Art Nouveau:
Inspired by Nature

Section 1: Lesson Preparation

Grade Level: 1st - 5th Grade
Unit/Subject: Visual Arts | Art History

Lesson Summary & Focus
Using objects in the Lightner Museum collection, students will explore the Art Nouveau movement through images and corresponding questions. Students will have the chance to create their own nature-inspired motif using foil embossing. This lesson plan pairs well with the Lightner Museum's *Designing with Nature: Adventures in Stained Glass*.

National/State Learning Standards
VA.1.C.1.2: Gather clues to help interpret and reflect on works of art.
VA.1.H.2.2: Identify objects of art that are used every day for utilitarian purposes.
VA.2.F.2.1: Identify work created by artists and designers.
VA.3.C.3.2: Describe the connections between visual art and other contexts through observation and art criticism.
VA.4.H.2.1: Explore works of art, created over time, to identify the use of the structural elements of art in an historical event or art style.
VA.5.C.1.2: Use prior knowledge and observation skills to reflect on, analyze, and interpret exemplary works of art.

Specific Learning Target Objectives
- By reading the corresponding essay, students will explore the Art Nouveau movement and the style's impact on art during the Gilded Age.
- Students will explore the Museum's collection through images and will discuss the works through guided questions.
- Students will design their own nature motif using foil embossing.

Academic Language
- Art Nouveau
- Gilded Age
- Motif

Resources/Materials
- Corresponding reading passages exploring Art Nouveau.
- Nature motif foil embossing activity.
- Exit Ticket question

- Advertisement Postcard template and instructions
- Exit Ticket Question

All materials are located at the end of this lesson plan.

Section 2: Instructional Planning

Anticipatory Set

- I will begin the lesson by having my students read the Hotel Alcazar passages aloud in small groups.
- I will use the discussion questions to lead a group discussion on the Hotel Alcazar and the use of William Henry Jackson's photographs as advertising.

Means of Representation

- Students will read passages out loud in small groups.

Means of Engagement

- Students will work collaboratively to read the passages.
- I, the educator, will provide a guided discussion regarding the significance of Hotel Alcazar and the use of advertising in the early 1900s.
- I will introduce students to the hands-on postcard activity and provide an example.

Means of Expression

Summative assessment:

- Hotel postcard advertisement activity.

Formative assessment:

- Classroom discussion regarding the reading passages
- Exit ticket question regarding Hotel Alcazar

Reading Passage: Art Nouveau at the Lightner Museum

The term *Art Nouveau* is French for "new art." This exciting art and design movement became popular in the 1890s and gained international attention at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris, France. Artists throughout Europe and the United States embraced the style, often giving it their own names. In Germany, for example, it was called *Jugendstil*, meaning "youth style," after a magazine named *Jugend* that supported the movement. Although artists used different names and approaches, they shared a desire to create something fresh, original, and beautiful.

Art Nouveau influenced many forms of art and design, including architecture, sculpture, furniture, jewelry, and glassmaking. Artists looked to nature for inspiration, using flowers, leaves, vines, animals, and insects in their designs. They often combined these natural forms with long, flowing lines, graceful curves, and geometric shapes. Art Nouveau artists also found inspiration in Japanese art, especially woodblock prints. These prints often featured bold colors, flattened shapes, unusual viewpoints, and scenes that seemed to continue beyond the edges of the image. Artists borrowed these ideas to create fresh and eye-catching designs of their own.

Art Nouveau remained popular for about two decades, although it lasted longer in some places than in others. After World War I, its popularity faded as new styles emerged. One of these was *Art Deco*, which became known for its bold geometric patterns and streamlined designs. Today, Art Nouveau is celebrated for helping connect older artistic traditions with the new ideas that shaped modern art and design.

The Lightner Museum's collection includes several examples of Art Nouveau. One example is the ***Dragonfly Lamp***, created by Louis Comfort Tiffany (American, 1848–1933) in 1904. The lamp features delicate dragonfly designs, colorful pieces of stained glass, and graceful, flowing lines. It demonstrates how Art Nouveau artists transformed everyday objects into beautiful works of art.

A similar appreciation for nature and craftsmanship can be seen in Tiffany's ***Flower form Vases***, designed in the early twentieth century. Made of iridescent glass and bronze, these vases feature organic forms and unevenly distributed colors that give each vase a unique appearance. Their naturalistic designs reflected the era's taste for distinctive, handmade objects, offering an alternative to the uniform, mass-produced goods that became increasingly common during America's Gilded Age.

Producing these vases required the combined skills of Tiffany's design teams and glassmaking artisans at his workshops in Corona, New York. Following Tiffany's sketches, the artisans incorporated colored glass canes, or rods, into the hot, malleable material and treated the glass with metal oxides to create its striking iridescent finish. Like the Dragonfly Lamp, the Flower Form Vases reveal Tiffany's ability to unite artistic imagination with technical skill, transforming glass into forms that evoke the beauty and irregularity of the natural world.

Nature and imagination also come together in two ceramic pieces made by the Amphora Factory in Austria around 1900. The first, a ***Ewer***, is a decorative pitcher covered with unusual creatures inspired by animals, including those found in water. An image of a crane among cherry blossoms adds a touch

of Japanese-inspired design. By combining fantastical creatures with delicate flowers and graceful details, the artist created a piece that is both playful and elegant.

Another Amphora creation, a ***Bud Vase***, appears to grow like a plant. Four curved supports rise along its sides like twisting vines, while tiny flowers and colorful, jewel-like decorations cover its surface. Like Tiffany's glass creations, these ceramic works demonstrate how Art Nouveau artists drew inspiration from nature, using organic shapes, intricate details, and imaginative designs to transform ordinary objects into works of art.

Vocabulary Worksheet

Draw a line to match the word with its definition or image.

Gilded Age	A distinctive, recurring element, idea, or pattern that helps develop a central theme, mood, or meaning.
Art Nouveau	A large international exhibition where countries from around the world gather to showcase their scientific, technological, and cultural achievements.
Motif	A style of art from the late 1800s and early 1900s that was inspired by the natural world.
World's Fair	A period of rapid economic growth, technological innovation, and the rise of large industries such as oil and railroads.

Object Observation Questions

1. IMAGE 1: Dragonfly Lamp, Tiffany Studio

1. **What natural motifs do you see in this lamp?** Look closely at the dragonflies, wings, and colorful glass. What other parts remind you of plants, flowers, or the outdoors?

2. **How does the artist use color to show nature?** Why do you think the artist chose greens, blues, yellows, and oranges for the lamp?

3. **How does the artist use shapes and patterns to represent dragonflies?** Look at the wings and the repeated shapes in the glass. How do these details help the lamp look like something found in nature?

4. **If you were the artist, what other part of nature would you use to design a lamp?** Would you choose butterflies, flowers, leaves, or something else? What colors, shapes, and patterns would you include?

2. IMAGE 2: *Bud Vase*, Amphora Factory

1. **Does this vase remind you of nature?** Look at its green color, curved handles, and rounded shape. Do any of these details remind you of plants, flowers, seeds, or other things in nature?

2. **How does the artist use color to make the vase interesting?** Why do you think the artist chose green, gold, and dark brown? How do these colors make you think about the natural world?

3. **What patterns and shapes do you notice on the vase?** Look at the repeated circles and decorative details. How might an artist use patterns found in flowers, leaves, or other parts of nature to decorate an object?

4. **If you could design your own vase inspired by nature, what would it look like?** Would you use leaves, flowers, shells, or animals in your design? What colors, shapes, and patterns would you choose?

3. IMAGE 3: Ewer

1. **Look closely at the ewer.** What animals and plants can you find? What colors, shapes, or patterns do you notice?

2. **Examine the animals closely.** How are the fish, crab, turtles, and crane different from one another? What do you notice about how the artist made each animal look?

3. **Why do you think the artist chose to make such an unusual object?** How does it make you feel when you look at it?

Activity: Embossed Foil Insects

Using the provided materials, students will create their own nature-inspired motif by embossing a design onto metal foil and adding color with permanent markers.

Materials Needed

- Permanent markers
- Aluminum foil sheets or metal embossing foil
- Printer paper
- Dull pencils
- Ballpoint pens
- Masking tape

Instructions

1. Draw a nature-inspired design.
Students will begin by drawing an insect, animal, flower, or plant on a sheet of printer paper. This drawing will serve as the main subject of their foil embossing.

Helpful Tip: Provide printed images of insects, flowers, plants, and animals for students to use as references or inspiration. This can help students who need additional guidance getting started.

2. Attach the drawing to the foil.
Place the drawing on top of a sheet of metal foil. Use masking tape to secure the paper to the foil, making sure the main image is centered.

3. Trace the design onto the foil.
Using a ballpoint pen, carefully trace the drawing on the paper. The pressure of the pen will create indented lines in the foil underneath. Remind students to apply gentle, even pressure to avoid tearing the foil.

4. Check the embossed lines.
Gently lift one corner of the paper to check that the design has transferred onto the foil. If necessary, carefully retrace any lines that are not clearly visible.

5. Remove the paper and define the lines.
Once the entire drawing has been traced, gently remove the paper from the foil. Using a dull pencil, lightly trace over the embossed lines to make the design more defined. Remind students to work carefully to avoid puncturing or tearing the foil.

6. Cut out your design or add a decorative background.
Students can either cut out their design or fill the background with geometric shapes, repeating patterns, or other decorative details. The background should complement the main subject and help it stand out. Students should leave the background uncolored so that the silver foil remains visible.

7. Add color to the main subject.
Students will use permanent markers to color their main subject, such as an insect, animal, flower, or plant. Encourage them to experiment with bright colors, shading, layering, and blending to add depth and visual interest.

Helpful Tip: If students would like to experiment with the permanent markers before coloring their designs, provide a scrap piece of foil for practice.



Exit Question



Ask the students:
How can you tell that this artwork belongs to the Art Nouveau movement, just by visual observation?



Amphora Factory (Austrian, operated 1892–1945)
Bud Vase, c. 1900
Earthenware

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Amphora Factory (Austrian, operated 1892–1945)
Ewer, c. 1900
Glazed earthenware

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Clara Driscoll, designer (American, 1861–1944)
Fabricated by Tiffany Studios
(American, operated 1902–1932)
Dragonfly lamp, ca. 1905
Leaded glass and bronze

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Tiffany Studios (American, operated 1902–1932)
Three Flower Form Vases, early twentieth century
Iridescent glass and bronze

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