

Classroom Activity

Elemental Blues

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| Essential Question | How can music influence and inspire an artist to create visual artworks? |
| Grades | K–12 |
| Time | One class period |
| Art Concepts | form, rhythm, composition, color value/tono, abstraction, experimentation |
| Materials | Acrylic or tempera paint, paint brushes, palettes, sturdy watercolor paper, rinsing containers, stereo system with CD player, CD of music composed and performed by Duke Ellington, recorded circa 1925–1940, "East St. Louis Toodle-oo," "Black and Tan Fantasy," "Mood Indigo," or "Caravan" |
| Talking about Art | <p>View and discuss the printed image <i>Blues</i> (1929) included in the curriculum. What do you see? What do you notice first about this artwork? How does the artwork make you feel? Why does it make you feel that way?</p> <p>Archibald Motley created many paintings inspired by the music and people in the Jazz and Blues clubs of Chicago and Paris in the 1920's and 1930's. This painting in particular is one of the most celebrated of his works, depicting dancers responding to the sounds from the group of musicians to the left. Motley depicts the scene in a tightly cropped composition. How does that contribute to the overall feeling of the painting? How do the colors contribute to the feeling?</p> <p>Look closely at Motley's painting. How does Motley evoke rhythm, movement, social cultures, and interracial interactions? What are the various meanings that can be discussed in Motley's <i>Blues</i> painting? In what ways can a music selection's melody and rhythm influence the visual art-making process?</p> |
| Making Art | <p>Begin by listening to one of the music tracks listed under Materials, composed and recorded by Duke Ellington. On a sheet of thick watercolor paper, brush blue paint across the entire page creating a wash. Create your own value/tono of blue; will it be lighter or darker? Add water to the paint to make it lighter and easier to spread across the entire page. Make sure to cover the entire paper.</p> <p>Then, clean your brush in water and choose another paint color, or another value of blue. Think about which color you would like to use. If you use a different color, remember that the colors may mix and blend to make something new. After you have chosen your second color, load your brush up with paint. Listen to the music and follow one of the instruments, the piano for example, then paint by listening and following the notes played by that instrument.</p> |

Paint various strokes/elements/shapes/words inspired by the notes of the music, creating a composition that fills the entire paper. Once the music track has stopped, stop painting.

Using a new piece of watercolor paper, repeat the entire process. Use the same Duke Ellington track that you used for your first painting but follow a different musical instrument, the saxophone for example. How are the two artworks you made different from one another? How are they similar?

Then, choose a different Duke Ellington track and a different background color. Repeat the entire process again for another pair of paintings. You may want to add in other colors, experiment with different strokes/elements/shapes/words inspired by the notes of the music, and vary the speeds of your painting strokes.

How are the new pair of paintings different from your first set? Did you make strategic decisions in the latter paintings? If so, why? Was it easier to follow the instruments after having practice? Was it harder? Why? Lastly, title your artwork. Think about making a title that connects each pair of paintings and makes a reference to the jazz songs you listened to.

Reflection

Display all completed artworks around the room. Walk around the room and view all the works as a whole. How does each pair of artworks differ? How are they similar? How did the songs affect the artworks? Are there visual rhythms in the artworks?

Curriculum Connection

For younger grades, limit the color palette to primary colors. Have students explore color mixing, turning primary colors into secondary colors. While listening to the music, have students focus on creating lines and textures they can name; straight lines, parallel lines, perpendicular lines, vertical lines, horizontal lines, concentric lines, etc.

Classroom Activity

Talking With Paint

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| Essential Question | How can you paint a portrait of a person while expressing your own personal feelings about them? |
| Grades | 3–9 |
| Time | One–two class periods |
| Art Concepts | Painting techniques, brushstrokes, expression, color, form, composition, scale, emotion, physicality, imagination, memory |
| Materials | Acrylic or tempera paint, paint brushes, palettes, painting surface (paper or canvas), rinsing containers, scratch paper, pencils |

Talking about Art View and discuss the printed images *Mending Socks* (1924) and *Barbecue* (1960) included in the curriculum. What do you see? What can you find that is similar? What is different about the two paintings?

Both of these paintings are made by the same artist. Is that surprising to hear? Archibald Motley was a very skilled painter who was able to use a variety of painting techniques and styles in order to express certain qualities about his subjects. He was able to paint realistically and also in a more simplified style. Motley used these different painting styles to tell stories about the characters in his paintings. He painted the people around him—people he knew and people in his community doing usual, everyday things. Through his portrayal, we can infer what he wanted to say.

Mending Socks is a painting of the artist's grandmother. How do you think the artist feels about her? What do you see that makes you say that? Describe the brushstrokes and colors. Does it look like it took a long time to make this painting, or was it done quickly? Scholars have said that it seems like Motley had deep respect and love for his grandmother. The loving care with which he painted the portrait comes through in the final product. Why do you think they see that?

Now let's look at *Barbecue*. What do you see? What is happening in this scene? Motley was known for his paintings of scenes of everyday life around him. Compare this painting to the image of Motley's grandmother; how are they similar? How are they different? Do they look more like caricatures? Why? Do the figures look more flat than the grandmother? Do they seem to have been painted more quickly? What do the bright colors say about what is happening in the scene? Does this painting seem as serious as the other one, or is it more playful? Do you think these people are important to Motley, or do you think he has more of a casual relationship to them? Why?

Making Art How can you make two paintings that feel very different from one another? Archibald Motley was able to express feelings and thoughts about people and places by the way that he painted them. Think about

two people you know and would like to paint. Try to choose two people who are very different from each other. Think of the qualities that each person has and how you will communicate them by the way you paint. With scratch paper, draw a line down the middle of the page. At the top of each side, write the subjects name you will paint. Under their name, write three to five words that describe their personality.

When you paint someone from memory, what is the main thing that you remember? Why do you remember it the most? If someone is sleepy, are their eyes closed? If they are happy, are their cheeks bright and rosy?

How do your feelings and thoughts about your subject influence your painting? How does your mood influence the work? If you are feeling happy when thinking about someone, how will that affect the way you apply the paint? Will you dribble it or brush it on carefully? Will you keep the colors separate or will you mix them together? Will you let the paint be thick or will you smooth it out? What does it mean if your brushstrokes are smooth, rounded, straight, scratchy, or thick?

Using acrylic or tempera paints, paint two portraits on separate paper or canvas. How will you use color to create mood or meaning? What color represents friendliness to you? What color do you associate with unkindness? If someone is funny, will they be wearing bright or dark colors? If someone is quiet, will they be surrounded by a lot of colors or just one?

You may want to use the background to say some things about your subject, as well. But, keep it simple. If your subject is angry, what color will you make the space around him? Can you make his environment reflect his mood? What does the size of your subject in her environment mean? Is she small or is she large? If she is large, does that mean she is important? If she is small, does that mean that she is young?

Reflection

Place both of your paintings side-by-side. How are they similar? How are they different? Who did you choose to paint? Why did you choose these people? How do you know these people? Do you know them well? What do you think your paintings say about the people you portrayed? Will you give your paintings to the people you painted? Do you think they will like them?

How do you think it might be different if you did not know the person well? What if you painted a famous person instead of someone you knew? What if you painted an imaginary person, like a character in a story? What would you want to say about that person?

Classroom Activity

Extra! Extra! History in Words and Images

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| Essential Question | How can an artist make a personal connection with historical art? |
| Grades | 6–12 |
| Time | One–two class periods |
| Art Concepts | Composition, space, image and text, subject matter, artistic styles |
| Academic Concepts | Civil War, reflecting on image and text, synthesizing information and historical events |
| Materials | pencils, 8½ x 11 drawing paper, colored pencils, newspaper template (included, or create your own) |

Talking about Art

View and discuss the images *Arrival at Chickasaw Bayou of the Slaves of President Davis* (Archibald Motley, 1938) and *Arrival at Chickasaw Bayou of the Slaves of President Davis' Negroes from His Plantation on the Mississippi below Vicksburg, Mississippi* (Frederic B. Schell, 1863) included in the curriculum. How are the two pieces alike? How are they different? What do you wonder about?

First, let's look at the engraving by Frederic B. Schell, who worked as a "special artist" for Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, a weekly newspaper. This image appeared on the August 8, 1863 issue. At a time when photography was still new, the artist tried to capture, through detailed sketches, important moments as they were happening. The image accompanied the following text:

The Slaves of Jefferson Davis coming on to the Camp at Vicksburg. Few incidents have been more curious and instructive than that witnessed some time before the fall of Vicksburg, when the slaves of Jefferson Davis from his plantation on the Mississippi came into camp. It seemed in itself the doom of slavery. . . The President of the Confederate States may call the roll of his slaves at Richmond, at Natchez, or at Niagara, but the answer will not come.

Many consider the defeat of the Confederate army at Vicksburg (July 4, 1863) and Gettysburg (July 3, 1863) by the Union army, the turning point of the US Civil War. How did this artist choose to depict this historic, current event? How does the image add to the context of the text?

Let's turn our attention to Archibald Motley's interpretation of this same event. Motley's paternal grandmother, with whom he lived, was a former slave. Why do you think Motley chose to re-illustrate this scene? Why do you think he chose to show the figures less realistically than Schell?

Making Art

After discussing the Schell engraving and Motley's painting, in a group of three, collaboratively create a front page of a newspaper. Using the attached template, work in groups to brainstorm news stories you would like to represent in your newspaper. After collaborating on current events you would like to illustrate (the stories can include events from your personal life, like what you learned in school this week, actual historical events, etc.). Each group should designate an illustrator, an editor, and a reporter.

Using scratch paper, the reporter will write the articles, making sure to address the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *why* of each story. The editor will then review the stories and decide on the best layout of the stories in the attached template (or you can create your own). While the reporter copies the articles onto the final template, the illustrator will think about how to best capture the story through an illustrated image. Using colored pencils, s/he will make a drawing for each of the articles on the group's front page.

Reflection

In your group, discuss favorite articles on the front page that you created together. Then, each group will present to the rest of the class their front page, discussing what stories they chose and how the illustrations add to the stories, as well as how they decided on the layout of their front page.

Curriculum Connection

To address the History-Social Science Standards: [8.10 Students analyze the multiple causes, key events, and complex consequences of the Civil War.], have students do further research on the US Civil War. Based on their findings, have student groups create the front page of a newspaper depicting key events in the Civil War, including how the war affected combatants, civilians, and the environment.

Classroom Activity

Identity: Portraits through Objects

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| Essential Question | What do objects in a portrait tell us about that person's identity? |
| Grades | 3–12 |
| Time | One period |
| Art Concepts | Balance, composition, negative and positive space |
| Academic Concepts | Shape an artistic investigation; hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences |
| Materials | Pencils, 5x8 inch index cards, black construction paper |
| Talking about Art | <p>View and discuss the portrait of <i>The Octoroon Girl</i> (Archibald Motley, 1925) included in the curriculum. What words would you use to describe this woman? Describe her expression. Describe her posture. Looking closely at the objects Motley included in this portrait, what do the objects in the painting tell us about this woman? Why do you think the artist has arranged these objects in the way he did? How do the objects around people help define their identity?</p> <p>"Outside of my grandmother's portrait," Motley reflected, "[<i>The Octoroon Girl</i>] is the best portrait I've painted." Referring to someone with an eighth of "Negro blood," <i>The Octoroon Girl</i> joined six other portraits by Motley which represented women of various racial intermixtures. These portraits provide viewers with opportunities to contemplate physical variances and, in conjunction with these differences, varying levels of social status. He titled this work not with the woman's name, but a categorization. Why do you think he did so? What do you think about the title? How would you title this work?</p> |
| Making Art | <p>Randomly pull out 5–7 things from your pockets or handbags. As a class, discuss art concepts including balance, composition, and positive and negative space. Arrange your items on black construction paper, keeping in mind the elements of art discussed.</p> <p>Take a gallery walk and randomly select a classmate's arrangement. On a 5x8 inch index card, respond to the following: "What can you tell about the person by looking at their objects?" Then, turn the index card over and leave it next to that arrangement. Walk around the gallery of compositions once again and choose another classmate's arrangement. Again, write about what you can infer about the person by looking at their objects on the back of the index card next to the arrangement. Then leave the index card next to the arrangement.</p> <p>After responding to two compositions, return to your collection of objects and read what your two classmates wrote on the index card.</p> |

Reflection

As a group, discuss the following:

- Based on the feedback of your classmates, do these objects define your identity accurately?
- If someone 100 years from now came across your class's collection of objects, what could they tell about your group?
- What would they learn about the current year?
- What important stories might they be able to tell?

**Curriculum
Connection**

Analyze other portraits from LACMA's collection and speculate as to why objects were included in the artwork, and what the objects tell us about that person's identity.

In order to address the following Common Core State Standard, write an imaginative narrative about the person, making sure to include details about the objects included in their portrait.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist

Selected Resources

Books for Teachers

Mooney, Amy M. *Archibald J. Motley Jr.*
Looking at the work of Motley through the prism of race, this book focuses on his portraits and depictions of the American scene. Dr. Mooney draws upon his paintings, writings, and interviews to examine Motley's work and his contribution to American art.

Powell, Richard J. *Archibald Motley: Jazz Age Modernist*
This exhibition catalogue offers an introduction to Archibald J. Motley, his world, and his art. Essays by prominent scholars in the field highlight topics related to his portraits, historical context, travels, influences, and the evolution of his art over his long career as a painter. Available in the Museum Shop.

Online Resources

African American Art & Visual Culture in Chicago: Timeline from 1901–2013
<http://chicagoblackart.com/>
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University
This timeline of African American art and visual culture in the twentieth century provides historical and visual context for Motley's work.

Archibald J. Motley Timeline
<http://nasher.duke.edu/motley/>
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University
Created in conjunction with the exhibition, this provides an overview of the life and career of Archibald J. Motley.

The Black Chicago Renaissance
<http://www.chicagohistoryfair.org/for-teachers/curriculum/black-chicago-renaissance.html>
Chicago Metro History Education Center
Organized into five major topics, this guide covers the Chicago Renaissance, a lesser known offshoot of the Harlem Renaissance.

Books for Students

Hill, Laban Carrick. *Harlem Stomp!: A Cultural History of The Harlem Renaissance*
Intended for Grades 7 and up, this book begins by examining the cause and effects of the great migration of African Americans to the North at the beginning of the 20th century, and then proceeds to cover the African American art, music, literature, and culture that flourished as a result.

Dillon, Leo and Diane. *Jazz on a Saturday Night*
This Coretta Scott King Honor Book uses bright colors and musical patterns to make jazz and its stars come to life. An accompanying CD allows students to hear each instrument play in a jazz song written and recorded for this book.

Gollub, Matthew. *The Jazz Fly*
Together, its distinctive illustrations and design give this book the feel of jazz, even without musical accompaniment, but the accompanying CD provides a jazzy beat that accentuates the story. This jazz and animal infused book is intended for preschool through 4th grade students.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Jazz*
This picture book combines poems and paintings to evoke and celebrate different forms of jazz.