

“Reflecting” with Grace French

As a teenager in New Hampshire, Grace French experienced a revolutionary idea: all children, regardless of “talent,” must learn basic principles of art. As a young woman, she studied at one of the finest art schools of her day, the School of Drawing and Painting at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. For nearly 50 years, young people from Rapid City learned to apply these “classical basics” in Grace French’s studio at 31 Quincy Street.

Grace French also taught basic art principles to public school teachers, too. They were required to pass “normal school” exams to get a license to teach. Then their students had to pass similar “performance” exams based on these “norms” or standards. Sounds familiar, doesn’t it?

Let’s follow one of her teaching ideas and experience how one of Grace’s French’s art students might have learned in the 1890s.



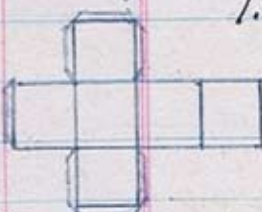
Grace French often went on expeditions with her sister Abbie to make sketches for paintings like this one. Sometimes one of her teenage students, James Cessna, drove them along Rapid Creek. She frequently used reflections in her landscapes.

1. Read these pages from Miss French's teaching notes for normal school lessons on shapes and reflections.


Drawing and Construction
Drawing, Cutting, Folding, and Making. Development of Surfaces

1. Draw upon paper the developed surface of a cube
 Cut, fold, and make the cube

2×2



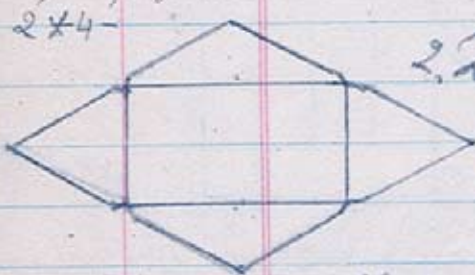
Development of cube



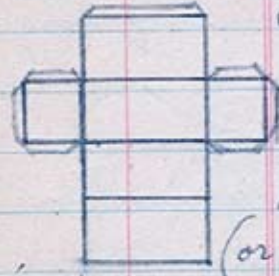
Cube constructed.

2. Draw the developed surface of an envelope.
 Make the same.

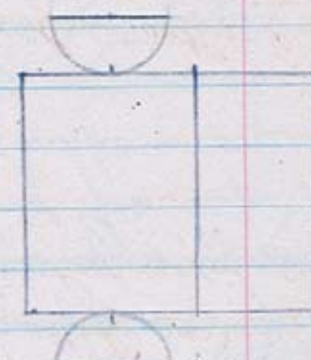
2×4



3. Dev. of a square prism.
 (or of a square-base prism.)
 2 in base

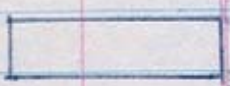


2×4




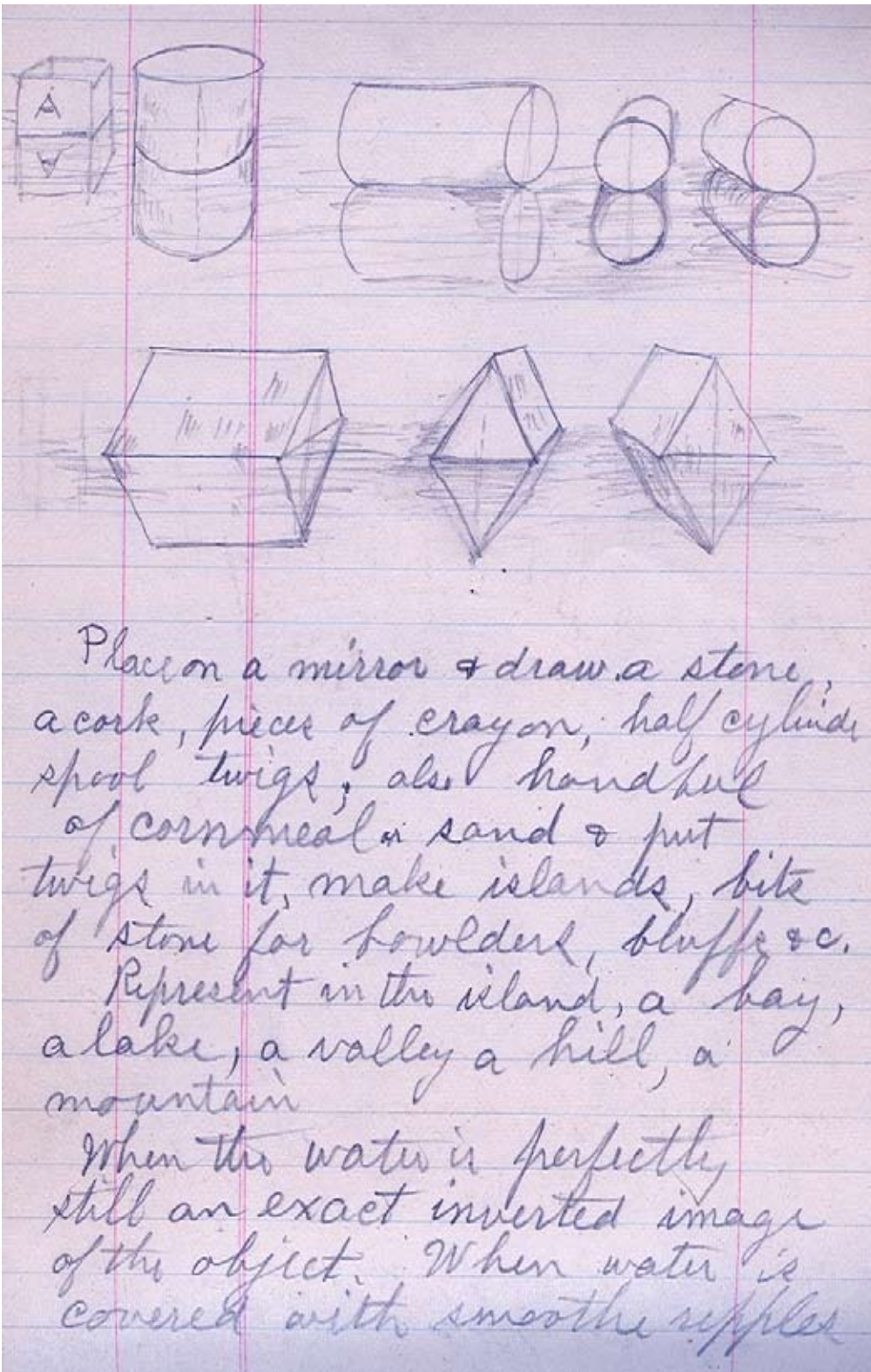
4. Dev. of a half-cylinder

5. Draw the developed surface of a napkin ring ($1\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ in), allowing for the "lap", then construct the ring.



$1\frac{1}{2} \times 4$ in.





2. Follow her notes and make a small paper cube, cylinder or prism. Place it on a mirror and practice drawing a reflection.

3. Then create a simple landscape on the mirror with sand or cornmeal, a small stone or two, twigs and moss to simulate reflections in still water. Make a sketch of your miniature landscape using what you see in the mirror.

FINE ARTS STANDARD TWO:

Students will understand the media, techniques and processes used in the production of visual arts.

5-8 Students will: Apply appropriate compositional elements and organizational principles* to solve specific visual arts problems

9-12 Students will: Determine and apply the appropriate compositional elements and organizational principles to solve specific visual art problems.