

Fantastic Faux Fossils

(art + science)

Fossils (from the Latin *fossus*, which means "having been dug up") are the preserved remains or traces of animals, plants and other organisms from the remote past, usually from more than 10,000 years ago. The study of fossils across geological time, including how they were formed, are two of the most important aspects of the science of paleontology.

Starting with their own simple drawings, students can create three-dimensional fossils of animals, plants or insects, either based on fossils they have seen first-hand, or those they have studied.

Grade Levels K-12

Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

1. Cut drawing paper into 4" x 4" squares.
2. Cut tissue into 6" x 6" squares.
3. Cut armature wire into 15" long pieces.
4. Thin the glue with a small amount of water and pour it into containers.



Process

1. Select a simple fossil to create and make a preliminary drawing on paper. Trace the drawing with a black marker.
2. Use the drawing as a template and bend the armature wire to match the lines and shapes of the fossil. Cut the wire into smaller pieces if needed.
3. Press the wire against a hard surface so it lies as flat as possible, then glue it to the canvas panel. Allow to dry.
4. Brush glue that has been slightly diluted over the entire canvas panel and armature wire.
5. Cut a piece of tissue slightly larger than the canvas and apply it to the glued area over the wire. Press the tissue in and around the wire. Allow it to wrinkle naturally. Let the piece dry and repeat the process



Materials

Blick® Drawing Pad, 30 sheets, 8" x 10" (10314-2012); need 1/2 sheet per student

Crayola® Classic Washable Marker, Black (21206-2001); one marker per student

Blick® Canvas Panels, 4" x4" (07008-0044); one per student

Armature Wire, 16-gauge, 32-ft (33400-1632); share one coil across class

Mini Wire Cutter, 5" (33083-1020); share four across class

Blick® Pure White Tissue, 24-sheet package (11308-1493); need one sheet per student

Blick® Economy White Bristle Bright, size 14 (05170-1014); need one brush per student

Blick® Washable White Glue, 16-oz (23882-1016); distribute across class

Prismacolor® NuPastel Color Sticks, one each per student of the following colors;
Warm Medium Gray (20034-2321)
Cold Deep Gray (20034-2831)
Nut Brown (20034-8091)
Burnt Sienna (20034-8703)

Blick® Matte Fixative, 12-oz (21707-1105); share one can across class

Process, continued

twice more with a thin layer of glue between each layer of tissue. Allow the piece to dry completely.

- Using the NuPastel Color Sticks, add color to the surface of the dry fossil panel. Use a dry brush to blend the color. Be sure to color the edges of the canvas.
- With the Cold Deep Gray pastel stick, color the raised areas of the wire only.
- Spray the finished piece with fixative.



“Fossil” prior to tissue paper overlay

Options

- A final tissue layer of rice paper can be used to provide an interesting texture.
- Pressed pressed leaves, sticks, pine needles, shells or other natural materials can be sandwiched between the layers of tissue.
- [Blick® Carve & Cast](#) (33103-1010) can be used to model fossils such as lizards, snakes, ammonites or trilobites. Mix two parts Carve & Cast with one part water, form it, and allow it to dry. Finished pieces will be as hard as plaster.
- [Staedtler Fimo® Soft Polymer Clay](#) (33228-1002) can be used to create bones or shell fragments.
- Older students can reproduce “sea bed” fossils or a slice of a forest floor on a larger canvas panel.

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

K-4 Students know the differences between materials, techniques and processes.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

9-12 Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

Content Standard #6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

K-4 Students identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum.

5-8 Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.

9-12 Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues or themes in the humanities or sciences.