
Masterpiece: “*Beasts of the Sea*” by Henri Matisse



Pronounced: Ahn-Ree Ma-Teese

Keywords: Positive/ Negative and Abstract

Activity: Paper Collage

Grade: 2cd – 4th

Meet The Artist:

- Henri Matisse was born in France in 1869, around the time the telephone was invented. He lived until he was 84 (he died of a heart attack). His father was a prosperous grain merchant and his mother was an artistic woman who made hats and painted on china. When Henri was young he wanted to be a lawyer so he went to law school.
- At age 21 Henri had appendicitis and while he was bed ridden his mother gave him a paint set. His life changed from that day on. He gave up the idea of being a lawyer and decided to be an artist.
- Matisse went to art school in Paris but didn't like the realistic way he was being taught to paint.
- By 1900 Matisse was known as the leader of the Post-Impressionists. He was also called an Expressionist. Expressionists painted their emotions. He was known for his use of bold bright colors. His approach in his art had not been seen before.
- His critics named him the “King of the Wild Beasts” because of his expressive artwork. He responded by wearing a sheepskin-lined coat inside out to look more “beastly”.
- He was very poor as a young artist, eating only rice, having to resist eating the fruit he bought for his still life paintings. He married and had 3 children. His wife owned a hat shop, and she supported him, making it possible for him to remain an artist. He warmed up his fingers everyday by playing the violin for hours.

- In his later life he made a lot of money as an artist, which was rare in his day.
- He kept tropical birds, letting them fly free in his house.
- In 1941 Matisse underwent a serious operation and was later confined to a wheel chair. Instead of painting he took a pair of scissors and began making his now famous cutouts. With his scissor he carved out shapes like a sculpture. Using bright colors and unusual shapes, the paper shapes he cut out were called the “Positives” and the leftover scraps were called the “Negatives”. He used both in his collage.
- Even though Matisse’s collages were abstract you can see recognizable objects if you look closely. He would repeat similar shapes to create patterns. Or repetition.
 - Matisse liked to collect pieces of patterned fabric when he traveled and would look at the fabric while he painted his pictures.
 - Matisse died in 1954 at the age of 84.

Definitions:

Positive Space – the space of work of art that is filled with something, such as lines, shapes, colors or designs.

Negative Space – the empty space surrounding shapes or forms in a work of art.

Abstract – a style of art in which shapes, designs, textures and colors are represented in a way that may look unrealistic or unrecognizable but they emphasize a mood or feeling. Abstract art is characterized by the use of geometric lines and shapes and bright, bold colors.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Henri’s mom gave him a paint set as a child?
- (bedridden when recovering from an appendectomy.)
- Did this prove to be a valuable gift from his mother? (changed his future)
- Did Henri’s health continue to affect his life in both a positive and negative way?
 - What do you see in this picture? Are the shapes recognizable?
 - What style of art does this represent? (**ABSTRACT**)
 - Can you find the **positive** shapes?
 - And their **negative**?
 - Point out that at times the shape removed allows the background color to create the shape. Backgrounds become part of the design.
 - Why do you think Matisse liked these patterns so much? (HE loved explosive color and shape.)

Activity: Create a positive/negative abstract Collage

Materials Needed: Per student: One 9 x 12 piece of assorted solid construction paper. One 6" x 6" piece of construction paper in assorted colors. Scissors, glue stick.

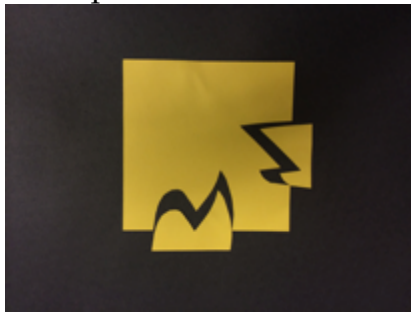
Demonstration:

Ask students to watch you demonstrate the first step. (using doc-camera)
Take the 6" square colored paper and cut an interesting abstract shape out of one side. Lay the 6" square paper on the table and put the cutout piece back into position like a puzzle piece. You will then point out that you will apply glue to the topside of the cut-out shape and then flip it and stick it onto the background to create a positive/negative mirror image. (Students will do this procedure on all four sides).

Special Note: In Japan this form of artistry is called "Notan" meaning the balance between dark and light. Ying/yang.

PROCESS:

1. Allow students to choose their paper. 1 background / 1 square.
2. Now it is the student's turn. They will cut 2-3 geometric and/or organic shapes on each side of their square. The cutouts can be placed in a pile till all sculpting (cutting) is complete.
3. Once done with the cutwork, tell students to paste the square onto the colored background so that it is turned diamond style. This will give room to add the cutouts.
4. Next, have students take their cutouts and put them back into position. Like a puzzle.



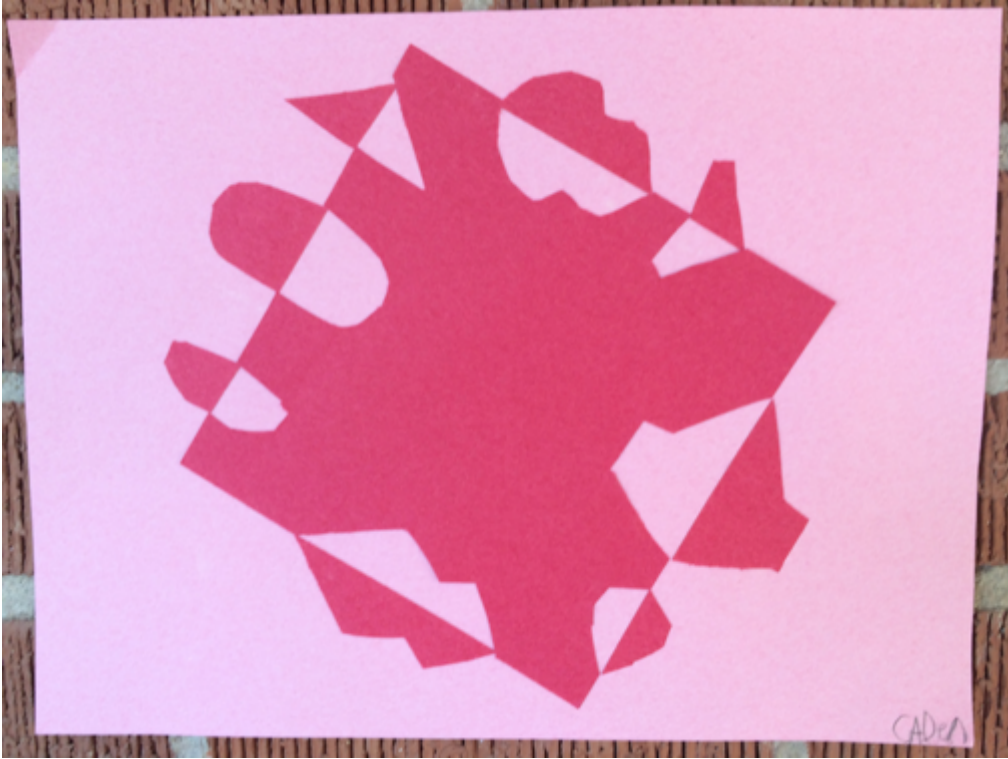
5. Remind them that the side that is facing up is the side that gets the glue applied to it.
6. Once piece at a time apply glue to a cutout and then flip over, align it to the edge of the square and stick it to the background paper.



7. Stress neatness in positioning and gluing the cut pieces onto the paper.



Project sample.



Chandler Unified School District Art Masterpiece

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