

# ARTISTIC CHOICES: The Message in the MATERIALS

## Suggested Grade Level: Middle School

Students analyze artistic choices in materials and composition seen in *Recycled Child*, 2009, by Marita Dingus; and *Parlour Fan Quilt*, 2010, by Ross Palmer Beecher. Students then create a collage self-portrait composition using recycled materials that are chosen for personal meaning.



### Thoughts for teachers:

*Each lesson step begins with a student-friendly learning target and is followed by directions and questions to guide student learning. Teachers are strongly encouraged to make a collage example as demonstration of each art-making step as the lesson is taught.*

### The Big Idea

Artists choose, change, and arrange recycled materials in ways that can communicate ideas.

### Student learning targets:

- I can analyze artistic choices.
- I can choose collage materials that have meaning to me.
- I can arrange shapes and materials in a composition to create a self-portrait.
- I can use craftsmanship in making my collage.
- I can explain my artistic choices.

## I can analyze artistic choices.

- Every artist makes many choices in the process of making a work of art. By describing what we see, we are going to analyze the choices artists made in creating two works of art — what materials, shapes, textures, and colors the artist used and how they are arranged in a **composition**.
- Look closely at **Recycled Child, by Marita Dingus**. (Student worksheet provided.)  
Make a list of what you see: lines, colors, shapes, textures, and things you recognize.  
How did the artist arrange or organize the parts of the picture or composition?  
Do you see something that might be found or recycled? What do you think it is?
- Recycled Child is a **mixed media assemblage**. It was created for Seattle Central Community College and is a combination of hand-painted elements and found materials. It is located next to the recycling program at the college. The computer parts that can be seen on the body came from the Information Technology department, also located in the building where the art is installed.

### Artist's Statement

*Recycled Child* is a metaphor for the latent potential inside of ethnic minorities who are often discarded and undervalued.

- Look closely at **Parlour Fan Quilt, by Ross Palmer Beecher**.  
Make a list of what you see: lines, colors, shapes, textures, things you recognize  
How did the artist arrange or organize the parts of the picture or **composition**?  
Do you see something that might be found or recycled? What do you think it is?
- Think about what you have noticed in the art and how the parts have been arranged. Share what you think the art might be about and why you think so.
- **Parlour Fan Quilt** is installed at Pioneer Middle School, in Dupont, and recognizes community history and school purpose. It is made from an assortment of materials, including oil paint on wood and tin, recycled glass from the school's garden, soda can flip tops, deerskin, computer keyboard parts, arrowheads, a watering can, and other materials.

### Artist's Statement

#### *Parlour Fan Quilt*

In Seattle I was introduced to the folk art of Mexico. ...  
This showed me that it was possible to do heartfelt artwork using materials I could gather on the street. ...I began making quilts of recycled cans, presidential lanterns, and punched tin tombstones.

- We will be making artistic choices as we make a **collage made out of recycled papers** (collage means "to paste" in French) that is inspired by both of these artworks. A collage can be like a quilt, since it is made of many individual shapes that are pieced together or layered. **Assemblages** are similar to collages, except that they are made of materials that tend to be more **three-dimensional**.

### Vocabulary

Acrylic medium  
Assemblage  
Background  
Border  
Collage  
Composition  
Craftsmanship  
Detail  
Layer  
Mixed media  
Proportion  
Recycle  
Self-Portrait  
Shape  
Symbol  
Texture  
Three-dimensional  
Quilt

## I can choose collage materials that have meaning to me.

- Create a **collage** that is a **portrait of you**. Your **self-portrait** will be made of shapes, colors, symbols, and materials you thoughtfully select because they have meaning to you. They will form the features of your face, parts of a **background**, and/or a **border** for your composition.
- The heavier paper is for the background. (If there are color choices, your first **artistic choice** is the color of background.) Select materials for your collage that communicate something about you past, present, and future. Think about your family, history, culture, friends, talents, beliefs, goals, things you like to do. Find colors, pictures, and **symbols** that you can clearly connect with who you are. You will be asked to explain your artistic choices — how the collage materials you choose communicate something about you or are meaningful to you.



### Gathering Materials

Honor the diversity and uniqueness of your students by gathering (or having them gather) a broad range of interesting paper materials. Include publications in diverse languages or images that include cultural symbols.

**Caution:** Setting out entire ordinary magazines can encourage restless browsing and predictable results.

### Managing Materials

In collage, ideas can spark materials choices, and materials choices can spark ideas.

Limiting materials and tools to just scissors and paper pushes students to become more creative.

Set out enticing collage materials on a long counter or table. Model the artistic selection process, as choices are as important as cutting and gluing. Set an initial time limit for “shopping for materials” to 3 to 5 materials to start. Students can return later for different materials.



### Materials

Heavy cardstock, file folders, or mat board in colors: 9x12 inches or smaller  
Newspaper for cutting practice, scissors, acrylic medium, brushes, small containers, glue mats. Optional: mirrors, facial proportion diagrams

### Collect

Skin-tone papers, publications, catalogs, stickers, greeting cards, sheet music, advertisements, old books, maps, school worksheets, colorful envelopes, paper bags, tickets, stamps, gift wraps, or pre-selected pages from magazines like *National Geographic* and *Popular Mechanics*



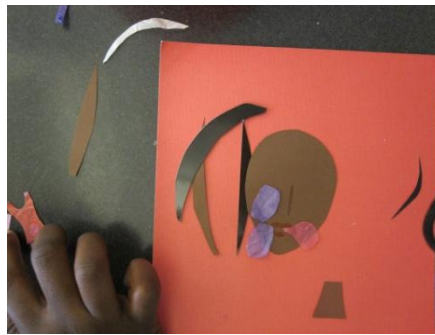
## I can arrange shapes and materials in a composition to create a self-portrait.

- Practice cutting out different shapes using newspaper first: Cut a precise rectangle and a then a spiral. Hold scissors still, open blades wide and move the paper with your other hand to create detailed shapes. We will be creating details with paper, not by drawing on paper, so precision is important.



- There are two different ways we will be recycling materials into art. One is to find **pictures of things that are meaningful to us** that we cut out carefully. An ice cream cone, a basketball, a cat, a mountain, a bicycle wheel, or a flower might find its way into your collage.
- The second way is to **cut out shapes for our portrait or other parts of our composition** using the collage papers available. You might cut out these shapes from symbolic or special colors, sheet music, printed paper, or interesting textures or patterns.

- Look at the face in **Recycled Child** and think about the shapes we see in a face: Ovals, circles, curvy shapes for lips, noses, and eyebrows. (Optional: Facial proportion can be a concept built into this lesson.) Cut out shapes for your face and features. You can **layer** shape upon shape.



- **Arrange and re-arrange your composition.** Your face does not need to be in the middle of your collage and can overlap other shapes or pictures you have chosen or cut out. Collage lets us move things around before we commit to a final composition (unlike other art processes). The **background** area behind or around your face can be a place, or pictures and shapes can float. You might want to create a **border**. Be thoughtful in organizing your composition.

**Assessment in Progress:** Students arrange major elements of compositions and check in with teacher for alignment with learning targets before gluing.



## I can use craftsmanship in making my collage.

- **Craftsmanship** means using care, thought, and skill in making something. It also means that what you make will not fall apart. In collage it means that all parts are carefully and smoothly cut out, securely attached to the background with nothing loose or flapping.
- When your collage composition has been approved and is ready to be glued down, carefully glue down each shape. Brush **acrylic medium** to cover all of the back of each shape. Place, and smooth down fully. (This is hard to reverse, so be precise.) Brush medium over the top of the whole collage to seal. Do not continue to brush once surface is covered since it makes the medium become cloudy.



## I can explain my artistic choices.

- Describe at least five recycled materials or pictures that you used in your collage and explain why they have meaning to you. (See worksheet.)

### Lesson Alternatives or Extensions

Students alter and arrange recycled materials with personal meaning to create an image of their hand as a portrait of self.

Students can create a setting or place that has personal significance using recycled materials with personal meaning.

Collages can be created on square paper and arranged like a quilt for display.

### Washington State EALRS

#### Visual Art

- 1.1.1 Concepts and vocabulary: Shape
- 1.1.2 Principles of Organization: Composition
- 1.2 Skills and techniques: Collage
- 2.3 Applies a Responding Process: Describes, Analyzes
- 3.2 Communicates through the arts: For a specific purpose

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# ARTISTIC CHOICES: The Message in the MATERIALS

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Class \_\_\_\_\_

## 1.) Analyze artistic choices seen in art.

### **Recycled Child**

*Make a list of what you see:*

*How did the artist arrange or organize the parts of the picture or composition?*

*Do you see something that might be found or recycled in the art? What do you think it is?*

### **Parlour Fan Quilt**

*Make a list of what you see:*

*How did the artist arrange or organize the parts of the picture or composition?*

*Do you see something that might be found or recycled in the art? What do you think it is?*

## 2.) Explain your artistic choices.

*Describe at least five recycled materials or pictures that you used in your collage and explain why they have meaning to you.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Self-assessment checklist:**

- I identified lines, shapes, textures, and materials in art and how they were used in composition. (1.)
- I chose materials and pictures for my collage that reflect who I am.
- I arranged shapes for my face and features in my portrait.
- I cut and glued materials down smoothly and securely, and sealed my composition.
- I described the materials I used and wrote about what they communicate about me. (2.)