

MARIE SELBY
BOTANICAL
GARDENS



*We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century
Florida, The Highwaymen*

Integrated Unit of Study

Grades 3-5



Curricular Unit Designed and Prepared by Dr. Jackie Henson-Dacey, 2021

Overview & Purpose

Students will explore, describe, analyze, interpret, and create artworks that reflect a deep understanding of the exhibition: ***We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century Florida, The Highwaymen.***

Standards covered by this unit:

Language Arts

LAFS.4.RL.1.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

LAFS.4.RL.1.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize the text.

LAFS.4.W.3.AP.8a Recall relevant information from experiences for use in writing.

LAFS.4.W.3.AP.8c Identify key details from an informational text that are relevant to the specific topic.

Social Studies

SS.4.A.1.1 Analyze primary and secondary resources to identify significant individuals and events throughout Florida history.

SS.4.G.1.2 Locate and label cultural features on a Florida map.

Visual Arts

VA.3.C.1.1 Use the art-making process to develop ideas for self-expression

VA.3.C.1.2 Reflect on and interpret works of art, using observation skills, prior knowledge, and experience.

VA.4.C.1.2 Describe observations and apply prior knowledge to interpret visual information and reflect on works of art.

VA.4.O.1.1 Use the structural elements of art and organizational principles of design to understand the art-making process.

VA.4.O.1.2 Identify the structural elements of art used to unite an artistic composition.

VA.4.S.2.1 Organize the structural elements of art to achieve an artistic objective.

VA.4.S.2.2 Demonstrate the ability to recall art procedures and focus on art processes through to the end of production.

Lesson One: Visual Literacy (45-60 minutes)

Display printed images or prepare a PowerPoint showing selected works of art from the exhibition, ***We Dream A World: African American Landscape Painters of Mid-Century Florida, The Highwaymen.***

Allow students time to closely observe what they see. Provide each student with a heart token (see resources) and ask them to put their first name on the token with a pencil or marker. After viewing the artworks as a group, ask students to place their token on the image they like the best, the one they would buy and hang in their house.

Ask students their rationale for making the choice, try to encourage students to use descriptive vocabulary (see resources) when sharing their decisions. Try to move student discourse into a deeper understanding of their choices, move from “it looks cool or pretty” to “I like the warm colors of the sky and the palm tree in the foreground.” Help students use more accurate language to reveal their thinking.

Read the following passage to the students:

This artwork we are viewing represents a group of entrepreneurial African American artists. What does the word entrepreneurial mean? (Wait to see if any student wants to share). Entrepreneurial means that these artists were able to create new opportunities for financial gain – to make a living. These artists grew up on the peninsula of Florida. What is a peninsula? (Wait to see if any student wants to share). Show an image of the outline of the state of Florida and define it as a peninsula. These artists worked in the 1950s and 1960s painting images of the Florida landscape up and down the east coast of Florida (ask students to identify the east coast of Florida using the outline map). They grew up and worked under the Jim Crow laws and social expectations that promoted segregation in the South. (Ask students if they know what the word segregation means). Segregation means to enforce separation of different racial groups, setting someone apart from other people. African Americans that lived in Florida only had an opportunity to pick oranges or pull beans in the nearby fields. These artists went out to seek a better life by painting prodigiously every day. What does the word prodigiously mean? (Allow students to try and answer). Prodigiously means that these artists worked in a remarkable and impressive manner, producing up to a dozen paintings a day and selling them from their car trunks up and down coastal highway A1A. (Have students identify A1A on the map). These paintings symbolized the American Dream and the beauty of the Sunshine State. Without galleries or even studios, the artists went on day trips to paint and sell works, sometimes when the paint was still wet. Tourism was booming in the state during the postwar period. Florida seemed to be an exotic destination. What does exotic mean? (Allow some time for students to think and attempt to answer). In this context, exotic means a very unusual and new experience with nature. The paintings explored and represented the natural beauty of Florida with colorful skies, luminous clouds, flora and fauna of a subtropical environment. What do flora and fauna mean? Flora and fauna are biological terms used to identify a place by its plants and animals.

Resources for Lesson One:



Heart Token (print one for each student)



Map of Florida (project on the ActivBoard or have a copy for each student or work group)

Vocabulary List:

Entrepreneurial
Exotic

Segregation
Flora and Fauna

Prodigiously
Peninsula

Lesson Two: A deeper dive, We Dream a World with Harold Newton (60-75 minutes)

Display the artworks from the exhibition, either print in color for student use or present PowerPoint on monitor for students.



Harold Newton

Source: <https://backusmuseum.org/highwaymen>



Harold Newton, *Fire Sky*



Harold Newton, *Hibiscus*



Harold Newton, *Rough Surf Crashing Ashore*

Please share the following:

- These three paintings were produced by Harold Newton, who is one of the original Florida Highwaymen.
- Ask students to describe the art images using art terms from the chart (share chart with students)



Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Elements-Art-Principles-Design-Poster/dp/B01GKRZ0PQ>

- Ask students: What elements of art do they see in this painting?
- Ask students: What principles of design are used in this painting? How?
- Ask students to point to the elements of art and principles of design as evidence for their thinking.
- Divide the class into small reading groups (3 students each). Provide them with the following reading sections on Harold Newton.
- Have students read using the Jig Saw Method (see handout on next page to print for students). Each student in the reading group will have a different section on Harold Newton. They will read and fill out the Jig Saw organizer and then share their knowledge with each other in small groups.
- Ask each group to identify vocabulary words they don't know or words that are interesting from the reading passage.
- Generate a word bank in class on the white board or chart paper for the students to see while the large group is sharing.

Important fact: The Florida Highwaymen did not choose to go by this name when they began painting in the 1950s. It was coined by an art collector and gallery owner, Jim Fitch, in 1990.

Make copies of the reading passages and cut into three sections, one section per student in the group.

Reading Passages:

Passage One	Passage Two	Passage Three
Harold Newton painted landscape images that symbolized the state of Florida as a place of natural beauty. He was born Andrew James Newton, but went by the name of Harold. Harold was one of fifteen children born to Rachel Newton. Harold's family lived in Gifford, Florida, but when he was seven, they moved to Tifton, Georgia, where they were told the land they lived on was going to be an airport. Because of promised equality, the family moved back to Gifford. Gifford was an area composed of orange groves, dirt roads, and wooden houses with well-tended gardens.	Harold Newton loved to draw. He entered "Draw Me" newspaper contests every week and frequently was the winner. In the seventh grade he tried his hand at portraiture. When his father died that year, Harold dropped out of school and got a job to help support his family. Harold had three passions: painting, fishing, and family. He worked in the orange groves to feed his family and painted at night using watercolors and then oil paints. He started painting Christian-themed pictures on velvet. He began selling his velvet paintings for \$2.50 each. Harold started selling his work in churches and on roadways.	Harold started to paint the Florida landscape with its Amazonian vegetation and moss-draped oaks hanging over riverbanks. These paintings represented the new frontier in Florida. Harold met another artist named A.E. "Beanie" Backus in downtown Fort Pierce. Backus used a palette knife to spread paint and build images. Harold would watch him paint in his gallery and soon began using a fruit knife and eventually saved enough money to purchase a real palette knife. Harold painted on inexpensive Upson board, a thick cardboard used for house construction, instead of canvas.

Formative Assessment: 30 minutes (make a copy for each student to use with the reading passages)

Jig Saw Comprehension Chart: Understanding the Ideas You Read

Passage One	Passage Two	Passage Three
Key Words I found interesting or need to look up. * * * * *	Key Words I found interesting or need to look up. * * * * *	Key Words I found interesting or need to look up. * * * * *
Main Idea:	Main Idea:	Main Idea:

Ask students to fill out their passage section while they are reading. After students have finished their section of the Jig Saw Comprehension Chart, they should begin sharing with each other in the small group. Each student will then have a completed chart from all three reading passages.

Share out in the larger group. Chart the words that they found interesting and/or need to define. Ask students to then share out what they learned from the reading passage.

Lesson Three: A deeper dive, We Dream a World with Mary Ann Carroll (60-75 minutes)

Display the artworks from the exhibition, either print in color for student use or present PowerPoint on monitor for students.



Mary Ann Carroll

Source: <https://www.thehistorycenter.org/mary-ann-carroll/>



Mary Ann Carroll, *Twilight Orange Sunset*



Mary Ann Carroll, *Royal Poinciana on the Indian River*

- These two paintings were produced by Mary Ann Carroll, who is considered to be **the only female Florida Highwayman** from the original group.
- Ask students to select three adjectives from the chart to describe the images. Encourage students to use different adjectives for each painting.

Adjective Chart:

(make copies for each student or display as a chart)

Review the adjectives with students to clarify meaning.

Vibrant	Calming
Poetic	Beautiful
Dramatic	Contrasting
Flowing	Bold
Enchanting	Strong
Tranquil	Distorted
Mysterious	Soothing
Earthy	Heavenly

Ask students to identify where in the paintings they see the adjectives represented. Ask students to share ideas in small groups to develop one sentence using the adjectives that describe the artwork of Mary Ann Carroll. Or build sentences together in a large group that incorporates the adjectives to describe the artworks.

Provide this background information on Mary Ann Carroll:

Twenty-six artists made up the group called the Florida Highwaymen and Mary Ann Carroll was the only female artist of the group. The Highwaymen sold their artwork along the roadways. They traveled from Fort Pierce up and down A1A and westward to Okeechobee. During their travels, they would stop at different businesses like restaurants to sell their work. They were never allowed to buy anything to eat or drink in these places because of the Jim Crow laws. Mary Ann Carroll was one of the artists that challenged this injustice, which situated this group within the civil rights movement in Florida.

Artists can find inspiration from many sources. Mary Ann Carroll was a pastor, and her spirituality was a source of inspiration. Mary Ann Carroll believed that God can be seen in the clouds shifting and drifting in the sky and the shadows that dance across the landscape. Mary Ann Carroll embraced the world through a religious perspective and felt the strength of God in her sermons and paintings.

Pass out this short passage on Mary Ann Carroll and ask students to read independently and then do the 3-2-1 activity outlined below.

Reading Passage:

Mary Ann Carroll met Harold Newton when he was selling his work in Fort Pierce on Avenue D. Mary Ann would watch Harold paint royal poinciana trees. She was amazed at how he was able to create a flaming tree within a landscape with quick brushstrokes and bright colors. Mary Ann came back several times to watch Harold paint and they became good friends. He taught her how to create deep space in the artwork and how to mix colors to create a **nuanced** sky. They both **intuitively** developed paintings. Mary Ann started to paint the Florida landscape from memory and stated, "I paint the way I feel (Monroe, 2014, p. 15)." Mary Ann and the rest of the Highwaymen did not paint directly what they saw. They would travel and observe the landscape at different times of the day, but their work came from their imaginations. Mary Ann stated, "Nature's never wrong (Monroe, 2014, p. 29)." She continued to paint daily and sell her work to white businesses for \$25-\$50 each. She brought home \$100 a day which was a very good income in the 1960s. It was enough money to buy groceries, have a nice home and car, and fill the tank of her car with gasoline. Mary Ann said that her paintings are **visual metaphors** for the Florida landscape. They allow viewers to see themselves in the Promise Land, a new frontier.

Nuanced = a slight difference in shades of color

Intuitively = the ability to know something without direct observation

Visual metaphors = images a viewer is meant to understand as a symbol for something else

Formative Assessment: 20-30 minutes (make a copy for each student to use with the reading passages)

3-2-1 Writing Activity:

What are three important words that helped you understand the reading passage?

What are two questions you still have about Mary Ann Carroll?

What is the most important sentence or word in the reading passage?

Allow students to either work in small groups or independently to fill out the 3-2-1 Activity. Ask students to share their answers with the larger group. Facilitate discussion around the most important sentence in the reading passage. Ask students, “is this the main point of the passage?” How does this sentence support your understanding of Mary Ann Carroll’s artwork?

Lesson Four: A deeper dive, We Dream a World with Alfred Hair (60-75 minutes)

Display the artworks from the exhibition, either print in color for student use or present PowerPoint on monitor for students.

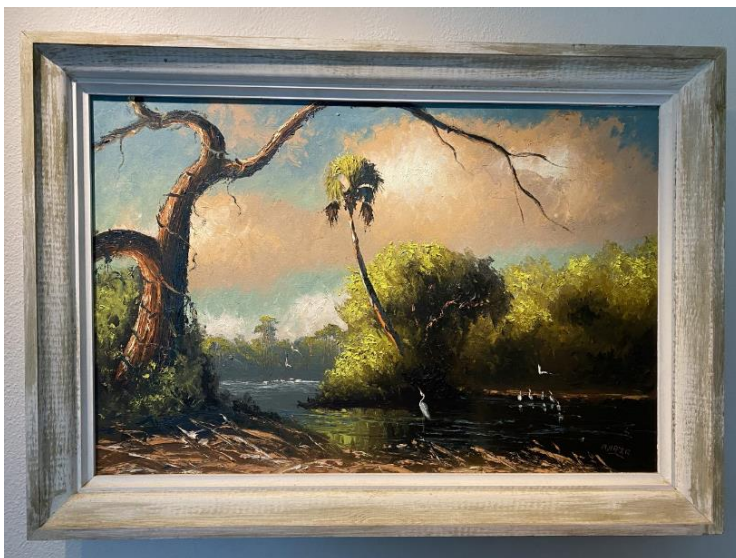


Alfred Hair

Source: <https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/tcpalm/name/alfred-hair-obituary?pid=186323869>



Alfred Hair, *Washer Woman*



Alfred Hair, *Old Florida*



Alfred Hair, *Poinciana on the River*

Share this story with students:

In 1958, a young African American high school student named Alfred Hair was introduced to landscape painter A.E. “Beanie” Backus by his art teacher Zanobia Jefferson. Backus and Hair became friends and began a new painting partnership that broke through racial barriers of the time. Backus was a white artist and gallery owner who opened his doors to young artists from any racial background. He became a mentor to Alfred Hair. What is a mentor? (Allow students some time to think and answer). Backus started to train Hair on his painting techniques, and with this mentorship, Alfred Hair began his career as an artist and business entrepreneur. What does it mean to be a business entrepreneur? (Allow students some time to think and answer). Alfred Hair became one of the original twenty-six Florida Highwaymen on the east coast of Florida. Alfred Hair was resourceful, painted very quickly, and had a love for nature. He loved to paint royal poinciana and palm trees. Unable to be represented in any of the white-only galleries in Florida, Alfred Hair and the other Florida Highwaymen relied on a method of high-quantity sales of affordable paintings, usually around \$25 each. A technique of “fast painting” with which the artist produced dozens of works each day provided them with a good living as an artist. The paintings created by Alfred Hair and other Florida Highwaymen depict **serenity** and undisturbed wilderness. What does serenity mean? (Allow students a few minutes to think and answer). A state of being calm and peaceful and in Hair’s paintings the beaches, marshes, water birds, and poinciana and palm trees. Alfred Hair, like most of the Florida Highwaymen, did not paint directly from observation, but rather painted scenes from memory and imagination. Because the group could not show or sell their work in galleries or museums as a result of segregation, the group became very creative and persuasive as salespeople. These paintings became **quintessential** Florida scenes which became ideal vacation **souvenirs** because they were affordable and relatively easy to transport. What does quintessential mean? (Allow students a few minutes to think and answer). What about the word souvenir? (Allow students a few minutes to think and answer). Quintessential means representing the most perfect or typical example of something and souvenir means something that is kept as a reminder of the place you visited.

Matching Trees in Florida with Florida Highwaymen Paintings Activity (30 minutes)



Bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)

Source:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Taxodium_distichum_exposed_knees.jpg



Coconut palm tree (*Cocos nucifera*)

Source: <http://data.abuledu.org/wp/?LOM=150>



Slash pine (*Pinus elliotii*)

Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinus_elliotii



Royal poinciana (*Delonix regia*)

Source: <https://www.thespruce.com/royal-poinciana-growing-profile-3269287>

Either print out these images in color and have them for small groups of students to work with during the activity or present them digitally on an ActivBoard. Ask students to work in small teams to identify which trees are represented in the paintings of the Florida Highwaymen. Allow students to share ideas and then share out in a group. Have fun with the Latin names of the trees. Ask students what types of trees do they have in their yards? What types of trees do they see in their communities?

Formative Assessment: Creating Florida landscapes within a paper shadow box (45-60 mins).

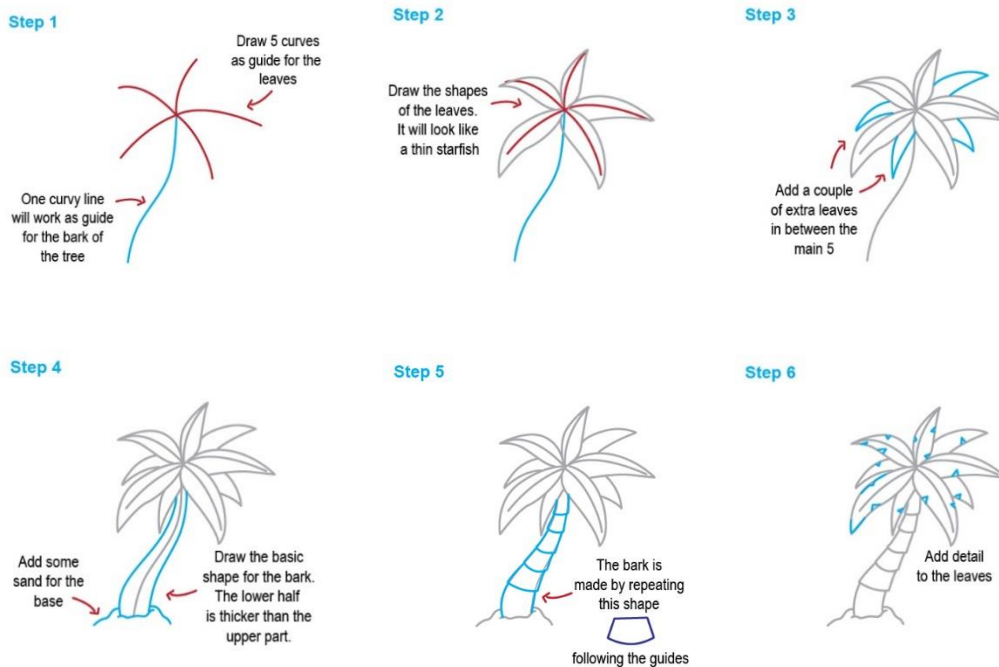
Students will create a shadow box that contains a painting or drawing of a Florida landscape. Students will begin by practicing how to draw and paint palm and poinciana trees. After completing two practice drawings or paintings, begin designing the shadow box out of 9 X 12-inch drawing paper (or tag board).

The Highwaymen created their own canvases out of Upson board, a widely available building material. They also constructed their own frames out of crown molding.

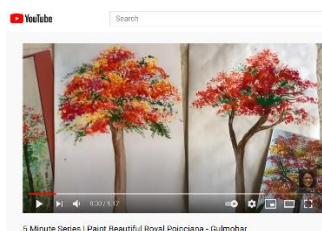
Supplies needed:

- 9 X 12-inch paper (or tag board)
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Scotch tape
- Paints (acrylic works best – but tempera is a good substitute)
- Popsicle sticks or tongue depressors
- Oil pastels or crayons (another option instead of paints)

How to draw/paint a palm tree (step-by-step):



Source: <https://topp-drawing.blogspot.com/2015/10/beach-easy-palm-tree-drawing.html?m=0>



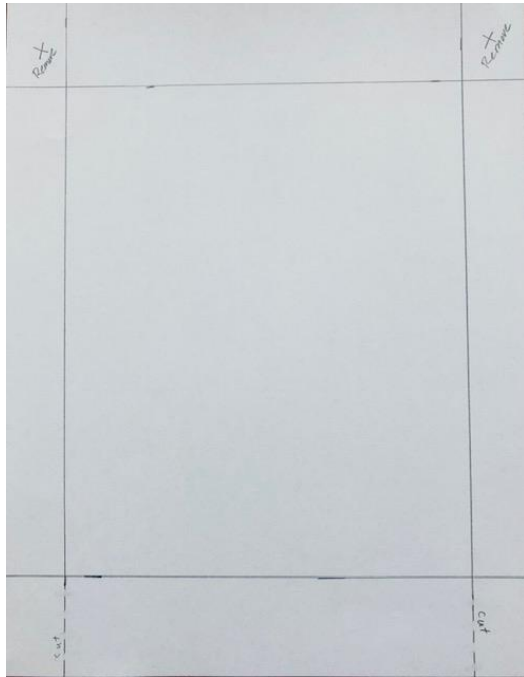
How to draw and paint a pinciana tree: (YouTube video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fu6uaD6TrU>

by Varsha Lad

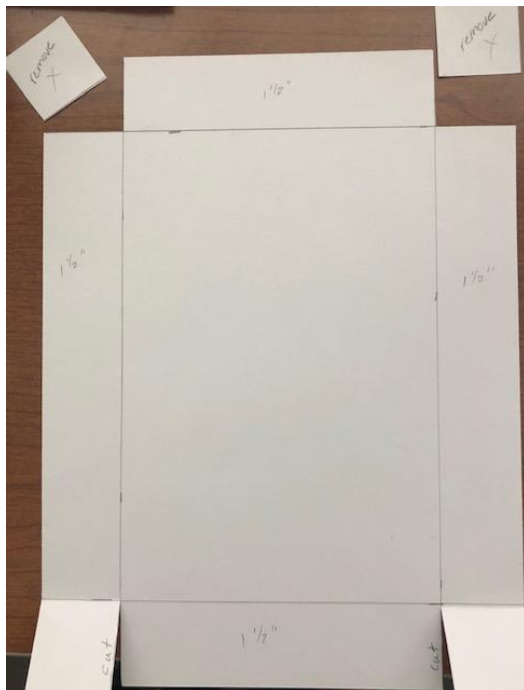
This video takes 5 minutes and uses crumpled newspaper for paint application.

Preparing and painting the background of your paper shadow box:



You can either measure out each piece of paper in preparation for the students, or you can teach the students how to measure the paper.

- 9 X 12-inch paper
- Measure down 1 ½ inches from the top
- Measure up 1 ½ inches from the bottom
- Measure in (on both sides) 1 ½ inches
- On the top, cut off the two small rectangles on both sides
- On the bottom cut (vertically) the two rectangles to create a tab for assembling the shadow box (this part folds under the bottom section to help the paper stand up for display).

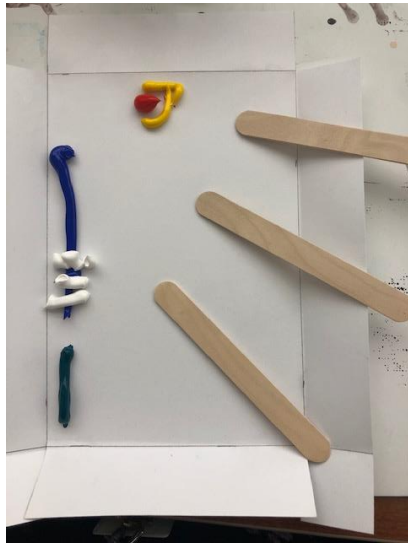


Remove the top two rectangles.

Fold the sides in and then place them back out.

Fold the two small flaps on the bottom – fold them up.

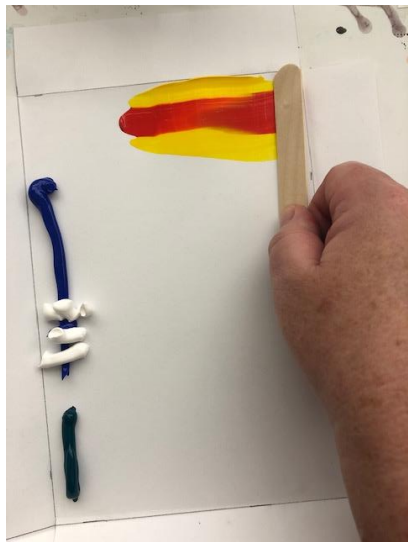
These flaps will become the base of your shadow box. You will use scotch tape to tape these flaps under the bottom rectangle section.



You may use acrylic paint or tempera paint with the tongue depressors.

Place desired colors on the paper – in areas that you want to paint.

Cover the table surface with scrap paper, newspaper, or paper towels for easy cleanup.



Use one of the tongue depressors to push the paint across the paper in one quick stroke.

Use the other tongue depressors to push the other colors across the paper in one quick stroke.

Technique tip: You can go back over areas to blend the colors together.

Sometimes leaving some spaces white helps imply clouds.

Allow the background to dry and either glue on your palm or royal poinciana tree to the background – or create it as a pop up for the bottom rectangle section.

Tape corners on the bottom so the shadow box can stand up.

You can add descriptive words at the top or bottom and display them as a group.



References:

Backus Museum <https://backusmuseum.org/highwaymen>

Monroe, Gary (2014), Mary Ann Carroll: First Lady of the Highwaymen. University Press of Florida.

Monroe, Gary (2007), Harold Newton: The Original Highwayman. University Press of Florida.

Smithsonian Museum <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/florida-highwaymen>