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## Art Masterpiece: *Persistence of Memory*, 1931 by Salvador Dali

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**Keywords:** Surrealism

**Grade:** 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>  
**Lesson:** Dream Collage



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### Definitions of Surrealistic terms:

- **Dislocation:** Placing an object in unusual or unfamiliar surroundings. (a train coming out of a fireplace)
- **Scale Change:** Changing an object's usual size. (an enormous apple next to a man).
- **Replacement:** Replacing an expected object with an unexpected one. (a car steering wheel that is a clock.)
- **Levitation:** Floating objects, defying gravity. (an Island floating in the air).
- **Juxtaposition:** Joining two images in an impossible combination. (a rock sitting on top of a fragile flower).

**Form of Art: Surrealism.** "Sur" means beyond, so surrealism means "beyond realism". Surrealism is a major artistic movement where artists attempted to represent the world as seen by the unconscious mind. These artworks were inspired by dreams and imagination and usually contained scenes that were very fantasy-like and unreal. Surrealism depicts bizarre images of objects that may be based in reality but the artist has changed them so they look more dream-like. Some of the methods an artist uses to create surrealist art are mentioned above in the definitions.

### **Meet The Artist:**

- Salvador Dali was born in Spain in 1904 (around the time of the invention of the car).
- Had his first drawing lesson at the age of 10. His father was a wealthy business owner who built Dali his own art studio.
- Dali eventually went to study art in Madrid and had his first art show at 21 years old.
- During the next 7 years he became internationally famous for his surrealist art. His

paintings are filled with strange scenes and objects from his imagination or dreams.

- Dali loved attention and was quite a showman. He wore a long curled up mustache. He was notorious for not knowing how to count money. Once he arrived to an event in a limousine filled with cauliflower. Another time he held a lecture wearing a deep-sea diving suit. The helmet was soundproof so while the audience was laughing, he was suffocating because no one could hear his cries for help!
- He loved to shock the public and traveled with his pet ocelots.
- Dali died at the age of 85 and will always be one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most famous and unusual artists.

### ***\*\*The Persistence of Memory, 1931***

Salvador Dali got the idea for this painting after an evening meal when he found himself looking at the remains of runny Camembert cheese. His painting consists of drooping forms of clocks as well as the 'soft self-portrait' melting on rocks underneath it, which he added to a barren landscape. In contrast to these elements of softness are the large rocks and strange blocks in the painting. All that is man-made or human has been conquered by time. In this dream-like artwork, time that is measured by mechanical clocks is not important, as all things human are temporary. When compared with the permanence of the landscape, mechanical measurement of time has no importance. The live ants crawling on the solid clock have been said to suggest our inevitable death. We are all conquered by time. (Rephrased from: Bradbury, K. *Essential Dali*. Bath, U.K.: Paragon, 1999, p. 70)

### **Questions:**

- What adjectives would you use to describe this scene?
- Is this a realistic painting? Why or why not? What makes it surreal? (Dreamlike imagery)

**Review the definition of each form of surrealism and as you go ask the students to show you an example of it in the artwork.**

- Do you see examples of Dislocation? (clocks and square structures in barren wasteland. Dead tree coming out of the square structure.)
- Do you see examples of Scale Change? (large, soft clocks)
- Why do you think the artist titled it *Persistence of Memory*?
- What do you think soft clocks are a symbol of?
- How does this painting make you feel?

## **Activity: Surrealist Collage**

Materials Needed: One sheet (9" X 12") white construction paper, colored pencils or markers, magazine pages, glue, scissors and assortment of landmark templates. (see attached)

**Advanced preparation: Make enough copies of the landmark templates so students can choose 1 from the 4 different landmarks. Each student will only need one landmark.**

### **Process:**

1. Tell the children they will be making their own collage Surrealist picture. Ask them to demonstrate at least two of the surrealist methods (dislocation, scale change, juxtaposition, replacement or levitation) in their artwork.
2. **Write the Surrealistic methods on white board or use Doc-camera.**
3. Students begin by cutting out their landmark template and gluing it on the paper.
4. Using magazines have students cut out 5-6 images to add to the landmark to create a surrealistic collage. Make sure they try to incorporate at least two of the mentioned surrealist elements.
5. Make it a challenge to see if anyone can incorporate them all.
6. With colored pencil or markers they can add color to the landmark and add minor details. Keep drawing to a minimum but work to make sense of the image so it looks like a scene.
7. Have them give their masterpiece a title, and sign it in a bottom corner.

**Art Guide:** Share a few project samples with the students so they can grasp the project better. Create your own OR share the following examples with the class. Ask them if they can find all of the different forms of surrealism discussed in this lesson.



Chandler Unified School District Art Masterpiece

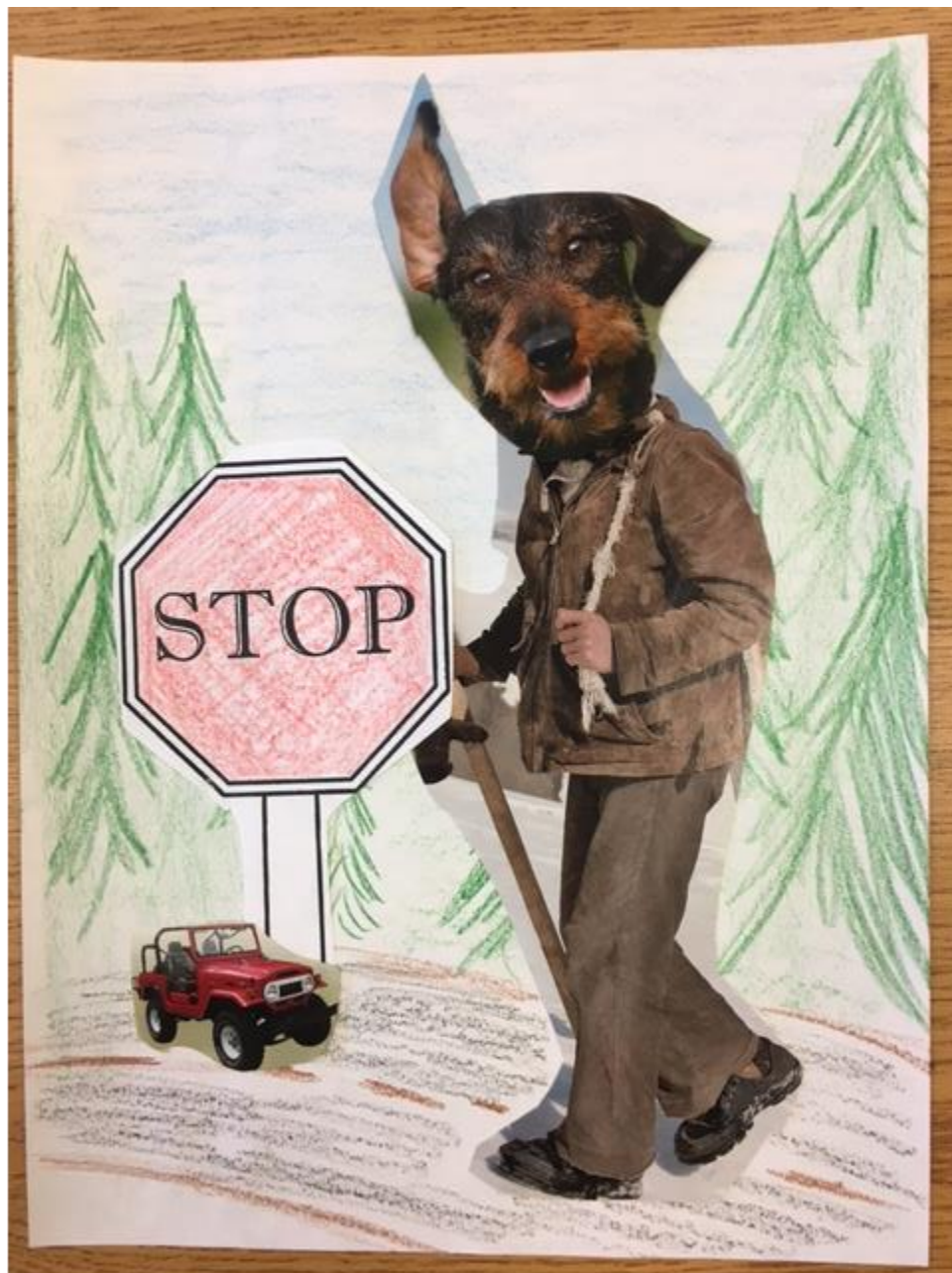


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Add a colorful and simple landscape to complete your Surrealistic collage.

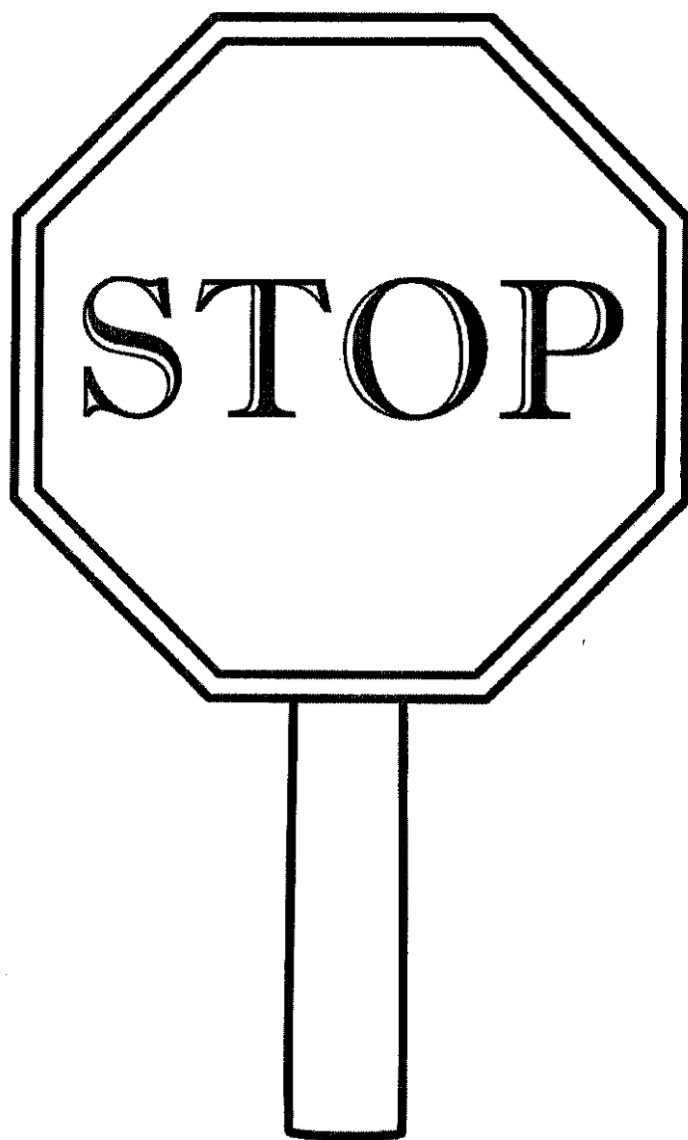


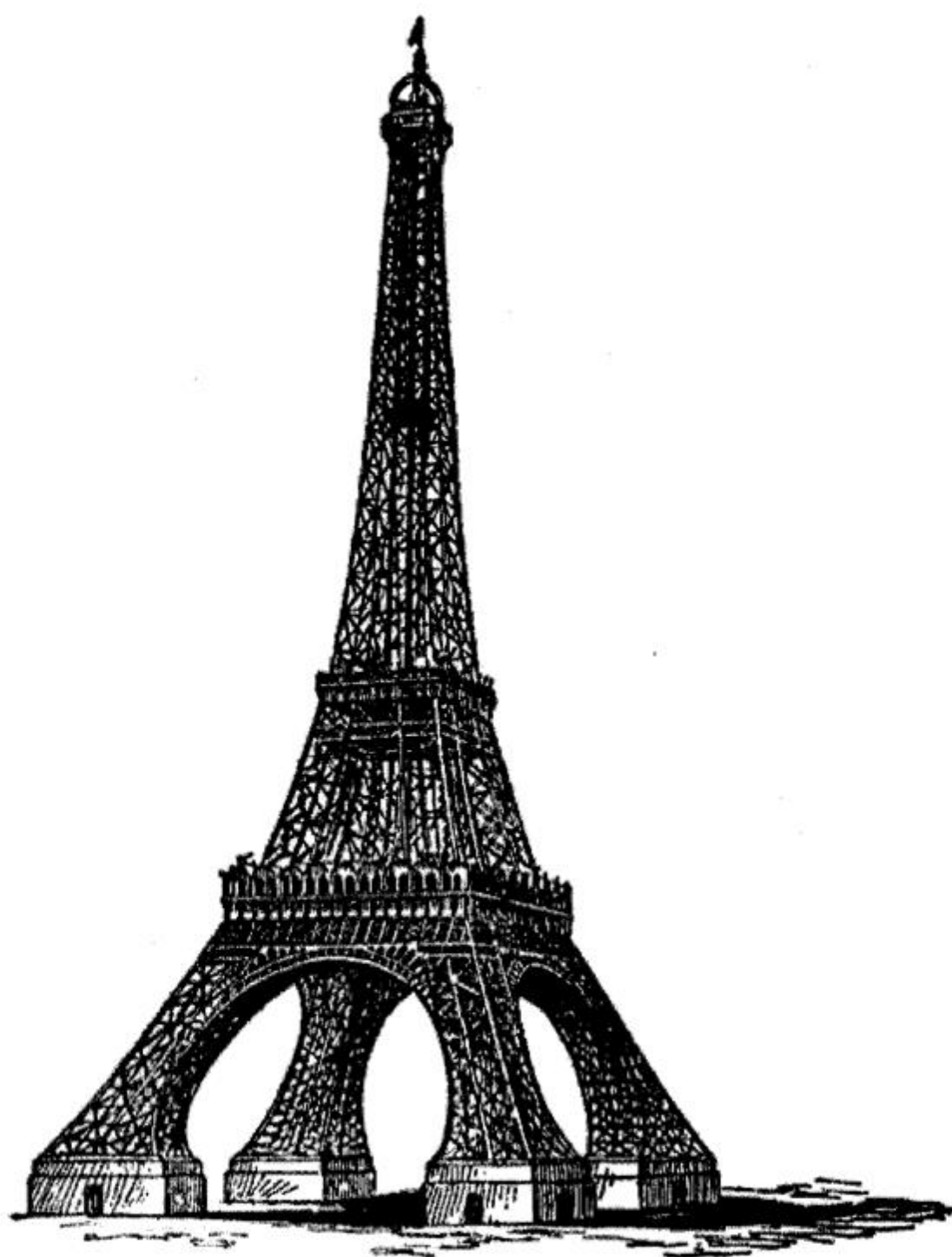


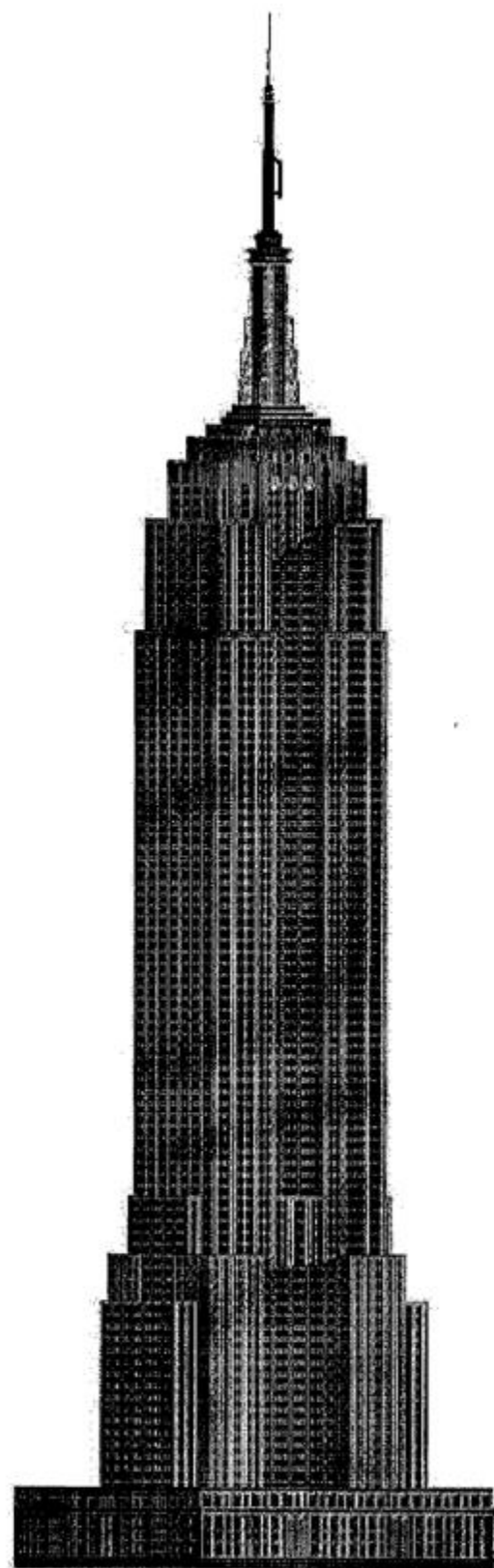
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**Brief info about the artist:** Salvador Dali was born in Spain in 1904. Surrealism is a major artistic movement where artists like Dali attempt to represent the world as seen by the unconscious mind. They often appear dream-like.

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