

Audubon/Scientist/Artist

Audubon was one of the most famous artists/scientists in American history. He did pictures of the many and various species of birds on the American continent in the early 1800's. He explored the natural history of much of the central and eastern United States. Audubon painted almost 500 species of the 700 or so regularly occurring North American birds.

Audubon drew birds from life whenever possible. He did, indeed, shoot specimens that he wired and propped into life-like positions as models for his paintings. He said that even if it took up to fourteen hours, he would try to finish the picture in one setting. He put the birds in their natural habitat in many and varied positions. He was educated in Paris, where he took lessons from the French painter Jacques-Louis David who pictured the French Revolution in art. In 1803 his father obtained a false passport for him to leave France and travel to the United States to avoid the Napoleonic Wars.

He met and became engaged to his neighbor Lucy Bakewell, whom he married in 1808. According to *Three Hundred Years of American Painting* by Elliot, Audubon discovered his technique by accident. He did a painting of his young wife in watercolor, wasn't pleased with it, and then finished it using pastels. He loved the mixed media composition. Have you ever felt like you didn't like your picture? Try something creative to fix it just like Audubon did.

In 1803, he began the study of natural history by conducting the first known bird-banding on the continent; he tied yarn to the legs of Eastern Phoebes and determined that they returned to the same nesting spots year after year. He also began drawing and painting birds.

He gave the birds not only their natural names, but also gave them the Linnaean (Latin) name of classification. He even gave the scientific name of the plants and flowers he included with the birds. He is noted for his famous book *Birds of America*. Audubon had to go to Europe and do bird calls in elegant drawing rooms of kings and queens to get the money that he needed to publish his book. Notice in the picture from this website the composition of the birds and the placement of the corn. Audubon is a master at doing balanced designs with interesting and exciting compositions.

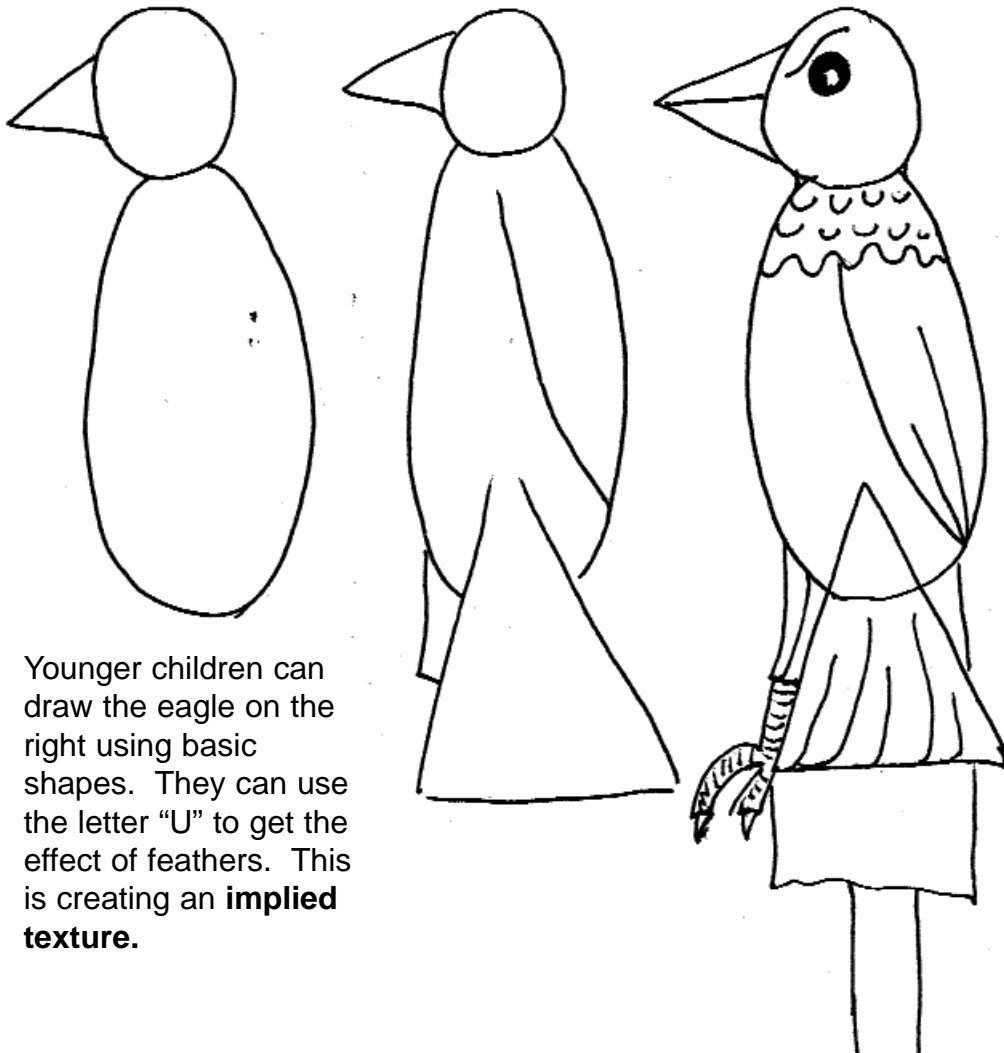
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:John_James_Audubon_001.jpg

In later years he claimed to have hunted in the Appalachians with Daniel Boone. He is considered perhaps the greatest bird artist who ever lived, and gave Americans a scientific and historical record of the birds in early America.



When my son Jonathan went to Europe, he was able to hold a hawk. Hawking was a sport of the Middle Ages. Go to this website: <http://www.dia.org/the_collection/overview/full.asp?objectID=33310&image=1>

At this website, you can see Audubon's "Bald Eagle." http://www.ncma.org/collections/highlights/american/before1850/eagle_lrg.shtml



Younger children can draw the eagle on the right using basic shapes. They can use the letter "U" to get the effect of feathers. This is creating an **implied texture**.



Notice how Audubon shaded the mountains in the picture. Where else do you see dark and light values?



Above is the picture of the Golden Eagle by Audubon. Notice the dark and light shadows on the feathers. This gives the picture **depth**. Notice the light in the eye. All Audubon birds have this reflected light. On the left are feathers drawn in pencil to show **implied texture**.

Golden Eagle

Older students can draw this eagle using the grid. Number the squares on the blank grid and draw what is in each square to create an exact replica of the bird.





On the left is Audubon's Carolina Pigeon. You can see beautiful Dogwood flowers in the picture. This would be in the natural habitat of the bird.

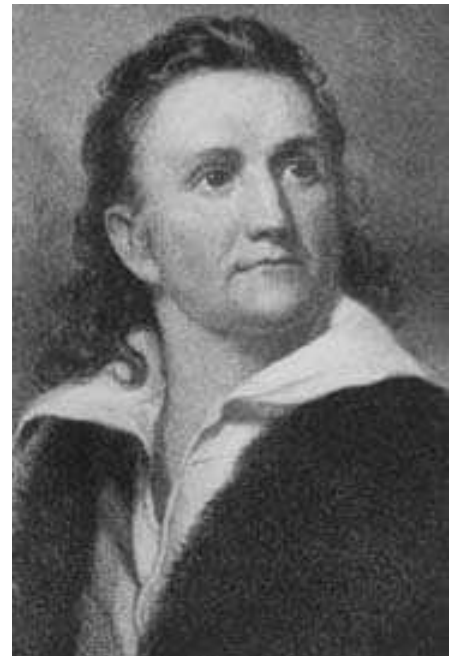


Design a postage stamp to honor Audubon. What bird would you choose?

Audubon was an ornithologist. An **ornithologist** is someone who studies birds. He was also called a naturalist. Look up the word naturalist.



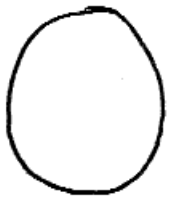
The picture on the left is called "White Gerfalcons." Notice the sky is darker at the top and lighter as you go to the bottom of the paper. This is called atmospheric perspective.



Audubon's Owl



Younger students can draw the owl using basic shapes.



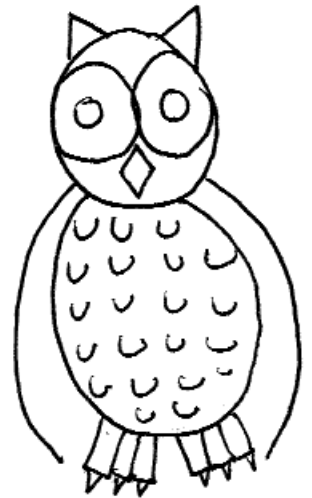
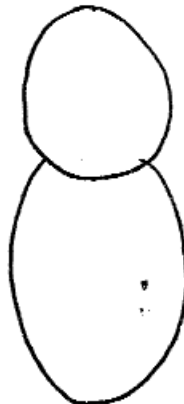
circle



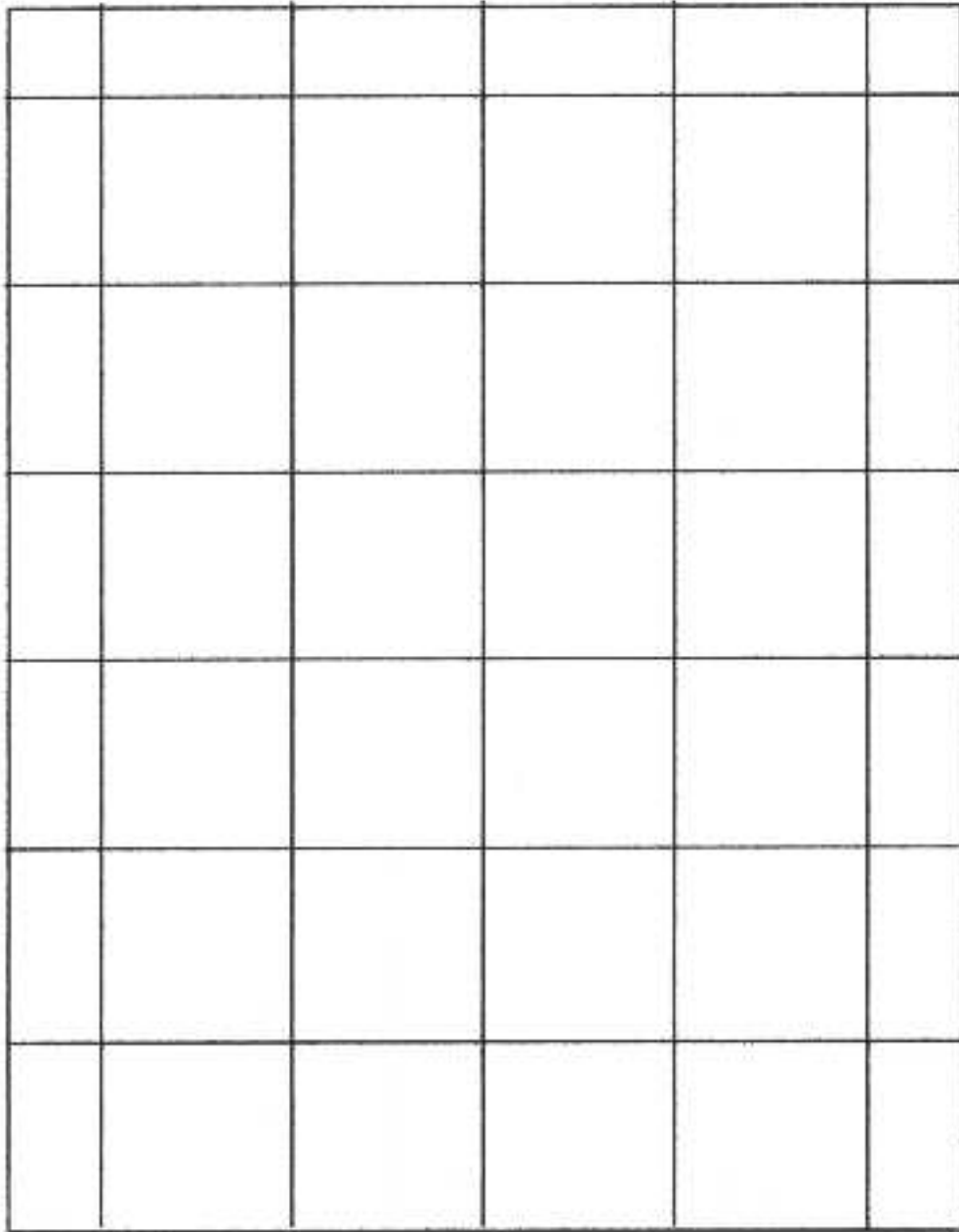
triangle



rectangle



Use the blank grid below for older students to copy the eagle and the owl. Great master artists of the past including Leonardo da Vinci and Rubens used the grid.



Use this grid to draw and owl or an eagle.