

MoNA

Museum of Northwest Art

Age: Preschool to Kindergarten

Lesson Duration: 1 hour

Subjects: Art, Science and Fun

Cloud Paintings Inspired by Steven Thornton

A HANDS-ON ART
ACTIVITY DESIGNED BY
MONA EDUCATORS



Student Sample

Description

We're going to explore clouds. Together, we will look at two paintings of clouds by Steven Thornton. Steven Thornton is an artist and home builder from the Pacific Northwest. After looking and talking about Thornton's cloud paintings, you will make a cloud artwork of your own!



Look out the window and see the kind of clouds in the sky today.

Did you know that if you can identify the basic kinds of clouds, you can do a pretty good job of forecasting the weather?

Materials

- Steve Thornton's paintings & information on the water cycle (included in this lesson plan)
- White, blue, and black paper
- Chalk or white crayon
- Watercolor paints & a cup of water
- Little sponge
- Washable white paint
- Paint brush and feather
- Towel for spills

Instructions:

Look at Thornton's paintings and ask students what they notice (larger versions are included at the end of this lesson). Watch [this video](#) with Howard Shapiro to get you started!



Steven Thornton, Skagit Flats



Steven Thornton, Pukalani

Start by talking about how water changes to make clouds. It all starts with the **WATER CYCLE**, which is powered by the sun. The sun warms the earth and the earth warms the air which is full of invisible water vapor that rises until it cools and forms into clouds! When the clouds become heavy with moisture, it rains or snows and the water returns to the ground. The same water gets recycled over and over and over. You can watch [this video](#) to learn more.

DRY UP/EVAPORATION

The sun causes water to dry and rise until clouds form.

BREATHING/TRANSPIRATION

Trees and plants breathe as they give off water vapor and oxygen.

MAKING CLOUDS/CONDENSATION

Steamy warm vapor turns into liquid water drops when it cools.

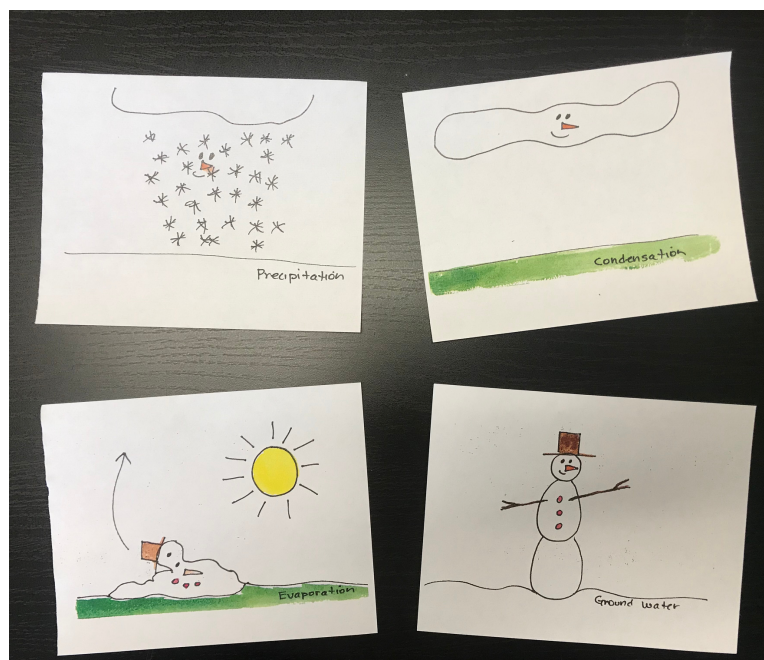
GETTING WET/PRECIPITATION

Water falls from the clouds in the form of rain or snow.

STREAMS AND RUNOFF/PERCOLATION

All water eventually returns to the ocean.

Talk about the pictures of the water cycle below. Can you recognize any of them from the list to the left? What order would you arrange them in?



THREE MAIN TYPES OF CLOUDS:

Cirrus - means “feathers” because these clouds are wispy. They’re high and made of ice. The weather is about to change!



Cumulus - means “heap” because they look like popcorn or bubbles. It’s time for sunglasses because these clouds mean fair weather.

Stratus- means “spread” because these clouds are like blankets. They’re also called nimbostratus because nimbus means “rain,” so grab your umbrella.

ART ACTIVITIES:

Use the blue & black paper as background

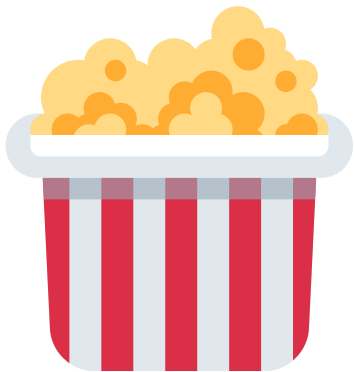
Make feather clouds

(use feathers loaded with white paint high in your sky because they are thin and light)



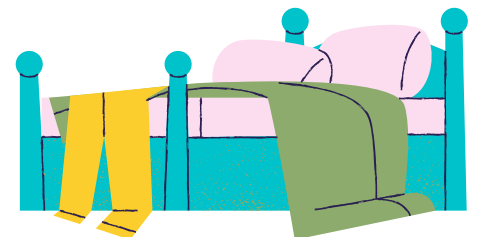
Make popcorn clouds

(use white crayons, chalk, and sponges in circles and fill your sky)



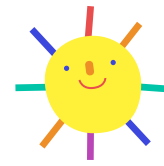
Make blanket clouds

(use a brush or sponge to spread thick paint across the page or color in layers low in your sky because they are heavy)





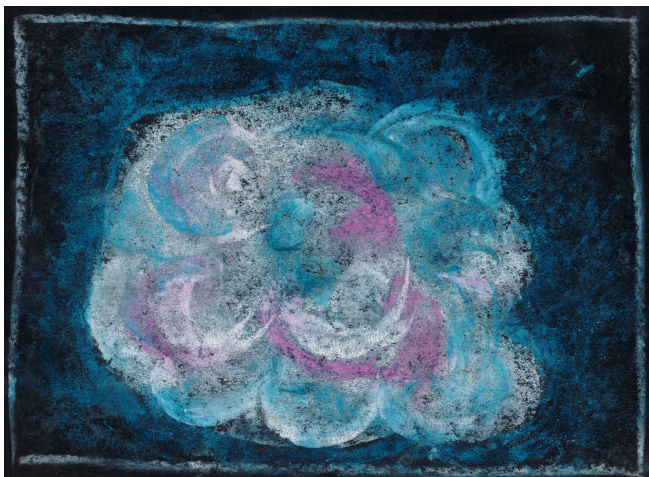
What else?



Did you hide the sun? Did a rainbow sneak out? Did you forecast the weather so you know if you need your sunglasses or an umbrella?

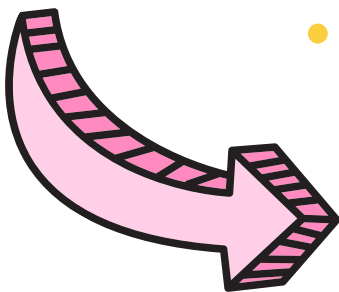
Draw the shapes of clouds with a white color. Paint with blue and gray until the sky is full of clouds.

Draw something you learned about the water cycle and how water can change as it is recycled around the earth.



Washington State Arts Learning Standards

- **VA:Cn10.1.Pk** Explore the world using descriptive and expressive words and art making.
- **VA:Cr1.1.K** Engage in exploration and imaginative play with materials.
- **VA:Cr1.2.Pk** Engage in self-directed, creative art making.
- **VA:Cr2.1.Pk** Use a variety of art making tools.
- **VA:Cr2.3.Pk** Create and tell about art that communicates a story about a familiar place or object.
- **VA:Cr3.1.Pk** Share and talk about personal artwork.
- **VA:Pr5.1.PK** Identify places where art may be displayed or saved.
- **VA:Re7.2.K** Describe what an image represents.



Don't forget to send a picture of
your finished art work to the
museum for sharing at
education@museumofnwart.org





Steven Thornton, *Skagit Flats*, oil on board, 2001



Steven Thornton, *Pukalani*, oil on canvas, 2004