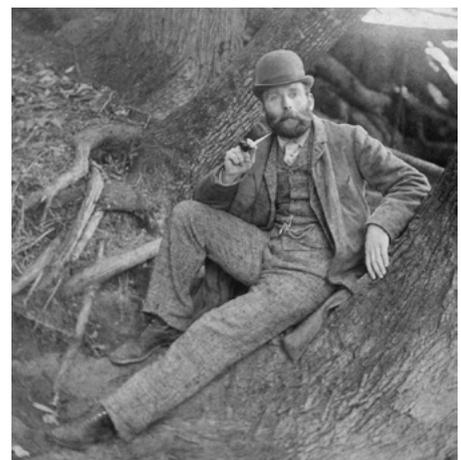
LEARNING PLAN

Step 1: 5 min

Watch the Art Canada Institute learning video on Homer Watson.

<https://vimeo.com/456798058>

Think about what you found interesting about the artist Homer Watson. Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication. Treat this space as you would a class discussion. Write clearly, structuring your thoughts carefully and paying attention to proper writing conventions.



One of the earliest known photographs of Homer Watson, c.1880, photographer unknown. Collection of Queen’s University Archives, Kingston (Homer Watson Fonds, 2033-2-10). Courtesy of Queen’s University Archives.

Step 2: 5 min

How do we identify different types of plants? What can we look for in plants to identify them? How can we tell different species apart?

Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication.

Step 3: 10 min

Your teacher may have shared information regarding identifying plants. Please review this material, following your teacher's instructions.

Step 4: 10 min

Look at this image of a deciduous tree. What physical characteristics do you see? How are they different from those of other trees you may have seen?

Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication.



A tree in Homer Watson Park. Courtesy: Wikimedia Commons.

Step 5: 5 min

Look at Homer Watson's painting *Grand River Landscape at Doon*, c.1881, and answer the following questions.

- What are some of the differences between the photograph of trees and the painting?
- What are some of the choices that Watson made when he painted trees and other plants, as seen on this canvas?
- What elements do you think Watson might have simplified when he painted trees and plants?
- What elements do you think he exaggerated?

Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication.



Homer Watson, *Grand River Landscape at Doon*, c.1881, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 91.5 cm, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax. Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, purchased 1950 (1950.1). Photo credit: Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.

Step 6: 20 min

Look closely at the artworks below and identify some of the different types of plants in each painting. Do your best to identify them and be sure to use the tools and resources provided by your teacher. The artist has stylized the look of these plants (by simplifying or exaggerating) and so a best guess based on careful thinking is great.

Post your thoughts on the collaborative discussion board or share them directly with your teacher using the preferred method of communication.



Homer Watson, *Near the Close of a Stormy Day*, 1884, oil on canvas, 96.5 x 142.6 cm. Collection of the Winnipeg Art Gallery, gift of Lieutenant Colonel H.F. Osler (G-47-164a). Courtesy of the Winnipeg Art Gallery. Photo credit: Ernest Mayer.



Homer Watson, *Two Cows in a Stream*, c.1885, oil on canvas, 33.5 x 54 cm. Collection of the Homer Watson House & Gallery, Kitchener. Photo credit: Homer Watson House & Gallery.

Step 7: 60 min

Find some simple sketching materials. Go for a walk in your local neighbourhood.

- What plants do you see?

Select two plants in your local community and create a detailed sketch of each plant, either by bringing drawing tools or photographing the plants and drawing them from the images.

Step 8: 40 min

Research these plants and answer the following questions. Record your answers as short annotations on your sketches. You will submit these with the two sketches to your teacher.

- What is the name of this plant?
- What are the physical characteristics of this plant? Label your sketch.
- Why do you think this plant grows in this area?

Step 9: 5 min

Post your two sketches and written responses to the collaborative gallery space that your teacher has created for this assignment. Write clearly, structuring your thoughts carefully and paying attention to proper writing conventions. Be sure to edit your work before you submit it.

Step 10: 5 min

Take time to explore the collaborative gallery space. Review at least two other sketches/written responses and provide your peers with two stars (something they have captured well) and a wish (something you wish you had seen in their work) as feedback.



Homer Watson, *A Coming Storm in the Adirondacks*, 1879, oil on canvas, 85.7 x 118.3 cm. Collection of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, gift of George Hague, 1887 (1887.203). Photo credit: Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.