



Cubist Collages and Challenging Traditional Art

Lesson Description: By examining Cubist collages and the works of Cubist artists, students will learn about how flexible and creative art can truly be! Often, when we think about art, our mind is drawn towards the detailed, intricate paintings we see on the walls of museums and think, "This must've been painted by someone superhuman." However, a main purpose of this lesson is to rid students' minds of that mindset and show them that art is more than imitating classical techniques and copying real life scenes to the tee. Students will use any materials they can find around them for this project: magazines, newspapers, old furniture/pieces of trash (clean trash, of course), old books, and whatever else they have access to! They will repurpose anything and everything they can find into a collage. As a teacher, encourage expression and meaning in the students' collages. Ask them WHY they chose to make their collage in the way that they did and whether it has an underlying meaning or not. If they say that it doesn't, encourage them to find a meaning in their work. While art created without a meaning definitely has merit, it becomes most impactful when made with a purpose and when serving as an expression of emotions.

Lesson Objective: By doing this project, students will learn about the malleability of art and how many different ways it can be created. They should realize that those not particularly gifted at typical artistic skills such as drawing or painting can still create equally impactful and creative work. They will also expand their creativity by repurposing trash, magazines, etc. to create art. They will have to think beyond the limits of traditional art to use these different materials. They'll learn the history of collage and how it relates to Cubism. By showing them the linked materials in the Step-by-Step Procedure section, they'll also see various examples of collages with deeper meanings and hopefully find inspiration.

Art History/Theory Relation: The art of Collage and *papier collé* (pasted paper) originated from the Cubist artists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque when they first incorporated actual pieces of their subject matter into their art. It was a direct challenge to the seriousness that surrounded all aspects of "high art" and a playful,



all for art

fun experimentation never touched before. It later went on to inspire all types of modern art, including Surrealism, Dadaism (an artistic movement which mocked social conventions and emphasized the absurd), and Pop Art.

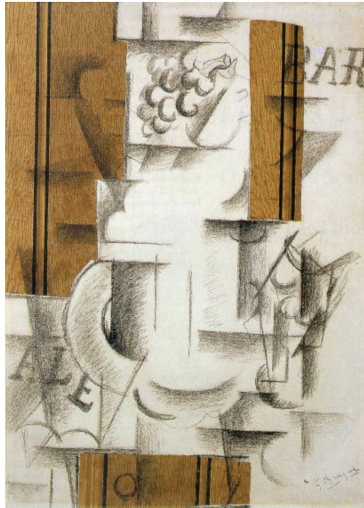
The first modern "collage" was Pablo Picasso's "Still Life with Chair Caning" (1912) in which he glued a part of an actual wicker chair to his piece.



"Still Life with Chair Caning," 1912

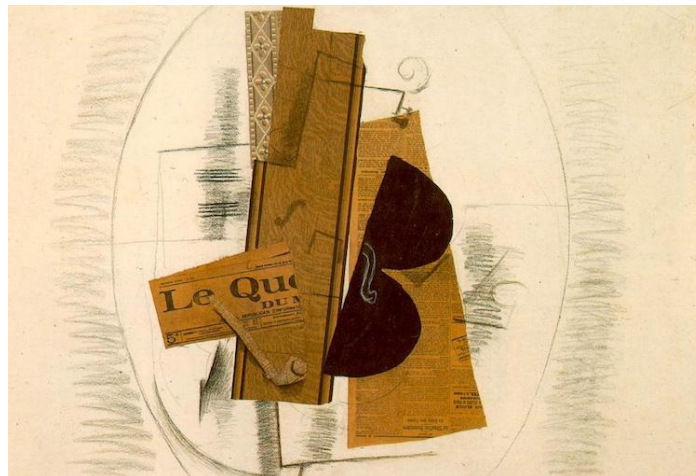


Soon after, George Braque introduced *papier collé* (pasted paper) to his works, first with his painting "Fruit Dish and Glass" (1912).



"Fruit Dish and Glass," 1912

The introduction of collage into Cubist work had a profound effect because the addition of actual pieces of subject matter or other objects added an entirely different level of meaning and depth to paintings. Now, instead of focusing on art that can be interpreted at only one level, works which incorporate collage could include multiple layers of meaning, creating a more malleable artistic form. Thus, collages took a turn for the more abstract. Below are some of my favorites:



"Violin and Pipe," Georges Braque, 1913



"Tableau Rastadada," Francis Picabia, 1920



"Flight," Hannah Höch, 1931



"Untitled (Celestial Fantasy with Tamara Toumanova)," Joseph Cornell, 1940

Materials Needed:

NOTE: All for Art lesson plans are always flexible with materials and students can use whatever they have on hand! We always strive to make art available to everyone, no matter how limited the resources available to them are. Thus, the following list is simply an ideation of possible materials for the above project.

1. Paper
 - a. Ideally construction/cardstock paper because regular paper is often too flimsy for collaging purposes.
 - b. Alternatively, repurposed cardboard could also work!
2. Magazines, newspapers, old books, etc.
3. Any repurposed items not in use (e.g. furniture, kitchen utensils, etc.)
4. Markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.
5. Anything else you have on hand!



Step-by-Step Procedure:

1. Introduce students to Cubist Collage, its origins, and its exploration of art with multiple layers of meaning. Make sure to show lots of examples of collages to help them find inspiration!
 - a. This article is a great supplement to the information already provided: [Cubism, Collage & Rejecting Realism | Smore Newsletters for Education](#)
 - b. This video gives a much more thorough and global view of the history of collage: [Cut and Paste | Collage Before Cubism](#)
2. Introduce the project to students and give them the materials.
 - a. Alternatively, to enhance their collage experience, have students find the materials they wish to use themselves!
3. Give students time to brainstorm and help them think of ideas if they get stuck.
 - a. The best way to inspire them is to show them other collages! This website has a lot of great examples: [Collage Art for Sale | LUMAS](#)
4. Throughout the process, stay updated on their progress and offer feedback and encouragement always!
 - a. If students get stuck, try asking the following questions:
 - i. Does your collage have an underlying meaning? If it doesn't, how could you develop a meaning in it?
 - ii. What has been your favorite material to collage with so far? Why did you like it the best?
 - iii. Have you taken inspiration from any collages you've seen so far? What parts of your collage show that influence? How can you further develop your collage through inspiration from other collages?
 - iv. What's your favorite part of your collage so far? How do you plan on finishing your collage with that in mind? As in, will you use the rest of the elements in your collage to emphasize that part? Or will you emulate that part in various other parts of the collage?



What Students Should Aim to Accomplish with their Final Piece:

1. Students should have created a collage with various repurposed materials, either provided to them or found by themselves.
2. Students should be able to explain a deeper meaning behind their collage.
3. Most importantly, they should have fun creating their piece!