



## LESSON PLAN: California Gold Leaf Postcards

### OVERVIEW

**Grades:**

Grades 4 – 5; adaptable to all grade levels (See Adaption Suggestions)

**Subjects:**

Visual Art, Social-Science

**Duration:**

Allow one, hour-long session from start to completion.

**Lesson synopsis:**

What would your California postcard look like? Design a California-inspired postcard decorated with gold leaf to send to someone living in another state.

**Museum Connection:**

*Sandbox Gallery*



This lesson can be explored solely in the classroom, but it is best supported with an accompanying field trip to the New Children's Museum to view the *Eureka!* exhibition and the works within it, including the *Sandbox Gallery* designed by the Museum Creative Team. *Sandbox Gallery* is a sandbox that acts as a canvas for presenting video and other time-based artworks. *A Distant Episode*, a video work by artist Jesse Kaminsky, transforms the *Sandbox Gallery* into a place for reflection on our global connections. Visit this installation and encourage students to think about how they might share information about California with other people around the globe.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Students will:**

- o think about their relationship to California and the objects they feel represent it.
- o learn about a special art process called gold leaf, which uses real gold to embellish a design.
- o use gold leaf to decorate a postcard they will make related to California.
- o send their designed postcard to someone living in another state or country.
- o consider their place in the world outside of their home state.

# HOW-TO

## Materials Needed:

- o Gold leaf sheets (*come in packs of 25; one sheet per student*)
- o Paper (*any color will work, but one can achieve an aged look using tan or brown paper; one sheet per student*)
- o Pencil (*one per student*)
- o White Pencil (*one per student*)
- o Tacky Glue (*one 16 ounce container per 20 students*)
- o Small containers for distributing the Tacky Glue among the students
- o Paint brushes for applying gold leaf glue (*one per student*)
- o Soft, dry, round paint brushes (*size 8 – 10*) for brushing off the excess gold leaf (*one per student*)
- o Cotton balls (*one cotton ball per student*)
- o Pens (*for adding to the postcard drawing; optional*)

## Vocabulary:

**gold leaf** – gold in the form of very thin foil that can be applied to a surface (usually wood, metal, or paper) as a decorative element

**value** – an element in art that refers to the lightness or darkness of a color; in this lesson, students can explore making dark and light values of gray using their pencil

**texture** – the quality of a surface, usually characterized by its roughness or smoothness; can refer to both visual and tactile qualities

**burnish** – to polish something by rubbing it

composition – the arrangement of art elements in a work of art

## STEPS

### Pre-Class Prep:

- o Arrange a visit to The New Children's Museum to view the Eureka! exhibition, which includes the installation Sandbox Gallery designed by the Museum Creative Team.
- o Divide the gold leaf sheets into appropriate sizes for the class (leftover gold leaf can be saved).
- o If teaching this lesson to more than one group of students, think about displaying unique student examples from the first group for students from later groups to get inspired.

### Motivation:

Ask students to consider what it is like to live in California. If they were to tell someone about it, what would they describe? What ideas/concepts do they think about? Record these ideas as students share them.

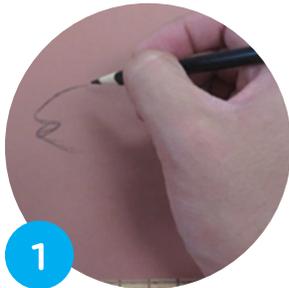
What single image or idea might they select for a postcard about California?

They might consider the local animal and plant life, their favorite foods from California, or that gold was discovered in California in 1948 and brought many people to the state.

In connection to the gold found in California, students will learn about a special art process called gold leaf, which artists use to add real gold on top of a design found on paper, wood, or metal. Students will use gold leaf to decorate a postcard that they will make related to California to send to someone living in another state or country.

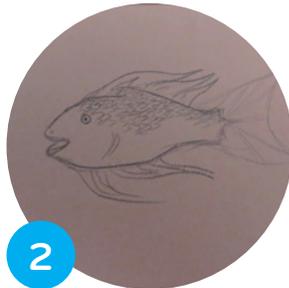
Introduce related vocabulary.

**Process:**



1

Select the California-inspired object for the front of the postcard.



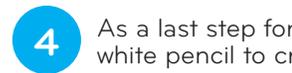
2

Begin drawing the object onto one side of the postcard paper. Note: Remind students to fill the entire space of the paper and to begin by drawing lightly.



3

Explore adding light and dark values to the drawing by pushing harder and more softly on the pencil and create visual texture using a various line types.



4

As a last step for drawing, add white pencil to create highlights.



5

Select an area of their drawing to enhance with gold leaf.



6

Add Tacky Glue to the selected area using a glue brush. Wait 1 – 2 minutes to it to get tacky (still feels sticky but the glue will not come off on your fingers).



7

Add the gold leaf to the glue area and gently press down with your hands.



8

Use the dry brush to brush off the excess gold around the edges of the glued area; gently rub the metal leaf with a cotton ball until it has smoothed out.



9

9 Turn over the drawing and create a line down the middle to turn it into a postcard. Mark off a location for a stamp.



10

10 Write a message about California, address it, stamp it, and send it off!



11

11 Clean up. Wash all brushes with soap right away or place them in a bath of soapy water to soak and wash later. Be sure to save extra gold for a later project.

### **Sharing Session:**

Reflect on the design process with students. Have students hang their finished works on the wall for a classroom gallery walk. Observe how the designs relate to or differ from one another and allow students time to describe their decision making process.

## **ADAPTATION SUGGESTIONS**

### **For younger students:**

For younger students who might have challenges with working with the gold leaf, consider using gold paint instead. Additionally, one might want to consider guiding the students drawings more directly with a more specific prompt or challenge (e.g. an animal you have seen here in California).

### **For middle and high school students (Grades 6 -12):**

For older students, this project could be explored using other media such as printmaking for the card design, on top of which the gold leaf process could still be added. Through the printmaking process, students can create multiple cards to send to more than one person.

### **For student with special needs:**

For students with tactile challenges, consider using gold paint in place of the gold leaf. For students with varying motor skills, larger brushes may be used to assist with gripping. Help students keep track of the remaining time that they have to work on their project.

## **EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

### **Pen Pal Project**

Work with students to connect with a school on the other side of the US/Mexico border. Assign each student a pen pal and prompt them to create a postcard about California for someone living on the other side of the US/Mexico border. Students should describe life in their city and ask their pen pals about their lives.

# **STANDARDS**

## **CALIFORNIA STATE STANDARDS**

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

#### **Grade 4**

1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (e.g., color, shape/form, line, texture, space, value), emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

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).

2.7 Use contrast (light and dark) expressively in an original work of art.

4.2 Identify and describe how a person's own cultural context influences individual responses to works of art.

#### **Grade 5**

2.7 Communicate values, opinions, or personal insights through an original work of art.

4.4 Assess their own works of art, using specific criteria, and describe what changes they would make for improvement.

## Science Standards

### Grade 4

4. a Students know how to identify common rock-forming minerals (including quartz, calcite, feldspar, mica, and hornblende) and ore minerals by using a table of diagnostic properties.

## English Language Arts Standards

### Grade 4

1.4 Write fluidly and legibly in cursive or joined italic.

2.1. a. Relate ideas, observations, or recollections of an event or experience.

## COMMON CORE STANDARDS

SL 4.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

SL 5.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 5 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

## RESOURCES

### RESOURCES FROM THE SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

**Gold leaf application and antique restoration (1998), by Ellen Becker**

745.75 BEC

**California: the Golden State (2015), by Michael Burgan and William McGeeveran**

J 979.4 BUR

Surveys the history, geography, and economy of the Golden State, as well as the diverse ways of the life of its people.

### WEB RESOURCES

The history of gold leaf and its uses (Smithsonian Library):

<http://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/historyofgoldlea00fwra>

California stock images and photos:

<http://www.123rf.com/stock-photo/california.html>

Introduction to value drawing video (You Tube video; total video is 6:06 minutes in length):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWmb\\_gRBhWU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWmb_gRBhWU)

Information on the Sandbox Gallery installation, currently on view at The New Children's Museum:

<http://www.thinkplaycreate.org/exhibition/sandbox-gallery>