

Using Shapes in "The Studio"

A HANDS-ON ART ACTIVITY
DESIGNED BY AMY RESINER

Description

During this activity, students will take inspiration from Jacob Lawrence's painting, *The Studio*, and create a collage of their own "studio" using different geometric shapes. Students will be able to use critical thinking skills and apply art elements in creating a collage containing geometric shapes.



Image Credit: Example by Lynn Prewitt

Materials

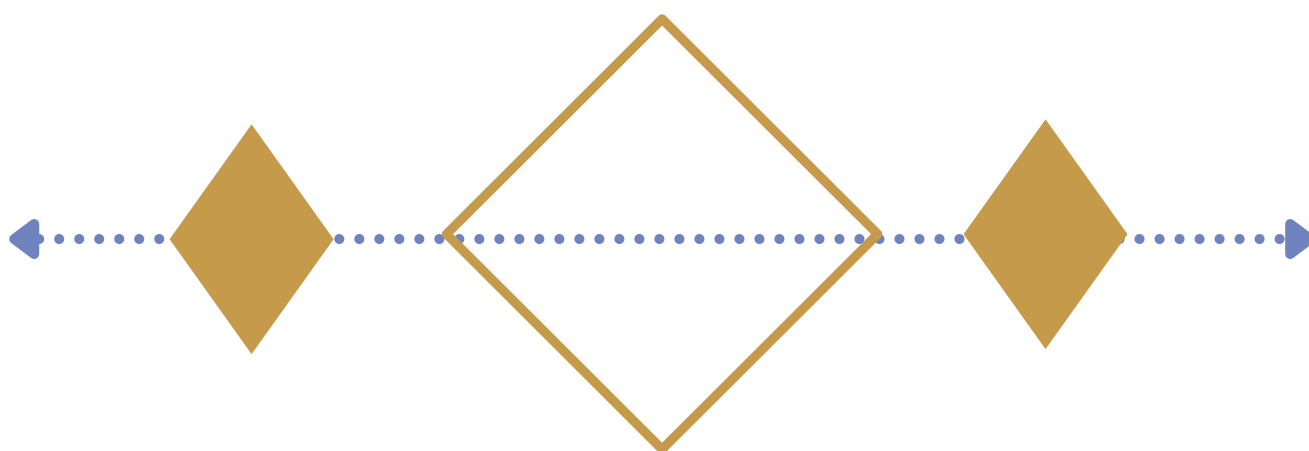
- Copy of *The Studio* by Jacob Lawrence (included at the end of this lesson)
- White construction paper
- Colored construction paper
- Crayons
- Glue sticks
- Scissors

Instructions

- 1)** Introduce the lesson by showing students *The Studio* by Jacob Lawrence and use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) techniques to ask questions about what you see.
 - VTS is an inquiry-based method of facilitating discussion. Tips and resources on VTS are included at the end of this lesson.
- 2)** Explain the geometric shapes in art and how they differ from organic or free-form shapes.
 - Geometric shapes are circles, rectangles, squares, triangles and so on. They have the clear edges one achieves when using tools to create them. Geometric shapes are also man-made. Organic shapes are shapes with a natural look and a flowing and curving appearance. Organic shapes and forms are typically irregular or asymmetrical. They are also associated with things from the natural world, like plants and animals.
 - Ask the students what sorts of objects they feel their studio or room needs and think about what kind of shapes those objects are.
- 3)** They can sketch their plan out on a piece of white copy paper. As they work, it may be helpful to talk about how to use size, overlap, and color in their plan.
- 4)** When the students have an idea of where to start, lay out colored construction paper.
 - Encourage them to choose different colors of construction paper to cut out five different shapes to add to their rooms.
 - Brainstorm what they could make... pictures, windows... Do all windows need to be rectangles?
- 5)** Using a piece of white construction paper for a background, have students begin to lay out their collages.
- 6)** Students can use glue sticks to glue their shapes on the page.
- 7)** Using crayon, add detail, color, etc. to finish off their pictures.
- 8)** Students that finish or need extra challenge can add polygons to their collage. (Ex: trapezoids, rhombus, pentagon, etc)
- 9)** When pictures are nearing completion, it's a good time to do a "gallery walk," where the students set their work out and form a line that walks by each piece to view it.
 - Optional: students might then write about: "What's going on in my picture?"

Relevant Vocabulary

- ✓ Geometric shapes
- ✓ Organic shapes
- ✓ Polygon
- ✓ Collage



Learning and State Standards

Fulfills **Washington State Arts Learning Standards:**

- **VA:Cr2.2.2** (Demonstrate safe procedures for using and cleaning art tools, equipment, and studio spaces)
- **VA:Cr3.1.2** (Discuss and reflect with peers about choices made in creating artwork)

Visual Thinking Strategies

MoNA's Education programs utilize Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which is a research-based teaching method that promotes aesthetic development including critical thinking and communication skills. Here in the MoNA, we use VTS to engage students and general visitors with art encouraging them to observe closely, think critically and discuss respectfully; however, VTS can be effectively used across curricula. This approach teaches its participants how to take the time to observe closely, describe what they see in detail and provide evidence for their observations. Students learn that their reflections and thoughts are valued and appreciated in this inclusive teaching method.

In order to facilitate a VTS discussion, you first encourage viewers to take a quiet moment to observe the work you are going to explore. Then you ask the following questions and paraphrase the responses without adding any of your own judgements. You can insert additional vocabulary and point to specific parts of the artwork.

What's going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say...?

What more can you find?

Visual Thinking Strategy Links

If you are interested in learning more about VTS, [here is their website](#). If you already know and love VTS, but want help finding great images to use in your classroom, here is a [fantastic gallery](#). You can also visit this website for additional resources: www.monamuseum.org/resources-for-educators

About the Artist: Jacob Lawrence



Portrait of Lawrence

Source:

Smithsonian American Art Museum

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000) was an African American painter who specialized in the cubism style. Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey to southern migrants, he spent the majority of his life in New York City. His art was inspired by the Harlem Renaissance and depicted African-American life with vivid color. He moved to Seattle, Washington in 1970 and he taught at the University of Washington until 1983. He is most famous for his series of paintings known as the *Migration Series*. This series of paintings depicts the Great Migration of African Americans from the rural south to the urbanized north in the United States.

YOU BRING TO A PAINTING
YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE.
-JACOB LAWRENCE



The Studio, 1977, Jacob Lawrence
Image Source: Seattle Art Museum