

# **“California Poppy Postcards”**

## **4<sup>th</sup> Grade History/Social Science and Visual Arts**

### **Background Information:**

The California Golden Poppy is the state flower for California. Each state of the United States has designated, usually by legislative action, one flower as its floral symbol. The California poppy was selected as the state flower by the California State Floral Society on December 1890, winning by a landslide. The California State Legislature did not make the selection official until 1903. The poppy golden blooms were deemed a fitting symbol for the Golden State. April 6 of each year is designated “California Poppy Day”. A common myth associated with the plant is that cutting or otherwise damaging the California poppy is illegal because it is a state flower. There is no such law. There is a state law that makes it a misdemeanor to cut or remove any flower, tree, shrub or other plant growing on state or county highways, with an exception for authorized government employees and contractors (Cal. Penal Code Section 384a).

*\*refer to pages 19-20 of History/ Social Science text*

### **History/Social Science Content Standards**

#### **California: A Changing State**

4.1 Students demonstrate an understanding of the physical and human geographic features that define places and regions in California.

1. Identify the state capital and describe the various regions of California, including how their characteristics and physical environments (e.g. water, landforms, vegetation, climate) affect human activity.

### **Visual and Performing Arts Content Standards**

#### **Visual Arts 1.0 – Artistic Perception**

Students perceive and respond to works of art, objects in nature, events, and the environment. They also use the vocabulary of the visual arts to express their observations.

- 1.3 Identify pairs of complementary colors (yellow/violet; red/green; orange/blue) and discuss how artists use them to communicate an idea or mood.

#### **Visual Arts 2.0 – Creative Expression**

Students apply artistic processes and skills, using a variety of media to communicate meaning and intent in original works of art.

- 2.1 Use shading (value) to transform a two-dimensional shape into what appears to be a three-dimensional form (e.g. circle to sphere).

## Learning Objectives:

- Students will know the state flower of California, the golden poppy and demonstrate this by creating an original color rendition of the golden poppy.
- Students will learn the definition of value and how it is used to create form in a work of art and will demonstrate this by using color value to create a postcard of a golden poppy.

## Vocabulary:

value	blend	Watercolor pencils
shading	layering	wick away
California poppy	shape/form	secondary colors

## Materials:

watercolor colored pencils	#5 watercolor brushes	water containers
pencils	watercolor postcards/cards	paper towels
scrap watercolor paper	hand-held sharpeners	art erasers
pictures of California wildflowers, specifically golden poppy		

## Motivation:

Students learn the story of their home state, unique in American history in terms of its vast and varied geography, its many waves of immigration beginning with pre-Columbian societies, its continuous diversity, economic energy, and rapid growth. In addition to the specific treatment of milestones in California history, students examine the state in the context of the rest of the nation, with an emphasis on the U.S. Constitution and the relationship between state and federal government.

## Visual Arts Content Lesson

1. What does the word value mean? (an element of art that refers to the lightness or darkness of grays and colors)

Value is the range of light to dark in an artwork. When value is used to describe the effect of light on a form, it is called **shading**. Value gradation, or the gradual change of lights to darks, is used to *create the illusion* of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional plane. Areas facing a light source are lightest in value. Areas facing away from a light source are darker.

2. What are secondary colors? (secondary colors are the colors created by combining certain primary colors, e.g. red + yellow = orange; blue + yellow = green; red + blue = violet (purple) You can create secondary colors from any type of media of primary colors, from house paint to theatre lighting. The color mixing formula always works.

## Procedure:

Water-soluble pencils combine drawing and painting within the same medium. The most common and useful method is to draw with them onto your paper, before dissolving the color with a brush loaded with water. This produces flat washes of one color or the blending of two or more colors for added impact. Lines worked over damp paper will spread slightly and have soft, furred quality.

1. Give students some scrap pieces of heavy paper (e.g. tag, watercolor).
2. Have each student color with the watercolor pencils some swatches of colors, make sure that they have the primary colors next to each other. Students use medium pressure to lay down the color.
3. Dip a brush into clean water and slightly dab it with tissue to draw excess water, (Brush should be wet, but not dripping)
4. Swab the wet brush over the swatches of color. Rinse the brush as the process proceeds. Wet the brush and swab over the complementary swatches, swab cross-wise to combine colors. What do you notice?
5. Have students continue to experiment with coloring with the watercolor pencils and then using a wet brush to see what happens.
6. Have students prepare two identical color swatches that graduate pressure. (coloring lightly to heavy) Wet a brush, dab off water slightly and run it along the first swatch moving in the same direction as the graduated pressure. What do you notice?
7. Give each student a picture of a California golden poppy and a postcard/card.
8. Have student use a light pencil line and copy the picture of the poppy onto the postcard/cards.
9. Turn the picture of the poppy upside down and look at just the lines the shape creates on the picture plane. (they can practice on printing paper before they go to final paper)
10. Remind students to try to erase as little as possible, and draw lightly with the regular lead pencil.
11. The pressure used on the watercolor pencil determines the value of the color. Light pressure produces light color; heavy pressure produces intense or darker color. *“Look at the light and dark shapes (areas) of the poppy. Where are the dark areas? (use their fingers and point to) The center of the poppy is what color?”(yellow) Overlap orange over yellow; blend the two colors together to create light and dark values.*
12. When the pencil drawing of the poppy is complete, color in with watercolor pencils.
13. Dip a clean brush into clean water and slowly stroke over areas of colored pencil.
14. Tips:
  - a. When using colored pencils start with lighter colors first and work to the darker. Let the colors overlap and blend for interesting shades.
  - b. It is more effective to apply several light coats of pencil shadings, adding more until the desired intensity is reached, rather than one very heavy application.

- c. Stray marks can be erased with an art eraser
- d. A barely damp brush gives brighter color, with pencil lines showing. Adding more water will blend the colors more smoothly. The more water you add, the less intense your colors will be, but add excessive amounts of water will cause the colors to run together, and the paper to buckle.
- e. A roll of toilet paper taped shut is a convenient way to wick away the water on the watercolor brush before you apply directly to your drawings.
- f. It is easier to lay down color with a blunt pencil rather than a sharp one.
- g. Don't get so caught up with the watercolor properties of watercolor pencils that you ignore the rich color and detail you get when using them dry, in the same way you'd use ordinary colored pencils, Leave some of the pencil undisturbed, or apply fine detail with a dry pencil once the washes have dried.

15. Have a safe place for watercolor works to dry.

### **Assessment and/or Evaluation:**

What do we want students to know?

- Students know what secondary colors are and how to mix them, and demonstrate this by the use of color layering with watercolor pencils.
- Students know the art element of value, and demonstrate this by using dark and light values to create shading in the flower drawings.
- Students know the difference between shape and form and how to create the illusion of form with value.
- Students know the state flower for California.

Students can self-assess (critique) their artwork using a formal rubric.

### **Extensions:**

1. Students research other California wildflowers and then create watercolor postcards/cards.





