

---

## Art Masterpiece: *Indian War Canoe*, 1912, by Emily Carr

---

**Keywords:** Expressionism

**Grade(s):** 1<sup>st</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Activity:** War Canoes and Totem Poles



### About the Artist:

- In 1871 Emily Carr was born in Victoria, British Columbia, which is in Canada.
- Emily had four sisters. She had a natural talent for drawing. Emily began to take drawing lessons when she was 8 years old.
- Emily loved of nature. She had a great affection for animals, the countryside, and the forest.
- When she was 27 years old, Emily took a trip to the west coast of Vancouver Island and visited with the “Nootka” people. The Nootka are a First Nations tribe. (Like Native American tribes in America.)
- Carr met many native friends at Nootka and she received the nickname “Klee Wyck” which means “Laughing One”.
- She loved to paint pictures of all the beautiful nature she saw while in Nootka.
- In 1907, Emily went to Alaska with her sister, Alice, and fell in love with the totem poles and First Nations villages that were there.
- By 1930, Emily’s artwork was loved by many in Canada and in the United States. She was well-known for her use of bright, vivid colors and for simplifying details.
- In 1933, Emily bought a trailer to live in and spent her summers with her animals—her monkey, rat and four dogs.

- Even when she became old and weakened by a heart attack, she still found energy to paint. Carr wrote, “Some can be active to a great age but enjoy little. I have lived.”

**About the Artwork:**

Carr painted in an artistic style called “*Expressionism*.” Expressionism presents the world solely from a subjective view in order to evoke moods or ideas or for emotional effect. In other words, Expressionists didn’t try to paint everything realistically, but rather tried to paint in a way that would make the viewer feel an emotion. You can see in her painting that the colors are very vivid and bright. The canoe is painted in a way that it looks as if we (the viewers) are smaller than the canoe; the canoe seems really tall! In the background, you can see some totem poles too.

**Definitions:**

*First Nations* is the name given to Native American tribes who lived in Canada.

*Totem Poles* are very tall sculptures carved into wooden pillars made from the trunks of trees. Some are over 60 feet tall! They are made by the First Nations people of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America. The carvings may symbolize familiar legends, family members, or historical events. Some of these characters are stylized and others are carved realistically. Carvings may include animals, like fish, plants, insects, and humans, or they may represent supernatural beings such as the Thunderbird.

***War Canoes***

The First Nations people are known for their elegantly engineered canoes. These canoes were made out of a single, giant cedar log. The inside was carved out to make room for people to sit, and the outside of the log was carved and painted. Some war canoes were only about 10 feet long, but others were as long as 65 feet! Canoes were very important for traveling, transportation, hunting, and trade.

**Possible Questions:**

- What do you see in this painting?

- What is in the background? (Totem poles, kids playing near the water, houses/lodges.)
- What do you think this canoe was used for? (Travel, fishing, trade, hunting.)
- What is the canoe made of? (It would have been carved out from a red cedar tree.)
- What do you think that green creature is that painted on the side of the canoe? (Have the kids guess/tell what they think.)

### **Activity:** War Canoes and Totem Poles

This project can be assembled together on butcher paper to make a collaborative mural; or each child can make their own individual piece.

### **Materials Needed:**

- Brown construction paper, with canoe and totem pole templates photocopied on them. See below for details.
- Oil pastels, two or three students can share a set
- Scissors, one per student
- White glue, three or four students can share –OR– hot glue\*
- Stapler and staples, two or three
- Cardboard tubes from rolls of paper towels, wrapping paper, and toilet paper (see below for details)
- 8 feet length of green or blue butcher paper, if making a collaborative class mural –OR–
- Black construction paper, 9”X12,” one per student, if doing individual student pieces.

### **To Do Before Class:**

Templates: At the end of this lesson there is a “canoe” template and a totem pole “wing” template. Please photocopy these templates onto sheets of brown construction paper (9” X 12”). You may wish to pre-cut the canoes and totem poles wings before class to allow students more time to work on their designs. (Note: the totem pole piece is 5 1/2 “ X 4 1/2 “. If you have 9” X 12” brown construction paper, you can cut it into quarters with the guillotine paper cutter. Then you only have to hand-cut the “wing” shape.)

Cardboard tubes: Ask students to collect and bring in empty cardboard tubes! There is a note at the end of this lesson that you can copy (or email) to send home with students, asking for donations. Alternately, you can call Treasures 4 Teachers (located in Tempe, at (480) 751-1122; 3025 S. 48th St., Ste.101. They are a GREAT resource for this sort of thing.)

Once you have the cardboard tubes, pre-cut long cardboard tubes into 4 ½ inch lengths (The same length as a toilet paper tube.) Each student will get one tube.

Hot Glue: If you are using hot glue to attach the totem pole pieces, it should be done by the adults only. Plug in the hot glue gun at the back of the room and have students bring the adult their canoe or totem pole to glue.

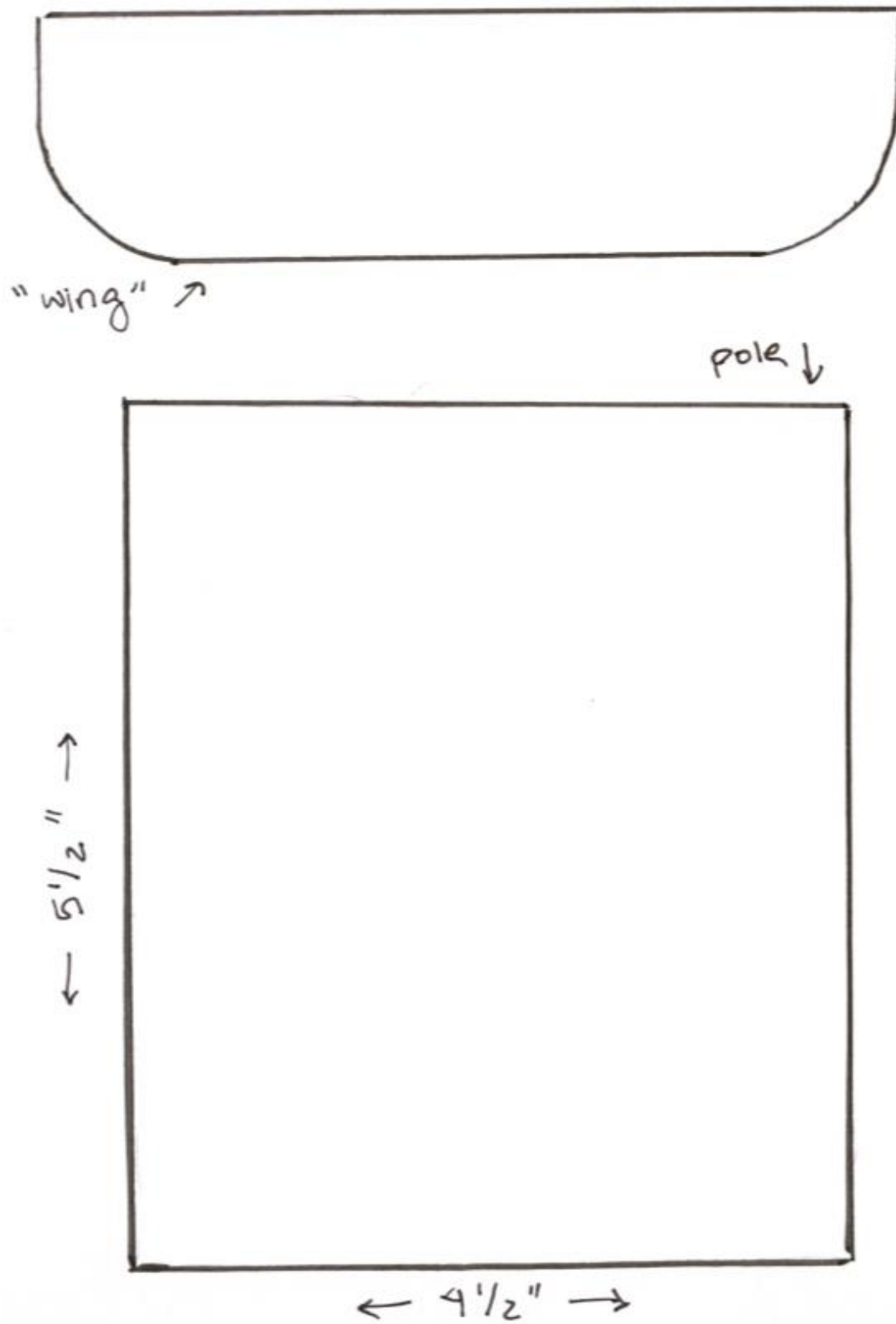
Stapler(s): Adults can walk around with the staplers to fasten the canoe ends, or you can set up one or two “staple stations” in the back of the room. As students finish, they would line up at a station and the adult(s) can help them staple their canoes and totem pole pieces.

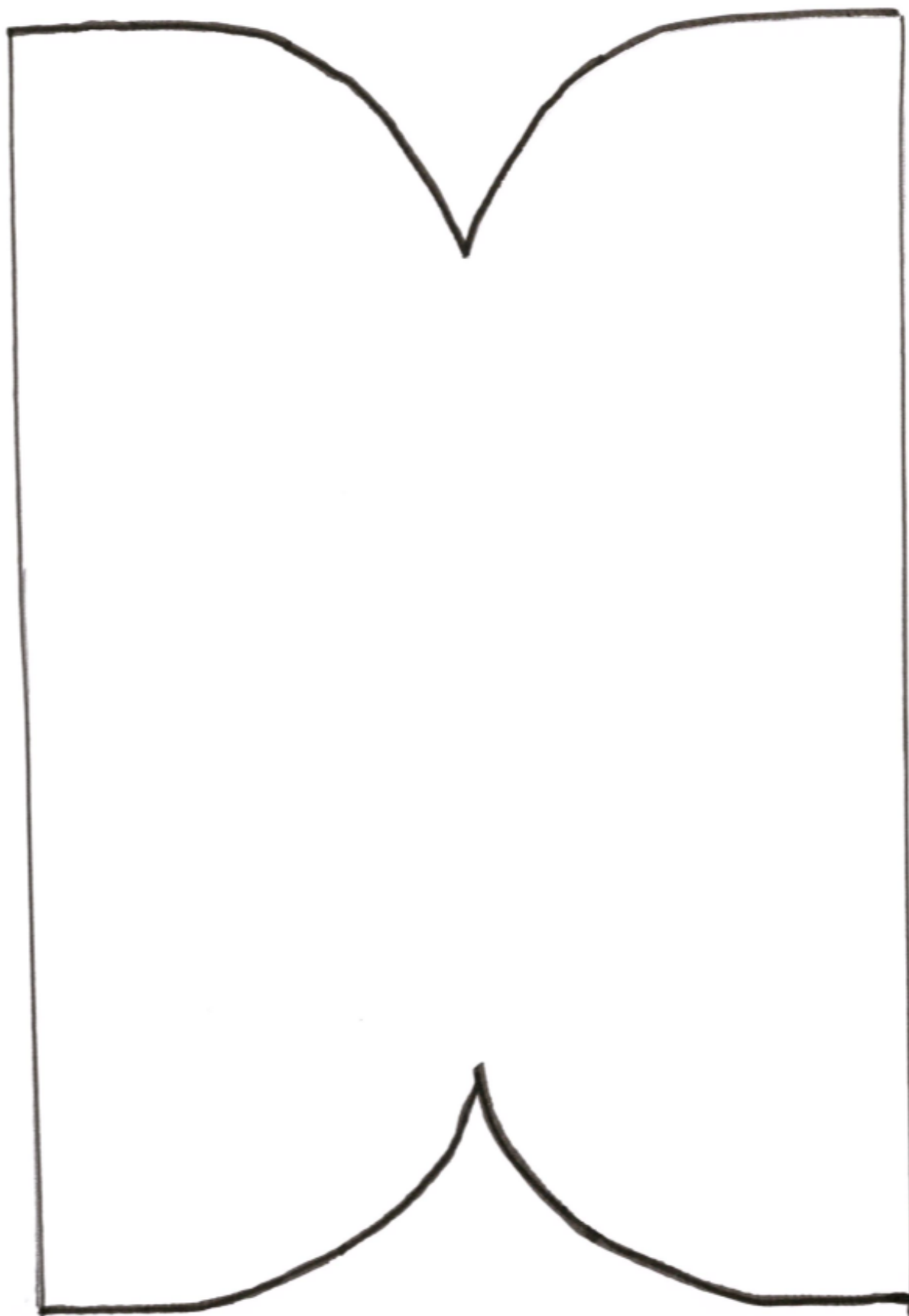
### **Process:**

1. Tell the students they will be making either a war canoe OR a totem pole. Pass out totem “wings” to half the class, and “canoes” to the other half. (Alternatively, if you have enough, allow each student to choose.)
2. If you didn’t pre-cut the totem pole and canoe shapes, pass out scissors and have the students cut their canoes and totem poles out.
3. For totem poles: explain that the rectangle shape will be the totem pole itself and the “wing” shape is optional. They can decorate it with wings upward, or wings downward, or not at all, whatever they prefer.
4. For the canoes: have the students fold the cut-out in half to form the canoe shape. The students will only decorate one side of the canoe since the other will be glued to the paper. Remind students to orient their canoe shapes so that the canoe is floating (ends facing upward, like a smile.)
5. Ask students to think about what animal, insect, or person they are going to draw. (If you need some ideas, there is a list at the end of this lesson.) Pass out the oil pastels.

6. Using the oil pastels they can draw the animals' faces, adding features such as eyes, nose, mouth, teeth, ears, etc. Keep the designs simple and bold. They may also add paws, claws, fins, wings, etc.
7. When the canoes are decorated the adults will need to staple the sides closed. Have "canoe" students cut their cardboard tube in half, lengthwise, and it to the inside bottom to help hold the canoe open. This will give a 3-dimensional effect to the canoe.
8. For a totem pole, you will need to wrap the finished artwork around a tube and glue (or staple) it at the top and the bottom. Fasten the optional wing piece (if the student wanted one.)
9. When all have dried, you can assemble your "village" on a large piece of butcher paper, adding paper trees, water, rocks, sky, etc.
10. Alternately, pass out the black construction paper and, using the oil pastels, have the students draw a simple landscape background for their canoes/totem poles. Glue (or staple) in place.
11. Display and enjoy!

# Totem Pole template





Chandler Unified School District **Art Masterpiece Program**, Chandler, Arizona, USA

## Donations Needed note:

### Art Masterpiece: Emily Carr “Indian War Canoe”

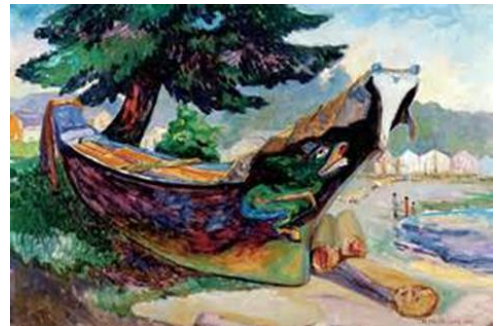
Dear Students and Parents –

On \_\_\_\_\_ we will be learning about the artist Emily Carr. We need cardboard tubes for the art project!

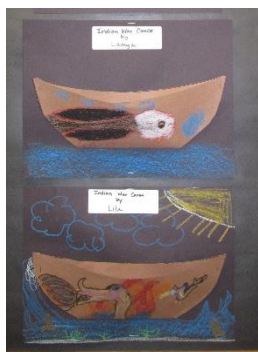
Please start saving the empty cardboard tubes from paper towel rolls, toilet paper rolls, and gift wrap rolls. Send them in with your child, and we'll collect them in the classroom for use in our lesson that day.

If you can help us on this day, please come! The more adult help we have, the better this project works. The lesson is just one hour long.

This is a fun lesson and the students always enjoy it. Thank you for your assistance in making this Art Masterpiece lesson a success!



## Examples:



**Parent Note:**

Emily Carr (1871-1945) was a Canadian Expressionist, who used bold, vivid colors in her art and often included scenes from villages of the First Nations people along the Vancouver coastline.

Today in Art Masterpiece, students used bold, bright colors to create their own canoes or totem poles, in the style of Emily Carr.



Emily Carr (1871-1945) was a Canadian Expressionist, who used bold, vivid colors in her art and often included scenes from villages of the First Nations people along the Vancouver coastline.

Today in Art Masterpiece, students used bold, bright colors to create their own canoes or totem poles, in the style of Emily Carr.



Emily Carr (1871-1945) was a Canadian Expressionist, who used bold, vivid colors in her art and often included scenes from villages of the First Nations people along the Vancouver coastline.

Today in Art Masterpiece, students used bold, bright colors to create their own canoes or totem poles, in the style of Emily Carr.



### **Some Animal Characteristics and Meaning:**

Bear: strong, courageous, guardian

Beaver: industrious, builder, determined

Butterfly: change, lightness, beauty

Coyote: clever, trickster, intelligent

Crow: magical, shape shifting, messenger

Dragonfly: flighty and carefree

Eagle: noble, divine spirit, freedom

Fish: graceful, good luck, agile

Fox: cunning, quick-witted

Frog: peaceful, rebirth, adaptability

Hawk: hunter, messenger, guardian

Horse: freedom, mobility, travel

Hummingbird: vitality, energy, quick

Lizard: conservation, camouflage, variation

Moose: headstrong, steadfast

Mouse: aware, eye for details, humble

Opossum: sensible, strategic

Otter: playful, friendly, dynamic

Owl: wisdom, stealth, vision.

Porcupine: curious, good-natured

Puma: graceful hunter

Rabbit: vigilant, fertility

Raccoon: curiosity, explorer, dexterity

Raven: magical, confident, messenger

Salmon: strong, determined, confident

Shark: Prowess, perpetual motion, hunter

Snake: smooth, shrewd, wise

Spider: spinner, balance, fate

Squirrel: planner, preparedness, awareness

Turtle: shy, patient, enduring

Whale: Navigator, communicator, kindness

Wolf: loyalty, intuition, freedom