

**GRADE 1**     **ARTIST: JANE MOORMAN**

## **LATIN AMERICAN ARTS: The Mayan Jaguar (2 parts)**

### **OVERVIEW**

This lesson introduces the myth and art of the majestic and ancient Mayan Civilization. We will talk about its ties to modern day Mesoamerica, which is comprised of Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador) The rain forest, where the jaguar lives, is an important environment in this region. Students will explore of the variety and richness of Latin American culture and art, both ancient and modern.

### **LESSON OBJECTIVES**

- Students will be introduced to the Mayans, past and present.
- Students will learn to analyze and to draw the shapes and markings of a jaguar.
- The concepts of foreground, background and overlap will be learned.
- The second day students will make a collage of the rain forest and will place the jaguar within the composition.

### **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Although the Mayan civilization declined after the European conquest, there are many Mayan descendants in Mesoamerica today. Some Jaguars still live in the fragile and diminishing rain forest.

The Mayan people have always revered the Jaguar as a symbol of power and admired this beautiful animal for its strength, speed, stealth, and mystery. They believed that jaguars could communicate with Gods and spirits. It was believed that jaguars protected a royal person. In fact, the Mayan word for Jaguar was often included in a king's name such as *Great Jaguar*

## MATERIALS

**Day One:** paint, brushes, paper, water cups, table cover or sponge for cleaning desks

**Day Two:** Paper, scissors, glue sticks, a couple of staplers

**For Jaguar:**

Beige paper cut 6"x8".

Paint: brown mixed with white, brown, gold, red for tongue

**For Rain forest background:**

Painted 12" x 18" paper in shades of green for the background, and smaller pieces for trees and bushes. (Spatter painting, finger painting or sponge painting as well as green gift wrap work well.)

Color Xerox of Guatemalan textile cut in 2" x 2" square (Brightly colored paper can be used)

## RESOURCES

David Wisniewski. *Rain Player*. Houghton Mifflin, 1995.

Joanne Ryder. *Jaguar in the Rain Forest*. Morrow Junior books, 1996

Madeline Dunfy. *Here is the Tropical Rain Forest*. Web of Life publishers, 1997

Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow. The rainforest issue: Myths and facts. <http://www.cfact.org/site/print.asp?idarticle=214>

The Dying Jungle EZINE. The Amazon Rainforest. <http://www.cmjhs.com/projects/jungle/sarab.html>

*Paw, Smoke-Jaguar*. Kings wore robes of Jaguar skins to show their power.

Jaguars are depicted on ancient Mayan temples in both sculpture and in paintings. Modern day people from this region weave beautiful textiles, many with embroidered jaguar motifs.

## VOCABULARY

**Spirit animal:** an animal with whom a person feels a special affinity or commonality, from whom he/she draws strength.

**Camouflage:** the devices, usually coloration, animals use to blend into their environment in order to avoid being seen by predators.

**Collage:** a picture made by gluing paper, cloth and other materials onto a surface.

**Composition:** the way in which the parts of something are arranged. In this case, the placement of the jaguar so that it will be partially hidden in the rain forest.

**Foreground:** the part of a picture that appears nearest to the viewer.

**Background:** the area that is behind something, creating a setting for it.

**Overlap:** to position things in such a way that the edge of one thing is on top and extends past the edge of another.

**Center of interest:** the most important thing the artist is trying to convey. This might not be in the center of the picture

**Expressive:** communicating a particular meaning or feeling.

## INTRODUCTION

Show pictures of Mayan sculptures and bas reliefs of Mayan kings with jaguar characteristics or clothing.

Show wild life photos of jaguars and analyze their form and markings. Describe the characteristics of Jaguars (power, speed, mystery).

Discuss the rain forest and its ecology.

Show examples of modern day Guatemalan Textiles, and Central American Folk images of Jaguars.

## STEP BY STEP

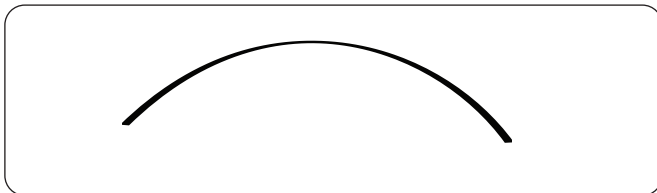
### Day 1: Paint

#### *Painting a naturalistic jaguar.*

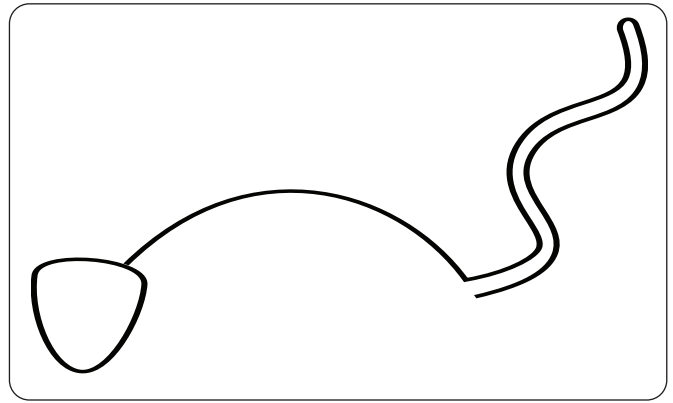
Have beige paper cut 6" x 8". Have base warm brown paint pre-mixed.

Show the students how to draw a silhouette of a jaguar. Point out the arch of the jaguar's body and the legs reaching out. Have the students imitate pouncing jaguars, or just have them practice drawing an arch shape with their fingers in the air.

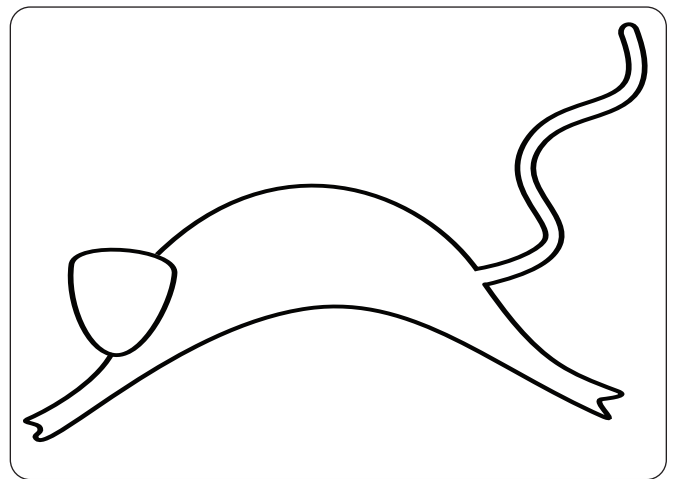
Follow steps 1-4 to paint the jaguar. The teacher might want to draw each step along with the students on large paper at the board



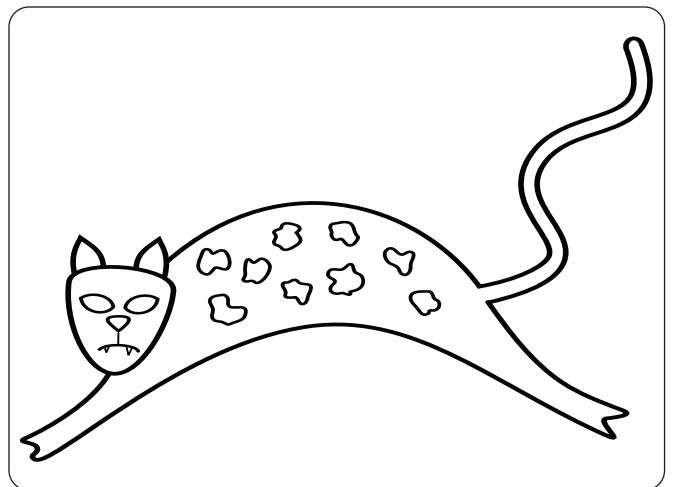
1. Start by painting a thick rainbow shaped stroke. This will be the arched back of the jaguar.



2. Add an oval for the head and a squiggly line for the tail.



3. Add the legs. If the jaguar is too skinny, add width to its ribs and stomach area. The painting should show movement and action.



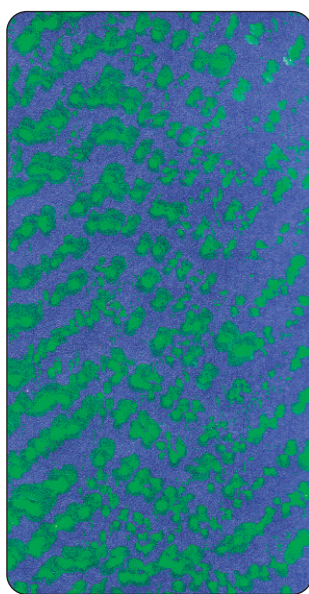
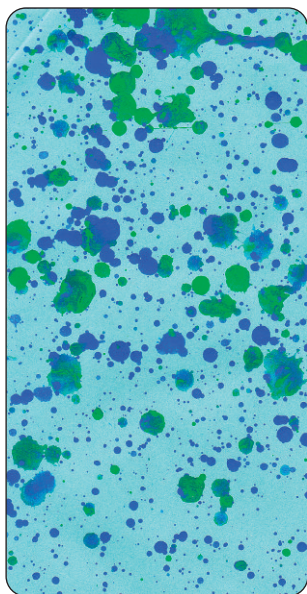
4. Finish the drawing with details such as spots, eyes, mouth, teeth, tongue, ears, claws, etc. Discuss the form of the curves of a jaguar's

spots. Have the students paint their jaguar. Paint the spots with brown or gold paint. Do not worry if the painted jaguar does not look perfect, as it will be cut to a jaguar shape later. Put aside to dry.

## Day 2: Collage

### ***Hiding the Jaguar in the Rain Forest collage.***

The teacher or students can cut out the jaguar. Give students pre-painted 12" x1 8" paper for the background. This could be paper that has been spattered, sponged or finger painted. Green gift wrap also works well. (The papers can be painted earlier by students or by the teacher.)



Paper examples

Pass out some smaller pieces for trees and bushes. Discuss shapes of foliage, trunks and leaves, foreground, background, and camouflage. Have the students place some trees and foliage in front of the jaguar and other pieces behind it. Explain that the Jaguar will be partially overlapped by leaves and tree trunks. Is he hunting or hiding, sleeping or eating, in a tree or in the shade?

Pass out a small color square of a Guatemalan textile. This can be found in a book and Xeroxed. (see resources) Explain to students that they



can make a bird, snake, frog, flower, butterfly or any other creature to place in the rain forest. How does the jaguar relate to this creature? Friend, foe or dinner? Have them decide the best place to put this

creature. This is important because it is the only bright color in the painting and your eye will tend to see it first. The Jaguar's spots and all the overlapping leaves should make him hard to find in the painting.

A 3-D effect is possible by curling some of the leaves on the tree or the feathers of a bird.

Distribute glue and have the students paste down the collage when ready.

### **During the Lesson**

Discuss the mystery, power and agility of the jaguar. Remind the students that they are telling a story about the jaguar—what it is doing, where it is going, where it has been. Discuss composition: the jaguar does not necessarily have to be in the middle of the picture. Encourage them to try different placements for their jaguar. Show the jaguar deep in the jungle, by using overlapping to create lush rain forest foliage.

### **Concluding the Lesson**

#### *Cleaning up:*

Allow 10 minutes for clean up. Have students save the larger pieces of pre-painted paper. Collage material is worth saving!

#### *Post-project discussion:*

Ask students look at each other's work and name some of the characteristics of a jaguar. Ask them to point out a good example of something overlapped. Ask them to share something about the detail they chose. Can they see why the Mayans revered the Jaguar?

*Variations:*

- This lesson can be used to study the fragile ecology and the complex interrelationship of organisms in the rain forest.
- Children could write up the stories in their pictures.

- Discuss the beautifully plummed Quetzal bird which was revered by the Mayans and is now represented on the Flag of Guatemala. The unit of currency is the quetzal.

## STANDARDS

- 1.1** Describe and replicate repeated patterns in nature, in the environment, and in works of art.
- 2.4** Plan and use variations in line, shape/form, color, and texture to communicate ideas or feelings in works of art.
- 3.3** View and then describe art from various cultures.
- 4.2** Identify and describe various reasons for making art.
- 5.2** Compare and contrast objects of folk art from various time periods and cultures.

**NOTES**

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