



Objective: To teach that art doesn't have to look like anything familiar or real. Art can be completely abstract and made up.

### A) Introduction

Going all the way back to the cave man, man has created many kinds of art. He has recorded what he sees. (I.e. Landscape, people, etc.) He has also recorded his beliefs about things. (I.e. religion, propaganda pictures about pollution, war, etc) He often has recorded his feelings using nothing but shapes and colors. Some art looks similar to a sunset we see in the sky or feelings inside our head. We should always keep in mind that an artist does not merely reproduce what he sees. An artist is a creative person. His eyes don't operate like the lens of a camera. Everything he sees is further shaped by his mind, his emotions, and his feelings. Artists see in a special way. Often an artist does not have an object in mind when he creates an artwork. This kind of art, where an artist has no object in mind, is called **non-objective art**. Sometimes an artist creates an artwork because he or she is interested in experimenting with color or shape or line rather than in reproducing an object.

Today, we are going to talk about some different ways artists create non-objective art. Before we start our discussion, let's take a look at some vocabulary words.

**B) Vocabulary:** (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)

- **Abstract art:** A piece of art that does not represent real or natural forms. Abstract art can be difficult to understand.
- **Hard edge:** A clear, crisply defined edge in a picture. To create hard edges you can use very thick paint or a pencil and paint the line using a guide such as a ruler, masking tape or a template.
- **Soft edge:** An edge that fades away in a picture and is not crisply defined. The edges fade so you and the color change or shape transformation is very gradual and does not stand out as you view the piece.
- **Template:** A pattern that serves as a drawing guide.
- **Color Gradations:** When the edges of a color slowly change into another color.
- **Collage:** Art in which different materials are pasted on a surface. When you make a collage you select a grouping of materials and objects. As you create the collage your imagination decides the arrangement of each item and the art takes its form.
- **Texture:** The way something feels on the surface.



Artists create Non-objective art by using the following techniques:

1. **Hard edge** – Sometimes artists create art with very hard edges that are crisp and clearly defined. To create hard edges you can use very thick paint and paint to a line. Many artists use masking tape to get a hard edge. They paint to the edge of the tape, let the paint dry, and then remove the tape. Today some artists use fast drying new paints that can be dripped on a canvas and will quickly dry to a shiny, hard finish. It is hard to draw a straight line. Artists use a pencil and ruler when they want to get very straight lines. Many shapes are not straight, and artists may use other tools for these lines. Artists can use many different objects as patterns for shapes. These objects are called templates. Have you ever used a template to make a shape? A ruler can be thought of as a template for making straight lines. Can you think of other templates? Pictures drawn with rulers and templates do not look quite real. People and animals aren't really made of circles and sharp corners. These pictures are different from the things we see.
2. **Soft edge** – Some artists make soft edge paintings. The edges fade so you cannot see them and colors change slowly. This is called color graduation. When artists want the colors in their pictures to fade into one another, they often use very thin paint you can see through. Usually, before an artist paints on a canvas he covers the canvas with a liquid that keeps the paint from soaking through and spreading. If an artist uses a canvas without this coating the paint will soak in and spread, creating a soft edge. You can also get soft edges by putting paint on damp paper.
3. **Collage** – When a number of different materials are pasted together to create a work of art, it is called a collage. Collage has fascinated many artists because it is different from a usual painting. An ordinary painting starts with a clean canvas or paper, fresh paint, and sketches. When you make a collage, you start with a collection of junk. The odds and ends you have will usually suggest to you what to do. When creating a collage, first gather a collection. The materials you decide to use must be arranged first into a design just as in a painting. Remember, at the beginning of the year we discussed some different ways shapes can be arranged in art. When you create a non-objective collage you can arrange shapes in any of the ways we discussed.

Here is an example of a non-objective texture collage. It is made of things with interesting shapes and colors that were pasted onto a heavy board. What things do you see? One interesting thing about a collage is many of the things used have textures. Who can tell me what texture is? It is the way something feels on the surface, isn't it?



Let's look at some art and talk about the ideas we have discussed.

### C) Artwork

**Title: Composition (Blue, Red and Yellow)1930**

**Artist: Piet Mondrian (peet MOWN-dree-ahn)**

**Details: Painting on Canvas**

- Mondrian painted for thirty years and never made a curved line. He saw an object such as a tree not as a trunk and branches but as verticals and horizontals.
- He decided that the colors of nature could never truly be represented on canvas so he began using only the “pure” primary colors red, yellow and blue and the non-colors white, gray and black.
- What sort of edges do you see in this piece?
- Do you see anything repeating within this painting?
- What kind of balance do you see in this piece? Symmetrical or asymmetrical? It's not the same on both sides, is it?

**Title: Phenomena Royal Velvet Visitation**

**Artist: Paul Jenkins**

**Details: Painting on Canvass**

- This painting is very different from the Composition painting. It was create using a unique method.
- Jenkins poured paint directly on the surface of an un-stretched canvas. “Unstretched” means the canvas was not stapled to a wooden frame but was just a loose piece of cloth. Next he tilted and manipulated the canvas so that the paint ran down to the center edge and then dripped off into a pan. He didn't not use a brush to apply paint.
- Is the paint blending together? What kind of edge is that?
- Do you see the rhythm and motion within in the paint. If paint represented music would it sound like? Fast? Slow? Upbeat? Loud? Soft?

**Title: The Picasso Statue, 1965**

**Artist: Pablo Picasso**

**Details: Sculpture**

- The “Picasso Statue,” which stands in front of Daley Center in Chicago is a good example of non-representational art.
- There are many different views of what this sculpture may be, art scholars say the statue is probably a portrait of Picasso's wife. Some think the sculpture is one of Picasso's pet Afghans, or a statue is that of a cow, or the figure is a woman with flowing hair.
- The sculpture was entirely pre-assembled, then disassembled, and subsequently shipped to the Daley Center to be reassembled in its final form.
- The Chicago Picasso is an unpainted cubist sculpture standing 50 feet tall and weighing 162 tons.

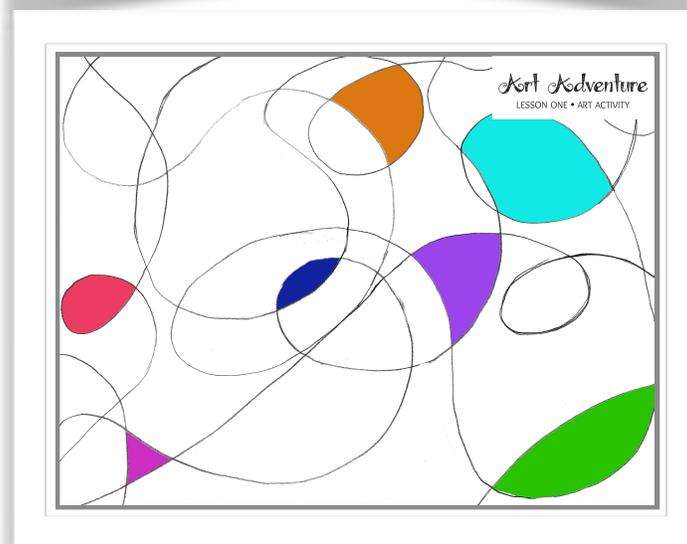
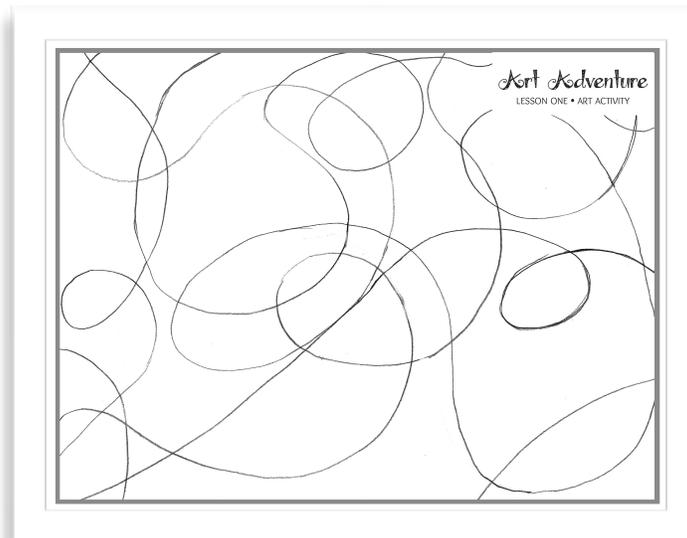


### Reinforcement Activity

Materials provided: template drawing with curly and whirly lines  
Children provide: pencil and/or colored pencils and/ or markers

Give each student the template of the curly and whirly lines.

Have them begin to color in sections of the rounded shapes the lines create. As they start to color in each section mention that they should also leave some of the shapes white without any color. The student can also trace the black lines to make the lines more dramatic. They can also use color gradations in some of the sections or draw in different textures.





### **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.*

#### **Piet Mondrian, Composition (Blue, Red and Yellow), 1930**

Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) is one of the many great Dutch artists who have changed the direction of history in art. He declared that true art should not be an attempt to represent something else, but that it should exist as an object itself. Towards this end, he reduced his idea of form to a rectangle, abandoned “natural” colors for pure primary colors, and began to create paintings composed of black grids filled with primary colors and non-colors white and gray. Balance was essential to Mondrian. Yet it was a personal, asymmetrical balance that he sought. Each new work was a search for the essence of balance, with weight of color on one side balancing weight of space and linear grid on the other. Some were simple, some were complex. Composition (Blue, Red and Yellow) is representative of his grand theme but not exactly like any other one in the long series. His last work, unfinished, indicates that Mondrian’s next development would be beyond the black lines of his work of the preceding 30 years. Tiny squares of color create the lines themselves and the spaces are left to the noncolor white. Mondrian may not consciously have intended it, but his work influenced other 20th century artists in fields as diverse as architecture, packaging, and interior commercial, and industrial design.

#### **Phenomena Waves Without Wind, Paul Jenkins, 1977**

Paul Jenkins’ (b. 1923) work is enriched by his strong foundation in other art fields, including theater, and dance, and he admits that the innovative, dramatic, choreography and style of the great modern dancer, Martha Graham, had an impact on his emerging art style. If we look at this particular painting, we can feel the burst of movement and a certain exuberance or delight in the power of the vivid colors as they move over the canvas. The artist also “choreographed” the paint by manipulating the canvas and controlling the flow in places with a knife attached to a long holder. This vivid, flowing fan-like painting is a study in color and motion. At first glance, you might think that the artist began at the bottom center of the canvas and brushed the paint up and out toward the sides. In fact, Jenkins used no brushes, nor did he paint the colors into the surface in the traditional manner. His technique was to pour paint directly onto the moist, primed (sealed), unstretched canvas and tilt it to move the pigments in a particular direction, in this case, inward and down where they dripped off the bottom edge into a pan. He totally eliminated a sense of foreground and background so that the color and space could be the primary focus. Here it is almost rhythmic, open, billowing. It creates an explosion that both blends the colors to form new ones, while also allowing some hues to overlap in a cleaner, less mixed way.