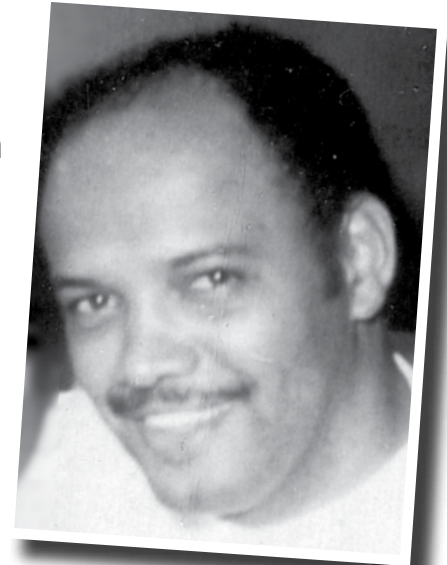


Florida's Highwaymen Artists

CIVIL RIGHTS ERA LESSON 2

In the 1950s, the South was still heavily segregated. This meant African Americans did not have equal access to housing, schools, or other public facilities and services. A 1896 U.S. Supreme Court decision in a case named *Plessy v. Ferguson* made segregation legal, stating that public places could be “separate but equal.” White and black Americans had separate restaurants, waiting rooms, parks, and even drinking fountains. The facilities for African Americans were almost always inferior or of poor quality.

During segregation, most African Americans could not find the same kinds of jobs or earn the same amount of pay as white people. In Florida, though, a group of 25 African American men and one woman created a way to earn money as artists instead of working in factories or picking citrus. This group, known today as the “Florida Highwaymen,” was started by two young artists: Alfred Hair and Harold Newton.



Top: Alfred Hair
Below: Harold Newton

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Alfred Hair was trained by A.E. “Bean” Backus, a white landscape painter from Fort Pierce. Hair knew that as a black artist during segregation, he could not sell his pictures for the same price as well-known white painters like Backus. Hair focused instead on creating lots of paintings and selling them for less money. He would paint as fast as he could – sometimes on as many as 20 different pictures at one time.

African Americans also couldn’t sell their paintings in segregated art galleries, so Harold Newton began to sell his art from the trunk of his car. Inspired by Newton, Hair would also travel along Florida’s highways, selling his paintings for about \$25 each to doctor’s offices, motels, and other small businesses.

Hair and Newton’s work inspired others to try painting. Unlike Hair, most of the other artists now called Highwaymen did not have formal lessons. Instead, they helped one another to learn new techniques and develop their own styles. To keep the process as affordable as possible, they made homemade frames and painted with inexpensive materials.

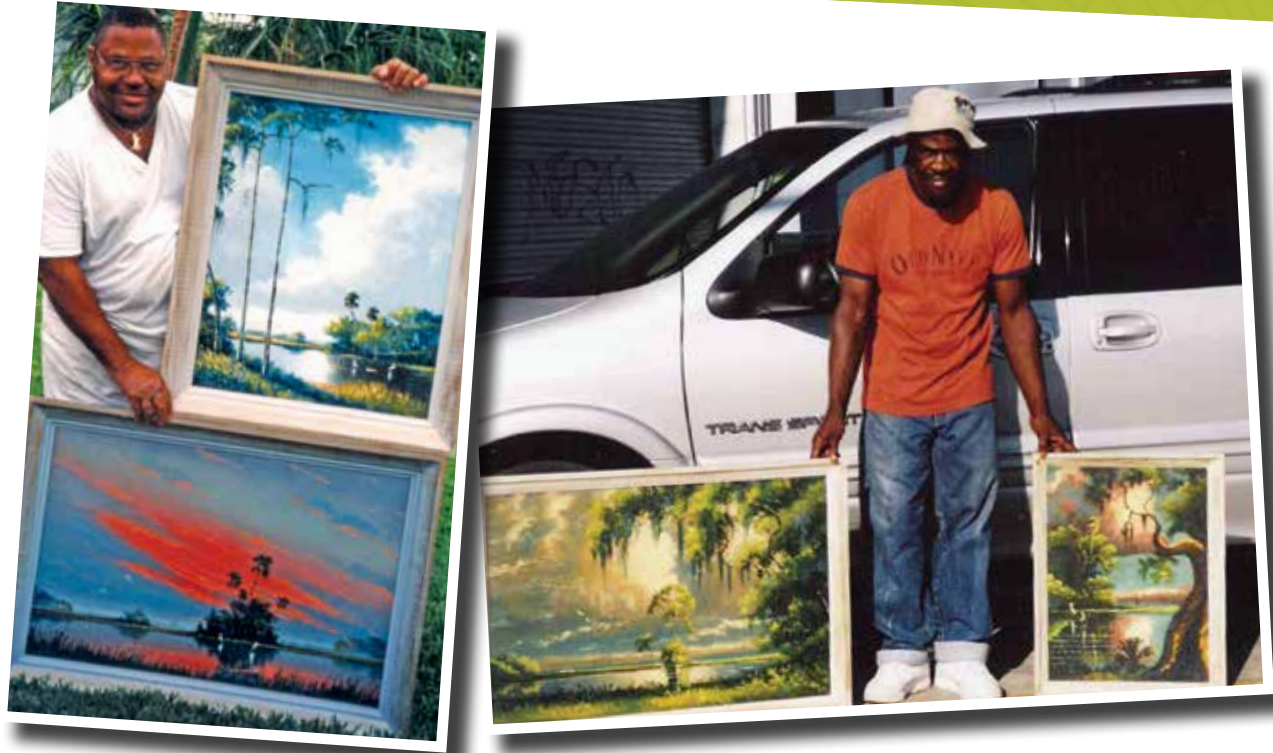


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The Florida Highwaymen painted landscapes, a type of artwork that depicts a natural scene, but they didn't paint the scenes in front of them. Instead they painted beautiful landscapes from memory. Their paintings highlight Florida's natural beauty – beaches, marshes, palm trees, birds, and other plant and wildlife. They are known for using bright and bold colors.

Today Florida Highwaymen paintings are on display all around the country, including at the History Center and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. In 2004, all 26 artists were inducted into the Florida Artists Hall of Fame, where they are celebrated not only for their art but for the lengths they had to take to achieve their dreams of earning a living as African American artists during the Civil Rights Era.

Florida's Highwaymen Artists ACTIVITY

When you picture Florida, what type of landscape do you see? Do you imagine animals and nature, or theme parks and cities? Do you picture a morning sky or a night sky?

Use your ideas to create your own Florida landscape artwork.

What You'll Need:

- Paper or cardboard
- Watercolor paint or colored pencils, markers, crayons or pastels (anything you may have to color)



Florida's Highwaymen Artists

ACTIVITY

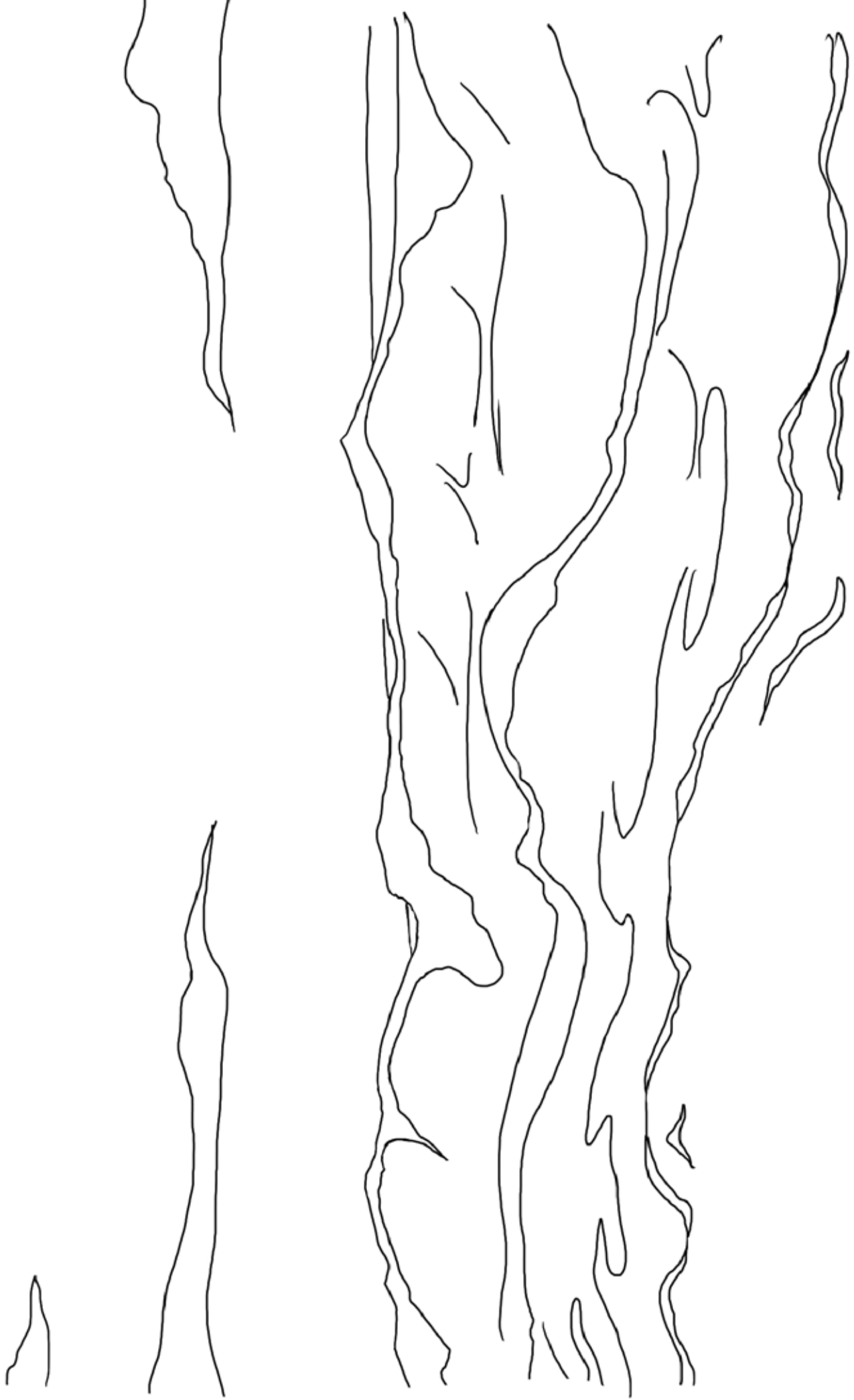
What to do:

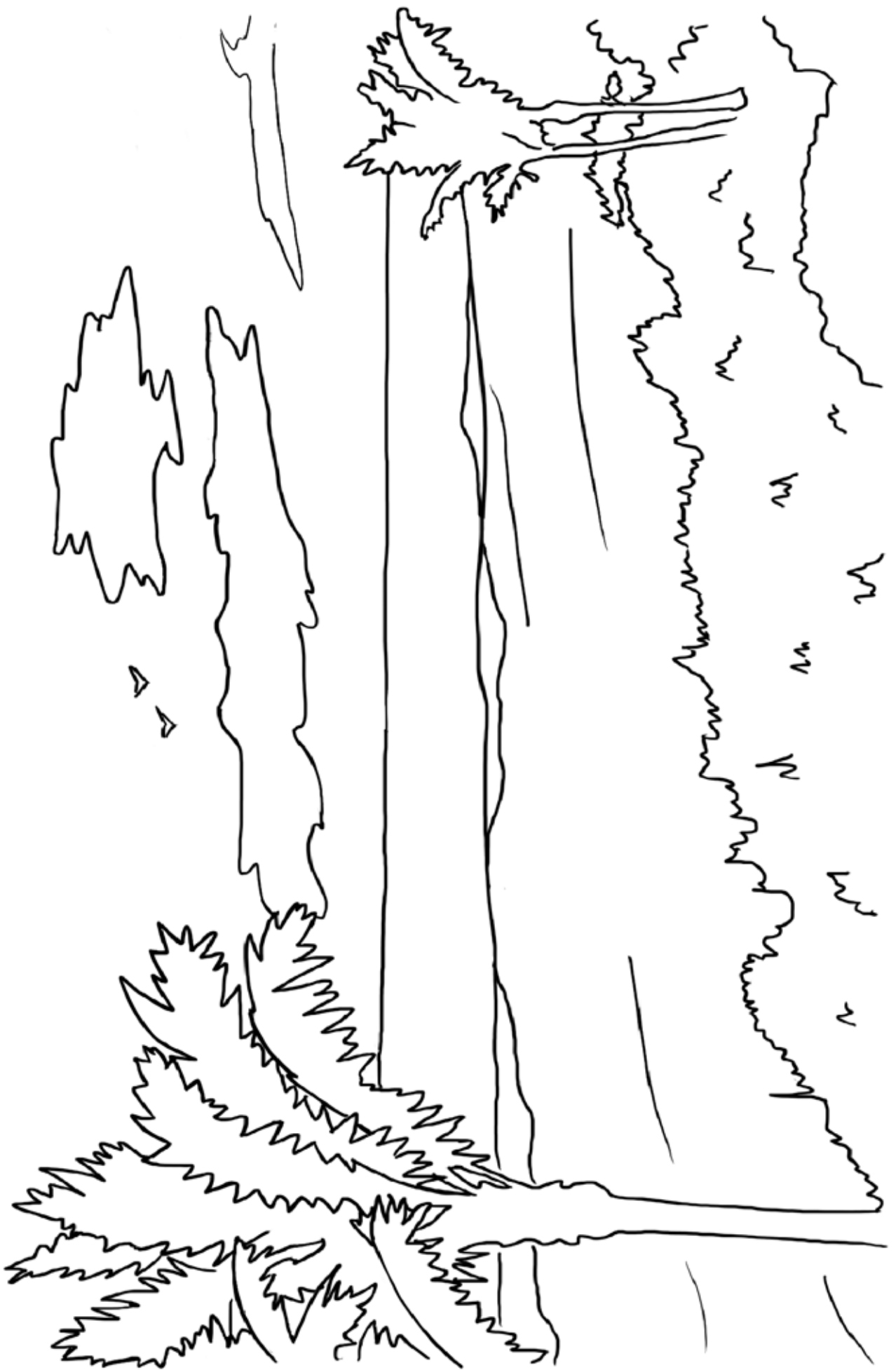
1. Pick the "canvas" for your artwork. You can use paper, construction paper, or cardboard.
2. Brainstorm what elements you want to include: what time of the day, what type of plants and animals, etc.
3. Draw the background of your artwork first, including the sky, ground, and water.
4. Once the background is finished and dry, add other elements to the foreground (the part of the artwork that is closest or at the front). This includes buildings, animals, plants, and clouds.

Once you have finished creating your own artwork, try using our Florida Highwaymen coloring sheet!















History AT HOME

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Sources

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<http://www.aarf.com/fews9501.htm>

<https://www.npr.org/2012/09/22/161434534/the-landscape-art-legacy-of-floridas-highwaymen>

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/l/landscape>

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/segregation-united-states>

This lesson helps reinforce these Florida State Standards for K-5th grade:

- SS.2.C.2.5 Evaluate the contributions of various African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, veterans and women.
- SS.4.A.6.3 Describe the contributions of significant individuals to Florida.
- SS.4.E.1.1 Identify entrepreneurs from various social and ethnic backgrounds who have influenced Florida and the local economy.
- SS.4.A.5.2 Summarize challenges Floridians faced during Reconstruction.
- SS.4.A.8.1 Identify Florida's role in the Civil Rights Movement.
- VA.2.S.1.1 Experiment with tools and techniques as part of art-making processes.
- VA.2.S.1.4 Use accurate art vocabulary to discuss art.
- VA.2.S.2.2 Follow sequential procedures focused on art production.
- VA.4.S.1.3 Create artworks that integrate ideas from culture of history.
- VA.4.S.2.1 Organize the structural elements of art to achieve an artistic objective.

