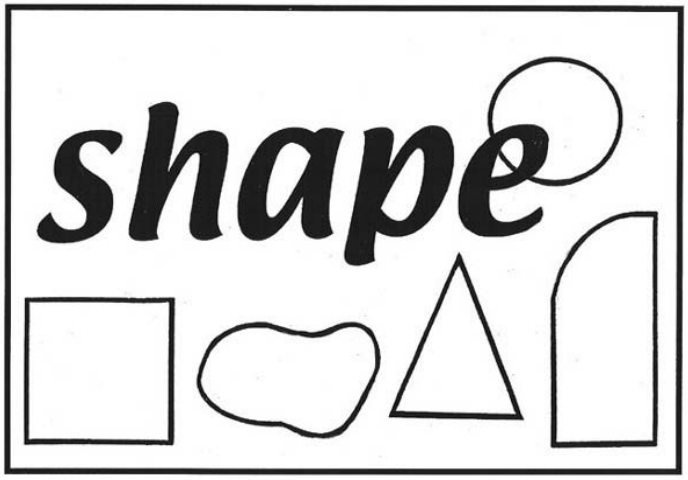
Unit 4 Working with Shape

Unit Overview:



This unit will focus on *Shape* as one of the art elements used by artists to express their views, feelings, and thoughts.

Designed as a two-week set of lessons and activities, the materials included in Unit 4 will introduce new concepts and continue to develop skills in both observation and art techniques.

The essential questions addressed in this unit are:

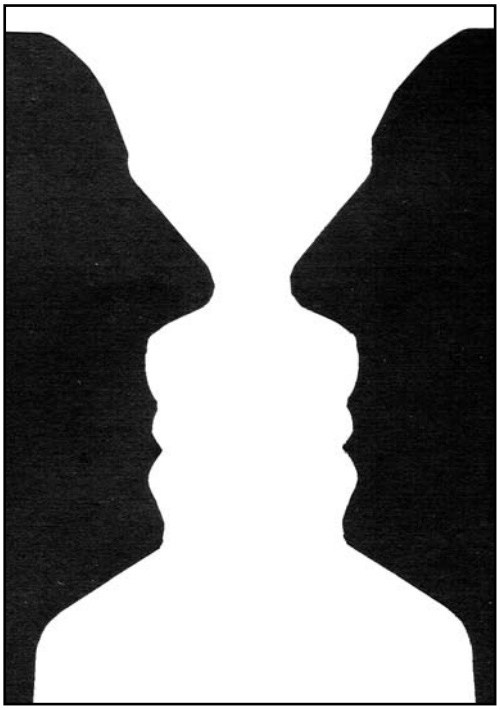
- What is shape?
- What are the characteristics of shapes?
- What are the various categories of shapes?
- How do artists use shapes in their artwork?

❶ Students will begin by discussing *Shape* as an art element. In this context, shape is *nonobjective* – that is, these "pure" shapes have no reference to objects nor any suggestion of subject matter. However, many artists use shapes to represent something; these representational shapes are put together in artwork to suggest or symbolize something in the natural and manmade environment.

Generally, shapes are classified according to their edges or outlines. They can be *organic* (freeform) or *geometric* (rectilinear or curvilinear/circular).

Organic shapes are thought to exist in nature while geometric shapes tend to be part of the manmade world. The tree has an organic shape while the buildings contain geometric shapes.

An important design concept involves *positive* and *negative shapes*. In artwork where there is subject matter, the distinction between an objects and its background is usually clear. The subject (positive shape) is usually the primary focus, but the background (negative shape) is often equally significant. Positive and negative shapes are sometimes referred to as *positive and negative space*.



Face or vase? Notice how it's possible to see a vase if the white shape is considered the object. Look again; if the black shapes are thought to be objects, then you'll see a pair of profiles. This optical illusion is an example of positive/negative shape reversal.

Shape and form are closely related. *Shape* refers to a two-dimensional area while the term *form* describes a three-dimensional mass or volume. Both shape and form are art elements

The illustration shown here is an example of *symmetry*, a type of balance (one of the Principles of Design). When objects are organized so that they mirror one another on either side of a midline, they are said to have *symmetrical balance*.

NOTE: Two days have been included in the *Tying It All Together* section of this unit in an Optional Art Reinforcement Task (Optional ART) – an activity designed to reinforce concepts introduced throughout the unit. However, if additional time is needed for lessons in the unit, some of the time allocated for this optional learning activity can be redistributed to allow students extra time to complete their assignments.

4-1 through 4-3: Shapes in City Buildings

Three-day Lesson

The teacher will need to collect and display books and reproductions that show buildings, especially city buildings. Many photographs of city buildings can be found in a Google-images search (possible key words: "storefronts" or "city streets").

Display art prints that show contemporary street scenes.
Some examples would be:
Romare Bearden's *Pittsburgh Memories*
William Crite's *Parade on Hammond Street*
Edward Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning*.
Charles Sheeler's *MacDougal Alley*

If possible, obtain an art print of Romare Bearden's *The Block* – a six-panel collage which represents Lenox Avenue in Harlem (see Lecture Support for additional information).

Distribute portfolios
Take journal (student activity books) from portfolios. Students are to define the vocabulary words and complete other assignments in their Activity Books.

Agendas for the three days (55 minutes each).
Each day, write the appropriate agenda on the board. (The breakdown of minutes in parenthesis is to help the teacher pace the learning activities and does not need to be written on the board.)

Day One (4-1):
- PowerPoint (15 minutes)
- Preview rubric **4-4b** (5 minutes)
- Start construct of printing plate (20 minutes)
- Activity Book **4-1a** (10 minutes)
- Clean Up (5 minutes)

Day Two (4-2):
- Distribute materials (5 minutes)
- Review instructions (5 minutes)
- Complete printing plate (20 minutes)
- Review definitions in Activity Book **4-2a** (5 minutes)
- Wrap up Activity **4-2b** (15 minutes)
- Clean up (5 minutes)

Day Three (4-3):

- Review instructions for printmaking (5 minutes)
- Print plate (35 minutes)
- Clean up (5 minutes)
- Activity Book **4-3a** and **4-3b** (10 minutes)

❷ **Objectives:** Students will

- identify geometric shapes and architectural features
- construct relief printing plates from rectilinear shapes
- develop images based on architectural features
- print a series of city buildings
- create city blocks of printed images

❸ **Vocabulary (4-1a** and **4-2a):** Review: shape, geometric, rectilinear, architecture, architectural features
Review: overlap, printmaking, relief prints

Materials List:

- pictures of buildings (from magazines and newspapers)
- pencils and erasers
- rulers
- tagboard (two 8" x10" pieces plus scraps)
- scissors
- old magazines or catalogs
- white glue
- small Post-its (two per student)

Procedure:

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE BEGINNING
Recall streets in cities and towns.

- What kind of buildings were there? (stores, churches, libraries).
- Where do people live? (apartments or condos)
- Where do they work? (stores, factories, hospitals, schools)
- What kinds of stores do people need? (food, clothing, books and other supplies)
- What do the city buildings look like? (usually square or rectangular)

Most buildings are *rectilinear*. The doors, windows, roofs, and the buildings themselves are made up of rectangles and squares.

City buildings are often two stories or more. They frequently have flat roofs but may have a decorative edging along the top.

Discuss the rubric for this assignment Students must know what they will graded upon, so go over this rubric (see **4-4b** in the Student Activity Book) and remind students to look at the rubric as they are doing their work.

At the end of the first day, ask the students to look over their printing plates -- the buildings and their architectural features. They will need to plan the additional details still needed. Remind them that the smallest details will go on last.

Instructions to Students:

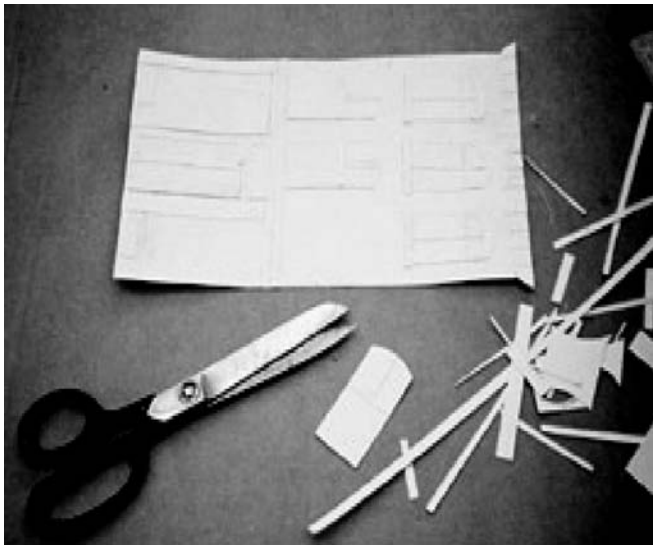
❹ **STEP 1:** Plan a city building; it can be from a photograph or from your memory. Sketch the front of the building on a piece of tagboard. Be sure the building sides touch at least three edges of the tagboard. Lightly sketch in windows, doors, and other architectural features.

STEP 2: Cut the building out so that you now have a tagboard piece that shows the outline of the building.

STEP 3: Cut other parts of the building from the second piece of tagboard. You will want to measure and cut windows, doors, and other architectural features. All parts will need to be in proportion to one another as well as to the building.

Tip: There are probably several features (such as windows) that are the same. Cut them out and add glue the parts on at the same time, keeping them alike.

STEP 4: When you have measured, cut, and completed the architectural features, glue them to the building front (step 1). Use an old catalog or magazine as a gluing surface (you can turn the pages and have a clean surface for each piece that you want to glue).



❺ **STEP 5:** Cut and add additional things you might see on city buildings such as awnings, steps, window sills, and doorknobs. You can add several layers – building up from the basic building shape. Cut final details (such as decorative trim) and glue them into place.

Reminder: Words and numbers come out backwards when printing. You will either need to eliminate them entirely or cut them out and glue them on backwards (you can check to see if you got it right by holding the tagboard up to a mirror).

STEP 6: You will not have time to complete all the parts of the building on the first day. At the end of the period, tear a clean page (from the old magazine or catalog you've been using for a gluing surface) and wrap the small pieces into a small packet. This can be tucked inside the magazine/catalog and kept in your portfolio until next time.

STEP 7: In small groups, discuss the vocabulary words and write definitions in the Student Activity Book **(4-1a)**. Preview the rubric **(4-4b)** and circle the criteria that you want to remember.

STEP 8: On the second day, continue gluing the parts to the building shape until a very elaborate and detailed printing plate is complete. Allow your tagboard printing plate to dry (you will need it to print during the next class).

STEP 9: Pin the finished tagboard printing plates on the board and wait for instructions for the Wrap-Up Activity.

Wrap-up Activity (4-2b):
The Wrap-up Activity at the end of the second day will focus student's attention on these two criteria: accuracy and complexity. Allow sufficient time for students to file past the board and place their Post-Its next to their first and second choices.

Students are to mark 1 and 2 on their three Post-Its. They are to place them next to the tagboard printing plates that they think are the most accurate and complex – ones that show correct proportion and many details. The 1 and 2 indicate the students' first and second choices.

Once the Post-Its have been placed, draw attention to the tagboard printing plates that received the most "votes." Comment on the proportion, attention to detail, and craftsmanship of the selected works as well as any others that exhibit these qualities.

Students are to remove their tagboard printing plates from the board and place them in their portfolios for safekeeping. There is also a section in their Activity Books (**4-2b**) that asks to have the top "winners" described – the characteristics that were the most outstanding.

Suggested Teaching Strategies:
If students seem a little confused about the idea of building up layers of the tagboard, have them focus on *one* architectural feature (such as a window). You may need to go step-by-step through the procedure. First students will need to cut out the basic window shape (usually a rectangle). From other pieces of tagboard (or the scraps), they will need to cut out the various parts of the window – frames, grills, glass panes, sills.

Have students glue the parts on to the basic window shape, building up layers. Once the window is complete, it can be used as a guide to make other windows. The windows, doors, and other architectural features should be glued on to the building shape at the same time so that they can be evenly spaced.

Encourage students to strive for accuracy in proportion – the relative size of architectural features (such as windows and doors) to the whole building. Also urge them to add finishing touches – the many details that will make the finished artwork more interesting.

Students who finish their buildings early can be asked to construct other tagboard printing plates: cars, a bus, fire hydrants, possibly even a few people.

Lecture Support:
Throughout this lesson, the term printing *plate* is consistently used; although "block" is equally correct, this word was avoided to avoid confusion with the idea of a city block.

A commercial storefront is usually made of three parts:

The top which includes the building's cornice.
The decorative cornice or pitched roof (or both) top off the building.

The middle façade (directly above the entry)
This section is characterized by a flat wall with regularly spaced windows.

The bottom or store itself from the foundation to the cornice
This section usually includes display windows and the store's entry. It may include awnings and the store's sign.

A five-piece set of cityscapes is available as part of Crystal Productions' "Take 5" art prints. These can be worded online at **www.crystalproductions.com**

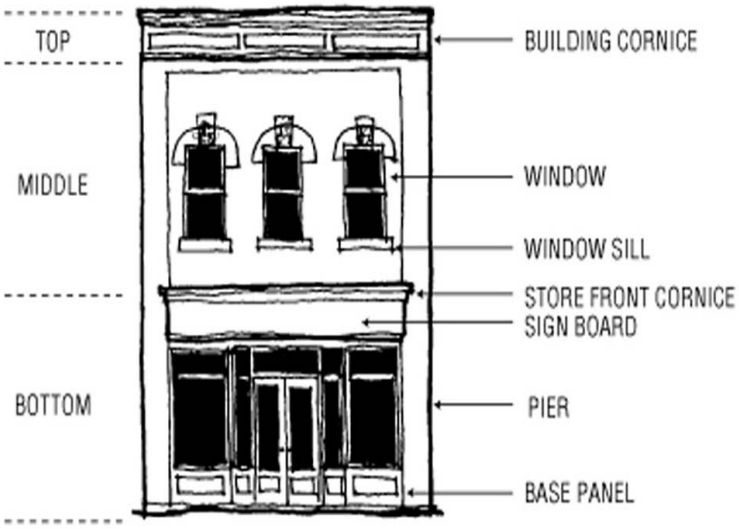


Diagram provided with permission of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation

The websites listed below show Romare Bearden's *The Block* (a six-panel collage that shows a street in Harlem). *The Block* (1971) is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY

www.metmuseum.org/special/Romare_Bearden/The-Block.r.htm

The Block II (1972) can be seen on the National Gallery of Art z

Information about Romare Bearden (as well as images) can be seen at
www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/bearden_romare.html

Bearden's *The Block* is also available in a book with poems by Langston Hughes; the book shows the of buildings and people along a street in Harlem. published by Viking Books; ISBN number 067086501X Book is available from amazon.com

Homework: Bring in photographs (from magazines, newspapers, or the web) that show city buildings and/or street scenes.

Preparation for Printing (4-3):
Have at least three printing stations set up before class starts. Spread them in different parts of the room to avoid overcrowding. Since many of the prints may not dry in time to be put away in portfolios, have a wire or cord strung across the room (prints can be attached with paper clips or clothes pins).

Materials List:
Each student should have three or four pieces of 9″ x 12″ newsprint paper at his/her seat (optional – standard 8 ½″ x 11″paper in light gray, tan, pale gold).
Each printing station contains

- one brayer
- an inking sheet or pan
- tube of water soluble printing ink
- old catalogs or magazines
- lots of newspapers, and
- a stack of newspapers cut in half (to be used by students to carry their inked plates (plates) back to their seats)

Suggested colors for printing inks: red or rust, dark blue, brown, black.

Since rust is not a standard color in printing inks, an easy way to achieve it is to mix orange with brown ink on the inking sheet.

Students who have made additional items for the city scenes (bus, cars, etc.) may need other colors as well. If not enough time (to print these "extras," some time can be set aside during the next class.

Procedure:

WHAT TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE BEGINNING

Review the steps for printmaking. Remind students that the tagboard building they have been constructing is their *printing plate* (also known as a *printing plate*). The actual artwork is the print itself. Multiple images are characteristic of printmaking. Students are to pull at least three prints (they can be the same or different colors).

❻ Printing instructions to Students:

STEP 1: Be sure you have paper at your seat (that's where you will be pulling a print). Decide what color or colors you will use for printing (if using different colors, start with the lightest and go to the darker inks for the second and third prints.

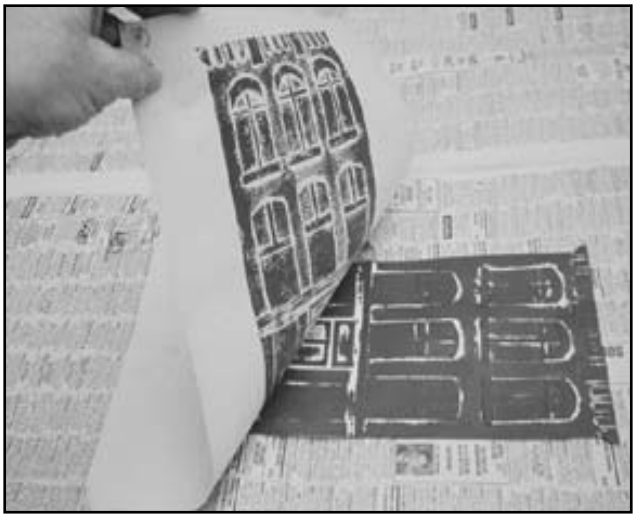
STEP 2: Bring your tagboard printing plate to the color center of your choice and wait your turn. The first thing you do is spread ink on the inking sheet or pan so that you can distribute it evenly on the brayer.

STEP 3: The next step is to ink the tagboard plate, going in different directions and returning to get more ink on the brayer so that the plate is thoroughly and evenly inked.

❼ **STEP 4:** Once the tagboard plate has been inked, place it (face up) on a clean piece of newspaper and carefully carry it back to your seat (where printing paper is waiting).

STEP 5: When seated, place a piece of printing paper on top of your inked plates. Rub gently on the back of the paper, carefully going over all the areas (including the edges of the plate).

❽ **STEP 6:** Finally, "pull the print" by completely removing the paper from the plate.



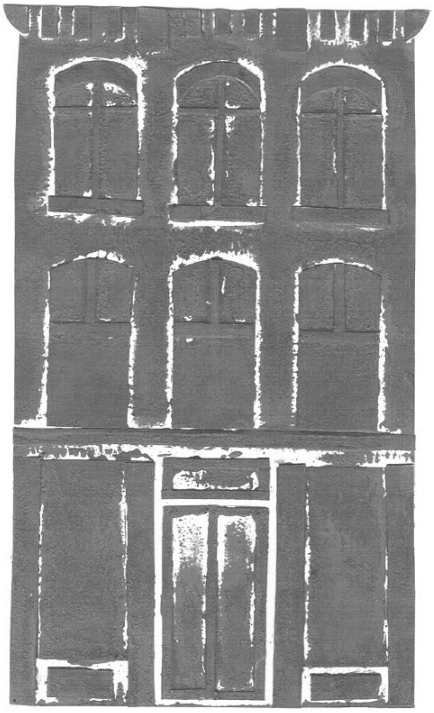
STEP 7: Set the prints aside to dry. You will need one for your Activity Book, one for your portfolio, and one for the classroom "city block" scene.

STEP 8: Use the rubric in your Activity Book to evaluate your own work. Once your prints have dried, you will paste one next to your rubric.

Once the prints of buildings have dried, students will cut them out and attach them to the background paper, forming a group city block.

Suggested Teaching Strategies for Printmaking:

It's likely that the prints will not dry (especially on a rainy day). Be prepared with string (crisscrossing the room) and paper clips or clothes pins.



Inked printing plate

Assign two reliable students to each printing center. Their responsibility will be to

- Be sure there is sufficient ink out for each person;
- Turn pages of the magazine or newspaper (to provide a clean surface for each person);
- Have newspaper ready for students (to take their inked plate back to their seats);
- Keep the printing center tidy, replacing dirty newspapers as needed;
- Clean up the printing center at the end of the period.

Be sure that the students monitoring the printing centers have time to pull their own prints.

Wrap-up Activity (4-3b): Discuss this printing activity and compare it to their previous experience (the Pass-It-On Portrait print). How are the two alike? How are they different? Write responses in the Activity Book.