

Nature Rubbings

By Caponi Art Park

Projects Overview:

Recommended for ages 5 and up

Have you ever admired the shapes and textures you find in nature? Have you wanted to capture nature's beauty, but don't have a camera? Explore the outdoors with a piece of paper and pencil, and preserve your surroundings by taking a rubbing of your favorite parts of the natural world. With these two simple tools, you can create amazing snapshots of your favorite trees, flowers, and leaves!

Supply List:

- Sharpened pencils (#2 pencils work best, but for a pop of color, you can also use colored pencils, crayons are also fine, but do not work as well as pencils)
- Multiple pieces of thin white or lightly colored paper, such as printer paper, per participant.
- If you completed the Nature Journal lesson plan, include these rubbings in that!

Instructions:

- Spend some time outdoors in your backyard, or at a park. Take your time noticing the fine details you see in nature, and note in your head which are your favorite.
- Once you've spent a good amount of time exploring, take one of your pieces of paper and your pencil. Lay the piece of paper over the nature element you wish to capture, and holding your pencil at an angle, lightly scribble over the entire piece of nature you're taking a rubbing of until you see that piece of nature in **negative space**. (See definition and example image below)
- Make sure you are coloring lightly enough that you're not filling in the negative space, but also pressing hard enough to capture the image.
- Repeat this process until you have a collection of your favorite parts of nature, in rubbings!
- You can make these into a book by following the Nature Journals lesson plan-<https://www.caponiartpark.org/events/workshops-at-home/>
- Or, you can pre cut the paper to be standard small frame size, and frame them as art for your walls!

Note: When you are taking your rubbings, be respectful of nature. Try not to harm anything, or pick flowers or leaves that should not be picked. For example, when taking

a rubbing of a leaf, it is best to use a leaf that has just fallen to the ground, instead of picking one off the tree that is still growing.

Define **Negative Space**: In art, is the space around and between the subject(s) of an image. Negative space may be most evident when the space around a subject, not the subject itself, forms an interesting or artistically relevant shape.

In the images below, the black area in the image on the right is the negative space:



Example finished project:



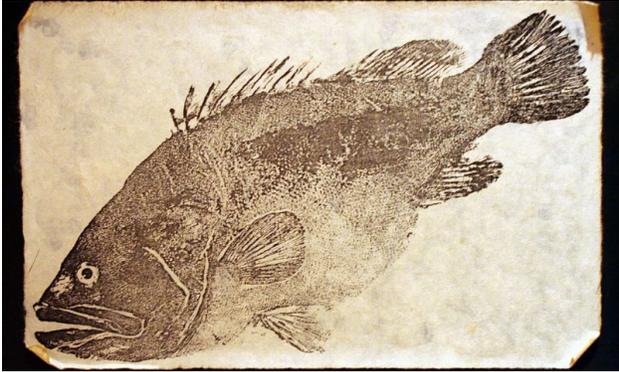
Discussion Questions:

- What pieces of nature did you find most interesting? Why?
- What different techniques did you use to try to make your rubbings look more defined?
- Were some pieces of nature easier to take rubbings of than others? Which ones? How so?

Short Lesson:

- Gyotaku is a form of printing that originated in Japan in the mid 1800s.
- Gyo, meaning fish, Taku, meaning rubbing, is a form of nature printing using fish as the plate.

- Japanese fishermen started using this method to record their catches, but now it has become more of an art form of its own.



- The practice utilizes not only fish, but also other sea creatures



- Gyotaku is believed to have originated from ancient Chinese stone rubbings of calligraphy, which was the predecessor to modern printing processes.
- Traditionally, Gyotaku is printed with Sumi ink and Washi, or rice, paper.
- This method of printing is still utilized by fishermen today in Japan and can be seen displayed in tackle shops.
- Rubbings, like the ones you created today, date back many years, and were used by Chinese scholars to retrieve calligraphy from stones and record it on plant fiber paper.
- Rubbing has also been used in the past as a record of death, when individuals would take rubbings of gravestones.



- A contemporary example of rubbing are those done at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington D.C.
- The memorial contains over 58,000 names of soldiers from the war that were declared dead. Family members are invited to take rubbings of their names from the wall, to keep as a memory of their fallen family member.

