

How to Build a Forest

Art, theatre, & design lesson, grades 9-12

Art into Story

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Lesson overview

In this lesson, students will be introduced to the elements of art and principles of design (visual art), create a series of still life tableaux (theatre) art pieces (visual art & theatre), and imagine the narrative that connects these objects (theatre & language arts).

Learning objectives & “I can” statements

Learning objectives

Students will be able to

- show the Elements of Art and Principles of Design in a variety of still lifes and tableaux.
- evaluate a performance of *How to Build a Forest* for strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.
- use the narrative technique of dialogue develop experiences, events, and/or characters related to the series of still lifes or tableaux.

“I can” statements

“I can show the Elements of Art and Principles of Design in a variety of still lifes and tableaux.”

“I can evaluate a performance of *How to Build a Forest* for strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement.”

“I can use the narrative technique of dialogue develop experiences, events, and/or characters related to the series of still lifes or tableaux.”

Common Core State Standards & North Carolina Essential Standards

CCSS Language Arts 9-12

- W.3a Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.
- W.3c Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.
- W.3e Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

*Note that the complete 9-10 standards are printed; 11-12 standards expand on these.

NCES Theatre Arts 9-12

- P.AE.1.1 Analyze design concepts for aesthetic impact of technical elements.
- P.C.1.1 Use non-verbal expression and physical self-awareness to communicate movement elements and characterization, including size, weight, and rate of movement.

NCES Visual Art 9-12

- B.V.1.2 Apply the Elements of Art and Principles of Design to create art.
- B.V.1.4 Recognize how Elements of Art and Principles of Design are used in art.
- I.V.2.3 Understand the role of emotion, imagination, and creativity in producing content for original art.
- I.CX.2.2 Apply skills and knowledge learned in various disciplines to visual arts.
- P.V.1.2 Understand the relationship between personal expression and design.
- P.V.1.4 Evaluate the use of the Elements of Art and Principles of Design in art.
- A.V.1.1 Use art vocabulary to explain compositional choices.
- A.CX.2.2 Create art using skills and knowledge learned in other disciplines.

Lesson-specific background

Shawn Hall (Designer) is a visual artist whose work imagines various facets of the natural world. In *How to Build a Forest*, Hall expresses a fascination with weightlessness, translucence and transformation by creating a representation of a forest out of different man-made materials – tie line, fabric, wire, netting, foam and more – joined together by embroidery, punching, tying, and welding. Through her careful selection of materials

and creative use of artistic principles, Hall has created a performance installation that both engages and challenges the audience.

Materials

A selection of craft supplies and reusable objects, for example:

- Paint
- Markers
- Tape
- Fabric
- String
- Trash bags
- Discarded boxes
- Discarded bottles
- Bottle caps
- Straws
- Wire
- Yarn
- Fabric
- Wood scraps
- Writing materials- paper, pens, pencils
- Camera (optional)
- Copies of student handouts

Vocabulary

Texture, form, shape, color, line, value, balance, emphasis, unity, rhythm, proportion / scale

Before the performance

You may wish to list the following terms on the board or poster paper for reference:

<u>Elements of Art</u>	<u>Principles of Design</u>
Texture	Balance
Form	Emphasis
Shape	Unity
Color	Rhythm
Line	Proportion / Scale
Value	

1. Use **Student Handout #1: Elements of Art Scavenger Hunt** to challenge students to look differently at the environment around them.

Directions: Elements of art can be found all around us, not only in examples of fine

artwork, but also in the way we have designed the objects and spaces in our world. Alone or in pairs, use the chart below to conduct a scavenger hunt of the area designated by your teacher. When you find an example of the element of art on the left, you may write and/or draw it in the box to the right. Then, partner with another person or group and take each other on a tour of your examples.

2. Then, in the same small groups select 3-5 objects with which to create a **still life**-arrangement of objects that reflects one of the Elements of Art. Students may transform the objects as desired. (If no camera is used, students should make notes of how the objects were arranged in order to recreate the still life later.) Have each group present their still life to the rest of the class in a gallery-style walk around the classroom.

3. Use **Student Handout #2: Principles of Design Challenge**. Divide the class into six roughly even working groups and number them 1-6.

Directions: The principles of composition are often used as rules in design in order to make visual art pleasing to the eye and understandable to the mind. Of course, like all rules in art, once you've learned to use them, you can bend them and sometimes break them to produce spectacular results. Use your personal knowledge, art texts, dictionaries, or websites to discover the definitions of each of the principles. Then, with your group give ONE practical example by staging a **tableaux**—a group of performers arranged in a frozen picture like statues—using body position, objects from their collection, and any other found props around the classroom. (If no camera is used, students should make notes of how the performers and objects were arranged in order to recreate the tableaux later.)

During the performance

Observation & Analysis

Use your student handouts as “cheat sheets” and take notes of the Elements of Art (textures, form, shapes, color, lines and values) you see used in *How To Build a Forest*. Also be on the lookout for how the Principles of Design (balance, emphasis, unity, rhythm, and proportion / scale) were used or bent/broken in some way.

After the performance

Creating a Narrative

At this point you have two different ways to proceed.

Option A: Students can create two additional **still lifes** using the objects from the original still life.

Option B: Students can create two additional **tableaux** using their bodies, objects, and found props from the original tableaux.

For both options: Analyze the pieces in terms of the Elements of Art and Principles of Design, and interpret for narrative. Ask students, “What do you think is happening here? How did these people or objects come to be in this arrangement or composition?”

Then, begin to develop a narrative, or “connect the dots” between the first, middle, and final compositions. If you are focusing on the still lifes, students may personify (attribute some human characteristics to) the objects to give them characters or add characters to the scene who would have moved the objects. In the tableaux, try to figure out what happened in the story that moved the characters from one tableaux to the next.

Use these discussions as story starters. Have students then write their short narratives out in complete sentences. Have students use well-chosen details and be sure to complete the narrative with a full sequence of introduction, development, and conclusion. You may post these narratives with the pictures of your tableaux or still lifes, read them aloud, or pair & share.

Extension Activities

1. Discuss the parallel of the beginning, middle, and end of the narrative of the materials used in creating *How to Build a Forest*. Where did the materials come from? How were they used in the performance to create an aesthetic expression? What might happen to them once the show has ended?
2. Discuss the differences between creating the narrative for yourself as an audience member and being given the narrative. For example, *How to Build a Forest* is a performance that is very open to interpretation, whereas a book usually gives the full story with all details. What are the benefits of each and which do students prefer?
3. Write a “behind-the-scenes-scene” of what happens that the audience doesn’t get to see and/or create the narrative for the trees in *How to Build a Forest*.

Assessment

1. Collect student’s handouts after the performance to assess their notes for

understanding and participation.

2. Have the students peer review narratives for well-chosen details and complete the narrative with a full sequence of introduction, development, and conclusion.

Additional Resources

Principles of Design Handout from The Getty Museum

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/principles_design.pdf

Elements of Art Handout from The Getty Museum

http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/building_lessons/elements_art.pdf

Quick Elements and Principles reference guide from 4-H

<http://new.4-hcurriculum.org/projects/kidspace/E-P.htm>

Elements of Art Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Elements of art can be found all around us, not only in examples of fine artwork, but also in the way we have designed the objects and spaces in our world. Alone or in pairs, use the chart below to conduct a scavenger hunt of the area designated by your teacher. When you find an example of the element of art on the left, you may write and/or draw it in the box to the right. Then, partner with another person or group and take each other on a tour of your examples.

Element	Example
<p>Line is a mark with greater length than width. Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, straight or curved, thick or thin.</p>	
<p>Shape is a closed line. Shapes can be geometric, like squares and circles, or organic, like free-form or natural shapes. Shapes are flat and can express length and width.</p>	
<p>Forms are three-dimensional shapes, expressing length, width, and depth. Balls, cylinders, boxes, and pyramids are forms.</p>	
<p>Space is the area between and around objects. The space around objects is often called negative space; negative space has shape. Space can also refer to the feeling of depth. Real space is three-dimensional; in visual art, when we can create the feeling or illusion of depth, we call it space.</p>	
<p>Color is light reflected off objects. Color has three main characteristics: hue or its name (red, green, blue, etc.); value (how light or dark it is); and intensity (how bright or dull it is).</p>	
<p>Texture is the surface quality that can be seen and felt. Textures can be rough or smooth, soft or hard. Textures do not always feel the way they look; for example, a drawing of a porcupine may look prickly, but if you touch the drawing, the paper is still smooth.</p>	

Principles of Composition Challenge

Directions: The principles of composition are often used as rules in design in order to make visual art pleasing to the eye and understandable to the mind. Of course, like all rules in art, once you've learned to use them, you can bend them and sometimes break them to produce spectacular results. Use your personal knowledge, art texts, dictionaries, or websites to discover the definitions each of the principles. Then, with your group give ONE practical example by staging a **tableaux**—a group of performers arranges in a frozen picture like statues—using body position, objects from your collection, and any other found props around the classroom.

Principle	Definition	Tableaux
Unity		1.
Harmony		2.
Contrast		3.
Variation		4.
Balance		5.
Emphasis		6.