Watercolour Lesson Book
I know a lot of teachers shy away from “real art” – especially if their areas of expertise are outside the traditional arts.

**YOU CAN TOTALLY DO THIS.**

These lessons will provide you with a simple, step-by-step system to help you become comfortable and successful with your work in watercolour.

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**Welcome to the Watercolour Lessons!**

Learning the foundations of watercolour is a great way to bring the arts into the classroom. The best part is that once you’ve learned how – you can use those skills in any subject and in any way you want!

Painting in watercolour is a deeply enriching activity. Even for those less inclined to be creative – it’s hard not to be excited by the mingling and flow of vibrant colours on paper.

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For more visual learners - in addition to the Lesson book, we’ve recorded all the lessons and made them available on our YouTube channel, click here [https://www.youtube.com/CurrysArtStore](https://www.youtube.com/CurrysArtStore)

**We’re committed to helping you bring creativity to the classroom.**

If you’d like to schedule a classroom workshop or gather 5 or more teachers together for a free demo – please don’t hesitate to contact:

**Lezley Davidson – Education Sales Rep. & Creative Arts Advocate**

647.985.0338 / ldavidson@currys.com
**Materials Intro & Image Transfer**

Included in your kit are the essentials of what’s required to paint in watercolour:

**Canson XL Pad**
140 lb. cold press paper is the standard for watercolour painting.

This 11” x 15” pad has ample 30 sheets which can be cut in half to a roomy 7.5” x 11” sheet.

*The video shows me using a 9”x12” pad – your kit will include (2x) 11”x 15” pads.

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**Reeves Set of 12 Watercolour**

We’ve specifically chosen a watercolour set that includes a split-primary palette* to give your students the best colour theory & mixing experience possible.

Reeves paints are a perfect choice for students new to watercolour.

*Split-primary means that there is a warm and a cold of each of yellow, red and blue.

We’ve used these paints with all my children’s classes – ages 6 -12.

They’re great right up to high school and even for adult beginners – those that aren’t sure if watercolour is for them and they don’t want to invest that much in materials to start with.

The paints have good intensity and transparency for the price.
Black Mungyo Oil Pastel

Oil Pastels are a great addition to learning watercolours. They provide the same “resist and containment” of water media that a crayon does, but they’re juicier and more intense.

Oil pastels are a great source of texture and depth, depending on how many “passes” or layers the student is willing to make on their work.

For this kit we have included black pastels, however, don’t hesitate to experiment with different coloured pastels for new effects.

We’ve included watercolours, paper and oil pastels only in this kit as it’s been our experience that most K-8’s already have a class set of brushes.

However, if you need a set specifically for watercolour – we recommend the Curry’s brand brushes. I’ll be using them in all the demo videos.

The same is true of the palettes. Teachers have proven themselves adept at finding creative alternatives to traditional palettes. I’ll be using the plastic round palette in all the videos as it’s an affordable, flexible palette option.
Image Transfer

This is a little tip to transfer your image to the watercolour paper quickly and cleanly.

Once the watercolour has been taped down (the right way), you can create a transfer sheet with the line drawing sample that you’ll be painting.

Using graphite sticks, or the edge of a pencil – cover the back-side of the line drawing with graphite – making sure all the lines are covered.

Once the back-side of the line drawing is covered with graphite, you’re ready to transfer the image to your watercolour paper!

Using a ballpoint pen or some other hard-ended (but not so hard that it’ll rip the paper) stylus, with firm pressure, trace all the lines in the drawing.

If you’re using a ballpoint colour other than black, you’ll see your trace lines and be able to tell if you’ve traced all your lines.

It’s always a disappointment to miss lines, so advise your students to only lift up part of the line drawing to check first before tearing it all off.

Ta dah! Complete and ready to paint.
We’ve decided to introduce you to the split-primary palette colour theory right out of the gate. It will give you a much better understanding of actual paint mixing as opposed to an idealized version of mixing “all” colours with 3 primaries. (Which isn’t exactly true.)

First – you can draw out the colour wheel by hand – or you can just print out the image and trace the lines.

Here are the steps for hand drawing:

1. Trace a round object – a palette or dinner plate or anything else that fits into the space of your paper is fine.
2. Split the circle into thirds.
3. Split each third into thirds.

4. Draw a box on the outside of each middle third section to allow for another secondary mix.

5. Draw two boxes on the bottom of the sheet for additional colour mixes.

The last two images show where the colours will be placed for each mixture and the final imaged labeled.
Mixing the Split-Primary Palette Colour Wheel

The split-primary colour wheel is divided into thirds: a green third, a purple third and an orange third – 3 pieces of pie.

The “true” or “bright” secondary is mixed using the 2 primaries from inside the section of pie. ie. “Bright Purple” is mixed using Crimson and Ultramarine – primaries from inside the purple pie section.

The “neutral” secondary is mixed using the 2 primaries from outside the section of pie. ie. “Neutral Purple” is mixed using Brilliant Red and Phthalo Blue – primaries from outside the purple pie section.

I had a mantra with my watercolour colour:

“Inside the pie is bright. Outside the pie is neutral.”
The Thing About Black

The bottom left hand corner of the colour wheel is showing the results of black mixed with other colours. Black can be an asset to a painting, but should be used mixed with another colour in your painting. Black on its own is flat and dead. Mixed with other colours it retains vibrancy and life.

Use this area to let the students mix black with other colours – including mixed secondaries.

Burnt Sienna & Ultramarine

One of my favourite mixes (especially in landscapes) is mixing Burnt Sienna and Ultramarine Blue. They mix together to make a neutral colour perfectly suited for bark and stones and dirt.

The Ultramarine is a heavy “sedementing” pigment and creates a natural texture that mimics a variety of natural surfaces.

Experiment with different ratios of Burnt Sienna to Ultramarine. You could also see what happens when adding an additional colour to create a secondary mix with the Burnt Sienna.
We've included all the line drawings to be copied and traced where needed. They've been sized to a half sheet of 11” x 15” or a 9” x 12” piece of paper. Understandably, the Ministry frowns upon copying templates and tracing and you may choose to use the templates as a teacher – for your own use while you learn how to use watercolours.

The line drawings are an example of the kinds of visual elements that will suit each of the different foundation techniques in watercolour: flat wash, glazing, graduated wash and wet in wet. It's been my experience that drawing is the biggest hindrance to learning how to paint in watercolours. Drawing is a skill that requires dedicated discipline and effort to realize – and most primary grade students aren't at that level quite yet.

Using our line drawings as examples, the students can create their own original designs – based on simple elements and principles designed to focus on the particular technique being learned.

**Flat Wash: “STAINED GLASS”**

- Simple shapes
- Very little detail
- Heavy, thick outlines in oil pastel
- Separates wet paint from bleeding
A Note About the Line Drawings

**Glazing: “OUTLINES”**
- Overlapping & tracing found objects
- Items found in yard and home
- Interesting shapes important
- Interesting negative shapes created

**Graduated Wash: “RAINY UMBRELLA”**
- Simple subject matter
- Large area to add water and dilute
- Very little detail necessary
- Secondary areas to practice dilution

**Wet in Wet: “CN TOWER”**
- Simple silhouette of cityscape
- Identifiable building
- Interesting shapes
- Large area to allow paints to mix
The default reaction to paint seems to be to think of it like acrylic or oils... thick and opaque.

Watercolours are the total opposite of that.

When I teach watercolours – to children and adults alike – I hear myself repeating over and over again:

**“More Water! More Water!”**

That’s the key – watercolours are watery and flowing. Less is more with watercolours because applying them thick and opaque completely negates their unique properties.

They’re transparent and are eager to flow and move across your paper and mingle with one another. That has the best chance of happening if you set them up correctly in your palette.

This is a split-primary palette, (warm and cold of each primary colour), set up and ready to be activated.

There is dime-sized dollop of paint in each well – and that’s really all you need.

That amount of paint is enough for a student to finish at least 3 projects.

And don’t wash them off when you’re done for the day.

You can clean up the over-splash – but let the paint dry out and store it for the next paint event.

The paint will activate again once water is added!

**Adding Water**

There are 2 basic ways of adding water to your palette:

1. Fill your brush with water and “drip” it into the well by “scraping” it against the rim of the well.
2. Using an eye dropper.
There is a “bonus” option that several of my students have used. They soak paper towel in the water and then squeeze it out into their paint wells.

I don’t know that I recommend this method. It’s hard to control and it made everything a little wet – but they were proud of their creative invention and got the job done pretty quick!

One of the tricks of activating and mixing watercolours is to not mix the whole paint dollop into a homogenous mass.

Leave a portion of paint on the side, ready to be mixed in.

What this does is give you the option of adjusting the intensity of the paint by mixing in more without having to get new colour from the tube.

If you’ve ever had sushi – it’s the same idea when you’re putting wasabi in your soya sauce:

Leave the dollop of wasabi on the side of your dish so that you can add the spicy stuff a little bit at a time instead of a giant rush of unbearable hotness that can ruin your taste buds.
Water Containers

If possible, give every student at least 2 water containers. One for dirty and one for clean water. It's difficult to mix bright colours if the water is dirty.

You can use any kind of plastic containers from home, or if you'd like a more compact option, Curry's has a variety of containers available:

**Water Bucket Set *staff pick!**

This plastic bucket set includes a bucket, paint palette & brush washer. The bucket features a convenient carry handle & water tight lid. Also features 2 inserts that each hold 1 litre of liquid.

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**Detachable Plastic Brush Washer**

Three durable plastic water containers snap together to make a unique brush cleaning station. When not in use the three containers dissemble & nest together for compact storage making this brush washer great for any artist, but especially handy for travel & plein air painters. It features a convenient carry handle attached to the largest & central water container.

- L basin dimensions: H 3.25" x L 2.75" x W 1.5"
- M basin dimensions: H 3.25" x L 2.5" x W 1.25"
- S basin dimensions: H 3.25" x L 2.25" x W 1"

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**Plastic Brush Basin**

This multi-purpose container holds water or solvents. The lift-off lid can function as a watercolour palette. It holds different brush sizes while ridges on the bottom aid in brush washing. *Note: Brushes in image are not included.*
This is it. We’re going to paint a painting and…

**It’s going to be awesome.**

The flat wash is the building block of watercolour. It’s basically filling in an area with colour and avoiding streaky weird lines and backwashes.

The key to this is **liquid control.**

Streaky lines happen when your brush has too little liquid and the paint dries before you can finish the area, so you over brush what you’ve already completed and it makes it a darker streak.

The opposite happens with a backwash.

A backwash happens when an already dry area continues to suck up wet from a big puddle. It plumes and spreads out and creates a noticeable craggy puddle shape as it dries.

I enjoy backwashes for texture. They can be used to create visual interest and add depth to a painting… but first, you need to learn how to paint without them.
Let’s Paint!

**Step 1.** Transfer the image to the watercolour paper.

**Step 2.** Outline the image in black oil pastel. This will create “buffer zones” to prevent the watercolours from bleeding into each other and making a muddy puddle.

**Step 3.** Lift excess pastel crumbs with tape. This helps prevent the black oil pastel from making the watercolour “dirty”. Encourage your students to avoid excessive scrubbing along the edges of the oil pastel. They can touch it a bit, but too much makes the colour dirty.

**Step 4.** Paint in each section. Students should be working at a steady pace. Stopping in mid-section will result in the watercolour drying with a streak or backwash. Finish the section with an equal amount of water not allowing any area to dry before it’s finished.

Use your new understanding of colour mixing to mix secondary colours. I’ve chosen to paint the butterfly in mostly warm colours, while reserving the background for cool colours.

*Warm colours come forward. Cold colours recede.*

**Step 5.** Create shadows. To add interest and depth, I added ultramarine shadows to the object.
Determine which direction your light source is coming from, and paint the ultramarine shadow lines on the opposite side of the object.

Experiment with the amount of water in your ultramarine mix so that it’s not too watery and doesn’t show up, or it’s too intense and doesn’t look like shadows.

Liquid control is a big part of watercolour painting. Have toilet paper or paper towel handy to dab your brush onto in case it’s too liquidy.

Further Study:
“African Fabric”, “Intuitive Shapes” (and others!) are available on the Curry’s YouTube channel.
Click here https://www.youtube.com/CurrysArtStore if you would like to investigate flat wash further.
Glazing – “Overlapping Outlines”

Glazing is essentially a flat wash layered over another dry flat wash. It’s important that the under layer is dry. If it’s not, then it’s just wet in wet (which we’ll get to later). Watercolours are transparent, so you can layer colour over top of one another so they mix optically. Instead of mixing yellow and blue on our palette and applying it – we could layer yellow, let it dry and then paint a glaze of blue overtop and it will “read” as green.

**Step 1.** Find interesting shapes in your neighbourhood or house.

**Step 2.** Trace those items onto your paper, overlapping them to create secondary images. Pay attention to the negative shapes that are created between the objects.

**Step 3.** Paint each underlying shape a different colour using what you learned in “Flat Wash”.

**Step 4.** Allow the shapes to dry completely before painting the overlapping shape.

Consider your colour choices and experiment with primary and secondary colours as colour choices – even painting a secondary colour over another secondary colour.

Some students may end up with muddy brown – but that’s okay. It’s an experiment in glazing and some colours glaze better than others.

**Step 5.** To add visual interest, I added shadows to my objects.

Determine from where your light source is coming. Mix a light ultramarine to paint a line on the opposite side of each object from the light source.

**Further Study:**

“Candle Flame” and “Tree” (and more!) are available on the Curry’s Youtube Channel https://www.youtube.com/CurrysArtStore for those interested in further investigation of Glazing.
Graduated Wash – “Rainy Umbrella”

The graduated wash is the “shading” of watercolour.
You take a dark wash and gradually turn it into a light wash by adding water.

All the techniques that you learn in this course can be combined with one another to produce the effect you need. The graduated wash is a foundation of creating volume.

**Step 1.** Transfer image to watercolour paper. Tape down.

**Step 2.** Cover entire page with water.
This can be a tricky part for students. They need to add enough water so it doesn’t dry out while they’re working, but not too much that it’s pouring off the page.
It’s all about the liquid.
Using spray bottles and squeeze bottles can help with this process.
Step 3. I used Phthalo blue – but you can use whatever colour you like. Spread a line of rich, intense colour along the top of the page.

We’ll be adding more water to this, so make sure the initial strip along the top is concentrated and intense – not washy and light.

Step 4. Clean your brush and pick up clean water on your brush. Now run the water along the bottom of your paint line – just barely touching the paint. You will pick up the paint and it will flow down into the water you’ve put down and it will lighten up mixing with the water.

Step 5. Repeat Step 4 until you’ve brought the blue all the way down the page, lightening it with water every step. Work quickly with this technique so that the page doesn’t dry up and ruin the flow of your blue pigment down the page. The blue should continue to flow downward following the water. Don’t avoid the umbrella – paint right over it.
**Step 6.** Go do something else for awhile and let this dry.
You can dry it with a hair dryer. It’s a good second choice when you’re in a pinch. It’s been my experience that the best results are when you can allow the paint to dry on its own. It continues to move and blend and create while it dries and the hair dryer interrupts that process.

**Pro Tips:** You can tell for sure that the paper is dry because it is warm, or room temperature. If your paper still feels cold – it’s still wet.
Test your paper with the back of your hand. There is less oil than on your fingertips and skin oil will discolor your paper over time.

**Step 7.** When the paper is completely dry – outline the umbrella in oil pastel.

**Step 8.** Paint graduated washes in each of the umbrella sections. Working quickly while it’s wet.
If you want to deepen and intensive the colour, you can drop in extra colour providing the section is still wet and moving.
**Step 9.** Mix a bit of ultramarine and paint a shadow underneath the umbrella. I added purple into it while it was still wet. I dropped in more colour to darken the shadow in areas.
Great job!!
You should totally sign this one.

Further Study:
“Teddy Bear” and “Foggy Hills” are available on the Curry’s YouTube channel. Click here https://www.youtube.com/CurrysArtStore if you would like to investigate Graduated Wash further.
Here we go... this is where the training wheels come off and we get to let watercolour do its watercolour thing. Wet in wet is probably my favourite part of watercolour because nothing can replicate what the water and pigment will do on their own.

With wet in wet techniques, you can't control it, so it's best to just accept it's free-wheeling ways and let it do its thing. **Here we go.**

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**Step 1.** Transfer your image and tape your paper down.

**Step 2.** Pre-mix / activate the colours that you’ll need.

*Mix more than enough.*

In our case we’ll be mixing 3 primaries: Crimson, Medium Yellow & Phthalo or Ultramarine.

*Mix your colour intensely. There’s a lot of water on the paper that will dilute it – so go in strong.*

**Step 3.** Get your paper completely wet with water.

Grab a spray bottle or even the liquitip plastic squeeze bottles (if it helps), each found at Curry’s. Work steady – don’t let this dry up or it’ll be a nightmare.

**LOTS OF WATER. LOTS OF WATER.**
**Step 4.** Apply yellow to the bottom third of the paper in a ragged, sketchy style. We’re trying to replicate a cloudy sunset sky, so leave some white.

**Step 5.** Apply crimson to the middle third of the paper in a similar sketchy, random style, mixing into the yellow in places.

**Step 6.** Apply your choice of blue along the top quarter of the painting allowing it to blend into the red in places.
**Step 7.** Add clean water in places where the paint is stuck and not moving. Be aware that the direction you move the brush will impact the direction of the “wind and clouds” in your sky. Move your brush only horizontally for this exact reason.

**Step 8.** Use some toilet paper or paper towel to gently mop up any giant puddles that will create an odd-looking backwash in your sky. Gently ‘dab’ the paper towel – do not scrub or wipe! The ‘dabbing’ adds cloud texture to the sky. Don’t dab everywhere, it’ll look too much – like a faux finish.

This “painting” of wet in wet takes very little time – it is a quick and intense dance with water and pigment – then you let it do its own thing.

Don’t try and control the wash… let the water work.

**Step 9.** Go make a sandwich because it’s got to dry.
**Step 10.** Go make a sandwich because it’s got to dry.

When dry – use your oil pastel to fill in the silhouette of the CN Tower skyline.

The first pass of the oil pastel will look weak and sketchy.

Encourage the students to go back in for a second and third pass with the oil pastel to create different value areas of interest in the piece.

Let the water work.

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**Further Study:**

We’ve included “Reflected Sky” and “Tree” on the Curry’s Youtube Channel. Click here

https://www.youtube.com/CurrysArtStore if interested in further investigation of the Wet in Wet technique.
For video lessons and more please click here www.currys.com/TeacherResources.html