

Harriet Tubman: Illustrating History

How can collage-style artwork depict historical events?

Grades 3-5 Lesson: Harriet Tubman: Illustrating History

Grade Band: 3-5

Arts Subject: Visual Arts

Other Subject: Geography

SUMMARY

In this 3-5 lesson, students will explore Jacob Lawrence’s artistic collage technique from “The Migration Series.” Students will create original Lawrence-style collage artwork about the “conductor” of the Underground Railroad, Harriet Tubman.

PREPARATION

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Determine key details about Harriet Tubman through a children’s book, *Harriet and the Promised Land*.
- Analyze the artistic technique of collage.
- Discuss the characteristics of collage artwork by artist Jacob Lawrence.
- Research and gather information about a historical figure.
- Create original artwork in the style of Jacob Lawrence.

Standards Alignment

National Core Arts Standards

[VA:Cr2.1.3a](#) Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

[VA:Cr2.1.4a](#) Explore and invent art-making techniques and approaches.

[VA:Cr2.1.5a](#) Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

[VA:Cr3.1.5a](#) Create artist statements using art vocabulary to describe personal choices in artmaking.

[VA:Pr5.1.3a](#) Identify exhibit space and prepare works of art including artists’ statements, for presentation.

[VA:Pr5.1.4a](#) Analyze the various considerations for presenting and protecting art in various locations, indoor or outdoor settings, in temporary or permanent forms, and in physical or digital formats.

[VA:Re.7.2.3a](#) Determine messages communicated by an image.

[VA:Re.7.2.4a](#) Analyze components in visual imagery that convey messages.

[VA:Re.7.2.5a](#) Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.

Common Core State Standards

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.1](#) Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.2](#) Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.3](#) Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.7](#) Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur).

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1](#) Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.2](#) Determine the main idea of a text and explain how it is supported by key details; summarize the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.3](#) Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.7](#) Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1](#) Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.2](#) Determine two or more main ideas of a text and explain how they are supported by key details; summarize the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.3](#) Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.7](#) Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

Recommended Student Materials

Editable Documents: *Before sharing these resources with students, you must first save them to your Google account by opening them, and selecting “Make a copy” from the File menu.*

Check out [Sharing Tips](#) or [Instructional Benefits](#) when implementing Google Docs and Google Slides with students.

- [Capture Sheet: Harriet Tubman](#),
- [Criteria for Success: Harriet Tubman Collage](#)

Books

- *Story Painter: The Life of Jacob Lawrence* by John Duggleby
- *Harriet and the Promised Land* by Jacob Lawrence

Videos

- [Jacob Lawrence. The Migration Series by Smarthistory](#)
- [Harriet Tubman Abolition Activist](#)

Websites

- [Jacob Lawrence: 60 Panels of The Migration Series](#)
- [National Geographic Kids: Harriet Tubman. Spy](#)
- [North Star to Freedom](#)
- [Ducksters: Harriet Tubman](#)

Teacher Background

Teachers should review historical information about Harriet Tubman from the following resources: [Harriet Tubman Biography](#), [National Geographic Kids: Harriet Tubman. Spy](#), [Harriet Tubman Timeline](#), [History: Harriet Tubman](#), and [Ducksters: Harriet Tubman](#).

Teachers should also review information about Jacob Lawrence. *Note: Some websites require a browser that supports Flash.* [Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series](#), [About Jacob Lawrence](#), [Jacob Lawrence: 60 Panels of The Migration Series](#), [Jacob Lawrence Interviews](#), Book: *Harriet and the Promised Land* by Jacob Lawrence.

Student Prerequisites

Students should have background knowledge about the American institution of slavery, the Underground Railroad, and African American history.

Accessibility Notes

Modify handouts and give preferential seating for visual presentations. Allow extra time for task completion.

INSTRUCTION

Engage

1. Show or share with students the [Jacob Lawrence: 60 Panels of The Migration Series](#).

2. Discuss Lawrence's artwork with students. *Ask students: What is similar about these pieces of artwork? (Bold colors, repeated colors, strong shapes, repeated shapes, strong lines, heavy feeling to artwork, strong emotions, little detail, exaggerated figures—they seem to tell an African American story) Why did the artist call this collection of artwork the Migration Series? (African Americans were moving from the south to the north to begin a new life.) How did you feel as you viewed this series of artwork?*

Build

1. Introduce the artist, Jacob Lawrence, to students by reading *Story Painter: The Life of Jacob Lawrence* by John Duggleby, and/or watch [Jacob Lawrence, The Migration Series by Smarthistory](#).

2. Explain that the Underground Railroad was a secret migration network of escaped enslaved people from the south to the north. This is not the migration that Lawrence was depicting in his Migration Series, but it is the subject of some of Lawrence's artwork.

3. Read *Harriet and the Promised Land* by Jacob Lawrence. Ask students: *How is the artwork in this book similar to the slide show? (Same colors, shapes, emotions, and style) What do you think Lawrence was trying to share with his viewers through this series of artwork? (The emotional journey of Tubman and her followers, the risk, and the fear) What new information did you learn about Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad?*

4. Explore the artistic style of collage art. Explain that collage-style art comes from the word "coller," meaning "to glue or to stick." In Lawrence's work, shapes, color, and other items are layered onto a single surface to create a multi-layered creation. There is often a background, middle ground, and foreground.

5. Show a piece of artwork in *Harriet and the Promised Land*. Ask students: *Is the artwork composed using a vertical or horizontal layout and why? (Most, but not all, portraits are done in a vertical format; and most, but not all, landscapes are done in a horizontal format.) What is in the background? What is in the middle ground? What is in the foreground? How does the artist distinguish between these "grounds"? (by varying the size of the shapes, from smallest in background to largest in foreground) In what order do you think the artist places items onto the paper? (background to foreground) Why do shapes overlap? (to create depth through layers) How did he know where to place the items? (He probably made a sketch with pencil first to visualize the pieces and their placement onto the paper.) What colors did Lawrence use? What shapes are repeated? What story was Lawrence trying to tell with this collage illustration?*

6. Have students research and gather details about Harriet Tubman's life with the [Capture Sheet: Harriet Tubman](#). Share the following resources with students: [National Geographic Kids: Harriet Tubman, Spy](#), [North Star to Freedom](#), [Video: Harriet Tubman, Abolition Activist](#), and [Ducksters: Harriet Tubman](#).

Apply

1. Create a Lawrence-type collage. Have students create a scene that depicts an aspect of Harriet Tubman's life or journey. The scene should depict three or more "facts" about Tubman and her north-south journeys. Students can pull from information gained from *Harriet and the Promised Land* or from their research. For example, students may choose to show the North

Star that guided her, the rivers journeyed along or waded through, the friends/allies that provided housings along the way, or some of the dangers that were encountered.

2. Review the [Criteria for Success: Harriet Tubman Collage](#) with students. Provide students with feedback throughout the process.

Reflect

1. Create a Jacob Lawrence classroom gallery. Display artwork in the classroom, hallway, or create a digital gallery. If possible, place Lawrence prints alongside student work. Invite students from another class to view the gallery.

2. Assess students orally as they serve as a docent (museum tour guide) to explain their artwork to the students on the tour.

Extend

1. Write an original poem about Tubman to accompany the collage. Use one or more poetic devices in the original poem: alliteration, metaphor, onomatopoeia, personification, rhyme, and simile.

2. Explore the other works of Jacob Lawrence or other collage artists.

3. Choose a topic to research and create a collage. The topic can be related to math, science, history, or another subject area. Create a Lawrence-style collage on the topic.

4. Create a timeline of historical events. As a class or in small groups, create Lawrence-style collages showing a series of events.

Credits

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