

Romare Bearden: Method and Composition

“Our Community: Our town, our school, our home, our work”

Museum Connection: Art and Enlightenment

In this lesson students will be introduced to a method used by Romare Bearden. He was an African American artist who researched select European Masters, and he used their compositional techniques and subject matter in the creation of his collages. By utilizing the “Rule of Thirds,” students will be able to examine Pieter de Hooch and Vermeer interior and street scenes. They will be able to see how their collages they are similar and different to Bearden’s underlying compositional geometry. Students will see the influence of Cézanne on Bearden’s subject matter. Students will create a collage using information and techniques learned in this lesson.

Course: Visual Arts

Time Frame: 2-5 periods

Part 1:

Correlation to State Standards:

Visual Art Outcome I: Perceiving and Responding Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to perceive, interpret, and respond to ideas, experiences, and the environment through visual art.

Expectation B

The student will select works of art and interpret their meaning based upon the application of expressive characteristics and use of symbolism.

Indicators of Learning:

1. Creative Expression: Working from observation, memory and/or experience, the student will create a work using a mode of representation and format that serves personal ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

2. Critical Response: The student will describe, analyze, and interpret how artists select modes of representation and formats to express personal ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Objective(s):

Day 1: Students will view an introductory documentary on Romare Bearden. Students will read a brief description of his life, his method of creating collages, and answer a series of questions on what was viewed and read in order to analyze the “Card Players” by both Cézanne and Bearden.

Vocabulary and Concepts:

(Word or Concept)	(Definition)
Harlem	a neighborhood on the upper west side of New York City.
Harlem Renaissance	an artistic and literary period between 1920-1930 in which African American writers, artists, and musicians had a creative explosion that resulted in them being very productive and innovative.
Collage	an image created with a variety of materials, such as paper and fabric that can be affixed to a board.
Painterly	The term painterly is used to describe a painting done in a style that embraces, shows, and celebrates the medium it's created in rather than tries to hide the act of creation.
Media	materials the artist chooses to use in the creation of an art work.

Materials:

For the Teacher: Day 1

The Art of Romare Bearden DVD

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Romare-Bearden-Danny-Glover/dp/B00014NE6W>

YouTube Videos

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lxZ_d3GlnME

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-0ZbWUaD-4>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LFXKqQ5sQFk>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WEVROxjjM54>

For the Student:

Student Resource Sheet 1: Romare Bearden Method Questions

Student Resource Sheet 2: Compare Cézanne and Bearden

Resources:

Publications:

The Art of Romare Bearden a Resource for teachers, The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, edited by Richard Carter, 2003 NGA, Washington DC

Web Sites:

Examples of Romare Bearden's Collages

<https://www.google.com/search?q=romare+bearden+dvd&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=QJOpU57GMZamyATw4CADQ&ved=0CC0QsAQ&biw=1280&bih=923>

Historical Background:

“Romare Bearden's art transcends categories because it joins the imagery of black life and circumstance to universally understood experiences. This is the essence of Bearden's contribution.”

<http://www.nga.gov/content/dam/ngaweb/Education/learning-resources/teaching-packets/pdfs/bearden-tchpk.pdf>

Bearden worked as a Social Worker for many years in New York City before he could afford to live off his art. He studied art that was created by select European masters by analyzing their compositions, subject matter, and themes. His art is reflected of how he reinterpreted their work into a personal expression.

Born in rural North Carolina in 1911, Bearden often relied on his childhood memories for imagery. His experiences in southern America, as well as Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, and New York City gave him a life time of inspiration. In the 1920's his family moved to Harlem, which is a large neighborhood in the northern section of New York City's borough of Manhattan. During this time, Harlem was in the middle of a creative frenzy that was known as the Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, and many other well-known artists were frequent visitors to the Bearden home. This artistic and intellectual environment remained with Bearden throughout his entire life.

Bearden was a pioneer of the Collage media. His application of materials is painterly, his themes are universal, and his integrity as an artist is of the highest order. He wrote poetry, played music and loved cats. Studying Bearden and his art will provide students with a wealth of information about collages, the technique of which he is most famous.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romare_Bearden

http://rogallery.com/Bearden_Romare/bearden_biography.htm

Lesson Development:

Part I

Motivation:

The Art of Romare Bearden DVD

<http://www.amazon.com/The-Romare-Bearden-Danny-Glover/dp/B00014NE6W>

Readings on Bearden

Teacher should make a Student Resource Sheet based on the readings below:

http://rogallery.com/Bearden_Romare/bearden_biography.htm

<https://www.google.com/search?q=romare+bearden+method+of+creating+collages&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=5ZyxU4S2L4OOyAT23IHABw&ved=0CDAQ7Ak&biw=1280&bih=923>

Assessment: Questions and discussion

Use Student Resource Sheets 1 and 2 in order to have Students compare Romare Bearden's "Card Players" to Paul Cezanne's "Card Players."

Closure: Ask students to brainstorm different subjects they may be interested in portraying in a collage. What sort of imagery will illustrate these subjects?

- Social identity
- Home
- Work
- Environment

If time allows let them draw 1-3 thumbnail sketches of these ideas. Or, assign as homework.

Lesson Extension:

- The Museum offers several school programs that connect to the curriculum lessons.
 - *Journey in History Theater* provides living history and theatrical performances which highlight African Americans in the museum's gallery.
 - Take the theme tour, *Heritage* and experience the rich, cultural heritage of Maryland's African American community. Learn how African Americans established and influence Maryland's historic communities, social organizations, work traditions and artistic customs.
- Contact group reservations for schedule updates.
- Research the art career of Romare Bearden. Identify recurring subjects or themes that Bearden incorporated in his collage works. What other art mediums did he pursue in his career besides collage?

Student Resource Sheet 1
Questions on Bearden's Method

Name _____ Period _____ Date _____

Romare Bearden's Method (10 points each)

1. List the wide range of media that Romare Bearden used.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.

2. What happened to Bearden's work in the early 1960's?

3. What contributed to his interest in figuration (the figure)?

4. Which prominent NY artists were using collage and how early?

5. How did Bearden solve the underlying geometry of his compositions?

“

_____”

6. Where did he look for compositional inspiration?

7. What were the materials he used in his collages? How did he create circular markings?

8. How did Bearden's collages become more painterly?

9. Choose 5 different materials you would like to use in your final collage.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Student Resource Sheet 2
Compare Bearden and Cezanne

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Discussion: Compare the image of “The Card Players” by Romare Bearden with the image of “The Card Players” by Paul Cézanne.

1. How are these two images different?

• *Style: Bearden* _____
Cezanne _____

• *Color: Bearden* _____
Cezanne _____

• *Detail: Bearden* _____
Cezanne _____

2. What is similar in each image?

• *Class of the people*

• *Place*

• *Time of day*

3. Do you think the artists drew from observation or memory? State your reasons for giving this answer.

4. Who do you think the Blue figure is in Bearden’s collage and why?

5. Who is the standing figure in Cézanne’s painting and why?

6. What else can you add from your observations of the two images?

7. How are these figures “Symbolic”?

Teacher: For image of “The Card Players” by Romare Bearden, open the hyperlink below:

<https://www.nga.gov/feature/bearden/170-131.htm>



The Card Players, 1890–92
Paul Cézanne (French, 1839–1906)
Oil on canvas

<http://www.wikiart.org/en/paul-cezanne/the-card-players-1892>

This artwork is in the public domain.

Part 2:

Correlation to State Standards:

Visual Art Outcome III: Creative Expression and Production

The student will demonstrate competent application of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to produce works of art.

Expectation A

The student will demonstrate competent application of the skills, knowledge, and attitudes required to produce works of art in a variety of media.

Indicators of Learning:

- **Creative Expression:** Within the context of a given or chosen art problem, the student will select media and experiment with processes and representational skills, exploring a range of ideas that can be expressed with different media.
- **Critical Response:** In reflecting on the completed work, the student will describe, analyze, and interpret the meaning created and evaluate the choice and use of media, skills, and knowledge in solving the art problem.

Objective(s):

Time Frame: Day 2-3: Collage application

Students will examine paintings by Pieter de Hooch and Jan Vermeer in order to compare how Bearden utilized the rule of thirds in his composition in order to plan a collage.

Vocabulary and Concepts:

(Word or Concept)	(Definition)
Rule of Thirds	states that an image is most pleasing when its subjects or regions are composed along imaginary lines which divide the image into thirds both vertically and horizontally. It creates movement and a sense of balance without making the image appear too static.
Depth	the illusion of space in a pictorial composition.
Balance	is the arrangement of elements so that no one part of a work overpowers, or seems heavier than any other part. The three different kinds of balance are symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial. It is also a principle that deals with the visual weight of an artwork.
Picture Plane	is the flat two-dimensional surface on which we draw or project an image in perspective.
Poetic Manner	diction that treats the manner in which language is used, and it refers not only to the sound, but also to the underlying meaning and its interaction with sound.

Materials:

For the Teacher:

1. Images of “The Courtyard of a house in Delft” by Pieter de Hooch and “A Lady and Two Gentlemen” by Jan Vermeer Van Delft.
2. Images of “Piano Lesson” and “Monday Morning” by Romare Bearden.
3. Criteria for thumbnail sketches.

For the Student:

1. Images of “The Courtyard of a house in Delft” by Pieter de Hooch and “A Lady and Two Gentlemen” by Jan Vermeer Van Delft.
2. Images of “Piano Lesson” and “Monday Morning” by Romare Bearden.
3. Criteria for thumbnail sketches.

Resources:

Web Sites:

<http://painting.about.com>

Lesson Development: (list of activities, documents, investigations, and document based questions)

Motivation:

Project a color reproduction of paintings done by Pieter de Hooch and Jan Vermeer.

Students will examine the reproductions of De Hooch and Vermeer and compare to Bearden works.

Activity: Students will draw three thumbnail sketches of possible subjects for their collage.

Assessment:

Students will choose a thumbnail sketch and explain why they selected their subjects.

Closure:

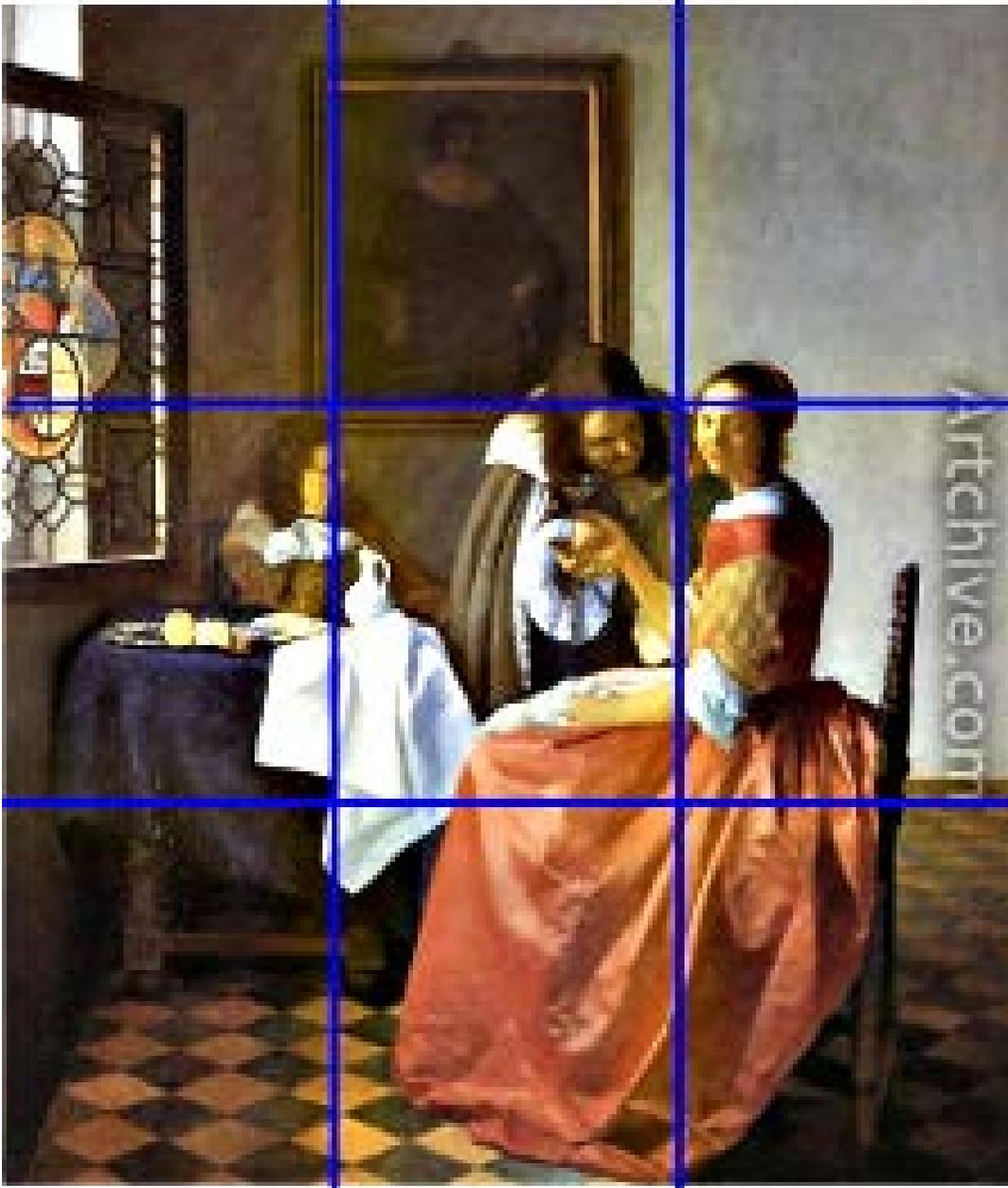
Conduct a gallery/studio walk to see the class’s thumbnail sketches and ideas. Have students suggest possible titles for their thumbnail sketches.

Thoughtful Application(s): Ask students to title their thumbnail sketches in a poetic manner and explain the definition of the term “a poetic manner.”

Lesson Extension(s):

The Resource Center at the Reginald F Lewis Museum offers a link to Library materials related to Romare Bearden and the Harlem Renaissance.

- The Museum offers several school programs that connect to the curriculum lessons.
 - *Journey in History Theater* provides living history and theatrical performances which highlight African Americans in the museum’s gallery.
 - Take the theme tour, *Heritage* and experience the rich, cultural heritage of Maryland’s African American community. Learn how African Americans established and influence Maryland’s historic communities, social organizations, work traditions and artistic customs.
- Contact group reservations for schedule updates.
- Research the art career of Romare Bearden. Identify recurring subjects or themes that Bearden incorporated in his collage works. What other art mediums did he pursue in his career besides collage?



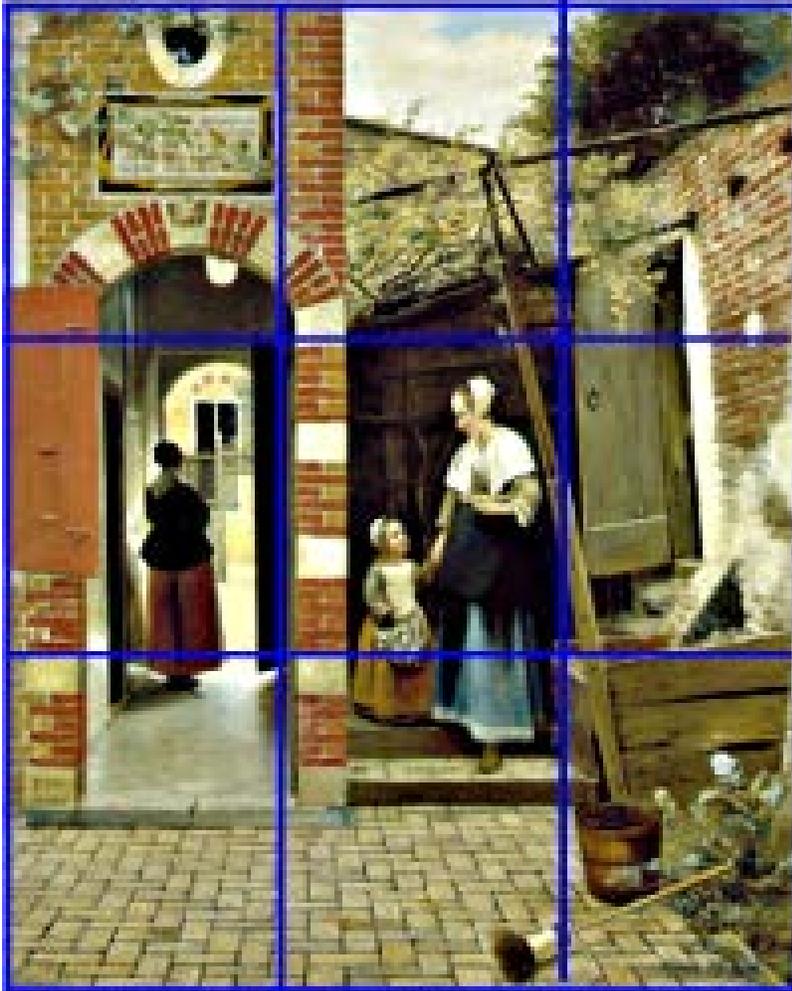
Jan Vermeer Van Delft, A Lady and Two Gentlemen

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johannes_Vermeer_-_A_Lady_and_Two_Gentlemen_-_WGA24639.jpg



This work is in the public domain in the United States, and those countries with a copyright term of life of the author plus 100 years or less.

This file has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights.



De Hooch, Pieter, The Courtyard of a house in Delft, 1658

Oil on Canvas

29"x23 5/8"

<https://www.google.com/search?q=pieter+de+hooch+the+courtyard+of+a+house+in+delft+in+public+domain&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=ZcWyU5SvKoGsyAS5qoDoAw&ved=0CC8Q7Ak&biw=1034&bih=875>



This work is in the public domain in the United States, and those countries with a copyright term of life of the author plus 100 years or less.

This file has been identified as being free of known restrictions under copyright law, including all related and neighboring rights.

The central subject of this composition is thought to be the jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams, who spent her childhood years in Pittsburgh. Just as Bearden's work was inspired by that of others in a variety of artistic fields, Piano Lesson inspired the play of the same title by playwright August Wilson, himself a Pittsburgh native.



Romare Bearden, Piano Lesson, 1983

Collage of various papers with paint, ink, and graphite on paper

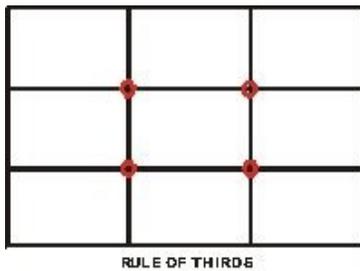
<https://www.google.com/search?q=Romare+Bearden,+Piano+Lesson,+1983+in+public+domain&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ei=aMayU-WFDNSeyATLiKQBA&ved=0CFYQ7Ak&biw=1034&bih=875>

Prompts on a comparison of composition between De Hooch, Vermeer, and Bearden

Rule of Thirds: The Rule of Thirds is a basic compositional rule popular among photographers, but equally applicable to the composition of paintings. Applying the rule of thirds to a painting means you'll never have a painting that's split in half, either vertically or horizontally, nor one with the main focus right in the center like a bull's-eye.

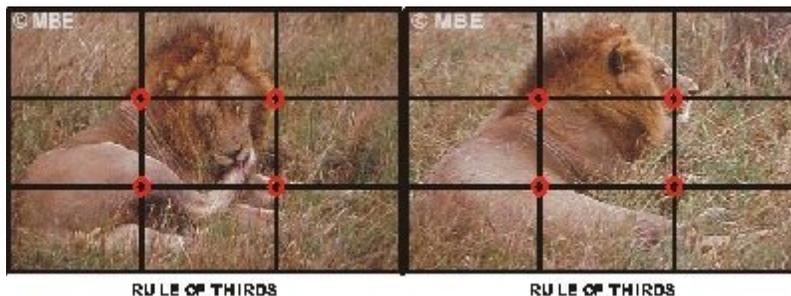
What is the Rule of Thirds?

Quite simply, divide a canvas in thirds both horizontally and vertically, and place the focus of the painting either one third across or one third up or down the picture, or where the lines intersect (the red circles on the diagram).



What Difference Does the Rule of Thirds Make?

Take a look at these two photos of a lion. On the one on the left, your eye is drawn straight into the center of the image and you tend to ignore the rest of the picture. On the one on the right, where the lion's face is on one of the Rule of Thirds 'hotspots', your eye is drawn the lion's face, then around the painting following the curve of the body.



<http://painting.about.com/library/blpaint/blcompositionclass2.htm>

Look at the images by De Hooch and Vermeer.

1. How does the construction/composition of each painting utilize the “Rule of Thirds?”
2. By having the focus in the center of the painting, is there less visual movement in the De Hooch painting than in the Vermeer painting? Why do you think this happens?
3. Which of the Dutch masters’ paintings render a realistic depiction of “depth”?
4. What are the dominant shapes in the De Hooch painting?

Now look at the images by Bearden.

5. Why do you think Bearden would be drawn to a “flatter” composition?
6. What are the dominant shapes in the Bearden collages?
7. Does your eye rest in the center of Bearden’s “Piano Lesson” or does it move around the “picture plane”? By having a centralized subject, do you have to look harder to see the details?
8. Using the following link, download Bearden’s “Monday Morning,” 1967 and divide it into the “Rule of Thirds, placing a triangle with its points at the head of each of the three people in the center plane.
<http://www.nga.gov/feature/bearden/170-085.htm>
9. In Bearden’s “Monday Morning” the triangle illustrates what kind of “Balance” in the composition?
10. What other “Elements” help the collage’s overall symmetry?

Criteria for thumbnail drawings of collage:

Subject: The community.

1. School
 2. Home
 3. Town
 4. Work
-
11. Draw four rectangles that can be easily divided into thirds. 6” x 9” will work well.

12. Draw a grid dividing the rectangles into thirds, vertically and horizontally.
13. In two of the rectangles, create a composition where the main subject is in the center of the grid.
14. In the remaining two rectangles, create a composition where the subjects are located around the center.
15. People are created with just shapes of color.
Buildings or room interiors are simplified into basic squares or rectangles.
16. Add color as a reference when you look for paper for your collage.
Consider textures found in magazine photos.
Color can help a composition; think about a balance of dark and light, warm and cool colors.

Part 3

Studio Experience: Collage

Correlation to State Standards:

Visual Art Outcome 1: Perceiving and Responding - Aesthetic Education

The student will demonstrate the ability to perceive, interpret, and respond to ideas, experience, and the environment through visual art.

Expectation C

The student will compare the use of elements of art and principles of design in selected works of art and demonstrate their application by executing expressive compositions.

1. Creative Expression: The student will develop unique or special ways to advance feelings, ideas, or meaning by using specific elements of art and principals of organization.

2. Critical Response: The student will use art vocabulary to describe and analyze the role of design in expressing unique visions.

Objectives:

1. Students will refine one of their four thumbnail drawings for their collage by transferring the design onto a board and adding details that represent the selected subject “community.”
2. Students will select paper, paint, and fabric in order to construct a Collage that expresses the idea of community.

Vocabulary and Concepts:

(Word or Concept)	(Definition)
Collage	an artwork made from objects that are glued onto a surface, such as a piece of paper, canvas, or board. The materials used in making collages may be as follows: tissue paper, wrapping paper, newspaper pages, magazine pages, cardboard, foil, metal, plastic, fabric, wire, photographs, found objects such as shells, feathers, or stones, and broken toys. Students may even cut up paintings that haven't worked or paintings they deliberately created to be collage elements. The heavier the objects, the stronger the support needs to be.
Acrylic Varnishes	are typically water-borne solutions used as a finish and have the lowest refractive index of all finishes and high transparency. They resist yellowing and dry as a protective, flexible, dust resistant surface. An acrylic varnish is more than simply a layer to protect your painting from pollution in the atmosphere and abrasion. It also brings the colors to the brilliance they had when you applied them.
Tempera	an inexpensive, water based, opaque paint.
Bristol Board	a heavy weight paper, similar to poster board or tag board, but a better quality that is used to glue materials on in order to make a collage.

Materials:***For the teacher:***

Colored Bristol Board 12” x15,” Acrylic matt varnish, pencils, scissors, glue, brushes, tempera paint and brushes, assorted magazine paper, newspaper, wall paper, and fabric swatches.

For the Student:

Rubric for Collage: the Community

Resources:***Web Site:***

<http://www.beardenfoundation.org/index2.shtml>

Lesson Development:

Motivation: Display select examples of Romare Bearden’s collages.

Use the Web Site for the Romare Bearden Foundation.

Review composition and identify the basic shapes in each collage.

Activity 1: Have students select one of their thumbnail drawings to become a collage. Distribute Bristol board and have the students redraw their compositions. Circulate and suggest additional details to add to each drawing.

Display drawings and critique before moving onto the next step.

Activity 2: Teacher will demonstrate how to brush an even layer of glue onto paper and adhere to board. Demonstrate overlapping of papers to create an effect. Demonstrate adding tempera paint to a collage to enhance pattern and/or detail.

Distribute various papers, magazines, newspaper, fabric swatches, scissors, glue and brushes.

Allow 2-3 class periods for students to fill their collage.

Seal Collages with acrylic varnish.

Assessment: Use rubric for each student to self-critique their collage.

Closure: Display Bearden's "Farewell Eugene" collage and read the accompanying poem.

Thoughtful Application: Have students write a poem to accompany their collage.

Rubric for Collage: The Community

Glue this sheet to the back of your Collage

Name _____ Class _____ Period _____ Date _____

Title of your Collage

“ _____ ”

Give each category a number score: 3=excellent, 2= proficient, 1= needs improvement, 0=not evident

1. Your collage's imagery reflects the subject you chose to represent reflecting the theme of community. _____
2. Your collage is neatly done. (craftsmanship)

3. Your collage has a strong composition. _____
4. The figures are made from pieces/shapes of various colors that hold together.

5. The location, interior or exterior, is clearly rendered.

6. There are a variety of textures.

7. There are a variety of materials used.

8. Your collage was completed on time.

9. Which of the artists that we studied did you consider when designing your collage and why?

10. Describe the type of space created in your collage. Is there the illusion of depth, or is it flat?

Reflection: You may write a poem or a paragraph to describe your collage.

What does “community” mean to you? How does your collage represent “community?”

