

Lesson Unit: Paper Art

by Sue McCleaf Nespeca and Joan B. Reeve



Grade: K-2

Time Required: Three, 50-minute Sessions

Overview

This unit will help children understand paper techniques that children's book illustrators use, such as cut paper collage, die-cut pages, and object stencils for relief printing.

Learning Objectives

- To distinguish cut paper collage in illustrations
- To construct a collage illustration of their own
- To understand the concept of die-cut holes in illustrations
- To recognize how to cut on folds to create a symmetrical die-cut pattern
- To learn how to create stencil art

Session One: Cut paper collage

Materials

- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle
- White construction paper
- Colored tissue papers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Crayons or colored pencils

Directions

1. Share the story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle.
 - Explain how Eric Carle makes his illustrations for his book.
 - First, he makes his own tissue papers by painting acrylics, watercolors, or poster paints on white tissue.
 - He uses various tools, such as paintbrushes or small squares of carpet, to make a design.
 - Then he draws an object (in this case the caterpillar) on tracing paper.
 - After this, he takes the colored tissue papers he has made and places his tracing paper drawing on top of the colored tissue and cuts out the object.
 - Finally, he glues the object to a white illustration board and then continues in the same manner for the rest of the illustrations. Final touches are added with crayons or colored pencils.
 - For an excellent description of this process with pictures, see *The Art of Eric Carle* (see resources), the video *Eric Carle: Picture Writer*, or the following website page: <http://www.eric-carle.com/makepic.html>
2. Make a simple paper collage.

- Give each child a piece of white construction paper.
- Have them cut or tear pieces of tissue paper and fasten it to the construction paper by brushing it with watered down glue directly on the paper. There is no need to glue the back and turn it over. It will stick when brushed with glue from the top. (Watering down the glue makes it easier to not catch the tissue paper onto the brush.)
- Older children can make a drawing first, but this is not necessary. Children can simply be creative with the process of making their own "picture" or design.
- Once they finish the collage, the children can add final touches with colored pencils or crayons in the style of Eric Carle.
- Explain to children that "collage" means a two-dimensional picture achieved by gluing paper, fabric, wood, and/or other materials to a flat surface. (Eric Carle works almost exclusively with paper.)

3. If time permits, share some other books by Eric Carle, or another wonderful story about a caterpillar, *Clara Caterpillar*. (See resources.)

Session Two: Die-cut stained glass art

Materials

- *There Was an Old Lady* by Simms Taback
- Black construction paper
- Colored cellophane paper or colored plastic wrap, or ends of laminating film colored with markers
- Tape or glue
- Safety scissors, both straight and zigzag, scalloped, etc.
- Paper punch (regular or for shapes)

Directions

1. Share the popular folk song version of *There Was An Old Lady* by Simms Taback.
 - Point out the die-cut pages. See if children notice that the holes increase in size as more animals are eaten.
 - Ask children to name the animals they see in the lady's stomach on each page.
 - After sharing the story, show children the endpapers of the book. (If you used the first lesson unit with children, ask them to tell you where the endpapers of the book are located.)
 - Tell the children that Taback used colorful pieces of torn Kraft paper to give a stained glass effect on the black endpapers and also on the old lady's dress.
 - Let the children know they will now make their own die-cut stained glass art work.
2. Make stained glass.
 - Have children fold their black construction paper in various places (or on angles) and cut out shapes, straight or curly lines, or designs on the fold.
 - When they open the folds, "windows" will appear. They can also use paper punches around the edges for a border.
 - Have them tape or glue colored pieces of cellophane paper on the back for a die-cut stained glass look.

- After they finish, tape the pictures to a window, and on a sunny day, the light will shine through the colorful openings.

3. If time permits, share another book with a similar look: *Go Away, Big Green Monster!* by Ed Emberley.

Take Home Assignment

- Let children take their pictures home to hang them on a window.
- Tell the children to demonstrate to their families how they made their die-cut stained glass picture, and other family members can make one for a very colorful display on home windows. This is one project that all ages enjoy!

Session Three: Sponge print stencil art

Materials

- *One Potato* or *Wildflower ABC* both by Diana Pomeroy
- Construction paper
- Sponge shapes pre-cut with a die-cut machine or with small, sharp (buttonhole) scissors
- Clothespins
- Tempera paint (in pans or trays)
- Large sheets of lightweight paper

Directions

1. Read either or both stories by Diana Pomeroy listed above. Note that the author/illustrator used potatoes for her printing, but that we will be using sponges instead of wasting an edible food. (There is quite a difference of one illustrator using a food item and an entire class of children using food items.)

2. Create stencil art.

- Have children practice the pincer grip to attach a clothespin to each sponge shape before dipping it into tempera paint.
- Let them print on construction paper by dabbing the paint-filled sponges across the page.

3. If time permits, provide large sheets of lightweight paper and have children create their own wrapping paper for gifts. They can use a pattern print, and you can use this exercise as a teachable moment to explain a simple pattern such as *ab—ab*, etc.

Follow Up

Modifications

- Have young children tear paper, rather than cut it, and glue it to the construction paper.

- For the die-cut exercise above, you can also save plastic scraps from a laminating machine and color them with permanent felt-tipped markers instead of using expensive colored cellophane paper.
- Contrast the look of sponge prints with those made by dipping a cookie cutter or other kitchen utensils into paint and making designs or patterns. Try making your own paper as described on page 12 in *Picture Books Plus*. (See resources.)

Assessment

- Children should be able to identify collage illustrations in books.
- Children should be able to create a collage illustration.
- Children should be able to identify die-cut page illustrations in selected books.
- Children should be able to cut designs on a fold.
- Children should be able to create stencil art.
- Children should recognize a simple stencil pattern.

Resources

Books Used in this Lesson

- Carle, Eric. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Putnam, 1983.
- Pomeroy, Diana. *One Potato*. Harcourt Brace, 1996.
- Pomeroy, Diana. *Wildflower ABC*. Harcourt Brace, 1997.
- Taback, Simms. *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*. Viking, 1997.

Additional Children's Books

There are many other Eric Carle books you can explore to see his cut paper collages. Here are just a few:

- Carle, Eric. *The Grouchy Ladybug*. HarperCollins, 1977.
- Carle, Eric. *The Very Busy Spider*. Philomel, 1985.
- Carle, Eric. *The Very Clumsy Click Beetle*. Philomel, 1999.
- Carle, Eric. *The Very Lonely Firefly*. Philomel, 1995.
- Carle, Eric. *The Very Quiet Cricket*. Philomel, 1990.

Other Related Books:

- Edwards, Pamela Duncan. *Clara Caterpillar*. HarperCollins, 2001. Henry Cole, Illustrator.
- Emberley, Ed. *Go Away Big Green Monster!* Little, Brown, 1992.
- Taback, Simms. *The House That Jack Built*. Putnam, 2002.
- Taback, Simms. *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*. Viking, 1999.

Instructional Books

- Carle, Eric. *The Art of Eric Carle*. Philomel, 1996.
- Carle, Eric. *You Can Make a Collage: A Very Simple How-To Book*. Klutz, Inc., 1998.

Websites

- Eric Carle's website: <http://www.eric-carle.com/>
- For another painted collage artist, visit Lois Ehlert's website: www.friend.ly.net/scoop/biographies/ehlertlois

* Some of the above description for this activity is from *Picture Books Plus: 100 Extension Activities in Art, Drama, Music, Math and Science*, written by Sue McCleaf Nespeca and Joan B. Reeve. ©2003 by the American Library Association.