

## Creating, Collaborating, and Problem-Solving

A cornerstone of the [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#) is the assertion that how children learn is equally as important as what they learn. Content knowledge alone does not prepare students for success in work, life, and citizenship. They also need practice thinking creatively and critically, solving problems, communicating their ideas effectively, and collaborating with others. This lesson addresses the challenge of how to teach those essential cognitive and social skills in the elementary years. Taking the lives and work of two artists as models, students observe and describe examples of creative problem-solving and collaboration. They then synthesize their learning by working together to create original artworks inspired by the artists' examples.

### Grade Level

Grades K–6

### Common Core Academic State Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#)
- [CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP1](#)

### National Visual Arts Standards

- Creating: conceiving and developing new artistic ideas and work
- Presenting: interpreting and sharing artistic work

### Suggested Art Images

Click on the titles below to view high-resolution photographs on the Museum's website:

- ["Animals" Quilt](#), 1980–83, by Pearlie Posey
- ["Exercisers" Quilt](#), 1981, by Pearlie Posey
- [Lagoon \(II\)](#), 1947, by Henri Matisse
- [The Flying Codomas](#), 1947, by Henri Matisse
- [The Knife Thrower](#), 1947, by Henri Matisse

### Lesson Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Look closely and carefully to describe, compare, and contrast artworks.
- Explain how different artists work creatively and collaboratively to overcome obstacles.
- Communicate and work effectively with others to create a new artwork.



"Animals" Quilt, 1980–83  
Pearlie Posey (American)  
Cotton; running stitch  
6 feet 4 1/4 inches × 62 1/2 inches (193.7 × 158.8 cm)  
The Ella King Torrey Collection of African American  
Quilts, 2006  
2006-163-7

### Materials Needed

- Screen for projecting images
- Whiteboard or chart paper for recording
- Copies of the Teacher Resource for *"Animals" Quilt* (optional)
- Copies of [Suggested Art Images](#)
- Art making materials, such as colored paper, fabric, scissors, tape, and glue
- Selected [Supplementary Materials](#)

### Lesson Process

1. Before beginning this lesson, review the Teacher Resource and object information for Pearlie Posey's *"Animals" Quilt* and *"Exercisers" Quilt*. Read the background information about Henri Matisse on [The Cut-Outs](#) website. Select one or both children's book titles listed under [Supplementary Materials](#). *Henri's Scissors* is better suited to younger students, while *Henri Matisse: Drawing with Scissors* is more appropriate for the upper elementary grades.
2. Explain to your students that today they will be learning about how artists work creatively and cooperatively with others to solve problems. Project an image of the *"Animals" Quilt* or *"Exercisers" Quilt*.
3. Allow a few minutes for looking, and ask students to describe what they see. Prompt their discussion with questions such as:
  - What are the different parts of this quilt? How are they arranged?
  - What colors, shapes, lines, and patterns do you see?
  - What are some of the characters in this quilt? What do you think they are doing?
  - How would you describe the mood of this quilt? What do you see that makes you say that?
  - What materials do you think this quilt is made of?
  - How do you think it was made?
4. Once students have shared their observations and thoughts, draw a T-chart on your whiteboard or chart paper. Label one side Problems and the other side Solutions. Tell students that you are going to give them some information about the artist who created the quilt. Ask them to listen and look for examples of problems and solutions in her life story.
5. Share Pearlie Posey's story with your students. Older students who are fluent readers might read the *"Animals" Quilt* Teacher Resource along with you. Pass out copies of the Teacher Resource if you wish. Otherwise, briefly tell students about Posey's life and experiences.
6. Allow time for students to respond to the artist's story, either in pairs or as a class. What did they learn? What new questions do they have? What connections can they make to their own prior knowledge and experience? Do they see the quilt differently now?
7. Ask students to help you add examples to the class Problem/Solution chart. What challenges did Pearlie Posey face? How did she overcome those challenges? Guide students to think about and discuss the roles played by community, cooperation, and collaboration.

8. Repeat Steps 2 through 7 to introduce students to Henri Matisse and his cut-outs. Choose one of the **Suggested Art Images** from the *Jazz Portfolio* to prompt looking. Read your selected children's book out loud, or share the photographs and animations from **The Cut-Outs** website, to provide background information. Ask students to add to the class Problem/Solution chart.
9. Before moving on to the next activity, reflect on what students have learned so far. What do Pearlie Posey and Henri Matisse have in common? What can students learn from the two artists' stories?
10. Break students into pairs. Tell them that they are going to work together to create artworks inspired by Pearlie Posey's quilts and Henri Matisse's cut-outs. How they collaborate with their partners is as important as the artwork they make.
11. First, pass out copies of the **Suggested Art Images** to each pair. Ask students to look closely for similarities between the quilts and Matisse's cut-outs. Examples might include the vibrant colors, energetic mood, and use of cutting and layering. Ask students to notice differences in materials, styles, and techniques as well. Allow time for sharing.
12. Pass out construction paper and scissors. Students will have time to practice cutting and arranging as a team. Use the following instructions to guide them:
  - Practice making cut-outs by tracing your hand on construction paper, cutting around the outline, and layering the positive and negative shapes.
  - Try cutting free-form shapes from paper, like Matisse did; or, trace realistic or abstract figures before cutting around them.
  - Practice working as a team. Take turns giving each other directions for taping cut-outs on the wall to form a pattern, or for arranging them on the table.
  - What is challenging about collaborating with your partner? What strategies do you need to use to communicate effectively? How can you work together to solve problems that arise?
13. Circulate and observe group dynamics as an informal assessment strategy. Provide feedback.

### Assessment

Assign partners to plan and create an original artwork using cut-out construction paper, felt, or other fabric. Pairs should present their completed projects and describe how they communicated and collaborated effectively.

### Differentiation

- Adapt the art-making activity to suit your students' fine motor skills. If cutting precisely is a challenge, give them the option of tearing construction paper.
- Younger students may not be prepared to work effectively in pairs. If this is the case, have the whole class collaborate on a cut-out artwork with your guidance. Provide each student with one square of felt or construction paper on which to layer and glue their cut-out designs. Display all the squares together as a class quilt.
- Connect the art-making activity to Language Arts for more advanced students. Challenge partners to make their cut-outs thematic or narrative, using Matisse's circus theme as an example.

### Supplementary Materials

- *"Hands" Quilt*, Winter 1980, by Sarah Mary Taylor (Pearlie Posey's daughter)
- *Henri Matisse: Drawing with Scissors*, written by Keesia Johnson and Jane O'Connor, illustrated by Jessie Hartland (2002)
- *Henri's Scissors* by Janette Winter (2013)