Gustav Klimt, “Tree of Life, Stocet Frieze,” 1909
About the artist:

Gustav Klimt was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1862. He was the son of a gold engraver and was the second of seven children, 3 boys and 4 girls. He was only 14 years old when he left the traditional education system to begin studying as an artist at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts. He was given a full scholarship and during his time at the school focused on classical architectural painting.

After graduating in 1883, Gustav, his brother Ernst and a friend opened the Company of Artists. They created murals in a traditional style that would appeal to the upper class of the time. During their time together they won many public art commissions and could work interchangeably. Today they are still know for painting the Vienna Burgtheater and the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Klimt's father and brother Ernst died in 1891 which forced Klimt onto a different path artistically. After their deaths Klimt began exploring his own artistic freedom and his work became full of decorative elements and symbolism.

In 1897, he and a group of artists formed their own group, known as the Vienna Secession. Members rejected the traditions of their time and promoted each others individual style. Klimt’s painting, “Greek Goddess Pallas Athena,” became this group’s symbol. It is now known as one of the most recognizable of Klimt’s paintings.

In 1900 artwork in Klimt's style became know as Art Nouveau. This art movement featured highly stylized designs. The early 1900's became know as Klimt’s “Golden Phase.” During this time he used a condensed sense of perspective and an excessive amount of gold leaf in his work. Some of his most famous paintings were created during this time including, “The Kiss” in 1908 and “Tree of Life” also known as the Stoclet Frieze, in 1909.
Instructions

Step 1:
Introduce students to Klimt’s work through video(s), and history sheet provided.

Step 2:
Have students identify patterns in and color examples of Klimt’s paintings.

Step 3:
Have students analyse a painting, then create their own portrait using patterns.

Step 4:
Have students create their own version of Klimt’s “Tree of Life.”
More Resources

Videos to share:

13 Minutes: Show students this short biography of Klimt with examples of his art: “Gustav Klimt: Life of an Artist, by Artist in School”: https://youtu.be/QjqjPNgf22U

16 Minutes: Show students this private video on how to draw, trace and watercolor a Tree of Life: “Create your own Tree of Life:”  https://youtu.be/Ri43uwWluG0
Klimt used curling branches and patterns in his painting, “Tree of Life.” Using the colors to the right of the outline, color the sheet below.

Klimt
The figure below is from the right side of the Stoclet Palace, Tree of Life painting by Klimt. Three patterns are identified for you. Use the picture of the painting on the first page of this packet to identify three additional patterns you see in the painting. Fill the figures/background with patterns in ink, then color.

NAME:___________________________________
Using Klimt’s “Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer” below, identify six different patterns and draw them in the boxes on the left side of the page. Once identified, place them in the line drawing of the portrait using black ink, then color. Don’t forget the background!
The painting below is a portrait of Eugenia Primavesi, the wife of Otto Primavesi. This couple helped support Klimt during his years as an artist and he was commissioned to do many portraits of the family. His portraits conveyed something about the subject through the use of pattern. Looking at the painting below answer the questions to the right.

What can you guess about the personality of Eugenia Primavesi by looking at this portrait?

_________________________________

_________________________________

_________________________________

_________________________________

Identify three things you see in the painting and then describe what you believe they may symbolize.

1. __________________________________

   __________________________________

2. __________________________________

   __________________________________

3. __________________________________

   __________________________________

What do you notice about the difference in the face and hands and the clothing she is wearing?

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_________________________________
Facial Proportions

1. Draw an Egg Shape
2. Draw a line through the center both vertically and horizontally.
3. Eyes are on the center line. They are spaced approximately as shown above.
4. Nose is approximately one eye width. (Draw lines from the corner of each eye to use as a guide.)
5. Eyebrows sit just to the inside of the inside corners of each eye.
6. Mouth line is approximately 1/3 of the way down between the nose and chin line. Mouth is the width of the center of the pupils.
7. Draw a line midway between the eye line and the chin line. This is where the bottom of the ears sit as well the bottom of the nose.
8. Hairline starts midway between the eye line and the top of the head and extends above the top of the head.
Take a photo of yourself or a friend and sketch an outline, or contour line drawing from that photo. Use the Facial Proportions worksheet on the previous page for guidance. Draw from at least the waist up and remember to include clothing. You will be using this as reference to create a pattern portrait.
PERSONALITY PATTERNS: Next draw some patterns and images that represent the personality or interests of the person you chose.
Use the sketch of your portrait and Personality Patterns sheet as reference to create a final portrait in the space below. Create your portrait and fill the clothing and background with patterns in ink, then fill with color. Remember to keep the face/hands realistic in their shading to create in the style of Klimt.
For your final project, draw a tree similar to Klimt’s “Tree of Life,” on the following page. But rather than trying to duplicate his tree, try to create a tree of your own. Begin by drawing it in pencil, then trace it in waterproof ink onto nice watercolor paper. Use patterns to fill in the branches, trunk and ground and then paint the whole thing, including the background with watercolor paint.

Watch the video included with this lesson and the drawing below as a guide if you wish, OR go wild and create something all your own!
Tree of Life Pencil Drawing

Turn horizontal for best results! Once finished transfer drawing onto watercolor paper and paint.
Examples

My example

Student example

Klimt
EXTENSION PROJECT

Create an abstract design in the space below. Use lots of organic lines (lines that are curvy and often found in nature). Once done, fill each of the spaces with patterns. You can use patterns from previous pages or create new ones. Keep the colors bright on this one!
EXTENSION PROJECT

Research “Art Nouveau” online and find a different artist in this movement to use as inspiration. Write the name of the artist in the space provided and then create a piece of art in the space below using the artist you chose as inspiration.

ART NOUVEAU ARTIST:___________________________________

Klimt