



Objective: To explore basic and distorted shapes in works of art.

A) Introduction:

Today we are going to talk about shapes and how artists use them to create art. Let look around the room for a moment and explore that shapes that are currently all around us. What shapes do you see? To learn more about these shapes lets review few words:

(If the vocabulary words have been provided on poster boards, refer to them here. Otherwise, write the words on the board before you start the discussion on vocabulary)

B) Vocabulary:

- **Shape:** In art, a shape is formed when a line meets itself.
- **Basic Shape:** A term that refers to circles, triangles, rectangles and squares.
- **Distortion:** When something is changed from the way we see it naturally.
- **Collage:** An artistic composition of materials and objects pasted over a surface.

Can someone come up and draw a basic shape?

There are many other shapes. Remember, you have a shape anytime a line meets itself. Can anyone come up and draw an original shape on the board that is not a basic shape? After a student has drawn the shape, ask the class what basic shape it looks like, if any. Most shapes are just basic shapes that have been stretched or pulled in some way.

Now let's take a look at how two artists have used shapes in their pictures.

C) Artwork

Title: The Return of Odysseus, 1971

Artist: Romare Bearden

Details: Collage

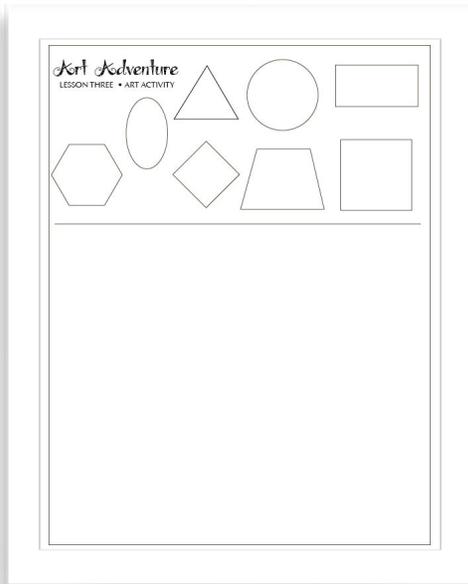
- This picture is a collage, and was made by cutting shapes from paper or other materials and pasting them on a board.
- Many works of art tells stories, and this story is about a warrior and his son who return home from war after being gone for many years. The warrior's wife, on the left, is greeting them.
- Where do you see basic shapes in this artwork? (Rectangles in the background; squares on the center figure's legs; small black squares on the center figure's legs; small black circle between the two main figures) Can you see other shapes that may be distorted? (The mountain and sails seen through the window are distorted triangles; the hats/turbans are distorted circles; etc
- What else do you see in this collage? Where do you see original shapes that don't look like any of the basic shapes? You can find all kinds of shapes in this picture.

Title: Nighthawks, 1942

Artist: Edward Hopper

Details: Painting on Canvas

- What is going on in this picture? (three people are sitting in a diner.) What time of day is it? How do you know that? (It is dark outside and the stores are closed)
- As we look at this picture do you see any basic shapes? Where? (windows - rectangles, doors - square, small window on diner door - square, reflected light in the store windows - triangles)
- Are there also distorted shapes? Where? (barstools and faces – circles; coffee urns, coffee cups and napkin holders – rectangles; cash register in shop window, tops of the coffee urns, countertop and the counterman's body - triangles)
- At our last lesson, we talked about lines. Where do you see horizontal lines? (Top of the windows, etc) Where do you see vertical lines? (Sides of the windows, etc) Where do you see diagonal lines? (Edge of the building, the countertop, etc) You remember very well. If this picture were telling a story, would it be a happy story or a sad story? Why?
- If you wanted to go join them, how would you get into the diner? Where is the door?
- The artist wanted you to view this story from a distance and continue to wonder what was happening in the diner instead of you being able to walk inside and be apart of what was happening in the diner.



Lesson 3 - 1st Grade

Materials provided:
White Paper with Shapes

Give each student a piece paper with shapes on it.
With their drawing supplies the students should begin build a city skyline of buildings with each of the shapes included in their drawings.

It may be a good idea to provide a brief example on the white board.
For example on the board draw a tall rectangle, with a trapezoid on top and then a triangle on the top of the trapezoid with oval windows. Then draw another combination next to it.

Additional Background Material:

This material is provided to give you, the discussion leader, additional information about the artists and paintings that may help you answer questions or generate additional discussion with the children if time permits. You are not expected or required to cover this information in the classroom.

Romare Bearden, The Return of Odysseus, 1971

In 1963, Romare Bearden (1912-1988) mobilized a group of New York black artists in response to the upheaval of the civil rights movement. The goal of this group was “to examine the plight of the Black American artist in America.” As a method of working collaboratively, Bearden suggested a technique he had just begun investigating – the groundbreaking method of collage. In adapting the European tradition of collage to African American themes, Bearden was fulfilling his lifelong goal of creating a universal art – an art that was contemporary yet grounded in history. The Return of Odysseus depicts the climax of the epic poem The Odyssey by the ancient Greek author Homer. Odysseus, accompanied by his son Telemachus, has returned from war to his faithful wife Penelope after an absence of 20 years. Bearden simplified the composition of this complex story by using fewer and larger collage elements with an emphasis on the flatness of the space and a limited blue-green, black and white color scheme. The simplicity of the scene, coupled with the balance of design and color, impart a sense of epic grandeur befitting its heroic theme. At the time of Bearden’s death in 1988, he was considered the nation’s leading African American artist. His richly poetic narratives of the rituals of black life are now part of the pantheon of world art, providing inspiration for the next generation of African American artists.

Edward Hopper, Nighthawks, 1942

Hopper was among a bold, dynamic group of painters who began depicting the less picturesque aspects of city life during the early years of the 20th century. Their choice of dark, deep colors led to their descriptions as “the Ashcan Artists.” He was finally “discovered” around 1924 and went on to receive many honors, prizes, and awards in his lifetime. Hopper painted scenes of everyday American life, often emphasizing the loneliness of life, especially city life. His style is represented in one way by how he handles form in his paintings. Anything that is not absolutely necessary is stripped away and details are simplified. But the signature of Hopper’s style is the light. Sometimes it is harsh, stark, glaring, and sometimes soft and enveloping, but it is always present. Light is a key element in Nighthawks, which Hopper named as one of his favorite paintings. The scene could be Any city, U.S.A, late at night. We don’t know who these people are or why they are here when the rest of the world seems deserted. There seems to be an air of expectation but we don’t know of what. The solid forms and shapes are hard, flat planes are achieved by eliminating much of the detail, including texture. Glass both separates and unites the indoors and outdoors in this piece. Hopper made much use of windows and door in his works because they let light in and out. He often created buildings where the interior and exterior could be seen simultaneously.