ADVancing American Art
And the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy

Teaching Packet
Grades K-12
ABOUT THIS PACKET

This teaching packet has been created to introduce your students to the exhibition *Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy*, which will be on display at the following museums:


Indiana University Art Museum: September 13 – December 15, 2013

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia: January 25 – April 20, 2014

The materials in this packet have been developed for students in grades K-12. Please feel free to adapt them to suit your needs and grade level. This packet includes the following materials:

- Information about selected works of art
- Color reproductions of ten works of art from the exhibition *Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy*. Images are also available for download at: http://www.artinterrupted.org/
- Lesson plans involving visual art and language arts for the classroom with correlating National Performance Standards
- Glossary

The exhibition, accompanying catalogue, educational programs, and national tour of *Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy* are made possible by grants from the Henry Luce Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts as part of American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius.
Walt Kuhn was 69 years old when two of his paintings were exhibited in the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s premiere of Advancing American Art—making him one of the eldest artists included. Kuhn’s mature artistic career is almost exclusively identified with portraits of circus and vaudeville performers—reflecting his lifelong interest in show business. However, he also had a fascination with still-life subjects, which he painted throughout his career. The modernist artist Paul Cézanne (French, 1839-1906) inspired Kuhn to simplify natural forms of the objects to their geometric essentials: the cylinder, the sphere, and the cone. Although most viewers in 1946 would not have considered Kuhn’s painting style particularly revolutionary, he was an early advocate for avant-garde art.
Over thirty years prior to Advancing American Art, Kuhn was one of the organizers of the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, which became known as The Armory Show due to its initial venue—New York City’s 69th Regiment Armory. Organized by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, The Armory Show is credited with bringing European and American Modernist styles of art (including Surrealism, Cubism, and abstraction) to the American public. Kuhn, who was the secretary of the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, was largely responsible for finding artists to participate in the exhibition of 1,300 works by over 300 European and American artists. Because of the new ideas it presented, The Armory Show was considered quite scandalous when it premiered in 1913. In 1938, Kuhn wrote about the experience in “The Story of the Armory Show.” Kuhn’s writing can be accessed online in the Archives of American Art.

Still Life with Red Bananas uses an analogous color scheme (colors that are located next to each other on the color wheel) of reds and oranges with a small touch of green. The painting shows the influence of Cézanne, because Kuhn minimized the naturalistic details of the fruit in favor of emphasizing the fruits’ spherical and cylindrical volumes. Kuhn accentuated the sculptural quality of the objects by building up the forms with broad, impasto (thick) brushwork. The objects are organized in a deceptively simple arrangement against a simple background.

Byron Browne (American, 1907-1961)

Although he never totally abandoned recognizable subject matter, Byron Browne was a strong proponent for abstract art in the 1930s and 1940s. He was inspired to explore Cubism (an art movement characterized by the use of geometric planes and shapes) after viewing an exhibition of French Modernist painting at New York University’s Gallery of Living Art in 1927. His initial abstract paintings were poorly received because they were so radically different from the style of realism that prevailed in the American art world during the 1930s. Browne helped establish the American Abstract Artists (AAA) group in 1936 to develop a better understanding of abstract art. This group of artists attempted to address some of the misconceptions about abstract art by publishing pamphlets such as “The Art Critic! How Do They Serve the Public? What Do They Say? How Much Do They Know? Let’s Look At the Record!” This brochure can be accessed online at: http://www.americanabstractartists.org/history/artcritics/index.html

In Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green, Byron Browne reexamines the traditional still-life genre by painting the objects in a highly abstracted style that merely suggests natural forms. Browne has flattened the painting’s space with dark outlines and planes of flat color. As the title suggests, Browne has limited his palette to the colors of red, yellow, and green—using white to lighten the color and black for the curvilinear elements that bring the viewer’s eye to the surface of the painting, emphasizing its flatness.
Byron Browne (American, 1907–1961)
Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green, 1945
Oil on canvas
23 3/4 x 28 inches
Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University; Advancing American Art Collection 1948.1.4
Courtesy of Stephen Bernard Browne
VISUAL ARTS LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVES

The student will:
- Compare and contrast two works of art.
- Consider representational art and abstract art, and articulate which style they prefer.
- Consider how these paintings may represent individualism and freedom of expression.
- Explore the visual elements of art, including color, line, shape, and space.
- Create still-life paintings.

RESOURCES

- Walt Kuhn, Still Life with Red Bananas (also known as Red Bananas in an Iron Dish), 1941
- Byron Browne, Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green, 1945
- National Gallery of Art’s Online Still Life Activity: http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/stilllife.htm

DISCUSSION

- Compare these two still-life paintings.
- Consider the artistic styles of each painting. Which one is more representational? Which one is more abstract? Is it totally non-objective (non-representational), or does it depict recognizable forms that are simplified from nature?
- In its promotional statements for Advancing American Art, the State Department stated, “only in a democracy where the full development of the individual is not only permitted but fostered could such an exhibition be assembled.” How do these paintings represent individualism and freedom of expression?
- How have the artists depicted space in each painting? Which one appears more flat? Why?
- How have the artists used color in each painting? Although you will see the same colors in each painting (red, yellow, and green), are there differences in the way the artists used those colors?

MATERIALS

- Computer (with Adobe Shockwave)
- Paper (8 ½ x 11 inches or larger)
- Color wheel
- Yellow chalk
- Tempera paint (red, yellow, blue, white, and black)
- Paint brushes
- Palettes (or Styrofoam plates)
OBJECTIVES

DAY 1
Introduce students to still-life compositions using the National Gallery of Art’s interactive still-life program. Have students experiment with the placement of objects, tables, and drapery.

DAY 2
Set up a simple still-life using real or imitation fruits and vegetables. Discuss the essential geometric shapes of the natural forms.

Ask students to sketch the shapes they see (using the chalk) in the more representational style of Walt Kuhn’s painting Still Life with Red Bananas.

Study the color wheel and explain analogous colors. Have students choose three colors that sit next to each other on the color wheel to use predominately in their painting. Have students mix those colors from the colors of tempera paint given to them (red, yellow, blue, white, and black) and paint their still life.

DAY 3
Set up a simple still-life using real or imitation fruits and vegetables. Discuss the geometric essentials of the natural forms. Consider how the geometric forms might be simplified nearly to the point of being nonrepresentational.

Ask students to sketch the shapes they see (using the chalk) in the more abstract style of Byron Browne’s painting Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green.

Have students choose three colors to use predominately in their painting. Ask students to mix those colors from the colors of tempera paint provided (red, yellow, blue, white, and black) and paint their still life.

CONCLUSION

Display the still-life paintings made by the students. Ask students to discuss which style they prefer, realistic or abstract? Why?

ASSESSMENT

The student participated in the National Gallery of Art’s interactive still-life program. Yes/No
The student made a representational still-life painting. Yes/No
The student made an abstracted still-life painting. Yes/No
The student participated in the discussion about their preferences in the still-life paintings. Yes/No
NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARDS FOR VISUAL ART:

#1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.
#2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.
#5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

LANGUAGE ARTS LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVES

The student will:
- Consider a 1940 brochure published by the American Abstract Artists.
- Read about the 1946 Advancing American Art exhibition.
- Write a short essay, in which they will respond to the criticism of Advancing American Art. The essay will consider how the choice of paintings such as Still Life with Red Bananas and Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green reflect the exhibition’s goals of emphasizing individualism and freedom of expression.

RESOURCES

- Walt Kuhn, Still Life with Red Bananas (also known as Red Bananas in an Iron Dish), 1941
- Byron Browne, Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green, 1945
  http://www.americanabstractartists.org/history/artcritics/index.html
- Art Interrupted: Advancing American Art and the Politics of Cultural Diplomacy exhibition website:
  http://www.artinterrupted.org/

DISCUSSION

- Have students read the first page of the American Abstract Artists’ brochure (the section titled “American Abstract Artists, June 1940”). The artists who wrote the brochure attempted to address misstatements and contradictions of art critics about abstract art.
- Draw the students’ attention to the paragraph that states, “The critics understand very well that the public has an extraordinary respect for the printed word, especially when it is coupled with the dignity of a famous publication. It is their method to presume that there is little or no question to their influence or authority.”
- Discuss what this paragraph means to the students.
- The controversy over the State Department’s 1946 exhibition was largely due to the printed word.
- What were the goals of Advancing American Art? Did the exhibition fulfill those goals? Why or why not?
- What influence or authority did the critics of the exhibition have? Did the public question that authority?
- How did the State Department’s decision to include paintings done in diverse styles, such as we see in *Still Life with Red Bananas* and *Still Life in Red, Yellow, and Green* reflect individualism and freedom of expression of visual art in America?

Find out more about Advancing American Art on the *Art Interrupted* exhibition website:
http://www.artinterrupted.org/

**PROCEDURE**

- Consider two opposing statements made by Representative Fred Busbey and William Benton, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs. Politician Busbey criticized the paintings included in Advancing American Art, saying, “this is what the communists and other extremists want to portray…that the American people are despondent, broken down or of hideous shape—thoroughly dissatisfied with their lot and eager for a change in government.” William Benton, on the other hand, stated, “only in a democracy where the full development of the individual is not only permitted but fostered could such an exhibition be assembled.”
- Have students write a short persuasive essay examining these contradictory statements. The student should choose one perspective to identify with, and write the persuasive essay from that point of view. The students should use images from the website to support their argument.

**CONCLUSION**

When the essays are complete, students will divide into pairs and read each other’s work. Pairs will discuss how to improve the essay in a constructive manner, and make changes before submitting it to the teacher. The class will then discuss the critique experience.

**ASSESSMENT**

The student participated in the discussion of the American Abstract Artists’ brochure and the *Art Interrupted* website.  
Yes/No
The student wrote a persuasive essay from the point of view of either Representative Fred Busbey or Assistant Secretary of State William Benton, using their quote as a prompt.  
Yes/No
The student participated in the paired essay critique, and made changes to his/her essay as suggested.  
Yes/No
The student handed in a completed persuasive essay to the teacher.  
Yes/No
NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#1: Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment.

#5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

#8: Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

#12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
Anton Refregier  
(American, b. Russia, 1905-1979)

Russian-born Anton Refregier was established in the United States as a muralist, printmaker, sculptor, and set designer when his work was chosen for Advancing American Art. Refregier left Russia at age fifteen for Paris, where he was apprenticed to a sculptor. His uncle invited him to move to New York in the early 1920s, and he first found work as a strikebreaker (someone hired to keep an organization running during a trade union dispute) in a factory. After studying at the Rhode Island School of Design on scholarship, Refregier moved back to New York in 1925 with the intention of being a muralist. However, rather than the monumental projects he envisioned, Refregier first worked for interior decorators who hired him to produce copies of 18th century French paintings on residential walls. In 1936, Refregier became one of many artists employed by the Works Progress Administration (renamed in 1939 as the Work Projects Administration, or simply the WPA). The WPA was an ambitious program of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s New Deal agency, and it employed millions of workers to do public works projects.

**IMAGE:**  
Anton Refregier (American, b. Russia, 1905–1979)  
*End of the Conference*, 1945  
Oil on canvas  
32 x 15 1/2 inches  
Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, The University of Oklahoma; purchase, U.S. State Department Collection 1948.1730
In 1945, Refregier served as Fortune magazine’s artist correspondent for an important conference held in San Francisco, California. The conference brought world leaders together to write the Charter for the United Nations (UN). The UN is “committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights.” Read more about the UN at: http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml

The Charter was signed on June 26, 1945, and came into effect on October 24, 1945. See the Fortune magazine September 1945 issue featuring Refregier’s San Francisco album at: http://www.fulltable.com/vts/f/fortune/ills/refregier/sf/c.htm

After the Conference relates to Refregier’s assignment for Fortune, although it is not one of the UN conference illustrations he made for the magazine. In the oil painting, Refregier has chosen to monumentalize two anonymous workers, rather than world leaders involved in the meeting. The two men are shown with their backs turned to the viewer as they remove the colorful flags symbolizing the conference’s intended spirit of international cooperation. In the background, we see the Golden Gate Bridge, which opened in 1937 and quickly became a symbol of San Francisco. Refregier has eliminated some details of the Golden Gate Bridge, such as the vertical suspension cables. Rather than depicting the bridge in its true color, International Orange, Refregier has shown it as red, against a blue sky streaked with white clouds.

O. Louis Guglielmi (American, b. Egypt, 1906-1956)

Born in Egypt to Italian parents, O. Louis Guglielmi moved to the United States when he was nine years old. The family settled in Italian Harlem, and this childhood experience gave him a great empathy for people living in urban poverty. In 1920, Guglielmi began classes at the National Academy of Design and also studied sculpture at Beaux Arts Institute. Painting murals and working on commercial design projects helped finance his artistic studies. Like Refregier, Guglielmi found employment with the WPA and Public Works Administration in the 1930s. His work for the WPA concluded in 1939, the same year Tenements was painted. During the 1930s and early 1940s, Guglielmi’s painting style was characterized by meticulous drawing coupled with mysterious, dream-like imagery that aligned him with Surrealism. In 1945, after serving three years in the army in World War II, Guglielmi’s art became more abstract and showed the influence of Stuart Davis. Guglielmi painted completely abstract work during the last years of his life.

Tenements served as social commentary upon contemporary public events. It references President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s second inaugural address of January 1937. The speech is called “One-Third of a Nation” because of the line, “I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.” You can access the entire speech at: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5105/
O. Louis Guglielmi (American, b. Egypt, 1906-1956)

Tenements, 1939
Oil on canvas
36 ¼ x 28 1/8 inches

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, University purchase, GMOA 1948.197
Guglielmi painted two works inspired by the President's words, Tenements and the nearly identical One Third of a Nation, which is part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Both paintings also reference a 1938 play written by Arthur Arent for the Federal Theatre Project. The play, known as a “living newspaper,” was made into a film in 1939. Both the play and the film feature a fire, which claims the lives of some of the tenement dwellers. Guglielmi alludes to the deaths in Tenements by depicting a line of coffins that point down the empty street and by treating the central red brick building as if it were a tombstone with a wreath of white roses.

VISUAL ARTS LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVES

The student will:
- compare and contrast two works of art.
- use visual clues to tell a story in a work of art.
- make colored pencils drawings that respond visually to a current political event.

RESOURCES

- Anton Refregier, End of the Conference, 1945
- O. Louis Guglielmi, Tenements, 1939
- Roosevelt’s “One-Third of a Nation” speech: http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5105/

DISCUSSION

- Consider how these paintings were both done in response to a contemporary political event.
- Look closely at the composition of both works of art. How does each artist use visual clues to tell us about the event?
- Is one painting more successful telling a story than the other? Why? Is the story each painting tells a positive or negative one?
- Do you think either one of these paintings might have been considered controversial? Why?
- Refregier’s painting was done immediately following the UN conference, while Guglielmi’s painting was completed two years following Roosevelt’s second inaugural address. How do you think this affected each artist’s ability to respond to the political events?
MATERIALS

- Paper (8 ½ x 11 inches or larger)
- Pencils
- Colored pencils
- Current newspapers and news magazines

PROCEDURE

- Instruct students to look through current newspapers and news magazines, and find a political event to respond to visually.
- Have students consider what visual clues to include in their composition to best convey the impact of the current political event.
- Have students draw their ideas in pencil to work out the details of their composition.
- Have students add color to the drawing with the colored pencils.

CONCLUSION

Make a list of the current political events the students have responded to visually. Have students arrange their completed drawings on the wall or a table. Each student will choose a work other than their own and try to identify the political event it responds to from the previously made list. Have the student try to answer the questions:

What is the contemporary political event depicted in the drawing?
What visual clues has the artist given us to tell the story of the event?

ASSESSMENT

The student chose a current political event to respond to visually. Yes/No
The student created a drawing in response to the current political event. Yes/No
The student participated in the final discussion of the drawings. Yes/No

NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARDS FOR VISUAL ART:

#1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.
#2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.
#4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
#5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.
LANGUAGE ARTS LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVES

The student will:
- Read or listen to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s “One Third of a Nation” speech.
- Learn about the Federal Theatre Project’s Living Newspaper “One-Third of a Nation.”
- Choose a contemporary political event and write an outline for a living newspaper about this event.

RESOURCES

- Roosevelt’s “One-Third of a Nation” speech: [http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5105/](http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5105/)
- The script for “One Third of a Nation” can be accessed online at: [http://digilib.gmu.edu/dspace/handle/1920/4496](http://digilib.gmu.edu/dspace/handle/1920/4496)
- Current newspapers

DISCUSSION

- Read or listen to Roosevelt’s “One Third of a Nation” speech. Summarize the play “One-Third of a Nation.”
- How does the living newspaper relate to Roosevelt’s speech? How did poverty challenge democracy?
- How does this issue of poverty and decent housing relate to the world today?

PROCEDURE

- Have the students look through current newspapers and choose an issue to respond to via a living newspaper play.
- Have students write a brief synopsis of their play based on this issue or event. Have the students make a list of the characters for their play. Have the students briefly describe how the play would be staged using minimal sets. While writing the draft of their living newspaper, the students should carefully consider the emotions and experiences their characters might experience.

CONCLUSION

When the living newspaper outlines/character lists are complete, students will divide into pairs and read each other’s work. Pairs will discuss how to improve the living newspaper outlines in a constructive manner, and make changes before submitting it to the teacher. The class will then discuss the critique experience.
ASSESSMENT

The student participated in the discussion about the relationship of the living newspaper “One-Third of a Nation” to President Roosevelt’s second inaugural address. Yes/No

The student chose a contemporary political issue or event and wrote an outline/character list for a living newspaper based on this event or issue. Yes/No

The student participated in the paired critique of the outline, and made changes as appropriate. Yes/No

The student turned in a completed outline and list of characters for a living newspaper. Yes/No

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

#4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

#5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

#8: Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

#12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

COMPARISON  Art Responds to War

George L. K. Morris (American, 1905-1975)

In George Lovett Kingsland Morris’s January 1975 obituary, art critic Barbara Rose wrote, “His art, like his writing, was dedicated to the ideals of clarity and precision.” Clarity and precision are exemplified by the style of geometric abstraction used by Morris and other members of the American Abstract Artists group. Morris, whose wealthy New England family encouraged his interest in the arts, originally planned to become an architect. His architectural interests were reflected in his preference for rational, structural art. Morris studied classics at Yale University, where he majored in English literature and studied art history. Upon graduation from Yale in 1928, Morris studied painting at the Art Students’ League in New York City with John Sloan (1871-1951), a leading figure in the Ashcan School of realist American painting. However, Morris believed art must transcend the concerns of the material world in order to achieve the timeless quality he desired for his own painting. Morris saw examples of European modernist art at A.E. Gallatin’s Gallery of Living Art, which opened in 1927.
George L. K. Morris (American, 1905-1975)
Shipbuilding Construction, 1944-45
Oil on canvas
22 x 18 inches
Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, The University of Oklahoma; purchase,
U.S. State Department Collection 1948.1725
© Frelinghuysen Morris Foundation, Lenox Massachusetts
In 1931, Morris traveled to Paris, where he studied with Fernand Léger (1881-1955), an artist known for his personal form of Cubism. Like Morris, Léger originally trained as an architect. Perhaps because of this affinity, Léger shaped the aesthetic outlook of the younger artist. In 1936, Morris helped establish the American Abstract Artists (AAA) group. Because of its ties to European modernism, geometric abstraction was often not accepted as an authentic expression for American art. Morris became one of the most articulate spokesmen for abstract art, which he considered to be a universal aesthetic.

Morris most likely created Shipbuilding Construction as part of his application to the army’s War Art Unit; however, the painting is not a traditional depiction of wartime themes. In keeping with Morris’ affinity for clarity and precision, the composition is more of an intellectual than emotional response to war—focusing on the engineering achievements of battle, rather than death and destruction. Geometric shapes of flat color and linear elements are arranged in an all-over composition. Although the painting is abstract, Morris includes ship motifs that give the viewer clues to its subject matter.

Ralston Crawford (American, b. Canada, 1906-1978)

Painter and photographer Ralston Crawford was influenced early in his career by Precisionism, a style of art that focused on industrial, urban subjects depicted in a clearly defined, starkly geometric style. Born in Ontario, Canada, Crawford moved to Buffalo, New York at age ten and often sailed with his father, a cargo captain, on the Great Lakes. Crawford received his artistic training in the mid-1920s at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. During school, he had a job as an animator for the recently founded Walt Disney studios. The clean lines and flat planes of color used in animation may have influenced his mature painting style. In 1927, Morris entered the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, where he studied with Hugh Breckenridge, whose paintings were characterized by unusually shaped color fields. While in Philadelphia, Crawford also studied at the Barnes Foundation, where he saw the works of the American Precisionist painters Charles Demuth (1883-1935) and Charles Sheeler (1883-1965). The Precisionists’ abstracted renderings of monumentalized industrial subjects appealed to Crawford. During World War II, Crawford was drafted and served as chief of the Visual Presentation Unit of the Weather Unit in the Army Air Force. Crawford developed methods of visually representing weather, using easily recognizable symbols to make the data more comprehensible to pilots. His charts resemble those used today.

Crawford produced Plane Production while working for the Miller Lighting Company. The company commissioned Crawford to make a painting of the revolutionary lighting system (fourteen miles of continuous fluorescent lighting) the firm had installed at the Curtiss Wright aircraft plant in Buffalo, New York. For photographic images of the aircraft plant in 1941, see: http://industrialphotos.industrialartifactsreview.com/aviation/1940s/1941/1941_Curtiss_Wright_Buffalo.htm.

While documenting the lighting system at the plant, Crawford became fascinated by the aircraft produced there. The central form that resembles a coffin may refer to the B-24 Bomber’s tendency to catch fire and trap personnel in the aircraft’s narrow bomb bay pathway. Because of this, the B-24 was given the nickname, “The Flying Coffin.”
William Gropper (American, 1897-1977)

William Gropper’s upbringing in a family of European Jewish immigrants who worked in sweat shops of New York’s garment industry, may have influenced his tendency to seek out subjects derived from a social consciousness. Gropper was well known for his political cartoons when three of his paintings were chosen for inclusion in Advancing American Art. By the 1930s he had begun doing more painting, working in a style known as Social Realism. Like other Social Realist painters, Gropper focused on the ugly realities of contemporary life and sympathized with working-class people, especially the poor.

William Gropper’s style frequently reflected the works he had seen in museums by artists such as Francisco Goya. Like Goya, Gropper often painted themes relating to the Spanish Civil War. Prey could depict a scene from that conflict, but it is also an indictment of the futility and ravages of war in general.

IMAGE:
Ralston Crawford (American, b. Canada, 1906-1978)
Plane Production, ca. 1946
Oil on canvas
28 1/8 x 36 1/4 inches
Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University; Advancing American Art Collection 1948.1.08
Courtesy Ralston Crawford Estate
IMAGE:
William Gropper (American, 1897-1977)
Prey, n.d.
Watercolor on paper
22 ⅛ x 15 inches
Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, The University of Oklahoma; purchase, U.S. State Department Collection 1948.1740
Courtesy the Gropper family
The black birds in the sky may be a loose reference to the bomber planes of World War II, which were sometimes compared to birds of prey. This comparison continues to be used today. In the 1990s, McDonnell Douglas and Boeing developed the Bird of Prey aircraft, whose name was based on the Klingon Bird of Prey warship from the Star Trek television series.

VISUAL ARTS LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVES

The student will:
- Compare and contrast two works of art.
- Learn about the elements of art: color, shape, line, and space.
- Create a collage.

RESOURCES

- George L.K. Morris, Shipbuilding Construction, 1944-45
- Ralston Crawford, Plane Production, ca. 1946

DISCUSSION

- Begin your discussion of the two paintings without revealing the artists’ titles of the works.
- What kinds of shapes do you see in these two paintings? Without looking at the titles (Shipbuilding Construction and Plane Production), can you tell what these shapes are? After you know the titles, what elements of planes and ships do you see in the paintings?
- Do these shapes look like they were made with a straight edge and compass or free hand? Is there an illusion of form in the shapes, or do they seem flat? Why?
- How are the paintings similar? How are they different?
- Do you have an emotional response about warfare when you look at either painting? Why?

MATERIALS

- Drawing paper
- Sketchpad
- Pencils
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Black markers
- Glue sticks
PROCEDURE

- Instruct students to look on the Internet for images of modern fighter aircraft and warships, and print an image that is of interest to them.
- Have students sketch the geometric shapes they see in the photographic image.
- Have students draw these shapes on the construction paper, cut them out, and arrange the shapes on the drawing paper.
- Once the desired arrangement is achieved, have students glue the construction paper shapes onto the drawing paper.
- Have students add linear elements to their composition with the black marker.

CONCLUSION

Display the finished collages along with the photographic images the students used as inspiration. Have each student choose a pairing of collage and photographic image and consider the following questions: How do the shapes in the collage relate to the photo? What has the student done to abstract, or simplify, the photographic image? Which seems more flat, the photograph or the collage? Why? Do you have an emotional response about war when you look at the collage?

ASSESSMENT

The student participated in the discussion of Shipbuilding Construction and Plane Production. Yes/No
The student researched images of modern military aircraft and ships. Yes/No
The student made a collage based on a photographic image. Yes/No
The student participated in the discussion of the finished collages. Yes/No

NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARDS FOR VISUAL ART:

#1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.
#2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.
#3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.
#5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

LANGUAGE ARTS LESSON PLAN

RESOURCES

- Ralston Crawford, Plane Production, ca. 1946
- William Gropper, Prey, n.d.
DISCUSSION

- Compare the paintings Plane Production and Prey. Although both paintings deal with war, they do so differently.
- How are the artists' styles different from one another? Which one is more representational? Which one is more abstract?
- Does either painting actually depict World War II? How do the paintings allude to war?
- Which painting produces more of an emotional response? Why?

PROCEDURE

- Begin by brainstorming with the class about words associated with war. Make a list of as many words as possible.
- Using the words as a prompt, have the students write a short story or poem that is about war, without being tied to any specific conflict or time period.

CONCLUSION

Students will divide into pairs and read each other's work. Pairs will discuss how to improve the short stories or poems in a constructive manner, and make changes before submitting it to the teacher. The class will then discuss the critique and the challenges presented by making their writing timeless.

ASSESSMENT

The student participated in the discussion of Plane Production and Prey. Yes/No
The student participated in brainstorming about words associated with war. Yes/No
The student wrote a short story or poem about war, without being tied to any specific time conflict or time period. Yes/No
The student participated in the pair review of the short story or poem. Yes/No
The student turned in a completed short story or poem to the teacher. Yes/No

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#1: Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

#4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

#5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
#8: Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

#12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**COMPARISON** Nonobjective Painting

**IMAGE:**
Arthur Dove (American, 1880-1946)
Grey-Greens, 1942
Wax emulsion on canvas
20 x 28 inches
Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Arts, Auburn University; Advancing American Art Collection 1948.11
Copyright the Estate of Arthur G. Dove, courtesy Terry Dintenfass, Inc.
Arthur Dove (American, 1880-1946)

Arthur Dove, who died the year Advancing American Art was organized, was one of the older generation of artists included in the exhibition. He held an important place in the history of avant-garde American painting because he is considered to be the first artist in this country to create totally purely abstract, nonobjective paintings—works with no recognizable subject matter. He once said, “I would like to make something that is real in itself, that does not remind anyone of any other thing, and that does not have to be explained like the letter A, for instance.” After graduating from Cornell University, Dove worked as an illustrator in New York before traveling to Paris in 1908-09. When he returned to New York, Dove met the American photographer and art promoter Alfred Stieglitz. Dove first exhibited work at Stieglitz’s gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue in 1901, and held his first one-person show there in 1912, which established his reputation in the New York avant-garde art movement. Dove preferred to take a mystical, rather than analytical, approach to the world. Like many abstract artists, Dove was interested in parallels between visual art and music. In the 1930s, Dove returned to more representational art. While some of the later works are more representational, they are consistently abstracted, making that distinction clear might be helpful here.

Grey-Greens is typical of Dove’s nonrepresentational painting style. Although there is no recognizable subject matter, the painting appears to be about nature. Dove’s use of earthen and green colors and the horizontal “landscape” format suggest this connection. However, in this work he sought to paint the spiritual essence of nature, rather than particular landforms.

Irene Rice Pereira (American, 1902-1971)

Irene Rice Pereira was an advocate for collaboration between art and industry. Pereira was strongly influenced by a trip to Morocco in the mid-1930s where she experienced the play of light and shadow on the sand. The experience encouraged her concern with optics and how we perceive light. Upon her return to the United States, Pereira helped found the Works Progress Administration Design Laboratory where she taught using the Bauhaus curriculum, which encouraged uniting art, architecture, and design. While teaching there, Pereira was introduced to industrial materials and coatings that she began to use in her abstract painting. She also began painting her geometric compositions on separate layers of glass, combined and framed together. In doing so, she hoped to produce an effect of inner light in her paintings. Pereira was one of only three women included in Advancing American Art. She often signed her work “I. Rice Pereira” to avoid being discriminated against because she was a woman.

By the mid-1940s, Pereira had established a reputation for her geometric abstractions, such as Composition. It is a nonobjective painting, with no recognizable subject matter. The painting is composed of mostly rectilinear visual elements. In Composition, Pereira used a clay-coated scratchboard surface. Many of the painting’s images are incised, rather than painted, into the surface. The work’s diagonal lines were painted with phosphorescent paint, a luminous paint that will sustain a glow hours after being exposed to ultraviolet (UV) light. By experimenting with this industrial material (the same paint has been used to mark escape paths in aircraft), Pereira achieved the inner light she desired for her paintings.
Irene Rice Pereira (American, 1902-1971)

Composition, 1945

Ink, gouache, and phosphorescent paint on ruled coated paper

16 x 11 ¼ inches

Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art, Auburn University; Advancing American Art Collection 1948.1.28

Courtesy Djelloul Marbrook
VISUAL ARTS LESSON PLAN

RESOURCES

- Arthur Dove, Grey-Greens, 1942
- Irene Rice Pereira, Composition, 1945
- National Gallery of Art Online “BRUSHster” Painting Activity:
  http://www.nga.gov/kids/zone/brushster.htm

DISCUSSION

- Composition and Grey-Greens are both nonobjective paintings, which have no recognizable subject matter. However, which painting seems to have more reference to the natural world? What makes you say that?
- Why do you think the artists titled their nonobjective paintings Composition and Grey-Greens?
- Describe the similarities in the shapes found in each painting. How are the abstract shapes different in the two paintings? Which shapes are organic, or biomorphic? Which shapes are geometric?
- How has each artist used color?
- Which painting has more linear elements? What effect does this have?
- Which painting seems “heavier?”
- What type of music would you associate with each painting? Why?

MATERIALS

- Computer (with Adobe Shockwave)
- Sketchpad
- Pencils
- Ruler
- Black paper
- Colored chalk OR Oil pastels
- Drawing paper
- Markers (metallic, if possible)

PROCEDURE

DAY 1
Introduce students to still-life compositions using the National Gallery of Art’s interactive BRUSHster program. Have students experiment with the different abstract effects you can create with this program.

DAY 2
If possible, play music similar to what students identified in the discussion as being similar to Grey-Greens. Have students sketch a nonobjective composition that will consist of abstract shapes. Have students draw their nonobjective composition on the black paper with the chalk or oil pastels.
DAY 3
If possible, play music similar to what students identified in the discussion as being similar to Composition.
Have students draw a nonobjective composition with pencil that will consist of only straight lines and rectilinear shapes.
Have students add color to their nonobjective composition with the markers.

CONCLUSION

Have the students arrange their nonobjective compositions on the wall or a table.
Ask each student to briefly discuss the experience of making the nonobjective drawings.
Which did they prefer, the free-hand drawing, or using the ruler?

ASSESSMENT

The student participated in the discussion of Grey-Greens and Composition. Yes/No
The student made two nonobjective drawings. Yes/No
The student participated in the discussion about the nonobjective drawing exercise. Yes/No

NATIONAL CONTENT STANDARDS FOR VISUAL ART:

#1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.
#2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.
#5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.
#6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

LANGUAGE ARTS LESSON PLAN

OBJECTIVES

The student will:
- Consider the differences between representational and nonobjective art.
- Demonstrate a preference for a style of art.
- Write a short persuasive essay communicating their preference for representational or nonobjective art.

RESOURCES

- Arthur Dove, Grey-Greens, 1942
- Irene Rice Pereira, Composition, 1945
DISCUSSION

- Nonobjective painting is purely an arrangement of line, color, shape, form, or texture and that does not show any recognizable person, place, or thing.
- However, American art was rooted in a tradition of representational art. Therefore, in the 1940s, nonobjective painting was considered shocking by viewers who expected a painting to look like something in the world.
- The debate between representational and abstract art continues today. Why do you think artists would want to make a totally abstract (nonobjective) painting? What do you think their goal for this type of art might be? How do you think these artists intend their work to communicate to viewers?
- Many abstract artists were interested in parallels between visual art and music. Does music have subject matter? Does it still communicate to listeners?

PROCEDURE

- Have students discuss the pros and cons for nonobjective art. Write down their responses on a dry erase/black board.
- Have students choose a stance about nonobjective painting—either pro or con.
- Have the students write short essays on the topic. Explain that it doesn’t matter which stance they take. However, they need to substantiate their argument with examples.

CONCLUSION

Students will divide into pairs and read each other’s work. Pairs will discuss how to improve the short stories or poems in a constructive manner, and make changes before submitting it to the teacher. The class will then discuss the critique and the challenges presented by making their writing timeless.

ASSESSMENT

The student participated in the comparison of Grey-Greens and Composition. Yes/No
The student participated in the discussion about nonobjective painting. Yes/No
The student wrote a short persuasive essay either for or against nonobjective painting. Yes/No
The student participated in the pair review and made changes as needed to their essay. Yes/No
The student turned in a completed essay to the teacher. Yes/No

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:

#4: Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
#5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
#12: Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).
GLOSSARY

ABSTRACT: Art that looks as if it contains little or no recognizable or realistic forms from the physical world. Focus on formal elements such as colors, lines, or shapes. Artists often “abstract” objects by changing, simplifying, or exaggerating what they see.

ANALOGOUS COLORS: Colors that are next to each other on the color wheel.

ARMORY SHOW: An exhibition (actually titled The International Exhibition of Modern Art) that was held in the armory in New York from February 17- March 15, 1913. It subsequently traveled to Boston and Chicago. The exhibition, which was seen by more than 400,000 people was controversial, but a major cultural event of its time. The Armory Show included approximately 1,200 works that introduced the American public to Post-Impressionist and Cubist art.

ASSYMETRICAL: Something that has two sides that are not identical.

AVANT-GARDE: Describes new and innovative art or artists that depart from tradition to experiment with a new style, technique, or subject matter. From the French word for “vanguard.”

BIOMORPHIC: Abstract shapes that suggest living organisms.

COLLAGE: A composition of different images and sometimes different media.

COMPLEMENTARY COLORS: Colors which appear opposite one another on a color wheel. When placed next to one another, complementary colors are intensified and often appear to vibrate.

CUBISM: An early 20th Century style of art characterized by overlapping picture planes, multiple perspectives; analytic cubism looks at all views at once; synthetic cubism is basically two-dimensional.

FEDERAL ARTS PROJECT (FAP): A program organized by the U. S. government in 1935 during the Depression designed to employ artists by placing them on the federal payroll and in return having the works they produced, which included murals, photographs, archival drawings, and easel paintings, submitted to the government for use in public buildings. By the time it was dissolved in 1943, the FAP had employed ten thousand artists.

FIGURATIVE: Art that depicts animals or human figures.

FOREGROUND: The part of the picture that appears to be closest to the viewer.
FORMALIST: An artist who focuses on the visual elements of an artwork--its color, line, shape, size, structure, etc.--to give it its form. Generally, but not always, a formalist artist emphasizes these elements over content or subject matter in a work.

GEOMETRIC SHAPES: Shapes with regular contours, and straight edges such as squares, triangles, or circles.

GREAT DEPRESSION: A period during the 1930s of drastic decline in the economy characterized by decreasing business activity, falling prices, and unemployment.

HORIZON LINE: The line created where the sky and earth appear to meet.

IMPASTO: A painting technique in which the paint is applied very thickly on the canvas.

LANDSCAPE: A painting, drawing, or other depiction of natural scenery.

MODERNISTS, MODERNISM: In art history, this term refers to the philosophies of art made in Europe and the United States during a period roughly from the 1860s through the 1970s when certain artists began to take radical steps away from traditional art in order to be deliberately different, critical, and often dissenting from the dominant official taste. Modern art or modernism is characterized by changing attitudes about art, an interest in contemporary events as subjects, personal artistic expression, and freedom from realism. Modernism can be seen as artists’ attempts to come to terms with urban, industrial, and secular society that emerged during the 19th century in Western society.

MONOCHROMATIC: One color, with shades and tints.

NONOBJECTIVE or NONREPRESENTATIONAL: Art that is purely an arrangement of line, color, shape, form, or texture and that does not show any recognizable person, place, or thing.

ORGANIC: Things pertaining to living organisms or something from the natural world. In art, organic shapes are derived from natural forms.

PERSPECTIVE: A variety of techniques used to create the illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface by mimicking the effects of distance on human perception. Perspective shows depth and make objects appear three-dimensional on a two-dimensional surface.

PICTURE PLANE: The surface of a picture.

REALISM: A style of art that represent nature accurately as seen by the human eye.

REPRESENTATIONAL: Depicts an object in nature in recognizable form.
SCALE: The size of an object in relation to things around it.

SHADE: A gradation of a color mixed with black.

SURREALISM: Movement in art and literature from 1924 to 1945 where artists attempted to give visual representation to dreams, fantasies, and the unconscious mind. Emphasized real objects in unreal situations, surprise, contradiction and shock.

SYMBOL: Usually an image that stands for an idea or object.

SYMBOLISM: The practice of using something, usually an object or sign, to represent something else, usually intangible, such as an idea or concept.

SYMMETRICAL: Identical on both sides of a two-sided image.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL: An object which has height, width, and depth. Artists use illusionary techniques to create a sense of depth on a flat surface which has only height and width (two-dimensional).

TINT: A gradation of a color mixed with white.

TWO-DIMENSIONAL: An object which has only height and width. The surface of a painting, for example, is two-dimensional or “flat.”

UNION: A labor union is an organization of workers formed for the purpose of serving their interests in terms of wages and working conditions.

URBAN: Connected to a city; many people living in close quarters; businesses nearby.
I have not used these but im open to any version.

I’m also up for any color options you want to suggest.

Below are the 4 colors I have used so far.