



Neuberger Museum of Art

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Let's Create A Collage

An abstract mixed-media project inspired by the work of Romare Bearden

What is COLLAGE and DÉCHIRAGE?

Collage is a technique where a piece of art is created by assembling different images and shapes and adding them in layers to a piece of paper, canvas, or object. A collage might include images or headlines from a magazine or newspaper, photos, color papers, fabric, items found in nature, and/or other objects.

Déchirage, which means "to tear" in French, is an artistic style that distresses paper to create a 3D patchwork.

Déchirage is a form of *décollage* (which is the opposite of collage) because the art is created by cutting, tearing away, or otherwise removing pieces of the original image.



Romare Bearden, *Melon Season*, 1967
Mixed media on canvas, 56 1/2 x 44 1/2 in (143.5 x 113 cm)
Signed upper right: Romare Bearden
Collection: Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, SUNY
Gift of Roy R. Neuberger. 1976.26.45

HOW TO REMEMBER THE DIFFERENCE

Collage = Adds image layers to create art

Décollage and Déchirage = Takes away pieces of the image

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

In the *Melon Season* collage shown above, can you spot an example of déchirage where artist Romare Bearden tore or peeled edges of paper away from the artwork?



Activity

Students will create a collage using magazines, newspapers, and art supplies found around the house. This mixed-media project is inspired by the work of Romare Bearden.

Materials

- Cardboard, heavy card stock paper, or a Canvas Board
- Old magazines and newspapers
(Be sure to ask for permission for which magazines and newspapers you can use!)
- Construction paper and/or tissue paper
- Scissors
- Glue or glue sticks
- Paint, paint brushes, crayons or colored pencils to fill any empty space left on your artwork

Step 1: Brainstorm

Start by thinking about the type of collage you want to create.

Romare Bearden often depicted his experiences, such as groups of people interacting, through his artwork. Maybe you want to try this, too? You can show your life experiences, identity, and heritage in your artwork. Maybe you want to create a collage version of yourself, or describe something that is happening on the news or in your community as it relates to you, or recreate a favorite memory of you and your friends playing in the park, or musicians playing their instruments, or a couple dancing, or working together with your family? Think about the picture you want to create and what images you may want to include in your artwork.

BRAINSTORM!



Step 2: Collect

What images do you want to use in your collage?

Start by going through your collected papers to find images of different sizes and shapes and colors that inspire you. Cut or tear them out as you find pictures and headlines that interest you. You can even use a photo of yourself and your family! Try to find photos of faces that are making expressions and people that are moving. You can also use the patterns on clothing or solid colors in the backgrounds to create your figures. Be sure to look for images that will help you create a setting or environment to place your figure or figures in: Indoors ... Outdoors ... At a beach ... It's your choice!



Step 3: Compose

Start arranging your cutout images on your canvas or base paper.

This is the stage where you can have fun experimenting by overlapping, taking away and/or adding more until you have the right "fit." Don't worry about gluing images to the paper right now. You can use multiple images of hair to create one character's hairstyle and multiple images of patterns or fabrics to create an outfit. Use the same technique for facial features. Creates layersour lines do not have to be straight!





Step 4: Glue

Once you have your artwork composed, use thin layers of glue or a glue stick to begin adhering your images to the paper or canvas.

Start with the background first. Use multiple colors or textures and try to overlap them. Then start arranging any building or images that make up the environment your characters are in before adding your figures. Work in sections and keep layering. If you add too much of an image or there is a piece of something you want to remove, simply tear it away. (Reminder: Taking pieces of the image away is called *déchirage*.)

Fill any remaining areas that are left blank with solid color paper or color it in with paint, colored pencils or crayons. The goal of collage is to fill the whole space as much as possible.



Step 5: Dry

That's it ... you now have a beautifully composed collage!

Be sure to allow the glue to dry before hanging your new collage in your home gallery.

Step 6: Share

Ask an adult to take a photo of your artwork and share your creation with us on social media at **#NEUtoDoKids!**



Romare Bearden (September 2, 1911–March 12, 1988) was an African-American artist, author, political cartoonist, and songwriter best known for his abstract paintings and figurative mixed media depictions (known as collages).

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, Bearden was raised in New York City and in Pittsburgh. After starting college in Pennsylvania, he first transferred to Boston University and then to New York University where he graduated in 1935. After serving in the US Army during World War II, Bearden went to Paris to study art history and philosophy.

Bearden's work focused on the African-American community and his own life experiences. His early paintings were often of scenes set in the American South; his later works expressed the humanity he felt was lacking in the world after his wartime experiences on the European front.

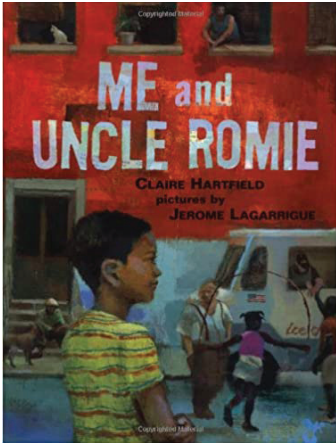
After the war he returned to travel across Europe, visiting and learning from other artists—including Picasso, who made a big impression on Bearden's work. It was during this period that Bearden began to paint more abstractly, a theme that would later emerge in his collage works of the 1960's.

In addition to the arts, Bearden was actively involved in social service work and the civil rights movement. As the movement evolved, so did his artistic style and technique. He began using clippings from glossy magazines, newsprint, and other textures of paper to create collages, combining real images representing people of different cultures with abstract art. In his 1988 obituary, *The New York Times* described Bearden as "the nation's foremost collagist."

Bearden said that he created collage because he felt that

"art portraying the lives of African-Americans did not give full value to the individual."

Bearden's unique style and artwork achieved high praise and caught the eye of many art collectors including Roy R. Neuberger, who founded the Neuberger Museum of Art. Bearden's collage, *Melon Season* (shown on the first page of this worksheet) is part of the Neuberger's permanent collection.



Me and Uncle Romie:

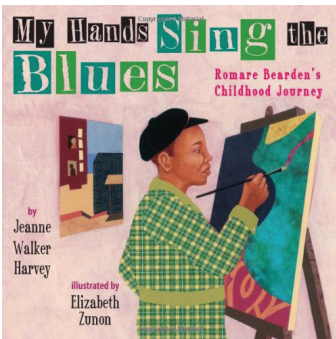
A Story Inspired by the Life and Art of Romare Bearden

by Claire Hartfield (Author), Jerome Lagarrigue (Author)

Young readers will feel as if they're discovering the city's wonders, and making an unexpected friend, right along with James in this vibrant story, expressively illustrated by Coretta Scott King Award winner Jerome Lagarrigue.

Age Range: 4 - 8 years | Grade Level: Preschool – 3

[Available on Amazon](#)



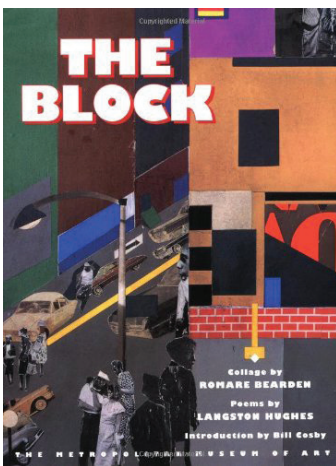
My Hands Sing the Blues: Romare Bearden's Childhood Journey

by Jeanne Walker Harvey (Author), Elizabeth Zunon (Illustrator)

As a young boy, Romare Bearden listened to his great-grandmother's Cherokee stories and heard the whistle of the train that took his people to the North. When Romare boarded that same train, he watched out the window as the world whizzed by. This story describes the patchwork of southern life that he saw out the train's window, his arrival in shimmering New York City, and his artwork honoring his past, African American culture, and the human experience.

Age Range: 6 - 8 years | Grade Level: 1 - 3

[Available on Amazon](#)



The Block

by Langston Hughes (Author), Romare Bearden (Illustrator)

Thirteen poems about the New York City neighborhood of Harlem are teamed with the collage painting, *The Block*, a celebration of the bustle of Harlem, from the corner grocery store to the local Baptist church.

Age Range: 9 and up | Grade Level: 3 – 4

[Available on Amazon](#)