

Masterclass

The Birches

Red Fox Hill Studios. © 2026

Step One PREPARATION



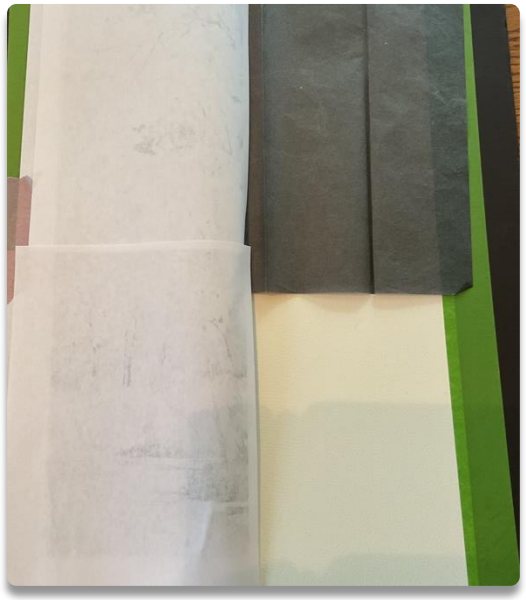
Tape paper to support

You need a support to tape the paper on so it does not curl. Support should be waterproof (wood, foamboard) or heavy cardboard



Tape design over paper

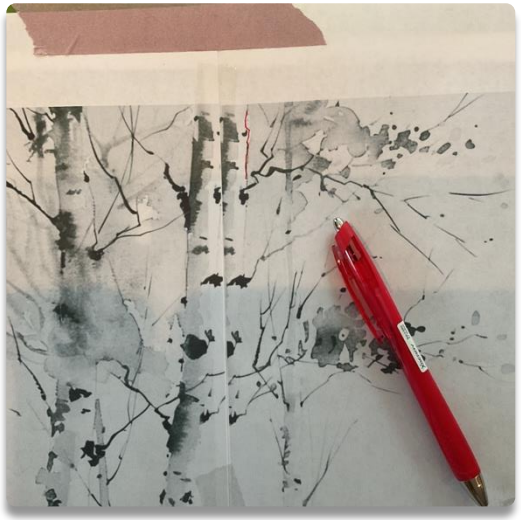
Tape design over watercolor paper making sure it is centered – fix at top and one side to keep from moving.



Place carbon on paper

Place carbon – shiny side down on watercolor paper – if a small sheet remember to move it when you have traced the section

Step 2 continued PREPARATION



Use red (any color) pen or pencil to trace

Do not press too hard so as not to make an impression on the paper



Verify your trace

Remember if you use a half sheet of carbon to move it to cover the remaining design when you trace



Do not add too many details

Important to trace outlines only. Small branches and details on trees not necessary – they just create too many pencil lines

Step 3 Prepare to blank out Birches



Tear tape into strips

Try not to have a straight edge and any size length is ok



Edges do not have to be clean

Follow the traced edges more or less. They do not have to be clean.



Create trees by torn edges

Pieces of tape can overlay others.
The object is to have rough edges of the trees

Step 3 Continue to blank out Birches



Use the outline to tape

Keep in mind the outline is a guide. Build your trees by torn edges. It does not matter your tape is not exact



Press down the tape

It is important that the edges of the tape that outline the trees are pressed down firmly so no paint or water can seep into the blanked out area



Verify tape does not tear paper

Lift some tape to be sure it does not tear your paper. If the tape is too strong rub it on your clothing to take away some f the adherance

Step 4 Begin First Washes of Color



Basic Colors

Blue (Ultramarine) Brown(Burnt Sienna) Yellow(Medium Yellow) Red(Scarlet) Extra –Gold(Ochre)



Wet on Wet

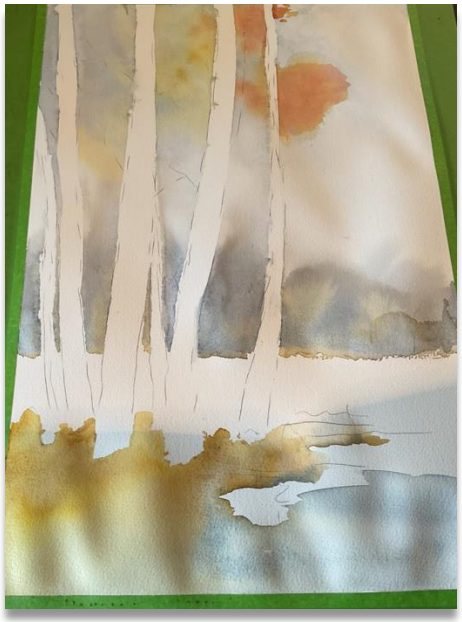
Enough water so that paper shines but not flooded. Wet to horizon line only. Try not to soak around tape on trees.



Lift off extra water or pools of paint

Mix grey – Blue with Brown – light wash mix yellow in and move paper around to blend the colors.

Step 5 Begin to concentrate color



Bottom around trees

Gold and yellow and reds wash and blend in blues. Only wet the area where paint is to go.



Colors 40% loss

Application of color will fade by 40%, But begin light. Additional washes with darken the color.



Re wet areas to darken

Darken with grey fir trees far side of lake. Darken shore with brown and highlight orange and yellows

Step 6 Details and Dimension



Begin to Darken

Contrast darks with bright gold and orange



Shadow Trees

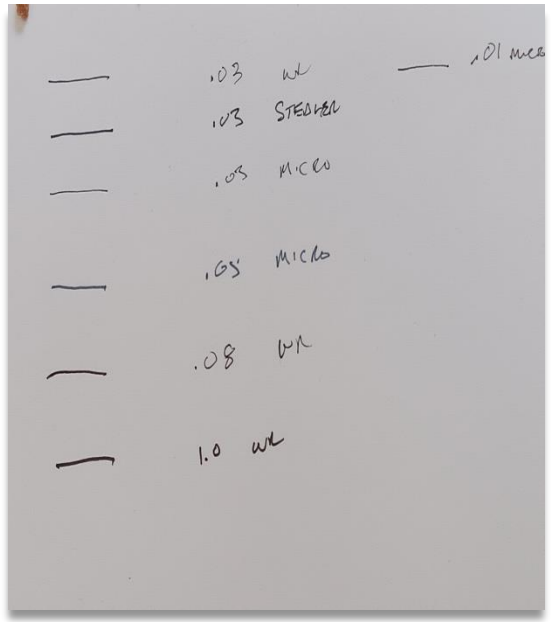
Vary pale wash of blue – grey down left side of Birches.



Re wet

Darken with grey fir trees far side of lake.

Step 7 Ink



Test page of your pens

Helps to know which weight you want to use



Distant trees

Begin with fine nib and lightly draw trunks and branches.



Outline Birch trees add branches

Medium nib light branches

Step 8 Ink and color



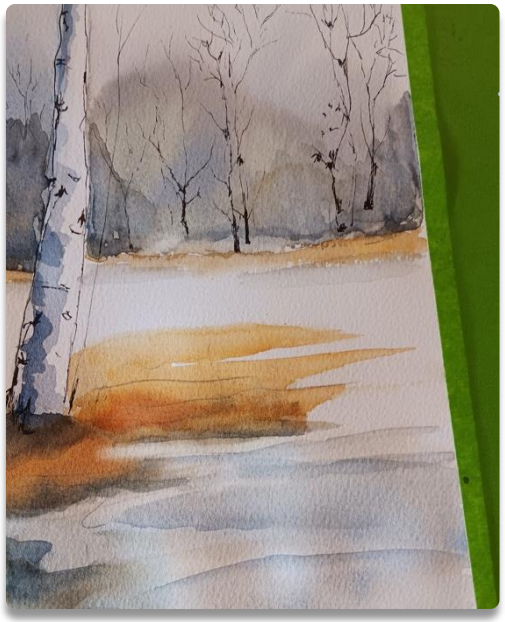
Medium nib ink birch bark

Pick dark black birch bark and fill wit ink



Bark detail

Begin with light grey and oranges wet on dry. Repeat to darken



Details water

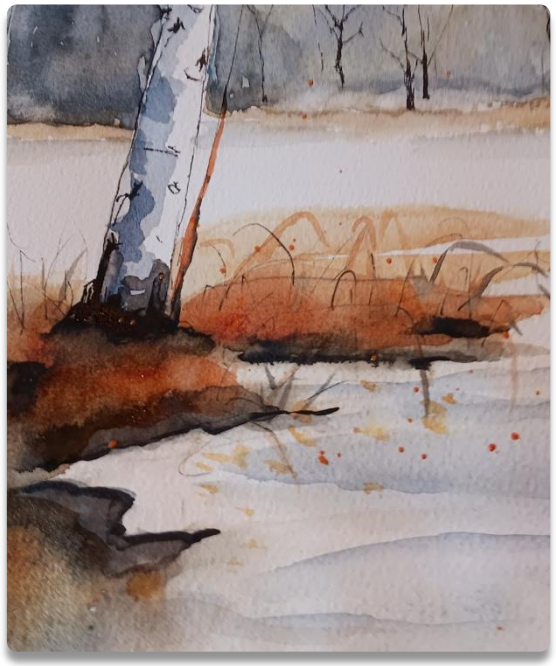
Oranges, brown and dark grey near shore and far

Step 9 Details & India Ink



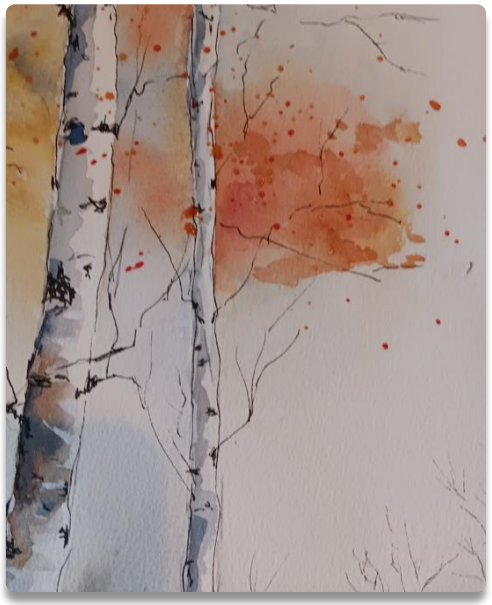
India Ink black

Bottom of Birch and ground ink and water to spread



Intensify

Darken with India Ink and wet on drey orange and grey to blend.
Detail grasses with browns



Leaves

Spatter reds, oranges and yellow on leaves on tree and ground

Final Touches

- If you need to whiten any area, use gouache – white. It is opaque and will cover up watercolor and intensify the white.
- Use gouache with fine brush or gel pen to draw in white grasses. Surface must be completely dry.
- Watercolor and ink have minds of their own.
- You can control to a certain extent but always be prepared for the unimaginable.
- Do not expect your creativity to reflect what anyone else will achieve. I can guarantee everyone will have a different piece of artwork at the end of the masterclass.
- BRAVO – you are done- do not forget your signature

