

# Art Masterpiece: The Tetons and Snake River, 1942 by Ansel Adams



**Pronounced:** An-sell Adams

**Keywords:** value, symmetry, asymmetrical and balance,

**Grade:** 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

**Project:** Complete the Other Half of the Image

## Attention Coordinator:

Along with the art Print “The Tetons and the Snake River” you will also receive a set of small-sized art prints of the cactus image (title unknown- see below) from the IRC to be used for the art project.



## Definitions:

**Value:** the lightness or darkness of a color

**Symmetry:** parts arranged the same way on both sides. A face is usually symmetrical.

**Asymmetrical:** a kind of balance in which two sides are not exactly alike but still look balanced

**Balance:** a principle of design. A work of art is balanced by the arrangement of the elements (line, color, shape, texture, value, form) appearing equal.

## Meet the Artist: (5 min)

- Ansel Adams was born in 1902 in San Francisco, California.
- He was a gifted piano player and as a young boy his father groomed him for a profession as a concert pianist.
- In 1916 his family vacationed in Yosemite, California and Ansel was immediately taken by the beautiful natural landscape.
- In 1927, he began taking photographs with his new camera and in that same year, he gained notoriety in the field of photography.
- He realized through photography he could capture the emotion, spirituality and wonder of nature.
- By the 1940's his landscape photograph work was well known and he set up a workshop in Yosemite known as the U.S. Camera Photographic Forum.

- In the 1970's, he traveled through Arizona and found he loved the Arizona landscape nearly as much as Yosemite and began to photograph many areas across the state.
- Many of his Arizona photographs have been and continue to be featured in Arizona Highways Magazine.
- Ansel Adams died in 1984 but left behind a vast amount of beautiful photographs and books about photography that continue to be used in photography courses around the country.

**Discussion: (10 min)**

**Review definitions noted above.**

Imagine a line down the middle of the artwork.

How do the two sides compare?

Are they identical?

Do the two sides appear to look balanced with each other? (yes)

Would this piece be considered symmetrical or asymmetrical? (asymmetrical, see definition above)

Did Ansel have control of whether his photo would look balanced? ( Yes, by where he stood to take the photo. He may have waited for the clouds to move into perfect position. )

Would this photograph have the same feeling if it were in full color?

Why do you think Ansel Adams chose not to use colored film?

Look for the color gray. How many different grays do you see?

The term to describe the lightness or darkness of a color is called it's VALUE.

Some people say that black and white art is more dramatic. Do you agree?

Find where the artist captured the light shining through the clouds. Do you see how the light passes through the clouds and hits the ground and river? The light against the darkest gray creates an intense contrast.

## **Project: Complete the Other Half of the Image**

**Coordinators:** Please use the white card stock available through the CUSD warehouse. This paper will make shading smoother and produce a nicer finished product.

**Project Materials:**

Copies of the ½ cactus image on cardstock -CUSD warehouse (1/student)

9"x12" black construction paper for mounting

Scratch paper

Pencils - do not assume students have pencils, bring in a class set of pencils

4-5 Individual pencil-sharpener. (Not all classrooms have a sharpener. )

Erasers

Kleenex (1/student)

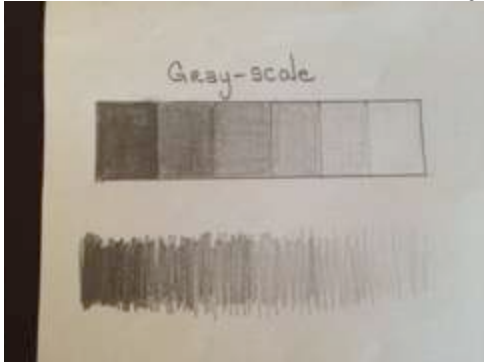
glue sticks

scrap paper (1/student)

Parent Letters - 1 per student

**Mini Lesson: (3 min) - Shading**

Demonstrate using the document-camera that using the side of a pencil you can achieve different values of grey by the pressure you apply to the pencil. Show this by going from extremely light to almost black. This is called a **Grey- Scale**.



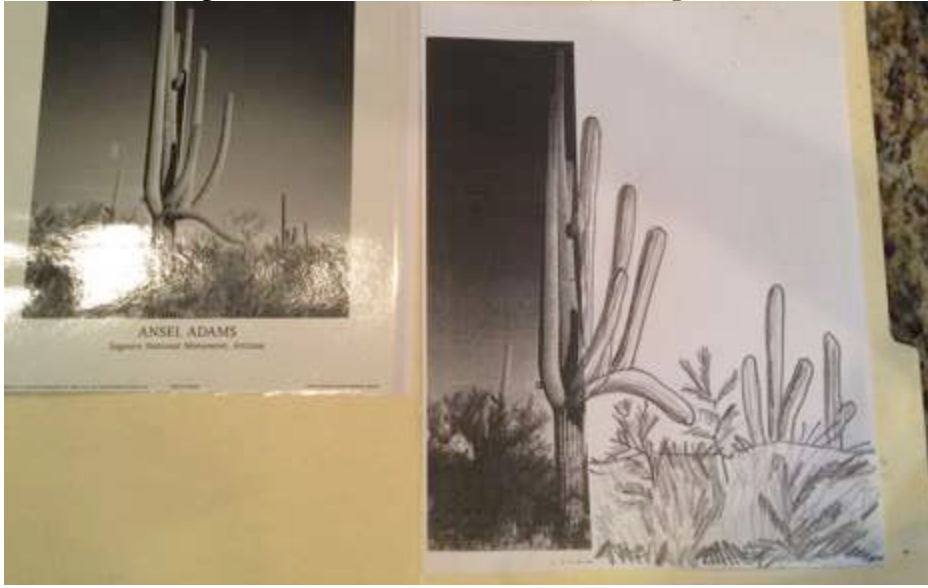
On scrap paper, have each student experiment using the side of the pencil lead (and not the tip) to accomplish shading. Have them experiment creating different values (lightness or darkness) of grey. Challenge them to come up with at least four different values of grey.

**Process: (30-40 min)**

1. Conduct the mini-lesson first.
2. Hand out the cactus art prints, a copy of the half cactus, pencils and erasers.
3. Explain that they will be drawing in the missing half of the Ansel Adams photograph using their pencil. Remind them to lightly sketch so they can easily erase if needed, working up to a darker drawing.



4. Students will now begin to fill the cactus and landscape with details. ( leaves on the trees, grass cover on the ground, lines and shadows ). See photo below.



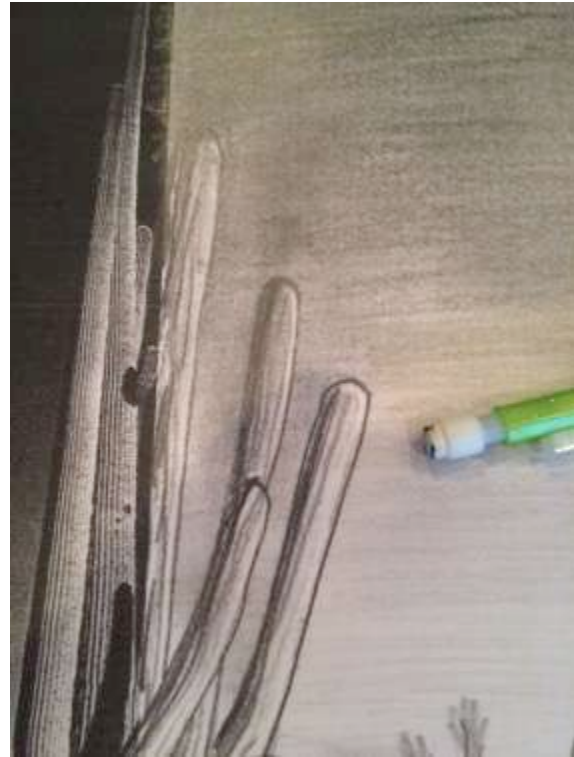
5. Encourage students to use their scratch paper to protect their drawing by placing the paper between their drawing hand and their artwork.

6. Time to fill the background. Instruct students to study the small art print handout and look at the different values of grey. Explain they will work to copy the same VALUE (lightness and darkness) of black and white onto their piece of paper that they see in the artwork.

Working from the top of the paper to the bottom is recommended.



7. Once the background is filled in with pencil take a Kleenex and wrap it around one finger.  
Show how to lightly blend the pencil markings on the paper to create a smooth appearance.  
Stress that students should work the lightest area first to get best result.



8. With an eraser show students how to lightly remove pencil to highlight the edges of the cactus. Creates contrast.
9. Students should mount their artwork onto black paper and attach the parent letter to the back.

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**Brief info about the project:** Students were taught how to create different values (lightness & darkness) of color. They first completed the image and then filled their drawing with pencil to match the values depicted in the artwork.



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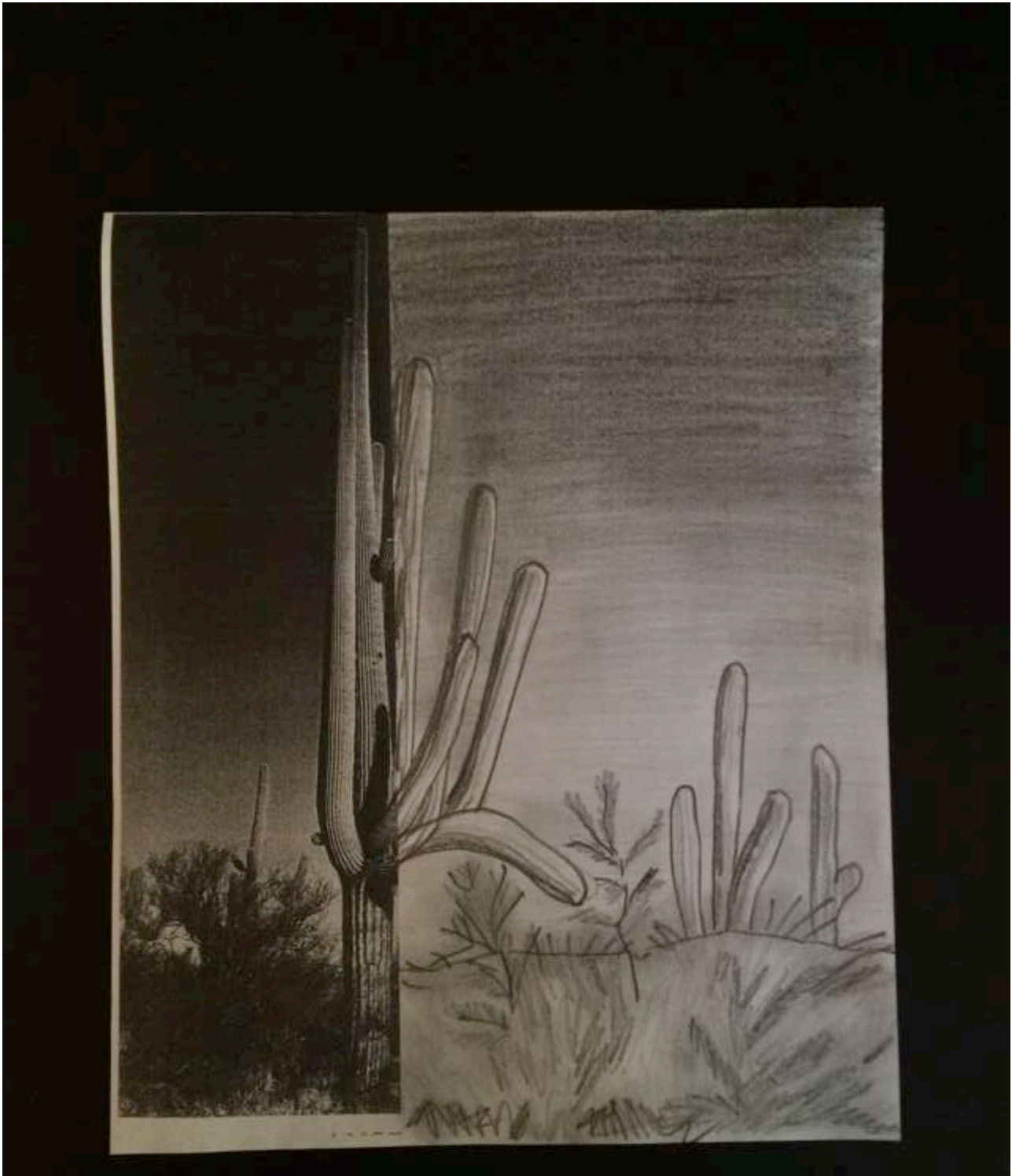
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