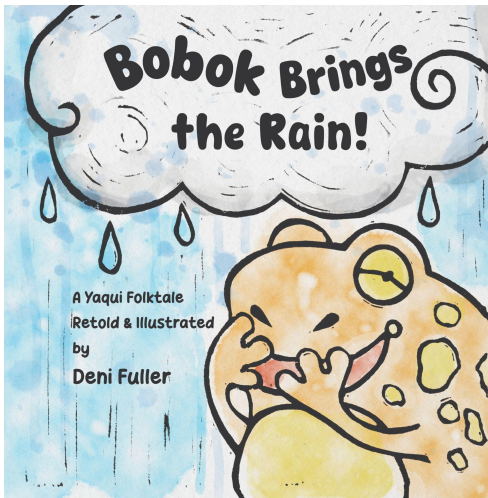


# The Craft of the Cut: Narrative Linocut Printmaking

Inspired by the process art of *Bobok Brings the Rain!*



This comprehensive lesson plan is designed for high school art students. It uses *Bobok Brings the Rain!* to bridge the gap between cultural storytelling (illustration) and the rigorous technical craftsmanship of relief printmaking.



## Lesson Overview

- **Target Audience:** High School Art (Grades 9–12)
- **Duration:** 4–5 Class Periods (approx. 50 minutes each)
- **Medium:** Relief Printmaking (Linoleum Cut)
- **Objectives:** \* Students will analyze the illustrative linocut process used by Deni Fuller in *Bobok Brings the Rain!*
  - Students will understand positive and negative space, learning to carve away the "light" and leave the "shadow."
  - Students will safely master the use of linocut carving tools (gouges) to create varied textures.
  - Students will design, carve, ink, and pull an edition of prints inspired by an animal, nature motif, or cultural folktale.

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## Materials Needed

- **Reference Material:** A copy of *Bobok Brings the Rain!* by Deni Fuller, and the available process videos and examples from the author's website [Denifullerart.com](http://Denifullerart.com)
  - **Tools:** Unmounted linoleum blocks (or SoftKut/Speedball blocks for beginners), bench hooks.
  - **Carving:** Linocut handles with assorted blades (V-gouges for fine lines, U-gouges for clearing large areas).
  - **Inking:** Block printing ink (water-soluble or oil-based), ink slabs (glass or plexiglass).
  - **Printing:** Brayers (ink rollers), barens (or wooden spoons) for hand-pressing, and printmaking paper (e.g., lightweight Stonehenge or Mulberry paper).
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## Day 1: Introduction to Narrative & The Relief Process

### 1. The Inspiration (15 mins)

- Introduce Deni Fuller's *Bobok Brings the Rain!*, explaining that the vibrant illustrations aren't just drawn—they are *carved* and *printed*.
- Discuss the cultural weight of the Yaqui (Yoeme) folktale. Explain that printmaking has a rich global history of being used to mass-produce and share important cultural stories, political messages, and folklore.
- **Craftsmanship Focus:** Show students the textures in the book's illustrations (the lines in the rain, the texture of Bobok's skin). Explain that every white line in a linocut was physically carved out by the artist.

### 2. Brainstorming & Sketching (35 mins)

- **Prompt:** Students will choose an animal or element of nature that represents a personal story, a local environment, or a cultural myth (similar to the Sonoran Desert Toad).
- **Design Rule:** Printmaking relies on high contrast. Students must sketch their designs using only black and white markers/pencils to understand positive and negative space. *Remind them that text or directional images will print in reverse (mirror image).*

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## Day 2: Transferring and Carving (The Craftsmanship)

### 1. Transferring the Image (15 mins)

- Students use graphite transfer paper or the pencil-rubbing method to transfer their final sketches onto the linoleum blocks.
- Have students take a sharpie and color in the areas of the block that will remain uncarved (the areas that will take the ink).

### 2. Safety & Carving Techniques (35 mins)

- **Safety First:** Always use a bench hook. Keep the non-carving hand *behind* the blade at all times.
- **Tool Mastery:** Demonstrate the difference between the gouges. Use the fine V-gouge for outlining and delicate textures (like fur, rain, or scales), and the wide U-gouge for "clearing" negative space.
- **Studio Time:** Students begin carving. Emphasize patience and craftsmanship; linoleum is unforgiving, and a slipped gouge cannot be erased.

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## Day 3: The Inking Process & Artist Proofs

### 1. The Science of Inking (15 mins)

- Demonstrate how to prepare the ink station. Place a small bead of ink on the glass slab and roll it out with the brayer.
- **The "Velcro" Test:** Teach students to listen for the specific sticky, "velcro-like" sound the brayer makes when the ink is rolled to the perfect, velvety consistency. Over-inking fills in fine carved lines; under-inking creates patchy prints.

## 2. Pulling the Artist Proof (35 mins)

- Students roll the inked brayer over their carved blocks, ensuring even coverage.
- Place the printmaking paper carefully over the block. Using a baren (or the back of a wooden spoon), apply firm, circular pressure to transfer the ink.
- **The Reveal:** Students pull their "Artist Proof" (the first test print). They will likely notice areas they need to carve deeper or clean up. Blocks are washed, dried, and refined.

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## Day 4: Editioning and Professional Practice

### 1. Pulling an Edition (40 mins)

- Students set up registration guides (using tape on the table) to ensure their paper lands perfectly square on the block every time.
- **The Goal:** Craftsmanship in printmaking is judged by consistency. Students must pull an "Edition" of 3 to 5 identical prints. The ink density, registration, and pressure must match across all prints.

### 2. Curing (10 mins)

- Place prints on a drying rack. Emphasize how keeping the paper clean (no inky fingerprints on the white borders) is a hallmark of professional printmaking.

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## Day 5: Signing, Curation, and Critique

### 1. Signing the Edition (15 mins)

- Teach the industry standard for signing prints (always in pencil, just below the image: Edition fraction on the left, Title in the middle, Artist Signature and Year on the right).

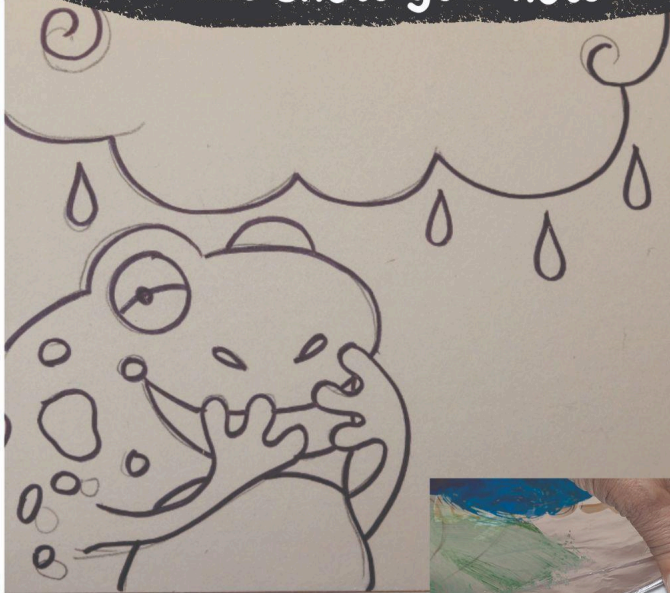
### 2. Gallery Critique (35 mins)

- Hang the dried prints around the room.
- Discuss how the physical process of carving influenced the mood of their animal or nature scene. Did the bold, graphic nature of the linocut make their "folktale" feel more powerful?
- **Closing Connection:** Conclude by reflecting on Deni Fuller's work. Ask students: *"Having done this yourselves, how does understanding the physical labor of carving a block change the way you look at the illustrations in a picture book?"*

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**Teacher's Note:** To align with the cultural respect modeled in Deni Fuller's programs, you may close the final critique with the Yaqui phrase of gratitude, *"Lios em chokoe-u"* (May God pay you / Thank you), acknowledging the hard work the students put into their craft.

## Let me show you how to make a Linoprint!



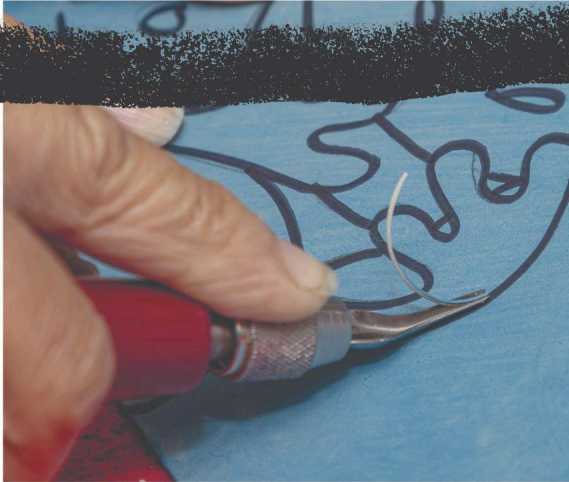
### Step 1: Drawing the Design

The process begins with a design drawn onto a linoleum block using a black marker. This is the block I used for the cover of Bobok Brings the Rain!

### Step 2: Preparing for Carving

The linoleum block is coated with a thin layer of paint to make the carved areas more visible against the original surface. This helps the artist see their progress.





### Step 3: Carving the Linoleum Block

Using specialized carving tools, the artist carefully carves away the areas of the linoleum block that they do not want to be printed. The raised areas will be what picks up the ink. Notice the intricate details being carved around Bobok and the raindrops.



### Step 4: The Carved Block!

The carved linoleum block clearly shows the raised areas that will form the print. The background and negative spaces have been carved away, creating texture and definition around Bobok and the cloud with raindrops.

*Time to make a print!*



**Step 5: Applying Ink to the Roller**

Before applying ink to the carved block, ink is first rolled onto a clean, flat surface (often glass) using a roller called a brayer. This ensures an even and consistent layer of ink on the brayer.



**Step 6: Inking the Linoleum Block**

The brayer is rolled over the carved linoleum block. The ink adheres only to the raised surfaces of the design, leaving the carved-away areas clean.

**Step 7: Printing the Block**

A sheet of paper is carefully placed over the inked linoleum block. Pressure is applied to the back of the paper by hand using a baren (a smooth, hard tool). This pressure transfers the ink from the raised areas of the linoleum block onto the paper.





### **Step 8: Revealing the Print!**

Finally, the paper is carefully peeled away from the linoleum block, revealing the finished print. The image of Bobok now appears as a mirror image on the paper! Hooray!



**Now that you've seen every step, can you believe how much work goes into a single linoleum block print?**

Linoleum block printing is just like making your own awesome stamps, but super-sized! It's an old technique that artists have used for ages, and it takes a little while to get just right. Think of it as a fun challenge!

For the book **Bobok Brings the Rain!**, making each picture was a big adventure. Carving each design into a linoleum block took a long time—about 8 hours! That's a whole school day! Then, actually printing the picture took another hour. It was definitely a lot of work, but look how amazing the results are! Well worth it!