

# PAPER COLLAGE

## Linked to *The Tempest*

A project suitable for KS1 and KS2 children



### Introduction

Collage as an art form can be traced back many hundreds of years, but it is most commonly associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Modernist art movement and artists such as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso, who repopularised the technique.

‘Collage’ describes both the technique and the resulting artwork. It is a process whereby different elements are brought together and arranged into a composition. These elements are then stuck to a surface. The word *collage* comes from the French verb ‘*coller*’ meaning to glue or stick together.

### Collage Materials

Paper is very commonly used for collage, in the form of magazines, newspapers, maps, books, photographs or hand-made papers. But collage isn’t exclusively made with paper. Some collage artists employ materials such as fabric, paint, plastic, wood, metal and found objects in their work. Collages can also be made digitally, using imagery from different sources layered together in an application such as Photoshop. What is key to all these approaches is the assembling and arranging of colour, shape and texture to make a new whole.

## Structure of the Project

This project focuses mainly on paper collage, but invites you to experiment and use other collage materials as appropriate. The project is designed to take place over the course of four or five sessions of at least one hour each. The sessions break down as follows:

- **Art Historical Context:** Looking at the work of prominent collage artists of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries.
- **Textured Paper Making:** Children will explore ways of creating their own bank of colourful textured papers.
- **Design Development:** Children will make initial drawn sketches for their collage, linked to suggested themes from *The Tempest*.
- **Collage Assemblage:** Two sessions. Children will translate their drawn designs into vibrant and effective collaged compositions.

### Session 1: ART HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Before starting our practical project, it is valuable to spend time immersing the children in the work of artists who have used the collage form. Please don't be tempted to skip this step as it gives a real insight into the different collage techniques out there and also helps children gain an understanding of the simplicity or complexity they can expect to achieve in their own projects.

When talking about collage, here are some questions to ask children:

(Red denotes possible new words to define)

- What do you notice about this artwork?
- What **materials** have been used?
- Can you talk about the **texture** of this artwork?
- Can you talk about the colours and shapes in this artwork?
- What is interesting about the **composition** of this artwork?
- What do you like or dislike about this artwork?
- Is the artwork effective? Why/why not?
- Is there a message in this artwork? - Why do you think this artwork was made?

The following artists are a good starting point for your discussions.



#### Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) and Georges Braque (1882- 1963)

Braque and Picasso were said to have coined the expression 'collage'. They used a mix of paint, paper, card, wood and found objects to create semi-abstract compositions featuring the multiple perspectives common to Cubism.

Image Credit: *Guitar*, Spring 1913. [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)

**Henri Matisse 1869-1964**

Famous for his large-scale paper cut-outs, Matisse was inspired by natural forms and strong colours. *The Snail* (1953) is a good starting point for discussion with children.



Image Credit L-R: Henri Matisse *The Sheaf* (1953) *The Snail* (1953)

More images and information about Matisse’s Cut-Outs show at Tate Modern:  
<https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/henri-matisse-cut-outs>

**Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948)**

German artist Schwitters has been called ‘The King of Collage’. His pieces (known as Merz Pictures) were created using ephemera found on the street.

**Hannah Hoch (1889-1978)**

Collage was embraced by both the Surrealist and Dada movements. Artists such as Hoch enjoyed the way collage allowed them to create bizarre contrasts and dreamlike juxtapositions.



Images L-R: Hannah Hoch *Modenschau* (1925-35)  
Kurt Schwitters *Merz Blauer Vogel (Blue Bird)* 1922



## **Peter Blake (1932 - ) and Richard Hamilton (1922-2011)**

Using the form of collage more often known as photomontage, these British Pop Artists' work make a comment on consumerism, disposable culture and collecting.

## **Contemporary Collage Artists**

Collage is still a hugely popular art form today, with the following contemporary practitioners making exciting work:

**John Stezaker** creates unsettling portraits from found photographs and vintage postcards.

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/john-stezaker-2000>

Image Credit: Peter Blake, *The Butterfly Man* (2012)

**Beatriz Milhazes** references Matisse in her work to create bright mixed media compositions inspired by her native Brazil.

[https://whitecube.com/artists/artist/beatriz\\_milhazes](https://whitecube.com/artists/artist/beatriz_milhazes)

**Ben Lewis Giles** combines photography with magazine imagery to create humorous artworks.

<https://benlewisgiles.format.com>

**Eric Carle** is a picture book artist whose work is characterised by bright tissue paper compositions.

<http://www.eric-carle.com/home.html>

**Leigh Hodgkinson** is an illustrator who works with digital layers to create her images.

<http://www.wonkybutton.com>



Image Credit L-R: John Stezaker, Beatriz Milhazes, Ben Lewis Giles

## Session 2: TEXTURED PAPER MAKING

The materials you will need are:

- A3 paper – any type, although cartridge paper is preferable
- Poster paint in a range of colours
- Watercolour paint
- Paintbrushes and sponges
- Thick card for making 'scrapers'
- Greyboard or A3 heavyweight card for back boards
- Aprons to protect clothes
- Scissors
- Good quality glue sticks

Optional collage materials: magazines, catalogues, newspapers, tissue paper, photographs, photocopies, plain papers in solid colours.

### Creating Texture



Image: Watercolour paint over glue, mixed with salt. [www.artblogclub.com](http://www.artblogclub.com)

We are going to focus on ways to make a bank of interesting textured paper for the whole class to share – partly because textured paper makes for really unique collages - but also because not all teachers have access to a large stock of magazines or printed resources.

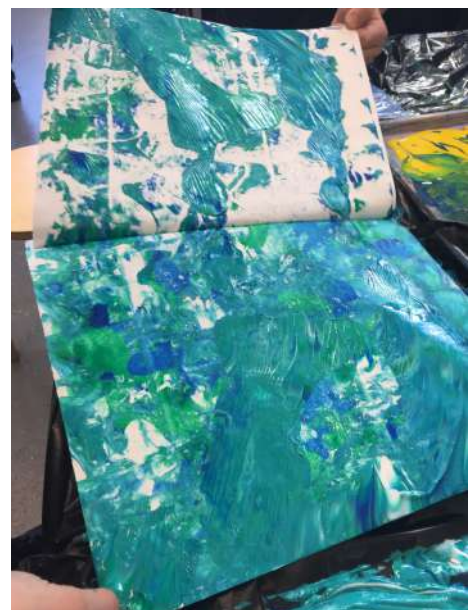
You might begin by talking to the children about why artists create texture – introducing the idea that it can make artworks more interesting, add detail or create a more three dimensional effect.

There are many ways to create texture on paper. Some things to try include:

- Adding salt and/or glue to a watercolour wash
- Washing watercolour paint over wax or oil pastels
- Adding sand/rice to poster paint
- Folding painted paper to make a print
- Dabbing poster paint with a sponge
- Scratching or scraping into paint with a card scraper

One of the most effective ways to make textured paper with a whole class is to use **poster paint**. It has a runny consistency, mixes well and doesn't dry too quickly - which is better for making marks.

Image R: Folding and printing painted paper





1. Squirt poster paint onto paper and let children dab and blend with a sponge or brush.
2. Add another colour. Work quickly!
3. Use a scraper (a piece of thick card cut with a serrated edge) to smear paint or make marks such as waves, ripples, cross-hatching etc.



### **Handy Hints**

- Use a maximum of three colours or you will end up with a lot of brown paper! Also choose colours that mix well or are quite similar tonally (e.g. red, yellow, orange). If you use colours that are too contrasting (e.g. orange and purple) you will end up with paper that is not so useful for collaging.
- You may be keen to reinforce colour-mixing skills by only giving children primary colours - but be careful - you need to end up with a wide range of coloured papers for this project, so only do this if you are confident of your children's mixing skills and you have plenty of time!

- This project is linked to *The Tempest* – so children’s collage designs will heavily feature the sea and the island. You will therefore need more blue and green shades than any other colours.
- Pattern is not the same as texture – sheets that are too patterned are not as versatile for this project.
- Let your papers dry thoroughly on a drying rack so that they don’t stick together. Once they are dry it can be really useful to iron them flat as this will make them easier to cut and stick later on.

### **Session 3: DESIGN DEVELOPMENT**

In this lesson the children will develop the design for their collage based on a theme or image from the play. They will make line pencil drawings that they can refer to later when making their collage.

#### **Choosing a theme**

The best collages have impact and are often quite simple. Unless your children have exceptional fine motor skills, small details can be tricky to create and don’t always come across well. For this reason, children are encouraged to choose a theme from the play as the basis for their design, rather than a particular scene. It can be difficult to collage characters unless they are simple shapes or silhouettes. The following themes from *The Tempest* all work well as they are broad and can be interpreted in many different ways.

- LOVE
- THE ISLAND
- STORM
- THE SEA
- SHIPWRECK
- FLORA AND FAUNA
- MAGIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD

Displaying a range of images on the whiteboard will help children come up with ideas, or they can research images online if they have access.



Image Credit Clockwise from L: National Geographic, Vectorstock, Vallejo Gallery

## Handy Hints

Remind children that paper collage is made by cutting, so they will essentially be drawing with scissors! This has design implications. It is easier to cut out large, simple shapes than small fiddly ones. If children's scissor skills are rusty, let them practise drawing and cutting out scrap paper – this is a good way to demonstrate the need to simplify their designs.

- Keep drawings simple – test by checking if it can be 'read' from far away
- Concentrate on clear outlines, strong shapes and vibrant colours
- Create a balanced composition – make the most of the space on your paper



Images: Y6 children's designs. Note: the central shipwreck design is the one used in our collage example below.

When you've finished your design, you could:

- Add colour if it's helpful as a reminder
- Try another design – you will then have a choice of which to collage
- Redraw your design on a larger scale (e.g. A3) and go over the outlines with a fineliner. This will help you check it's simple enough to collage.

## SESSION 4 and 5 – COLLAGE ASSEMBLAGE

Two one hour sessions are probably needed for this, depending on your class's concentration and fine motor skills, and whether children will work individually or in pairs/groups. I suggest individuals work to A3 scale, while pairs work to A2.

1. Give the children a heavyweight piece of card for their back board.

(Some children may want to roughly draw their design on their background to help them judge scale - but don't spend too long on this.)





2. Children should start to collage from background to foreground - or **from large area to small**. In the example, the background is the sky and the sea. These will be the largest pieces of textured paper that you use. If you need to cut a particular shape (such as the lightning, below) draw it first in pencil.



Note of caution: If you draw on the reverse of the textured paper, your design will be the other way round when you cut it out (this is essential to remember if you are doing any lettering!)

3. Glue down your background when you are happy with it.

4. Next, children should work on the **medium sized** details – in this example, these include the ship and sails. It's a sensible idea to cut out the different elements and arrange them on your artwork first to see where they should go. Only glue when you are satisfied you have the best composition. Keep an envelope handy for storing cut pieces if you need to break this lesson.



5. Finally, children should cut out the smallest elements of their design. In our example, this includes the seaweed, the shark and the fish. Again, draw on the reverse of your textured paper before cutting out.



6. When children are happy with their arrangement everything can be glued flat. Be generous with gluesticks. Do not use PVA or your collage may wrinkle.

7. Optional: Add any further collage element of your choice – for e.g. photographs, or photocopies, or even try printing or painting on your collage. In our example, white paint was added as 'sea spray'.

Your collage is finished!