

Landscape/Soundscape: Drawing and Listening to Your Community

This lesson can act as a short unit in which students are given a chance to critically reflect on and creatively make art from what they see and hear in their communities. They are also given a chance to see and hear with the eyes and ears of others through collaborative creation. The timing of the following lesson should be shaped according to your timetable, class length, and age of participants. Please adjust any of the following to better fit your class.

Italics have been used to indicate sentences to be spoken aloud to the students.

Materials needed: projector, laptop/desktop, stereo/speakers, cameras and audio recorders (can be on mobile phones), chart paper, markers

Day One - Minds on a discussion, some listening, and some creating

Feel free to cover the following in a Think-Pair-Share style if you have time, this often gives more students a chance to talk:

- *What was the first sound you heard this morning? Describe it without labelling it.*

If time permits, written descriptions can be read aloud and can sound very poetic.

- *What does a building sound like?*
- *Does it make sounds? Are other sounds affected by it?*
- *What does a park sound like?*
- *Does it make sounds? Are other sounds affected by it?*
- *How does a park look different than a building?*

Using a projector with speakers, watch and listen to [Snowforms](#) by R. Murray Schafer, a choral composition that is inspired by sketches of snowdrifts and various Inuit words for snow.

- *Any thoughts about this piece?*
- *Is this what snow might sound like?*
- *What kinds of other sounds might snow make?*

In reality, literal sounds and shapes can be interesting and engaging but our own creative versions of these can be more personal depictions of how we see and hear the world or how we want to see and hear it.

Schafer made sketches of the snow he saw around his farmhouse.

- *What are some of the most familiar lines and shapes around your home?*
- *Can you sketch these?*
- *What would these sketches sound like?*

In groups try to make some sounds to match your sketches. Try moving your body to follow the lines and shapes. Create a performance (sound and/or movement) that uses an aspect of each group member's sketch.

[Here is an example of a group neighbourhood sketch of teachers in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil \(2019\).](#)

What might these landscapes sound like?

[Prairies](#)

[Prairies in Winter/Ice](#)

[Copacabana sunset](#)

R. Murray Schafer

R. Murray Schafer (b. 1933) is a living Canadian composer and educator who is often credited for being the first person to use the word soundscape. He is considered one of the first to suggest that what we hear, and even what we might miss hearing, affects us as much, possibly even more, than what we see, smell, taste, and touch. He was highly concerned with the modern soundscape getting noisier and noisier. Many of his compositions incorporate aspects of deep listening, the sounds of our environment, and can be inspired by or even set to be performed at natural locations such as a lake at sunrise or a quiet northern forest. In one of his musical dramas participants perform a howl after dusk around a campfire. They are often joined by real wolves!

Day Two - Action your landscape, your soundscape

Homework to be done before:

Take a picture or two of a favourite spot/view of your neighbourhood.

In-class action:

- *Describe one of your pictures (shapes, colour, lines, textures) without labelling the objects within it (labelling is literal, descriptions are more personal and open ended).*
- *Describe what sounds (volume, tone, pitch, rhythm, duration) might be implied by your picture.*
- *Make a sketch (lines, forms, textures, colour) from your pictures*
- *How might you move to this (consider the basic elements of dance: body, space, time, energy, relationship)?*
- *What might the line, colour, form, textures of your sketch sound like? How might the lines indicate volume, tone, pitch, rhythm, duration)?*

In groups experiment with interpreting your sketches through sound and movement.

- *Try to describe of someone else's picture.*
- *How are your pictures similar? How are they different?*
- *How are your descriptions of the same pictures and recordings the same? How are they different?*
- *Are there similarities, common themes, shapes, lines in your all of your group members' pictures?*

Day Three – Consolidation

- In small groups collaborate on a sketch composition involving elements of each group members individual sketch. Use large chart paper.
- Consider your descriptions and experiment with sound and movement when choosing elements from each sketch.
- Create a two to three minute performance using sound and/or movement that accompanies this sketch. You may use noisemakers, instruments, voices, bodies, and props. You can record (audio and/or video) and post to [Creatubbles](#).

Possible Extensions:

- Look at historic pictures to see how they are different.
- Explore the [Massey Hall Sound Museum](#) and/or the [BBC sound effects archive](#).
- Smell, touch (theatre of the senses) - do pictures and audio recordings of cooking
- Write poems, short plays, short stories using your descriptions

Assessment:

If you wish to evaluate this work, it is suggested that you create success criteria along with students:

1. Brainstorm
2. Sort and Categorize
3. Make and post a T-chart
4. Add, revise, refine

Sample Criteria/Rubric:

Criteria for Group Presentations	4	3	2	1
Application of the creative process (evidence of generating ideas, reflection, revision, imagining, experimenting)				
Transfer of previous skills and knowledge (good use of individual skills and well performed as an ensemble)				
Effective choice and use of musical and/or dance elements (well chosen motives matched with expressions in dynamics, texture, tone)				
Creative (well chosen motives matched with an engaging performance)				
Analysis (clear description of process, evidence of reflection and revision)				

Appendix A

Some of the elements and principles of art, dance, and music are used above. Please find a more complete list here.

The following is taken from the Ontario Arts Curriculum ([elementary here](#), [secondary here](#)) but can be found in similar form in other provincial curricula.

Elements of Music

- Duration: fast and slow tempo; rhythm versus beat; two and four beats per bar (and metres); quarter note (oral prompt: “ta”), eighth note(s) (oral prompt: “ti-ti”), quarter rest; simple rhythmic ostinato (e.g., “ta, ta, ti-ti, ta”)
- Pitch: high and low sounds; unison; melodic contour; simple melodic patterns using the notes “mi”, “so”, and “la” (e.g., the “so-mi-la-so-mi” pitch pattern in some children’s songs)
- Dynamics and other expressive controls: loud, soft; a strong sound for a note or beat (accent); smooth and detached articulation
- Timbre: vocal quality (e.g., speaking voice, singing voice), body percussion, sound quality of instruments (e.g., non-pitched and pitched percussion), environmental and found sounds
- Texture/Harmony: single melodic line in unison (monophony)
- Form: phrase, call and response

Elements of Dance

- Body: body actions, body shapes, locomotor movements (e.g., running, galloping, crawling), non-locomotor movements (e.g., lifting, pulling, marching, waving arms), body bases (e.g., seat as base), use of body zones (e.g., body areas of front and back)
- Space: levels, pathways, directions, size of movement
- Time: freeze, tempo (e.g., slow, sustained, fast)
- Energy: force (e.g., lightness/strength), effort (e.g., pressing, gliding), quality (e.g., smoothly, cautiously, erratically, percussively)
- Relationship: (e.g., interconnected shapes)

Elements of Visual Arts and Design

- Line: directional lines; one- and two-point perspective to create depth; contour drawings of figures
- Shape and Form: various visual “weights” of forms (e.g., large, light-coloured forms can seem to have less weight than smaller, dark forms); complex three-dimensional constructions and motifs; gradation in size
- Space: one- and two-point perspective or foreshortening to create illusory space; informal converging lines in an image creating the illusion of space; adult human figures that are seven to eight heads in height; alternative systems for representing space (e.g., layered images in medieval art; disproportionately small images of people within a vast landscape in Chinese art to show the smallness of humans in relation to nature; images seen from several points of view simultaneously in Egyptian and cubist paintings)
- Colour: tertiary colours; contrast of colour; absence of colour Note: In creating multimedia art works, students may need some understanding of different colour models, such as RGB and CMY(K), and websafe colours.
- Texture: real and illusory textures that appear in the environment

- Value: cross-hatching to suggest volume and shadows; variation and increased range of gradation in value

Principles of Visual Arts and Design

- Contrast: light/dark; large/small; pure/mixed colour
- Repetition and Rhythm: repetition of colour and shape in patterns; random, alternating, and regular patterns in everyday objects (e.g., textiles, ceramics) and in art (e.g., works by M. C. Escher)
- Variety: slight variations on a major theme; strong contrasts (e.g., use of different lines, shapes, values, and colours to create interest [bright or light colour values, dark colour values])
- Emphasis: use of colour intensity, contrast in value, placement and size of shapes, and/or weight of line to create a particular focal point
- Proportion: the relationship of the size and shape of the parts of a figure to the whole figure; the scale of one object compared to its surroundings, with indications of how close and how large the object is (e.g., figures with childlike proportions that are approximately “five heads high” and adult figures that are approximately “seven or eight heads high”; caricature; use of improbable scale for imaginary settings and creatures)
- Balance: arrangement of the elements of design to create the impression of equality in weight or importance (e.g., a formal or symmetrical arrangement produced through distribution of shapes; an informal or asymmetrical arrangement produced through use of colour); colour concepts to be used in creating balance (e.g., light or neutral colours appear lighter in “weight” than dark or brilliant colours; warm colours seem to expand, cool colours seem to contract; transparent areas seem to “weigh” less than opaque areas)
- Unity and Harmony: radial balance (e.g., a mandala); similarity (e.g., consistency and completeness through repetition of colours, shapes, values, textures, or lines); continuity (e.g., treatment of different elements in a similar manner); alignment (e.g., arrangement of shapes to follow an implied axis); proximity (e.g., grouping of related items together)
- Movement: actual lines to lead the viewer’s eye (e.g., solid lines, dotted lines); subtle or implied “paths” using shape, value, and/or colour (e.g., an invisible path created by leading the eye from large shapes to small shapes, from shapes in dark colours to shapes in lighter colours, from familiar shapes to unfamiliar shapes, from colour to no colour); actual action (e.g., kinetic sculpture, animation); implied action (e.g., an invisible path created by an arrow, a gaze, or a pointing finger; the “freeze frame” effect of an object in motion, such as a bouncing ball suspended in mid-air or a runner about to take the next step)