Central focus:

In honor of Earth Day, students will learn about environmental art such as earthworks, as well as activist art by Alexis Rockman. They will apply what they have learned about using the elements and principles of art in their drawing and painting to create a piece of art that reflects their ideas surrounding an environmental concern.

Essential questions:

How can the environment affect art?

How can art affect the environment?

What are ways artists can raise awareness?

Why is it important that artists are mindful of the environment?

Standards:

2PE Analyze and explain the factors that influence artworks.

6RE Explain how a response to a work of art is affected by the context in which it is viewed.

Day One:

1. The lesson starts with a powerpoint presentation. The first slide asks “how can the environment effect art?” The teacher leads the class in a discussion. The second slide reads, “how art can effect the environment?” The next slides introduce artists that cover environmental issues in their work through land works, such as Andy Goldsworthy, Robert Smithson, and Maya Lin. She then discusses artist/painter Alexis Rockman, and shows some of his paintings that detail more specific environmental issues with compositions that take a fierce political stance. With one image on the screen, the teacher takes them through the guided critique process where they describe, analyze and interpret the image to determine its message. The teacher will continue to help them understand how the elements/principles of art contribute to the message.
2. Students will be randomly assigned an environmental issue from a list. For homework, they will have to bring in an article related to this specific issue, and brainstorm a list of ways to represent it in a drawing or painting. Students can get extra credit if they also bring in an article or picture of an artwork or about an artist that deals with this topic.

Day Two:

1. After the class has settled and the teacher has taken attendance, she will ask students to share some of what they have learned about their topics for homework. She may ask them questions as they share that will further their understanding of how to represent these issues in their art such as “What symbols are commonly associated with this topic?”, “Is this a negative or positive thing, can how can you illustrate that tone in your work?”.
2. Students are then set to start planning for their own work. Those who did not do the homework will have to get caught up and use the computers to find an article while others begin initial sketches. The teacher talks about the importance of thumbnails for planning, and expects at least 6 done by the end of the class. If students complete thumbnails and have selected one they like best, they may begin the final composition. Students will have a choice of medium from all that they have worked with so far (charcoal, pencil, colored pencil, chalk pastel, paint), and they should consider which medium would best complement the message they are trying to send about their issue.

Day 3/Day 4: Work day - Students continue their planning and final compositions while the teacher monitors the room.

Final Day:

1. Students are to set up their drawings/paintings on the drawing easels outside of the classroom for the class critique. Each easel is numbered so that the works can be easily referred to by number. Each student is given a critique sheet that asks them to list which numbers they think have achieved excellence in the categories on the rubric (craftsmanship, composition, clarity of message and risk taking) They must not use one more than once, and they must also explain WHY (with at least one sentence) they believe this shows a good demonstration of the category. The sheet also has an area to list which work(s) best demonstrated each element/principle of art.
2. After everyone has completed the sheet independently, the teacher opens it up for discussion by asking students to share what they have written. This leads the class into a conversation about certain pieces and qualities. After they have moved through each category on the list, the students are given their own self-evaluation sheets to fill out. Now that they have had some time to look at the work of others and discuss the criteria, they should have a more honest and reflective approach to their own work. If they do not finish this during class it is homework.