# African American Masters

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

January 12, 2005, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

# Table of Contents




Special thanks to Elizabeth Firmage for the digital photography in this packet.

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# African American Masters

Utah Museum of Fine Arts
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## List of Images

1. Russell Talbert Gordon (1936- ), American
***Sunday Noon at Raymond's***, 1974
Colored pencil and watercolor on paper
Purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
Museum # 1974.042

2. Richard Howard Hunt (1935- ), American
***Metamorphic Form***, 1963
Steel
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Jack Sweet
Museum # 1981.031.001
©Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York, New York

3. Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000), American
***Confrontation at the Bridge***, 1975, edition 23/175
Screenprint
Purchased with funds from the Jarman Family Endowment Fund
Museum # 1981.070
© 2004 Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

4. Elizabeth Catlett (1919- ), American
***I Am Sojourner Truth, I Fought For the Rights of Women and Blacks***, 1946, 1989 printing, edition 2/20
Linoleum cut and paper
Purchased with funds from the M. Belle Rice Fund
Museum # 1991.039.006
© Elizabeth Catlett/Licensed by Vaga, New York, NY

5. Raymond Lark (1939-), American
***The March***
Screenprint on paper
Purchased with funds from the Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment for the Acquisition of Twentieth Century Art
Museum # 2002.10.1

6. Romare Bearden (1914-1988), American
***Jazz***, 1979
Etching on paper
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1980.068

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# *Sunday Noon at Raymond's*

**Russell Talbert Gordon (1936- )**

Russell Talbert Gordon (1936- ), American
***Sunday Noon at Raymond's***, 1974
Colored pencil and watercolor on paper
Purchased with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts
Museum # 1974.042
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

Russell Gordon was born in Philadelphia in 1936 where he experimented with different career options. After abandoning a brief career in professional basketball to become an artist, Gordon began by painting what he knew, what he saw around him. He later made the transition from figurative work in printmaking to acrylics on canvas painting everyday objects, often exploring cubist and Renaissance spatial conventions. Gordon often used closely-toned deep acrylic colors in large scale paintings.

His ambiguous, associative titles are of primary importance to Gordon, and in fact are the starting point in his creative process. "When I make a painting, I have a title already. Titles come from everywhere: music, conversations, books, something I heard on the radio or saw on TV. I often start with a musical phrase; I'll play a record over and over again, and the strength of a phrase will trigger an association, and then I transpose that into formal components." Like music, his paintings have a strong sense of mood, created primarily through his use of color and color relationships. Also like music, particularly jazz, his paintings contain the intellectual and emotional force of multiple layers of meaning.

*-Compiled by Rebbecca Hull,*
*excerpted from* Russell T. Gordon: I look at What I Think; I Hear What I See,
*by Sylvia Brown, 1982*

# Rules of Design and Composition with Inspiration

## An art lesson plan for *Sunday Noon at Raymond's* written by Jo Bradbury

**Objective:**
Using *Sunday Noon at Raymond's* as inspiration, students will learn the rules of design and composition by creating a collage. They will also experiment in creative titles written ahead of time.

**State core links:**
**Objective A**
Explore a variety of art media, techniques, and processes.

-Experiment with a variety of media, including current arts-related technologies.
-Experience the expressive possibilities of art media, techniques, and processes.
-Practice safe and responsible use of art media, equipment, and studio space.

**Objective B**
Create works of art that show the use of the art elements and principles.

-Create expressive works of art using art elements, including line, shape, form, value, and color.
-Create expressive works of art using the art principles, including balance, repetition, color relationships, and emphasis, to organize the art elements.

**Objective A**
Align works of art according to history, geography, and personal experience.

-Use visual characteristics to group artworks into historical, social, and cultural contexts; e.g., cubist views
-Use visual characteristics to group artworks into historical, social, and cultural contexts; e.g., cubist views of the Egyptians, tenebrism of the Baroque.
-Analyze the impact of culture on works of art
-Evaluate own relationship with artworks from various periods in history

**Materials:**
This collage activity will require the use of stiff paper such as Bristol or watercolor paper cut into 11" x 14" sheets. Additional stiff paper such as Bristol board or cardstock will be needed in 8" x 10" sheets, for the collage elements. You will need watercolors, colored pencils, rulers, graphite pencils and glue.

**Activity:**
1. **Discuss:** When Russell Gordon created this series of artwork, he said he liked to name his pieces before he ever created them, using inspiration from music titles, something he heard on the radio, or read in the newspaper. To integrate their own lives with their artwork, have the stu-

dents create their titles first.
2. Using the big piece of watercolor paper and the rulers, students will measure out 1 inch squares in a grid across their paper.
3. They will then fill in every other square with their choice of watercolor, making a checkerboard surface across the entire paper.
4. Then, on the cardstock, they would draw and cut out five organic objects and three geometric objects. These can be anything they want that correlates with their pre-chosen title, to echo the shapes of the flower and the eggs Gordon used on his piece.
5. **Discuss:** With the class, talk about the rules of placement when composing a piece. Show a sample grid with pre-cut pieces and explain design and composition rules, (i.e. the Golden Mean, leading the eye into the picture plane and keeping it there, avoiding tangents, and cluttering, scale, etc.) By moving the piece around on the paper, students will see how important placement on the page is for different objects. Explain that putting an organic object on the grid diagonally will create interest. Also, discuss repetition of shape, line quality, and other elements and principles.
6. Then, have the students cut out and color their own objects and collage them onto the grid in a compositionally pleasing manner, in correlation with the previously mentioned rules.
7. Using the glue, they will attack their objects onto the picture plane.

**Assessment:**
Students will write the title on a card and place it next to their piece, then display the art around the room. As a class, discuss the design strengths and weaknesses in a critique. Also discuss how the title influenced students' choices of objects

**Sources:**
For referencing design elements and principles, see:

Ocvirk, Stinson, Wigg, Bone, Cayton. *Art fundamentals, Ninth Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002

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# *Metamorphic Form*

**Richard Howard Hunt (1935 - )**

Richard Howard Hunt (1935- ), American
***Metamorphic Form***, 1963
Steel
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Jack Sweet
Museum # 1981.031.001
©Courtesy ACA Galleries, New York, New York
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

Richard Hunt is a recognized American sculptor and a distinguished printmaker. Richard was born in Chicago on September 12, 1935. He and his sisters grew up in a small, urban community. His parents were hard-working; his father was a barber and his mother a beautician. Both encouraged Richard to pursue his artistic ambitions, beginning at a very young age. He took a high school class in sculpture and realized that he wanted to learn more about this form of expression. He studied at the Art Institute of Chicago in a junior group and continued to progress over the years. Later he taught at the Art Institute.

Although many of the well-known sculptors from all different periods have had an impact on his work, he was most profoundly influenced by the welded sculpture of the Spanish artist, Julio Gonzalez. Gonzalez's unique method of working with steel and iron excited Hunt and inspired him to create a number of works such as this one. Hunt's aim has been to draw in space and create movement using his typical three-dimensional work.

Although his work is usually described as abstract, it always makes some reference to the human figure or to plant and animal forms. Hunt himself refers to his style as organic abstraction because it is a combination of geometric shapes and organic objects drawn from sources in nature or built in the environment. In this, his style has strong connection with the biomorphic forms of Surrealism. He has stated, "It is my intention to develop the kinds of forms nature might create if only heat and steel were available to her." This idea is seen in many of his works, which even show fantastic creatures moving about in an imaginary landscape.

*-Written by Rebecca Hull*

# Finding Form in Nature

## A fine arts lesson plan for *Metamorphic Form*
## Written by Megan Hallett

**Objective:**
By closely examining Hunt's work and discussing methods for generating inspiration from nature and the world around us, students will develop a method for creating abstract forms for both two-dimensional and three-dimensional artwork.
The focus of this lesson plan will be developing a method for producing artwork that incorporates elements of design inspired by man-made and natural found objects. The goal will be to provide students with a creative method for generating mark-making and sculptural forms for use in various approaches to materials and art making.

1. Students will discuss their initial reactions to non-objective vs. objective artwork prior to any lesson plans.
2. Students will learn the basics of distinguishing non-objective and objective visual imagery and identifying the blending of these two approaches in *Metamorphic Form*.
3. Students will discuss the title of the sculpture and how it might inform the content of the sculpture.
4. Students will experiment with progressive renderings which interpret an object in a series of variations ranging from specific to abstract.
5. Students will work independently to create a finished work inspired by the Hunt sculpture and class exploration.
6. Students will examine the results of the process and discuss the effect this procedure has had on the way they now view Hunt's sculpture and the effect this process might have on their own future artistic projects.

**State Core Standards:**
4th – 6th Grades - Visual Arts, Standards 1,2,3
Secondary Core- Visual Arts Foundations Standards 1,2

**Discussion:**
The discussion sets the stage for considering various methods for generating artwork and the ways in which seemingly abstract work is derived from recognizable objects both natural and man-made.

1. Ask for initial response to Hunt's work.
    - -To start off have a few kids tell you what they see, continue until they have provided a good visual inventory of the artwork.
    - -Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers, you want to know if they like it or not, why or why not, have they ever made something like it?
    - -Discuss what the artists' goals might have been. Do you think that he was trying to make a "realistic" portrayal of something? Why or why not?
    - -What emotion do you think the artwork carries? What elements of the sculpture appear to be figurative references? How would you feel differently about the piece if it were positioned more upright and straight up and down?

2. Investigate the title of the artwork, *Metamorphic Form*. Write the definition of metamorphic on the board:

**metamorphic**\Met`a*morph"ic\, adj. 1: Of or pertaining to metamorphosis (especially rocks); "metamorphic stage"; "marble is a metamorphic rock that takes a high polish" [syn: metamorphous] 2: characterized by metamorphosis or change in physical form or substance.

-Discuss what this title implies about the sculpture. Is the artist telling us that this form is in a process of metamorphosis? If so, what do you think it is changing into? How does the way in which Hunt abstracts the sculpture increase the meaning or symbolic con tent of the work? Ask how it would be different. . .
-Investigate other examples of symbols and metamorphic processes in the student's experience, their home experience or in the classroom.

**Sketching Activity:**
This activity is progressive, utilizing sketches, viewfinders, and copy machines to help the students explore and experiment with abstracting recognizable objects.

3. Ask students to do some outdoor exploration and bring into class a few different objects from nature that appeal to them. Suggest that they look for flowers, leaves, grasses, seedpods, bark or rocks that have interesting form or texture. Ask them to bring in as "complete" an object as possible, as they will be further breaking it down and will want to start with a lot of specific information.
4. Give each student four pieces of sketch paper, all the same format. Have them number the pieces of paper on the back.
5. Give them each 4 strips of mat board and have them tape the pieces together into a window or viewfinder of their choice, they can create a perfect square, diamond, or whatever shape suits them.

6. **Five drawings**

-**First drawing**- Ask students to use their first piece of paper to do a drawing of the object of their choice. They should make it as large and as detailed drawing as possible, filling the page. Discussion- What did they like/dislike about this initial step in the process? Were they satisfied with their renderings? How closely did their drawing resemble the object? Were they still intrigued by the object they had chosen?

-**Second Drawing**- Using the viewfinder that they have created, the students will move the opening around their first drawing, until they find an area of the drawing that appeals to them. Using the information available to them in the viewfinder, they will fill their second page. They can either enlarge the cropped bit of sketch to fill their second page, or they can develop a repetitive design with the information in order to fill the second page.
Discussion- What did they like about the section that they chose? When looking at this small section could they still see evidence of their original object of inspiration? What about in this second drawing?

-**Third Drawing**- Using the viewfinder, have the students choose a section from their first drawing again. They need to ink this section. Use a copy machine to change the scale of the section they have inked, increasing the scale by 50% or more if it seems appropriate. Have the stu-

dents use this enlarged copy to inspire their fourth drawing. At this point give them instructions to start experimenting with adding additional shapes, lines or texture to the overall drawing. But they must use some of the information from their original drawing, which you have enlarged.

**Discussion:**
How much do the drawings still look alike? Have they chosen to add anything new to their drawings? If so how did they decide? Is their drawing starting to look like something else? Ask the entire class to comment on the drawings as a whole and attempt to generate ideas about what some of them might be starting to resemble. Remind the class that this is similar to looking at clouds to see what objects they resemble. One way to do this and generate class participation is to tape drawings up across board. Then let the students go up and write a word that it reminds them of or that they see in it on a list underneath the drawing.

-**Fourth Drawing**- At this point students will do a finished drawing inspired by any part of the process. They might alter the scale of their original, blend the rendering of their original with something else that they think or their classmates have suggested it looks like, or do a more or less detailed rendering of any of the previous three steps.

**Sculpting activity:**
Students will work independently using the Richard Howard Hunt artwork, their original object, and their four sketches as inspiration to produce a clay sculpture.

**Final Group Discussion:**
As a class discuss the process that the students have gone through. Display all of the work simultaneously, the original objects that they brought in, the drawings, and the clay sculptures. Discuss the ways in which the pieces in each group do or do not resemble each other. Ask for feedback on the process. Did they enjoy it? Are there any steps that they want to repeat as a way to make artwork in the future?

**Assessment:**
Assess the students based on their level of participation in the activities, their attitude towards experimenting, and their involvement in the discussions.

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# *Confrontation at the Bridge*

Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000), American
***Confrontation at the Bridge***, 1975, edition 23/175
Screenprint
Purchased with funds from the Jarman Family Endowment Fund
Museum # 1981.070

Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

## Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000)

Jacob Lawrence absorbed the lessons of modernism in the classes he took during the mid 1930's at the Harlem Community Center. Jointly sponsored by the College Art Association and the Federal Art Project of the Works Projects Administration, the offerings included classes in painting, drawing, and sculpture with an emphasis on technical training in each case. As Lawrence concentrated on painting, he developed an austere, direct style of strong, simple shapes and intense primary colors. He was determined to use his artistic skills to call attention to the past realities of slavery without resorting to sentimentalized idealizations of the black experience. He used the term "dynamic cubism" to describe his work, although his figures are often static and his compositions controlled. There is no doubt, however, that he had developed sufficient mastery of the modernist language to allow him to depict racial violence and cruelty with a pathos that emphasizes the human dignity of his subjects. Lawrence also absorbed much of the philosophy that dominated artistic endeavor during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, and was particularly influenced by art critic and Rhodes scholar Alan Locke who said: "There is in truly great art no essential conflict between racial or national traits and universal human values."

In 1960 Lawrence was elected to the American Academy of the Arts, and received an appointment to the faculty of Pratt Institute in New York. At the same time he turned his attention to Civil Rights themes, casting his earlier depictions of the brutality of slavery in contemporary narratives of localized violence. One of these, *Confrontation at the Bridge*, depicts an incident that took place on March 7, 1965 when a group of activists in Alabama began a protest march from Selma to the State's Capitol in Montgomery in support of voting rights for all citizens. Stopped at the Edmund Pettus Bridge by local and state police with Billy clubs and tear gas, they were forced to turn back.

Lawrence's work, like that of Elizabeth Catlett, is a powerful visual expression of a collective national experience in the history of human rights.

*-Written by Mary Francey*

# Dynamic Cubism

## A Lesson Plan for *Confrontation at the Bridge*
## Written by Tiya Karaus

**Objectives:**
Students will understand the historical context of the print "Confrontation at the Bridge".

Students will create a scene, in the style of Jacob Lawrence, in which they faced confrontation.

**State core links:**
Standard 3- Expressing
Students will create meaning in art.
Objective A Create content in works of art.
-Identify subject matter, themes, and content in works of art.
-Create works of art that show subject matter, themes, or individually conceived content.
-Express subject matter, themes, or content through applications of art media and by applying the art elements and principles.

**Materials:**
scratch paper
pencils
construction paper
scissors
glue

**Initiation:**
Ask students to describe what they see in the postcard of *Confrontation at the Bridge*.

This is Jacob Lawrence's interpretation of an historic event, which took place on March 7th, 1965. At that time African-Americans could vote although very few actually did. In order to vote they had to register at an office, which was usually quite far from where they worked and lived. To make matters more difficult the voter registration offices often opened late, closed early, and the administrators took long lunches. Besides overcoming these logistics, African-Americans had to take a test before being issued a voter card. In the 1960's many people worked to help more African-Americans register to vote. They often drew attention to their cause by organizing marches. There had been several marches in and around Selma, Alabama. Some had turned violent and a man, Jimmie Lee Jackson, was shot while he tried to protect his mother. At Mr. Jackson's funeral someone made the off-handed comment that a march should be organized from Selma all the way to the state capitol in Montgomery. This idea was seized upon and plans were made for the fifty-four mile march from Selma to Montgomery.

The march started on March 7th, 1965 as the civil rights activists proceeded to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. It was there on the bridge that the police and state troopers confronted the marchers. The Governor had ordered that the march be stopped and the police soon used tear gas and Billy clubs to attack the unarmed crowd. The protesters were beaten back across the bridge and all the way back to the church that was the starting point of the march. The march was so violent that it became known as "Bloody Sunday".

Images of the violence against the protesters attracted the attention of many more people sympathetic to the cause. Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. became involved in reorganizing the march. The activists remained committed to non-violence, yet sought to find a way to protect their fellow marchers. They applied for a court order that would prohibit the police from using violence against the marchers. A judgment on the court order was delayed in order to hold additional hearings. Meanwhile hundreds of supporters were streaming into Selma and march organizers were eager to have another march. Without the court order it was determined that they would go as far as the bridge and turn around. Many of the people marching however were not aware of the organizers' plans and where surprised and disappointed by the abbreviated march. That evening a white minister, James Reeb, who participated in the march, was clubbed outside of a whites-only hangout. He died before reaching the hospital in Birmingham. This drew even more of the nation's attention to the march in Selma.

On March 21st the protesters set out once again from Selma. The 25,000 people involved in the march reached Montgomery in five days.

Now that you are familiar with the history behind this print, why do you think Jacob Lawrence has the marchers confronted by snarling dogs instead of the police?

**Further Initiation Activities**:

There are a couple excellent biographies of Jacob Lawrence.

*Jacob Lawrence- American Scenes, American Struggles* by Nancy Shroyer Howard
This is a great book that can accommodate the needs of students of any age. The book designates "quick activities", "further exploration", and "projects" with the colors red, yellow and green respectively.

*Story Painter – The Life of Jacob Lawrence* by John Duggleby
This book is best suited for fifth grade and above. It contains a comprehensive biography, which is supplemented by examples of his work. There are also photographs and quotations from prominent contemporaries of Lawrence like Langston Hughes and Martin Luther King Jr.

**Project:**

1. Jacob Lawrence drew on the history of African-Americans and his own history in his paintings. Have students look again at the postcard of *Confrontation at the Bridge*, and ask them to think about confrontations they have faced in their own lives. Give students two minutes to list confrontations on a scratch piece of paper. Ask them to think about times they overcame fears and challenges. What obstacles have they faced? (If students are having difficulty coming up with ideas, asking a few students to share their lists with the class may spark some ideas.) (See example 1)
2. Next students should look at their lists and choose just one confrontation to illustrate.
3. Students should spend some time (10 minutes or so) sketching out their scene on a scratch piece of paper. (Focus on the body language on people in the scene to portray emotion.) (See example 2)
4. Jacob Lawrence painted in a style, which he called "dynamic cubism." His paintings often used bold primary colors. Have students look again at *Confrontation on the Bridge*, they'll notice how simplified the forms of the people are. They will use elements of Jacob Lawrence's style in this project. Soon they will be cutting shapes out of construction paper to make their scene. With this in mind, have students look at their sketches and see if there are shapes within their scenes. Students should draw these shapes over their sketches. (See example 3). This will save time as they begin cutting paper, it will also simplify their compositions.

5. Have students choose a colored piece of construction paper as their background. (Keep in mind the way color can affect the mood of the picture.)
6. Next they should cut of pieces construction paper to compose their scenes. Cut the large pieces first and then add details with smaller pieces.
7. Be sure that all the pieces are glued securely.

Example 1

List of Confrontations

Jumping off high diving board at the pool
Going to first soccer practice with a new team
Flying on an airplane with just my brother
First night at summer camp
——— *Saying goodbye to my cat before she was put to sleep* ———

Example 2

Example 1

List of confrontations:

Jumping off high diving board at the pool
Going to first soccer practice with a new team
Flying on an airplane with just my brother
First night at summer camp
——— Saying goodbye to my cat before she was put to sleep

Example 2

**Assessment:**
See attached rubric

Dynamic Cubism Rubric

Complete

| 5 points | 4 points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Picture is finished | | Picture is partly finished | | Picture is not finished |

Portrays Emotion

| 5 points | 4 points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Emotion is clearly expressed in the picture | | Emotion is somewhat expressed in the picture | | Emotion is not expressed in the picture |

Dynamic Cubism

| 5 points | 4 points | 3 points | 2 points | 1 point |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Simple shapes and bold colors are used | | Either simple shapes or bold colors are used | | Neither simple shapes nor bold colors are used |

15 points

**Sources:**
http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al4.htm
Selma-to-Montgomery March –National Historic Trail & All-American Road
This site contains information on the march along with photos of the bridge and marchers.

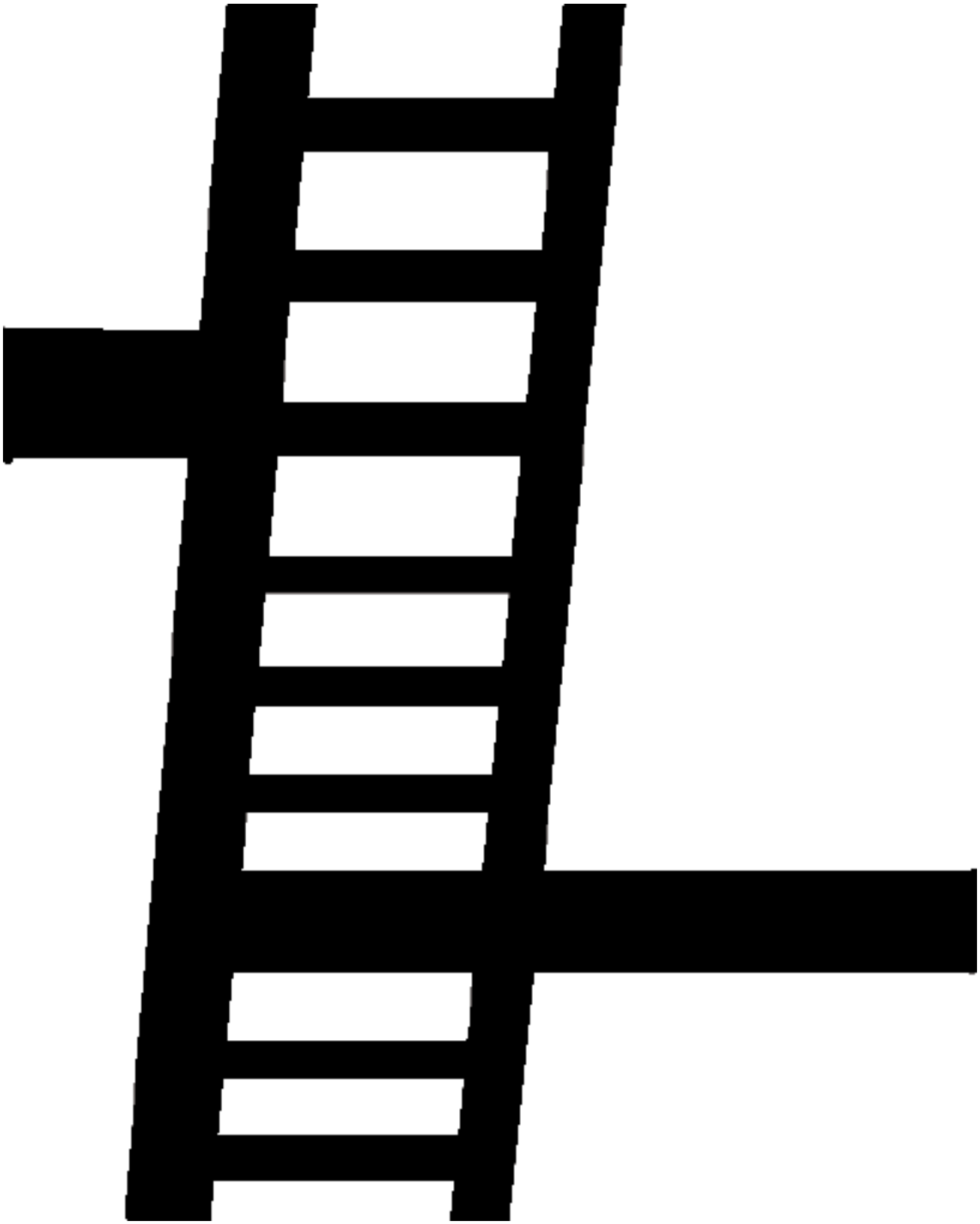
http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/selma.html
Welcome to African American History
This site contains detailed information on the Selma to Montgomery March and a variety of other civil rights topics as well as information on African American history from the Dred Scott Case through school integration.

http://www.usdoj.gov/kidspage/crt/voting.htm

Voting Rights
This site contains information on the Voting Rights Act of 1965. It mentions the Selma to Montgomery march and has a photograph of the bridge.

**Variations:**
For younger students a template of the bridge in *Confrontation at the Bridge* is attached. This may be photocopied for students to add themselves and a depiction of something they have confronted.

**Extensions:**
This project lends itself well to further exploration of African American history and the civil rights movement. Topics from the Montgomery Bus Boycotts, to the Freedom Riders, to Sit-ins, to the Voting Rights Act of 1965 may be explored in greater detail.



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# *In Sojourner Truth, I Fought For the Rights of Women and Blacks*

Elizabeth Catlett (1919- ), American
***I Am Sojourner Truth, I Fought For the Rights of Women and Blacks***, 1946, 1989 printing, edition 2/20
Linoleum cut and paper
Purchased with funds from the M. Bell Rice Fun
Museum # 1991.039.006

Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

## Elizabeth Catlett (1919- )

In a characterization of herself, Elizabeth Catlett stated that first she is black, second she is a woman, and third she is an artist. The linoleum cut series, first done in 1946-47 as *I am a Negro Woman* was re-printed in 1989 when the title was changed to: *I am a Black Woman*. Funded by a Julius Rosenfeld Fellowship, this series was a significant assertion of the black American woman as subject for strong social statements. Engaged in domestic duties, fieldwork, intellectual endeavor, and heroic endeavor, Catlett's women include Harriet Tubman, Phyllis Wheatley, and Sojourner Truth as well as anonymous women whose contributions may have been unnoticed, but nevertheless were important in the struggle for equality.

Due to the racial discrimination Catlett encountered in 1947 when she, along with other artists, were driven into seclusion during the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings, she moved to Mexico. Once there she began working at the *Taller de Grafica Popular*, and associated with Diego Rivera and David Sisqieros. Linoleum cuts, she said, were suitable for public art, and the artists at the *Taller de Grafica* were directly concerned with the social programs established by the Mexican government, particularly the anti-illiteracy program. She makes her work available in non-established art spaces where it is accessible to black working people, and she continues to "….try to bring art to my people and to bring my people to art as I recognize my debt and our need. There has to be something for us outside the mainstream, and something of our lives we can offer to others."

Artists such as Elizabeth Catlett and Jacob Lawrence are essential figures in the struggle of ethnic and racial societies for aesthetic recognition, adding a necessary dimension to western cultural history.

*-Written by Mary Francey*

# Elizabeth Catlett Lesson Plan

**Written by Jennifer Opton**

"*I have always wanted my art to service my people - to reflect us, to relate to us, to stimulate us, to make us aware of our potential.*"

-Elizabeth Catlett

Elizabeth Catlett could never be described as simply an artist. She said of herself that first she is black, second she is a woman, and third, she is an artist. Catlett not only created art she created political statements.

She was born on April 15, 1915 in Washington, DC. Three of her grandparents were slaves and she was proud of her slave heritage. She grew up in a time of uncertainty for African Americans. Throughout her life, like other African Americans of her time, she experienced racial discrimination. She was denied entrance into Carnegie Institute of Technology because of her race, but she would not let that stop her. She enrolled in Howard University, an African American college, for which she graduated with honors in 1937 with a masters in fine arts. From there she went to the University of Iowa where she continued to study art. While she was there she was encouraged to experiment with different forms of art media and to make art about what she knew best. She took this advice and created lithographs, linoleum cuts, and sculpture in wood, stone, clay and bronze, all based on African American life. She focused on creating art that conveyed the way that African Americans lived, worked, thought and felt. In 1940 she was the first person to graduate with a Masters in Fine Arts from the University of Iowa.

In 1946, Catlett won a Julius Rosenwald Fellowship, which made it possible for her to go to Mexico and study art. While in Mexico she found other artists who were trying to create social change in their own county, they were called The People's Graphic Art Workshop. The PGAW used linoleum blocks because they were inexpensive and worked well for mass distribution of prints. Catlett used this method in her own work and created *I Am the Black Woman Series* in 1946 and 1947.

The *Black Woman Series* has fifteen linocuts, which celebrate the historic oppression, resistance, survival, and achievements of African American women. In *I Am Sojourner Truth...*, Catlett shows the well-known orator standing before an open bible pointing up towards the sky. Sojourner Truth was born Isabella Van Wagener in Ulster County, New York. She was a slave for many years and when she was freed in 1843 she started preaching. Sojourner Truth was an amazing woman, she spoke eloquently and with passion even though she was illiterate. She spoke out for the rights of all women before there was a major Feminists movement.

While many of the other linocuts in the *Black Woman Series* portray famous black women like Harriet Tubman and Phyllis Wheatley, several depict ordinary black women in their everyday lives. Catlett wanted to show people what it was like to be a black woman, whether she was working the fields, in church or the focus of discrimination and humiliation.

Taken together, the titles of all 15 works form a poem about the lives of African-American women in America. Below is the poem that accompanies the *Black Woman Series*.

*I am the black woman*
*I have always worked hard in America.*
*In the fields,*
*In other folks' homes.*
*I have given the world my songs.*

*I'm Sojourner Truth, I fought for the rights of women as well as blacks.*
*I'm Phillis Wheatley, I proved intellectual equality in the midst of slavery.*
*I'm Harriet Tubman, I helped hundred to freedom.*
*My role has been important in the struggle to organize the unorganized.*
*But there are bars between me and the rest of the land.*
*I have special reservations,*
*Special houses,*
*And a fear for my loved ones.*
*My right is a future of equality with other Americans.*

**Objective:**
Catlett's work makes a perfect starting point for students to study the Civil War or the Civil Rights Movement. Students will study the struggles of African Americans during and after slavery and how those events led to the Civil Rights Movement and the continued fight for equality. February is Black History Month and would make a perfect time to study Catlett and her influence on history, politics and art.

**State Core Links:**
Social Studies: Grade 5 Standard 5.

**Materials:**
Catlett's *In Sojourner Truth...*, other pieces of *The Negro Woman Series*, and research materials about African American history.

**Activity:**
First, decide on either the Civil War era or the Civil Rights Movement. You could also have half the class do one and the other half do the other. Second, have the students pick a person, legislation, city, or organization from the specific era. Some of the possible choices are listed below. After the students have chosen their topic have them research on the internet or by checking out books in the library. Tell them that they will need to know dates, places, people and other interesting facts about their topic. The students should write a two page paper about the significance of their topic and give a short presentation to the rest of the class. Each student will be educating the rest of the class about their topic; they will be the teacher for a few minutes.

| | |
|---|---|
| Martin Luther King, Jr. | John F. Kennedy |
| Malcolm X | Lyndon B. Johnson |
| Harriet Tubman | The Voting Rights Act |
| President Abraham Lincoln | George Washington Carver |
| Brown v. Board of Education | The Harlem Renaissance |
| Frederick Douglass | Rosa Parks |
| W.E.B. DuBois | Montgomery, Alabama |
| NAACP | The Little Rock Nine |
| Booker T. Washington | Thurgood Marshall |
| Fourteenth Amendment | Langston Hughes |
| Civil Rights Act of 1875, 1957, 1960 | Freedom Riders |
| The SCLC | Lunch counter sit-ins |
| Negro Baseball League | The March on Washington |

**Assessment:**

Use the rubric below to grade your students' papers and presentations.

Paper- The goal of the paper is the work on the student's writing skills and ability to research and find pertinent material.

Complete

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 points The student turns in two full pages of written text. | 4 points | 3 points The students turns in on full page of written text | 2 points | 1 point The student turns in less than half a page of written text. |

Neat Appearance

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 points Very neat and careful cursive | 4 points | 3 points written in cursive | 2 points | 1 point Not in cursive and appears very little time was spent |

Context

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 points The paper contains all dates, places, people, and relevant events | 4 points | 3 points The paper contains many of the important dates, places, and people | 2 points | 1 point The paper contains no relevant information |

Presentation- The primary goals are to work on presentation skills and informing the class of the researched topic.

Context

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 points The student gave interesting and important information to the rest of the class | 4 points | 3 points The students gave some interesting facts about his or her topic | 2 points | 1 point The student said very little about his or her topic |

Overall Presentation

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 points The student spoke clearly, read very little, and made eye contact | 4 points | 3 points The student spoke clearly but read the entire speech | 2 points | 1 point The student read (out loud) very little |

_____

25 Points in Total 20

**Sources:**
http://www.nmwa.org/collection/profile.asp?LinkID=129
http://www.sculpture.org/documents/catlett/cat_special.htm
http://www.kn.pacbell.com/wired/BHM/AfroAm.html
www.blackhistory.com

**Variations:**
You can make this lesson fit fifth grade and above. All of the above topics have the ability to go in depth. For high school students this would be a good assignment for students to learn to write longer papers, five to ten pages in length. African American history is a very important part of American history, and is important for all students to learn.

# African American Masters

Utah Museum of Fine Arts
Evening for Educators
January 12, 2005, 5:30-8:30 pm

## *The March*

**Raymond Lark (1939- )**

Raymond Lark (1939-), American
***The March***
Screenprint on paper
Purchased with funds from the Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment for the Acquisition of Twentieth Century Art
Museum # 2002.10.1
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

American painter, draftsman, watercolorist, and printmaker, Raymond Lark was born to Bertha Lark, a domestic worker in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on June 16, 1939. He rose from a shoe shine boy, farm laborer, junk man, and unskilled factory worker to become a successful artist.

As a young child, Dr. Lark demonstrated talent in the arts. At four years old he began to create works inspired by the experiences around him. Through trips to the Philadelphia Museum of Art, his desires to pursue art were solidified. Dr. Lark sought formal art training to make his dream of becoming an influential artist a reality.

He was educated at Temple University Evening College, Dobbins Vocational Night School and St. John's Night College and received his Doctorate from the University of Colorado. He continued his artistic training by studying technical illustration at Los Angeles Trade Technical College as he also prepared to earn a living in the commercial world in order to devote time, eventually, to his passion for drawing and painting.

Lark's emergence as an artist coincided with the vigor and energy of the modern civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1967, Lark joined Art West Associated (AWA), a black arts organization in Los Angeles and San Francisco that promoted cultural discussion, organized educational programs, and campaigned for recognition and participation in mainstream art institutions.

Like his dedication to education, his community service commitment has similarly endured to the present and has powerfully influenced the thematic development of his own artwork. By 1971, he decided to pursue his artistic career fully.

*-Compiled by Rebecca Hull, excerpted from* AskArt, www.askart.com

# "When You Pray, Move Your Feet"

## Using Raymond Lark's *The March* to explore the Civil Rights movement and the struggle for African-American voting rights

**Written by Kim Nusco**

As one of the most important and tumultuous epochs in United States history, the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and 1960s presents opportunities to not only examine the events that transformed our society, but to explore broader issues of citizenship and social justice.

Because such a rich culture developed around the civil rights movement, artwork created during or inspired by this period provides a useful tool for initiating and deepening discussions of the goals, methods, and outcomes of civil rights activities. In this lesson, Raymond Lark's piece, *The March,* is used to introduce an analysis of civil rights protest tactics, focusing on one specific example of protest—the series of marches from Selma, Alabama in 1965. Initiated in response to the struggle to attain equal access to voter registration for African Americans in the South, the Selma marches captured the attention of the nation when images of protesters brutally confronted by police aired on public television. Outrage at the violence drew the support of the public to the protesters' cause, and is largely credited with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in August 1965.

This discussion is designed to accompany the content of secondary-level history textbooks. To provide additional information about the Selma marches, an article from the Library of Congress' American Memory project has been provided [see end of lesson plan or go to the American Memory web site, at http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/mar07.html.]

**Objectives:**

1. Students will use an example of visual art to explore representations and perceptions of the civil rights movement in the United States.

2. Students will examine the causes, events, and outcomes of one significant episode in the civil rights movement—the series of marches from Selma, Alabama and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

3. Students will examine examples of citizens' actions for civil rights, both historically and in response to current events.

4. Students will discuss the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, using the issue of African Americans' voting rights as one example of the struggle for equal participation in American society.

6. Students will consider the impact of artwork and other representations on the effectiveness and perceptions of social movements.

**Utah State Core Standards** [Grades 9-12]:

Social Studies – U. S. History II, Standard 9, Objective 1
Social Studies - U.S. Government & Citizenship, Standards 2, 4
Social Studies - American Government and Law, Standard 7

**Introduction:**
Display or distribute copies of Raymond Lark's "The March" and initiate discussion with the following suggested questions:

- What is the subject of this piece? What kind of march do you think this is? Can you tell if the artist intends to represent a specific event?
- What is the mood of this piece [celebratory? tense? etc.]? How does the artist create this impression?
- How would you describe the central figure? What kind of person does he seem to be? What do you base your opinion on?
- What kinds of people seem to be in the crowd in the background? Why do you think the artist chose to single out the one figure?
- Why do you think the marchers are carrying American flags?

**Optional:**
Display or distribute the photograph of the Selma to Montgomery march by James Karales. (Figure 1, below). Ask students to compare the two images—does it seem that Lark drew any inspiration for his work from such Civil Rights era images/experiences?

- Ask students to list various methods of protest used during the Civil Rights era—sit-ins, boycotts, marches. Introduce the Selma marches as one example of an effective civil rights protest.

1. Have students read/review the appropriate textbook chapter and/or the article "When You Pray, Move Your Feet."

2. As a class, create a timeline of the events in Selma culminating in the final successful five-day march to Montgomery and the passage of the Voting Rights Act.

**Discussion questions:**
- Who is eligible to vote in the United States and how does one register?
- How were African Americans denied this right in the South? What tactics were used to keep African Americans from registering to vote? Why do you think it was so important to white Southerners to prevent African Americans from voting?
- How did civil rights activists try to obtain voting rights for African Americans?
- Why did the Selma activists decide to march to Montgomery? What makes marching an effective tactic to address a social justice issue?
- Why did so many people join in the Selma marches?
- Why are the Selma marches credited with the passage of the Voting Rights Act?
- Can you think of recent examples of protests similar to the Selma marches? Do you think that these examples were effective?

**Extensions:**
Have students gather examples of more recent protests from news sources and write a paper and/or make a presentation outlining the protesters' goals, tactics, and outcomes of the event.

Discuss the issue of voting rights today. After locating and analyzing sources about recent U. S. elections, conduct a class debate about the current status of access to political participation. Are

there elements in our electoral system that disenfranchise portions of our population? What changes might be needed to ensure the protection of voting rights?

Have students compare/contrast the images of the Civil Rights movement offered by photographs and other documentary sources with the creation of artwork such as Lark's print. What do they find more effective in conveying a sense of the movement? How do creative works (visual art, literature, music) function in creating a social movement?

Raymond Lark's work highlights the participation of everyday people in the civil rights movement. There is a wealth of sources about the efforts of ordinary people to transform society (examples are provided in the suggested reading list that accompanies this lesson plan). Have students select a biography or interview a person who has participated in some action intended to bring about social change and write a paper and/or create a work of visual art expressing this person's contribution.

**Suggested Bibliography:**

**Useful web sites:**

National Voting Rights Museum at Selma, Alabama. http://www.voterights.org/. Includes a sample "literacy test" from pre-civil rights voter registration, plus useful resources about voting rights issues.

Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail, from the National Parks Service
http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al4.htm and http://www.nps.gov/semo/

Exhibit on the Selma mass demonstrations from the Stanford Humanities Laboratories. Includes interesting and thought-provoking photographs.
http://www.stanford.edu/group/shl/Crowds/galleries/selma/index.htm

The Civil Rights Movement Veterans organization includes a large resource list on its web site at
http://www.crmvet.org/crmlinks.htm

CNN Civil Rights timeline
http://www.cnn.com/EVENTS/1997/mlk/links.html

Sample lesson plan using a civil rights document from the National Archives (uses the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to examine the issue of affirmative action):
http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/civil_rights_act/teaching_activities.html

Civil Rights section of the African American Odyssey exhibit on the Library of Congress web page
http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibit/aopart9.html

**Books and videos about the Selma protests and civil rights marches:**

Carson, Clayborn. *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader : Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*. New York: Penguin, 1991. A great accompaniment to the "Eyes on the Prize" video documentaries and a wonderful source of documents for analysis.

"Eyes on the Prize". A vivid, well-made 12-volume documentary set created by PBS that covers both the early period of the civil rights movement and the subsequent decades of community building. Volumes 1-6 cover the period of 1954 to 1965, and include coverage of the Selma marches. Available on VHS. Appropriate for secondary students.

Crowe, Chris. *Getting Away with Murder: the True Story of the Emmett Till Case*. New York: Phyllis Fogelman, 2003. A recent, easy to read, powerful discussion of the brutal murder of 14 year-old Emmett Till, an incident often credited with bringing public attention to the violence faced by African Americans in the South. Appropriate for secondary students.

George, Linda and Charles. *Cornerstones of Freedom: Civil Rights Marches*. New York: Grolier Childrens Press, 1999.

Haskins, James. *The March on Washington*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Levine, Ellen. *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993. A remarkable collection of interviews with people, both prominent and not, who participated in civil rights activities as children and teenagers.

Medaris, Angela Shelf. *Come this Far to Freedom: a History of African Americans*. New York: Macmillan, 1993.

Meltzer, Milton. *There Comes a Time: The African American Struggle for Freedom*. New York: HarperCollins, 1991.

Siegel, Beatrice. *Murder on the Highway: the Viola Liuzzo Story*. New York: Four Winds Press, 1993. Viola Liuzzo was a white mother of five who was murdered shortly after participating in the Selma to Montgomery march.

Webb, Sheyann and Rachel West Nelson. *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil Rights Days*. University of Alabama Press, 1980. Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson were children when they took part in the Selma marches. In 1999, this memoir was made into a feature film by the same title, appropriate for students ages 7 and up. Available on video and DVD.

**Music from the Civil Rights era:**

"Voices Of The Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs 1960-1966" [BOX SET]. Various artists. Smithsonian Folkways, 1997.

"Sing For Freedom: The Story Of The Civil Rights Movement Through Its Songs". Various Artists. Smithsonian Folkways, 1990.
Books about social activism:

Hoose, Phillip. *It's Our World, Too!: Stories of Young People Who are Making a Difference*. Boston: Little Brown, Co., 1993. Includes profiles of several young people who have taken on causes and effected change. Also provides information and advice on addressing social issues.

**Books for younger readers:**

A number of excellent picture books and short biographies and histories are available for primary and middle school students. These are just a few:

Coles, Robert. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. Illustrated by George Ford. Scholastic, 1995. Picture book depicting the story of five-year old Ruby Bridges, the first African-American student to integrate Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans.

*Martin's Big Words*. Text by Doreen Rappoport. Illustrated by Bryan Collier. Jump at the Sun/Hyperion. Biography of Dr. Martin Luther King using excerpts of his speeches.

Morrison, Toni. *Remember: the Journey to School Integration*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. A teacher's guide to this collection of photos from the movement for desegregation can be found at http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/morrison_remember.shtml

Welch, Catherine A. *Children of the Civil Rights Era*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 2001.

**Picture books about African American history using artwork by African American artists:**

**Jacob Lawrence:**

Walter Dean Myers. *The Great Migration: An American Story with Paintings by Jacob Lawrence*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993. A webquest for Lawrence's The Great Migration can be found at http://www.whitney.org/jacoblawrence/resources/webqst_migr_3.html

*Harriet and the Promised Land*. Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1993 (reissue).

**Faith Ringgold:**

*If a Bus Could Talk*. Scholastic. A young girl learns about Rosa Parks and the Montgomery bus boycott.

*My Dream of Martin Luther King*. Scholastic.

*Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*. Scholastic.

Figure 1: Photograph of the march from Selma to Montgomery, 1965. James Karakeles. From exhibit at Stanford University:
http://www.stanford.edu/group/shl/Crowds/galleries/selma/selma1.jpg

The Library of Congress
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/mar07.html

Libary of Congress' American Memory Project

# "When You Pray, Move Your Feet."

-- African Proverb.

"When You Pray, Move Your Feet,"
Charles White(?), photographer,
Selma, Alabama,
March 7, 1965.
photo courtesy of Representative John Lewis

John Lewis (on right in trench coat) and Hosea Williams (on the left) lead marchers across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

On Sunday March 7, 1965, about 525 people began a fifty-four mile march from Selma, Alabama to the state capitol in Montgomery. They were demonstrating for African American voting rights and to commemorate the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson, shot three weeks earlier by an state trooper while trying to protect his mother at a civil rights demonstration. On the outskirts of Selma, after they crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the marchers, in plain sight of photographers and journalists, were brutally assaulted by heavily armed state troopers and deputies.
One hundred years after the Civil War, in many parts of the nation, the 15th Amendment had been nullified by discriminatory laws, ordinances, intimidation, violence, and fear which kept a majority of African Americans from the polls. The situation was particularly egregious in the city of Selma, in Dallas County, Alabama, where African Americans made up more than half the population yet comprised only about 2 percent of the registered voters. As far back as 1896, when the U.S. House of Representatives adjudicated the contested results of a congressional election held in Dallas County, it was stated on the floor of Congress:

*. . . I need only appeal to the memory of members who have served in this House for years and who have witnessed the contests that time and time again have come up from the black belt of Alabama--since 1880 there has not been an honest election in the county of Dallas . . .*

Hon. W. H. Moody, of Massachusetts
Contested Election Case, Aldrich vs. Robbins, Fourth District, Alabama: Speeches of Hon. W.H. Moody, of Massachusetts [et al.] in the House of Representatives, p. 3 (2239)
March 12 and 13, 1896.
From Slavery to Freedom, 1824-1909

However, by March 1965, the Dallas County Voters League, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) were all working for voting rights in Alabama. John Lewis headed SNCC's voter registration effort and, on March 7, he and fellow activist Hosea Williams led the group of silent marchers from the Brown Chapel AME Church to the foot of the Pettus bridge and into the event soon known as "Bloody Sunday."

Alabama Police Attack Selma-to-Montgomery Marchers,
Federal Bureau of Investigation photograph,
Selma, Alabama,
March 7, 1965.
"We Shall Overcome": Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement

When ABC television interrupted a Nazi war crimes documentary, Judgement in Nuremberg, to show footage of violence in Selma a powerful metaphor was presented to the nation. Within forty-eight hours, demonstrations in support of the marchers were held in eighty cities and thousands of religious and lay leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, flew to Selma. On March 9, Dr. King led a group again to the Pettus Bridge where they knelt, prayed, and, to the consternation of some, returned to Brown Chapel. That night a Northern minister, who was in Selma to march, was killed by white vigilantes.
Outraged citizens continued to inundate the White House and the Congress with letters and phone calls. On March 9, for example, Jackie Robinson, the baseball hero, sent a telegram to the President:

"IMPORTANT YOU TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION IN ALABAMA ONE MORE DAY OF SAVAGE TREATMENT BY LEGALIZED HATCHET MEN COULD LEAD TO OPEN WARFARE BY AROUSED NEGROES AMERICA CANNOT AFFORD THIS IN 1965"

In Montgomery, Federal Judge Frank Johnson, Jr. temporarily restrained all parties in order to review the case. And, President Lyndon Johnson addressed the American people before a televised Joint Session of Congress, saying, "There is no issue of States rights or national rights. There is only the struggle for human rights . . . We have already waited a hundred years and more, and the time for waiting is gone . . ."

Rev. Ralph Abernathy walking with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as They Lead Civil Rights Marchers out of Camp to Resume Their March
United Press International,
Selma to Montgomery, Alabama
March 21-25, 1965.
New York World-Telegram & Sun Collection,
Prints and Photographs Division

Allowing CBS footage of "Bloody Sunday" as evidence in court, Judge Johnson ruled on March 17, that the demonstrators be permitted to march. Under protection of a federalized National Guard, voting rights advocates left Selma on March 21 and stood 25,000 strong on March 25 before the state capitol in Montgomery . As a direct consequence of these events, the U.S. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, guaranteeing every American twenty-one and over the right to register to vote. During the next four years the number of U.S. blacks eligible to vote rose from 23 to 61 percent.

John Lewis went on to serve as Director of the Voter Education Project, a program which eventually added nearly four million minorities to the voter rolls. To mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of "Bloody Sunday," on March 7, 2000, Lewis, a U.S. Congressman from Atlanta's 5th District, and Hosea Williams crossed the Pettus Bridge accompanied by President William Clinton, Coretta Scott King, and others. Asked to contrast this experience with that of 1965 the Congressman responded, "This time when I looked there were women's faces and there were black faces among the troopers. And this time when we faced them, they saluted."

# African American Masters

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Evening for Educators

January 12, 2005, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

## *Jazz*

### Romare Bearden (1914-1988)

Determined to find a way to validate the black experience in the United States, Romare Bearden developed a photomontage technique that combined photographic images from popular magazines. Never acknowledged as one of Abstract Expressionism's heroic figures, Bearden concentrated on a form of social realist comment on civil rights issues. His work was consistent with the early 1960's trend toward a broader artistic focus on mass culture and social concerns. Less interested in propaganda or political statements, Bearden's work was an expression of his experience as a black American, distinct from white reality.

Romare Bearden (1914-1988), American
*Jazz*, 1979
Etching on paper
Purchased with funds from Friends of the Art Museum
Museum # 1980.068
Photograph by Elizabeth Firmage

Along with Norman Lewis, Hale Woodruff, and ten other New York artists, Bearden established the first black arts group since the New Negro movement of the early twentieth century. Formed in 1963, the group was named Spiral, for the symbol that, Woodruff remarked, "moves outward embracing all directions, yet constantly forward". Although it held only one exhibition, Spiral was an important forerunner of the Black Art movement of the following decade.

Bearden's ability to make strong, socially conscious statements was partially derived from his studies with George Grosz at the Art Students League. Grosz introduced him to the great draftsmen of the history of art, including Albrecht Dürer, Hans Holbien, and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, along with his own satirical approach to social narrative. In addition to classes with Grosz, Bearden studied with John Graham, and took lessons in calligraphy from a Chinese artist known only as Mr. Wu. Service in the all black 372nd Infantry Regiment during World War Two enabled him to go to Paris in 1950 on the GI Bill to study at the Sorbonne.

Bearden elevated the process of collage to a new level of scale and expressive content. With *Jazz*, Bearden has interpreted the energy and vitality of the musicians with an equally vigorous pictorial language.

*-Written by Mary Francey*

# Improvisation in Art, Music, Life

## A Lesson Plan for *Jazz*
## Written by Maria Villa

**Background**

The complex and colorful art of Romare Bearden (1911-1988) is autobiographical and metaphorical. Rooted in the history of western, African, and Asian art, as well as in literature and music, Bearden found his primary motifs in personal experiences and the life of his community. The rural South, Pittsburgh, New York's Harlem, and the Caribbean island of St. Martin — these places not only served as his home but also as rich sources of artistic inspiration. Bearden's work reveals both universal concerns and a special awareness of "being Black" in the 20th century. Historical events, political issues, personal memories, music and folklore traditions, and deep spirituality inspired him.

The themes of society became the themes of his work, where jazz and the blues, ritual practice, religion, history, and literature all figure prominently. Less interested in propaganda or political statements, Bearden's work was an expression of his experience as a black American, distinct from white reality. His complex, imaginative body of work offers an invaluable view of mid-twentieth-century African American experience.

Born in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Bearden moved as a toddler to New York City, participating with his parents in the Great Migration of African Americans fleeing menacing Jim Crow laws to states both north and west. The Bearden home became a meeting place for Harlem Renaissance luminaries including writer Langston Hughes, painter Aaron Douglas, and jazz musician Duke Ellington, all of whom undoubtedly would have stimulated the young artist's imagination.

Bearden maintained a lifelong interest in science and mathematics, but his formal education was mainly in art, at Boston University and New York University, from which he graduated in 1935 with a degree in education. He also studied at New York's Art Students League with the German immigrant painter George Grosz, who reinforced Bearden's interest in art as a conveyor of humanistic and political concerns. In the mid-1930s Bearden published dozens of political cartoons in journals and newspapers, including the Baltimore based Afro-American, but by the end of the decade he had shifted the emphasis of his work to painting.

Bearden became a prolific artist while holding a full-time job as a social worker with a degree in education from New York University. He served in World War II and used the GI Bill to study at the Sorbonne in Paris. He was a political activist, a respected writer and an eloquent spokesman on artistic and social issues. His many awards and honors include the National Medal of Arts he received from President Ronald Reagan in 1987, one year before he died in 1988.

During a career lasting almost half a century, Bearden produced approximately two thousand works in a unique fusion of diverse artistic traditions. Best known for his collages, he also completed paintings, drawings, monotypes, and edition prints; murals for public spaces, record album jackets, magazine and book illustrations, and costume and set designs for theater and ballet. His serious work in printmaking occurred in the 1970's and includes approximately one hundred editions in etching, lithography, screenprint, and collagraph.

**Improvisation**

Romare Bearden lived in many dimensions. He had a degree in education, but became a painter. He borrowed ideas from the 14th century Florentine artist Giotto and from Byzantine mosaics, but used spray paint, sandpaper, and Clorox on his canvases. He was a social worker looking after gypsies in New York City, a child of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, and an artistic leader in the civil rights movement of the 1960's. He shopped for groceries in Paris with Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi and took Spanish artist Joan Miró to a baseball game in New York City. He loved cats, and a friend says he lived nine lives, all at the same time.

A lifetime of study and a deep knowledge of how artists of the past solved the eternal problems of space, color, and form also shaped his work. As Bearden's friend, the late novelist Ralph Ellison put it at a memorial service for Bearden in 1988, "I can remember visits to Romie's studio during which he stood at his easel sketching and explaining the perspectives of the Dutch and Italian masters. Other times he played with the rhythms of Mondrian and related them to the structure of jazz." In a 1977 interview with New Yorker writer Calvin Tomkins, Bearden described how, as a young man, "I'd take a sheet of paper and just make lines while I listened to records, a kind of shorthand to pick up rhythm and the intervals."

Bearden's niece, Diedra Harris-Kelley, thinks that in some ways her uncle even anticipated hip-hop. She says, "When they borrow a sample from James Brown and they stick it into a contemporary beat, it's the same as Romie borrowing a piece of African sculpture and putting it in with a contemporary, realistic eye. And look at his layering of color; when you listen to the rap artists, you hear them layering, you hear the backbeat, and then the James Brown [lick] or the jazz that they stick in there, and they're rapping on top of that, and somebody might be singing too. So you have this layered experience, which is what collage is."

**Collage**

"Collage" was originally a French word, derived from the word coller, meaning "to paste." A collage is a picture created by adhering such basically flat elements as newspaper, wallpaper, printed text and illustrations, photographs, cloth, string, etc., to a flat surface, and the result becomes three-dimensional, and might also be called a relief sculpture / construction / assemblage. Most of the elements adhered in producing most collages are "found" materials. Introduced by Cubist artists, this process was widely used by artists who followed them, and it is a familiar technique in contemporary art.

Bearden became a master of collage elevating the process to a new level of scale and expressive content. He began by combining elements of photographs in a traditional collage, and having the original enlarged photographically. He then cut the large version into sections that could be reorganized into a final congested composition of broken, jagged shapes, repetitive elements, and distortions of figural scale. But the way he broke up and layered his images, improvising with new materials and new ideas, was more than a matter of technique. It came out of Bearden's life and culture – the improvisational nature of the jazz music he loved, the patchwork quilts and rooms wallpapered with old newspapers and magazine pages he recalled from childhood summers in North Carolina.

**Jazz**

A proficient musician, Bearden's strongest works synthesize black American musical and visual forms. He had a special affinity for jazz and a lifelong appreciation for practitioners of the art form. Many collages, paintings, and prints are visual equivalents of jazz and blues, art forms that are among the greatest contributions black Americans have made to western culture. Layering, improvisation, complexity of form and design are characteristics of jazz as well as collage. This definition of jazz says it all, "Jazz is the comprehensive name for a variety of specific musical styles generally characterized by attempts at creative improvisation on a given theme (melodic or harmonic), over a foundation of complex, steadily flowing rhythm (melodic or percussive) and European harmonies…."

As Bearden said, "So long as you get everything in a nice shape, the picture will be all right. If…it all moves in the right rhythms, you have a painting…it's like jazz, you improvise."

Bearden's most important printed works are the dozens of unique pieces he made in monotype between 1975 and 1983. The process is a hybrid of painting or drawing and printmaking. Bearden painted his monotype images onto sheets of plastic and transferred them to paper by means of a printing press. He often added details by hand to the transferred images, using graphite, ink, or paint. His composition, *Jazz*, is one of these hybrids with details added in watercolor.

With *Jazz*, Bearden has interpreted the energy and vitality of the musicians with an equally vigorous pictorial language and color. While this work is a print, it's not flat. Bearden creates a layered effect, the transparent watercolor brushstrokes visible through the transparent image of the musicians, which appears to float, giving the image a luminous quality and the feeling of three-dimensionality. We see the musicians, an ensemble, energized and engaged in the act of creating jazz.

## Lesson Plan

**Objectives:**
Students will:

1. Look at their personal experiences, families, communities, and culture, and how these influence inspire their lives (older students).
2. Work on cutting and pasting skills (younger students).
3. Define and discuss:
    - -Collage
    - -Improvisation
    - -Composition in design
    - -Creating a picture about a theme or story
4. Experiment with shape and color combinations.
5. Create a collage with the goal of combining both the specific (self) and the general (their culture).

**Core Curriculum Reference:**
K, 1, 2 Core, Language Arts, Standard I, Objective 2
K, 1, 2 Core, Mathematics, Standard III, Objective 1
3rd Grade, Visual Arts, Standard 1, Objective 1
4th Grade, Visual Arts, Standard 1, Objective 1
5th Grade, Visual Arts, Standard 1, Objective 1

6th Grade, Visual Arts, Standard 1, Objective 1
7th – 12th Grades, Foundations I, Objectives A & B

**Resources:**

National Gallery of Art, www.nga.gov:

-Special Feature: "The Art of Romare Bearden", http://www.nga.gov/feature/bearden/index.shtm
-Teaching Resources, http://www.nga.gov/education/classroom/bearden/
-Children's Guide, http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/beardencg.pdf
-Teaching Resources, http://www.nga.gov/pdf/bearden-tchpk.pdf

**Materials:**

Image of ***Jazz***, by Romare Bearden, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Permanent Collection
Image of ***Empress of the Blues****, by Romare Bearden Utah Museum of Fine Arts, African-American Masters Exhibit, available 1/8/05 – 2/28/05]*
A piece of masonite (about 12" by 12") or heavy cardboard
Magazines, newspapers, computer printouts, cards, posters, other reproductions
Photographs (or xerox copies), illustrations, fabric scraps, string, ribbon, etc.
Found objects of all sorts
Glue
Scissors
Gesso or latex house paint and a paint brush
Sealer

**Activity:**

1. Have a discussion about how Romare Bearden used his personal experiences, his life in his community, and his culture to inspire his art. In *Jazz*, he uses his culture, specifically its music, as his source of inspiration.
2. Ask students about their lives and culture:
   -What personal experiences have you had that meant a lot to you?
   -What is something you really like about your family, your community, culture, friends, your self?
   -How does your family or community or culture influence you? Inspire you?

ß What's a picture you would like to create about your community or culture inspired by personal experience, family, life in your community, etc. in the style of Romare Bearden?

3. Come up with as many questions as you can as you have a class discussion.
4. For younger students, focus on colors and shapes in their communities.
5. For older students, focus on a theme or story that touches on their lives and their culture. Tell them to work on their collages with the goal of combining both the specific (themselves) and general (their culture) and to give themselves the time they need to tackle this project.
6. Next, every student should have a look through magazines, newspapers, etc., paying special attention to colors, textures, forms, text, symbolic images, and visual evocations of space, mood, time, or tempo important to their story or theme.
7. Encourage students to choose their favorite images and text and place them in a pile on their table or desk.
8. The same should be done with photographs, fabric, string, found objects, etc.
9. Once each student has a pile of paper and objects in front of them, they can begin to cut out the parts that appeal to them the most.

10. They can arrange these parts by color, shape, subject matter, story line, etc.
11. To prepare their masonite or cardboard, cover with one layer of white latex house paint or gesso. This will help to prime the work surface.
12. Next, each student can arrange his/her images, which they have collected, and glue them onto the board to create a collage.
13. When the collages are complete, they can be sealed with a thin coat of water based varathane.
14. Set up the completed works and have each student discuss what he/she did. Why they chose the images they did. Why they arranged the images the way they did. What story does their collage tell, represent, express, etc.
15. Younger students should be encouraged to discuss the colors, shapes and pictures they found.

**Assessment:**
Have younger students give examples of the colors, shapes and pictures in their communities (neighborhoods, streets, homes, etc.) and describe what they mean.

Have older students write a brief essay answering the following question(s):

**Did your collage:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **__ imagine** | **__ personalize** | **__ capture** |
| **__ integrate** | **__ transform** | **__ release** |
| **__ symbolize** | **__ recall** | **__ inform** |

Point out to students that it's not easy to accomplish all of the above, but that's what Romare Bearden did, and it's why his collages combine visual, emotional, and cultural memory. Ask them if they agree with this quote, from an art critic writing about one of Bearden's collage series, "What better way to express the accumulation of memories?"

**Sources:**

Ruth Fine, *The Art Of Romare Bearden*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, 2003

Paul Trachtman, *"Romare Bearden, Man of Many Parts"*, Smithsonian, February, 2004

Gwen Everett, *African American Masters, Highlights from the Smithsonian Art Museum*, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, New York, 2003

Leroy Ostransky, *Understanding Jazz*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1977

www.artlex.com/c/collage

**Variations:**
The class can create a group collage with a larger piece of masonite or cardboard. Otherwise, the materials, activity, and assessment are the same.