

## Bird Prints Inspired by Morris Graves



Raven Print example

Image source: Museum of Northwest Art

A HANDS-ON ART  
ACTIVITY DESIGNED  
BY KECIA FOX

### Description

Inspired by Morris Graves' painting, *Blind Bird*, students will create prints of Northwest native birds.

### Materials

- Paper
- Pencils
- Image of Morris Graves' painting *Blind Bird* (included in this lesson)
- Foam board
- Printing plates
- Optional: images of NW Native birds

### Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Geometric shapes
- ✓ Printmaking
- ✓ Native
- ✓ Contour drawing
- ✓ Printing plate
- ✓ Brayer roller
- ✓ Foam board

## Instructions

- 1) Start with a discussion based on Morris Graves' painting (full size image provided at the end of this lesson). This is a great opportunity to practice using VTS (Visual Thinking Strategies) to guide students in a discussion of the artwork. VTS tips and resources are also included at the end of this lesson.
- 2) Ask students to identify shapes they see in the painting and model how you might draw a bird using basic shapes.
- 3) Students can now brainstorm a list of NW bird names they know. You may wish to provide some images of NW Native birds, such as a poster like this one.
- 4) Students will draw a bird with pencil on paper using the basic shapes.
- 5) They will then add detail lines.
- 6) Once they like their design, they can draw it using pencil on the foam board, and add lines for texture. Note: their image will be reversed when they print it.
- 7) Students will work in small groups to do the printing. They will roll out their ink using the brayers on the printing plates and then roll the ink onto the foam. Once it is inked, they will flip it onto the paper and press evenly and with their full body weight to make the print.



## Closer

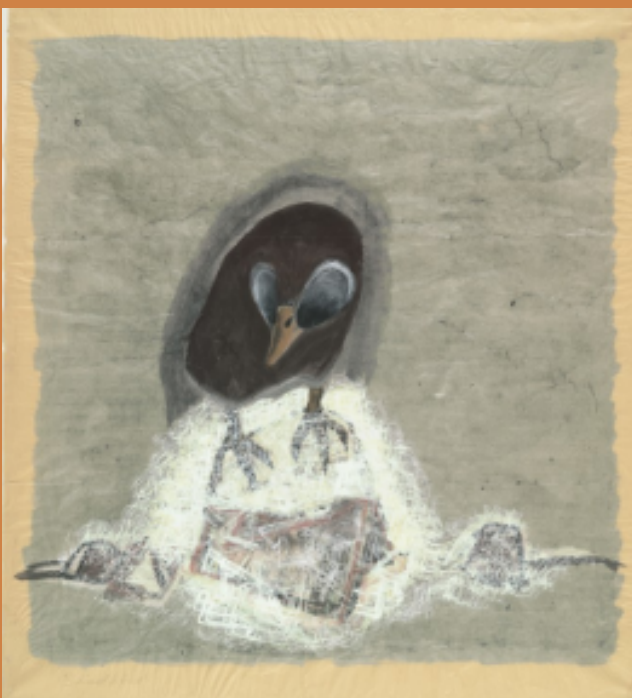
Students will choose a favorite bird print to glue to black paper and display in class.

# MORRIS GRAVES

Morris Graves (1920-2001) was a Pacific Northwestern painter and printmaker. His style is referred to as mysticism, which consists of nature inspired symbols mixed with surrealism. He was an important leader of the "Northwest School" and was one of the first recognized modern artists from the region.



Portrait of Graves  
Source: Wikiart.org



Morris Graves, *Blind Bird*  
1940, Gouache and watercolor on mulberry paper  
Image Source: Museum of Modern Art

**"I PAINT TO REST FROM THE  
PHENOMENA OF THE EXTERNAL WORLD,  
TO PRONOUNCE AND TO MAKE  
NOTATIONS OF ITS ESSENCES WITH  
WHICH TO VERIFY THE INNER EYE."  
-MORRIS GRAVES**

# CHECK OUT THIS GREAT RESOURCE FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION!

This [list of birds of Washington](#) includes every wild bird species recorded in the U.S. state of Washington.



## Learning and State Standards

Fulfills [Washington State Arts Learning Standards](#):

- **VA:Cr2.1.4** (Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches)
- **VA:Cr7.1.4** (Compare responses to a work of art before and after working in similar media)

# Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

*What's going on in this picture?*  
*What do you see that makes you say that...?*  
*What more can you find?*

## Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to VTS in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: <https://www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators>



Morris Graves, *Blind Bird*

1940, Gouache and watercolor on mulberry paper

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