

# Hand-Colored History

(art + history; art + literature)

Applying color to black and white images is a practice as old as photography itself. From the early days of photography in the 1830s, until the use of color film became widespread in the 1950s, many photographers communicated color in an image by painstakingly brushing watercolor, oil paint or dyes onto a print. Even with the advanced color technology available today, many fine art photographers prefer the nostalgic look of hand-colored photos to modern film and digital options.

An easy, safe and tidy way to color photos in the classroom is to use colored pencils on black and white prints. Depending on the color choices and amount of color applied, finished pieces will look like the hand-painted work of Victorian artists or as if the piece were completely drawn by hand.

This lesson plan will easily connect with historical studies of your own community. Visit your library to find photos that you can scan of buildings, places and people that were important in the development of your town's history. Invite students to photocopy images from their own family history. Connect with writing and literature studies by having students research and write an essay about the person or place that they have selected.

**Grade Levels** 5-12

## Preparation

1. Select photos for hand-coloring. A good photo to use will have a wide variety of grays – not overly dark or light. Texture, such as hair, grass or brick, will be beneficial. Avoid photos with large areas of black or white.
2. Print the photos onto the Strathmore matte-surface digital paper. Center the image on the page with surrounding white space (about 6" x 8" image size). Digital images that are inkjet or laser printed on the computer paper will provide the best results, but images may be photocopied onto the photo paper if a computer is not available. The Strathmore paper has a heavy weight and smooth surface that reproduces images well and accepts the colored pencil beautifully. For practice pieces, print copies on regular bond paper.

## Process

1. Have students use a practice copy of the photo (on bond paper) first, to experiment with color selection and pressure.
2. After they have learned to control the colored pencil medium with a practice drawing, students can complete their final drawing on photo paper. Use the following guidelines:
  - Keep a sheet of newsprint beneath the drawing hand to prevent smearing the color and toner. Even clean hands have oils that can leave marks on the paper.
  - Draw in a circular motion rather than lines or zig-zags. The drawing will look smoother and colors will blend together softly.
  - Work from light colors to dark colors, using light pressure and intensifying colors by building them up in gradual layers, not by increasing pressure.
  - For a nostalgic look, use mostly sepia, ochre, sienna and earth tones with small amounts of brighter colors. In areas of shadow, use browns, dark blues or greens – NOT BLACK. Black will create muddy colors or completely overwhelm other colors.
  - Blend colors with a paper stump, using a circular motion. Use the side of the stump for larger areas, not just the pointed tip. A Prismacolor Colorless Blender contains the same core material as the pencils, so it blends perfectly.
  - Concentrate on one area at a time – don't try to fill the whole page with color at once. Prismacolor Art Stix work well for doing large areas. Art Stix are made with the same material as the Prismacolor pencil core, but in a stick form instead of a wooden casing.
  - Sharpen pencils only when the core is completely inaccessible. A point will leave a strong line, so try to avoid sharpening the pencils as much as possible.
3. Once the work is finished, secure it in a pre-cut mat to frame and display.

## Variations

- For more advanced hand-coloring techniques, use [Marshall's Photo Oils](#) (00426-) and [Mashall's Photo Pencils](#) (20516-). Also, [Photo Coloring Markers](#) (22961- or 22985-).
- Use [Strathmore Matte Surface Digital Photo Cards](#) (11915-1067) to make 5" x 7" greeting cards.
- Instead of historical photos, use current photos from a digital camera, image CD or internet download.



## Materials

[Prismacolor® Pencils](#), assorted colors (20508-), share throughout classroom

[Strathmore Digital Paper, Matte surface](#) (12954-3012), one 8-1/2" x 11" sheet per student

[Blick All-Purpose Newsprint](#), 8-1/2" x 11" sheets (10204-1085), at least one per student

[Dahle® Professional Pencil Sharpener](#) (21418-1001)

[Gray Paper Stumps](#) for blending (22856-1048), classpack of 48

Inkjet or laser printer, computer, photocopier

[Savage Value-Priced Pre-Cut Mats](#), size 11" x 14" with an 8" x 10" opening, assorted colors (17211-)

### OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

[Prismacolor® Colorless Blender](#) (20508-1010), one per student

[Prismacolor® Art Stix](#), assorted colors (20008-), for large areas of color

## National Standards

Content Standard #1 – Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

**5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas

**9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use

Content Standard #4 – Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures

**5-8** Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

**9-12** Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art

Content Standard #6 – Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines

**5-8** Students describe ways in which the principles and subject matter of other disciplines taught in the school are interrelated with the visual arts.

**9-12** Students compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues or themes in the humanities or sciences.