



Objective: To teach the children to recognize basic shapes, distorted shapes and decorated shapes and to design with them.

A) Introduction:

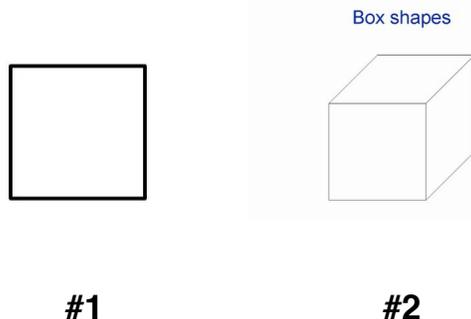
Today we are going to talk about shapes. What is a shape? When a line meets its tail, you have a shape. All shapes are two-dimensional, meaning that they have only length and width. We can learn to see the world around us as shapes. Recognizing the shapes that we see will lead to improved drawing and painting. Shapes can be used to help us focus on one part of the artwork or it can help us to keep our eyes moving throughout then entire artwork. What are some shapes you see in this room?

(If the vocabulary words have been provided on poster boards, refer to them here. Otherwise, write the words on the board to refer to as you talk about them)

B) Vocabulary:

- **Shape:** In art, a shape is formed when a line meets itself.
- **Basic Shape: Does anyone remember what a basic shape is? It's a** term in art that refers to circles, triangles, rectangles & squares.They are shapes you all know. Can anyone come up and draw these basic shapes on the board for me?
- **Distorted Shapes:** Artists look very carefully around them to see all the shapes they can.

Sometimes they see shapes in different ways. They might paint a picture and the shapes would not look real to you. But they would be real to the artist because she saw them differently than you did. Very often, a thing can have several shapes depending on how you look at it. A box is a good example. When I hold the box like this, it looks like a square (#1). When I turn the box, it doesn't look like a square (#2).



Have you ever looked at yourself in a mirror at a fun house? How does your shape change? When an artist changes a shape from the way it is in real life because he sees it differently, it is called distortion. Sometimes artists distort shapes to make them more interesting. Can someone come up and draw a distorted triangle?



Vocabulary (con't)

- **Decorated Shapes.** Another way that artists create original shapes is to decorate them. What is decoration? You usually decorate something by putting things on it. Who can decorate this triangle?
- **Design:** A good arrangement of shapes. Artists design artwork just as carefully as a scientist designs an airplane. Each shape must be in the correct place for the design to “work” or, in other words, to accurately express what the artist wants to say.
- **Center of Interest:** The part of a piece of art to which your eyes keep returning. When an artist begins to plan the design of his art, he thinks about all the shapes he will use. Sometimes he decides that one shape or group of shapes is going to be the most important part of the picture. This is called the center of interest. Does the center of interest have to be in the center? [No]. The center of interest is the place you find your eyes coming back to again and again as you look at a work of art.
- **All-Over Design:** An arrangement of shapes in which all are of equal visual importance. Not all artists create pictures with a center of interest. Some artists create pictures with an all-over design in which no one part of the artwork is more important than any other part.

So, we have seen that artists use basic shapes in their art. They can distort shapes or decorate shapes to make them more interesting. Shapes can be arranged in a design so that one part of the design is more important than the rest, and that is the center of interest. Shapes can also be arranged in a design so that all parts are equally interesting.

Now let's look at some artwork and see how the artist has used shapes.



3. C) Artwork

Title: *Tar Beach*, 1988

Artist: Faith Ringgold

Details: Picture of a Quilt

- What we are looking at is a print, or picture, of a quilt that contains a painting and a story.
- The text tells a dreamy story of eight-year-old Cassie and her memories of evenings with her family and friends on the roof of her apartment building.
- The rooftop of the building is covered in tar.
- Where do you see basic shapes? Squares? Circles?
- Are there decorated or distorted shapes? Where?
- What do you eyes focus on in the quilt?

Title: *Thanksgiving*, 1935

Artist: Doris Lee

Details: Painting on Canvas

- There is a lot going on in this picture, do you eyes travel throughout the painting or do they focus on one single spot?
- This picture is an all-over design and each part of the painting is equally important.
- Where do you see basic shapes?
- Where do you see distorted shapes?
- Can you find any decorated shapes?



Reinforcement Activity

Materials provided:

White paper and construction paper

Children provide: scissors, glue and crayons

In this project the children will create a city skyline with shapes. Pass out the papers and have the children get out their glue, scissors and crayons. Tell the children to cut shapes from the construction paper and arrange them in a design on the white paper to form a city skyline. Once they have created a design they like, they may glue the shapes down and decorate them with their crayons. Remember to refer to the vocabulary. They may distort their shapes and decorate their shapes. They may make an all-over design or a design with a center of interest.



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.

Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach*, 1988

Faith Ringgold (1930-) is an African American woman whose talents are wonderfully diverse. She is a painter, quilter, sculptor, performance artist, storyteller, author, musician and a Professor of Art. Her work is not only a colorful documentation of her own life and the people she has known or wanted to know, but a way to define and affirm her African-American experience, particularly from the female perspective. *Tar Beach* is the first of five quilts in a series called *The Woman on a Bridge*. The text that is painted onto the fabric is a blend of autobiography and fiction. It tells the dreamy story of eight-year-old Cassie Louise Lightfoot and her memories of evenings with her family and friends on the roof of her apartment building. Like all the quilts in this series, the story is essentially one of freedom. In this case, it is the freedom of flying, of going anywhere, any time, forever. Young Cassie is seen both lying on a mattress with her little brother and soaring near the Washington Bridge. Cassie's parents play cards with neighbors. A picnic dinner waits invitingly on a table in the corner. The picture is painted on a large piece of cloth with acrylic paints. Multicolored patchwork strips and squares of printed fabric surround the scene, a soft frame that "protects" the memory.

Doris Lee, *Thanksgiving*, 1935

Doris Lee (1905-1983) grew up on the banks of the Mississippi in rural Aledo, Illinois. As a youngster on her grandfather's farm, she developed a great appreciation for the spirit of the American family, a theme that appeared in her paintings long after she moved away from the Midwest. *Thanksgiving* celebrates the joys of family ties. The bustling kitchen is filled with life and love as a group of women prepares the annual feast. It is clear that, to Lee, the meaning of the holiday lies in the ritual of its preparation. Women, children and animals fill the entire composition, including the back room. Every person's character emerges through the way in which she completes her task, and each figure is carefully positioned to create a sense of balance and unity in the painting. Lee's work received public and critical acclaim for its earthy qualities and sense of humor. One critic described her paintings as "fresh, with the charm of innocence."