

HENRI MATISSE

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- Introduce students to the work of Henri Matisse, one of the most beloved and influential artists of the 20th century, and specifically for this lesson, pioneer of the art form known as paper “cutouts”
- Experiment with *composition*, or the arrangement of shapes and colors to communicate a sense of emotion and/or movement
- Help students create their own works of art in the style of Henri Matisse cutouts

LESSON SUPPLIES:

All lesson supplies are in the Art Appreciation Project Cabinet located in the PTA room. Please confirm you have the following supplies before heading up to your child’s classroom:

1. **PROJECT BOX** includes materials for all grades, please use items appropriate to your grade.

ALL GRADES:

- Laminated visuals for classroom discussion (5)
- Laminated project examples (2)
- Extra scissors (for adults, students to use their own)
- Extra glue sticks (students to use their own)
- Extra pencils (students to use their own)

OLDER GRADES:

- Laminated Positive & Negative Space samples (3)
- Laminated Logo visuals (1)
- Fedex envelope logo sample (1)

2. **PROJECT PAPERS** (Marked by teacher, one bunch / class)

- White paper to be used as background
- Color paper (in bags marked by class)

LESSON OVERVIEW:

1. Introduction to Artist & Cutouts with visual laminates **(10 minutes)**
2. Classroom discussion with visual laminates **(5 minutes)**
3. Student Project: students create own art in the style of Henri Matisse **(30 minutes)**

Before we get started with the lesson plan, we’d like to highlight some teaching points for the parent volunteers to consider:

CLASSROOM TEACHING POINTS:

- This lesson has been tailored for a younger grade audience AND for an older grade audience. Please note grade appropriate materials.
- There are 3 bolded words within the lesson plan. It would be terrific to teach these words to the students, and explain their meaning as they are key touch points in understanding Matisse’s cutouts work. Please refer to the glossary of terms (see last page).
- Within the classroom lesson plan, we’ve provided quotes from Matisse himself to add flavor and interest to the class. Please use these at your discretion. They may be overwhelming for the younger grades, so feel free to omit them if you choose. In addition, there is the option of discussing the concept of *positive and negative* space with the older grades (see Class Discussion).
- Lastly, at a high level, the key artistic concepts we are attempting to share with students via Matisse’s paper cutouts are composition and positive/negative space (for older grades only).

CLASSROOM LESSON PLAN

1. Introduction to the Artist

- Born on New Year’s Eve in northern France in 1869. Died in 1954 - almost 85 years old.
- Over 60 years of creating art, Matisse developed a vast body of work encompassing paintings, drawings, sculptures, graphic arts, book illustrations, and paper “cutouts”
- He approached art through feeling and emotion, and strived his whole life to simplify his means of expression. With “cutouts” he found the way to give the world visions of purity and serenity.
- “I do not believe I have ever had such balance as when I was creating these paper cut-outs.” - H.M.

2. Introduction to “Cutouts”

Use the following 5 laminated visuals to guide students through select examples of Matisse’s cutouts.

VISUAL #1:



In 1941, at the age of 72, Matisse became very sick. He had to remain in bed for a very long time to recover from surgery. He was too weak to stand and paint for long periods of time. Instead, he picked up a pair of scissors and started to cut pieces of paper. He called this “drawing with scissors.”

“Draw with your scissors. Cut your shape straight out of the colour, without hesitation.” - H.M.

VISUAL #2:



He then sorted and organized the shapes and colors creating impressive **compositions**, or arrangements. He kept rearranging the shapes and colors until he was happy with the composition.

“Keep the objects that tell you a story and assemble them in a way that creates a **harmonious** feeling.” - H.M.

VISUAL #3:



Some shapes fell to the floor. Matisse realized that every shape he cut created another shape. Instead of throwing the left over pieces away, he added them to the composition. They were not leftovers at all!

VISUAL #4:



Sometimes the shapes he cut were simple like squares. When he arranged them in just the right way... the squares looked like they were moving. In this picture, they took flight, like a swarm of bees!

VISUAL #5:



His cutouts started very small and got larger and larger – until they were as large as a wall! Matisse surrounded himself with flowers, algae, leaves, and bits of coral. He felt like he was IN a garden and was happy to be alive!

3. Classroom Discussion

Encourage students to think about what makes Matisse’s cutouts unique. Some questions may include:

- What do you like about these compositions?
- How do these compositions make you feel?
- Do the shapes and colors help you feel that way?

- What if Matisse changed the colors or shapes? Would that change the way you feel?
- Do these look easy to make? Sometimes the simplest things are the most difficult to achieve!

Back in 1941, these cutouts were **revolutionary**. Matisse managed to simplify objects to their most basic form to convey a sense of joy and happiness. People had never seen art like this before.

OLDER GRADES: Today, we are used to seeing simplified icons, logos, and other symbols that represent brands or common household goods. Show logo laminate.

- Apple logo
- Nike logo
- Can you think of any others?

OLDER GRADES: POSITIVE & NEGATIVE SPACE SUPPLEMENT (see laminated visuals provided in Project Box)

VISUAL #1

Let's talk a little more about what happened when Matisse cut a shape out of a piece of paper. Here is a simplified example:



- How many “leaves” do you see?
- Henri Matisse saw two leaves also. One leaf was created by the cut out. The other leaf was created by the shape left over from the cut out.

This is a good example of **positive** and **negative** space. They are both important! Simply put...

- **Positive** space is best described as the areas in a work of art that are the subjects, or areas of interest.
- **Negative** space is area around the subjects.

“The subject of a picture and its background have the same value, no point is more important than another; the composition is all that matters.” – Henri Matisse

VISUAL #2

Take a look at the image below. Do you see two faces or a vase?



- If you are seeing a vase, then you are seeing the white area as the positive space. The black areas become the negative space.

- If you are seeing faces, then you are seeing the black areas as the positive space, and the white area as the negative space.

VISUAL #3

A good artist realizes that the space surrounding an object is just as important as that object itself. Negative space helps define a subject, and brings balance to a composition. The 3 tree & land images below help explain positive/negative space.

Balance of Pos/Neg Space



Mostly Negative Space



Mostly Positive Space



VISUAL #4



Lastly, for a little fun, take a look at the FedEx logo. Do you see the arrow in the negative space of the FedEx logo? This was no accident!

DID YOU KNOW? Cutting is hard work. Your hands get tired. Henri Matisse played the violin for two hours every day to give his hands a workout and make them stronger!

4. Student Project

Now it is the student's turn to create art inspired by Henry Matisse cutouts!

SET UP:

1. Distribute one white sheet to each student to serve as a background
2. Ensure students are able to share the following materials:
 - Colored papers
 - Scissors
 - Pencils
 - Glue

Students are welcome to design their own unique composition, or they may choose to create their own version of the following famous Matisse Cutouts with a theme of nature or animals (**see laminated examples provided in Project Box**):



With the help of parent volunteers, students will:

- **CUT** shapes out of the colored paper provided. Students may use pencil to lightly sketch their design if preferred.
- **COMPOSE** shapes and colors until they are happy with their arrangement.
- **GLUE** their colored shapes to the white background paper provided.
- **SIGN** their name lightly on the back in pencil.

CLEAN UP:

1. Identify safe area in classroom to allow art to dry before taking home
2. Ensure all lesson materials go back into Project Box so that it may be ready for the next class.
3. Return Project Box and any unused paper to Art Appreciation closet after lesson.

Thank you for all of your time and support! This art appreciation experience would not have been possible without your help. We hope you enjoyed your time in the classroom!

Note: Upon conclusion of the in-class project, there will be an email sent to all the parents of the class, which recaps the Matisse project experience.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Composition - The arrangement of shapes and colors to communicate a sense of emotion and/or movement

Harmonious - Forming a pleasantly consistent whole

Revolutionary - Radically new or innovative; outside or beyond established procedure, principles