



Bill Edwards

FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS
Youth Educational Programs



**TEACHER
RESOURCE GUIDE**

2025/26

ABSTRACT ART

- September 30, 2025
- Duke Energy Center for the Arts - Mahaffey Theater



WHAT IS ABSTRACT ART?

Abstract art is a type of art that does not try to look like real life. Instead of drawing or painting people, places, or objects exactly as they appear, artists use:

- **Shapes (circles, squares, organic forms)**
- **Colors (bright, dark, warm, cool)**
- **Lines and marks (smooth, jagged, bold, light)**
- **Forms and patterns to express their feelings, ideas, or energy.**

The purpose of abstract art is not to create a realistic picture, but to encourage the viewer to interpret the meaning. This means there isn't just one "right answer." Each person may see and feel something different when they look at an abstract artwork—and that's exactly the point!

Abstract art invites us to use our imagination, explore creativity, and express emotions in new ways.

What is Abstract Art?



REALISTIC



ABSTRACT

Abstract art is art that does not try to look like real life. Instead of representing people, places, or objects as they actually appear, artists use shapes, colors, forms, and gestural marks to express feelings, ideas, or energy.

FUN FACT

One of the youngest stars in the abstract art world is just 12 years old! Artists of all ages can create bold, imaginative pieces that inspire audiences worldwide.



[This 12-Year-Old Has Taken the Art World by Storm](#)



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COLLABORATIVE CIRCLE PAINTING

Objective: Practice teamwork, creativity, and a growth mindset through collaborative art-making.

Materials:

- Large white butcher paper
- Brightly colored paints (cups for 4 students per color)
- Paintbrushes (1 per student)
- Aprons/smocks and paper towels

Directions:

- Seat students in a circle around the butcher paper.
- Each student paints a circle or dot with the color in front of them.
- Students rotate one spot and use the new color to paint another circle/dot.
 - **Tip:** Keep brushes in paint cups to avoid mixing colors.
- Continue rotating until the paper is filled.
- Add final touches: classroom number, signatures, or central details.
- Hang the artwork in a shared space.

Discussion Questions:

- How did it feel to create art as a group?
- Were you surprised by how the painting turned out?
- How does this activity show that there's no one "right" way to make art?

Standards Connection:

- **VA.1.S.1.1:** Experiment with art processes and media to create works of art.
- **VA.3.O.1.1:** Demonstrate how the elements of art are used to create balance.
- **VA.68.C.1.1:** Apply ideas and strategies to solve artistic problems.



EMOTIONS IN COLOR

Objective: Explore how colors, shapes, and lines can represent emotions.

Materials:

- Paper
- Crayons, markers, or paint
- List of emotion words (happy, nervous, calm, excited, angry, etc.)

Directions:

1. Assign or let students choose an **emotion word**.
2. Students create an abstract piece using only **colors, lines, and shapes** (no faces/objects).
3. Display artworks and let peers guess which emotion each piece represents.

Discussion Questions:

- Which colors best show your emotion?
- Did anyone use the same emotion but show it differently?
- How does abstract art let us express feelings without words?

Standards Connection:

- **VA.2.C.1.2:** Reflect on & discuss qualities of one's own & others' works of art.
- **VA.5.S.1.3:** Create artwork to communicate personal ideas and experiences.
- **VA.912.C.1.2:** Use critical thinking to refine and reflect on an artistic theme.



MUSIC TO ART

Objective: Connect sound and rhythm to abstract expression.

Materials:

- Paper
- Markers, crayons, or paint
- Speaker/device to play music (various genres: jazz, classical, hip-hop, electronic)

Directions:

1. Play short excerpts of music.
2. Students “draw the music” by using lines, colors, and shapes that match rhythm and energy.
3. Repeat with different genres. Compare results.

Discussion Questions:

- How did fast vs. slow music affect your drawing?
- Did the music make you think of certain colors?
- Was your artwork different from your classmates’?

Standards Connection:

- **VA.K.C.1.1:** Create and share personal works of art with others.
- **VA.4.C.2.2:** Identify purposes for viewing works of art.
- **VA.68.H.1.3:** Identify connections between visual art and other disciplines.



MUSIC TO ART: SUGGESTED LISTENING EXAMPLES

FAST & ENERGETIC (TO INSPIRE QUICK, BOLD LINES & BRIGHT COLORS)

- “Flight of the Bumblebee” Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (classical).
- “Uptown Funk” Mark Ronson ft. Bruno Mars (funk/pop).
- “Can’t Stop the Feeling!” Justin Timberlake (pop/dance).

SLOW & CALM (TO INSPIRE SMOOTH LINES & COOL COLORS)

- “Clair de Lune” Claude Debussy (classical piano).
- “Weightless” Marconi Union (ambient/relaxation).
- “River Flows in You” Yiruma (modern piano).

DRAMATIC & POWERFUL (TO INSPIRE BOLD SHAPES & HEAVY STROKES)

- “O Fortuna” Carl Orff (classical/choral).
- “Believer” Imagine Dragons (rock/pop).
- “Hall of the Mountain King” Edvard Grieg (orchestral).

PLAYFUL & QUIRKY (TO INSPIRE WHIMSICAL SHAPES & MIXED COLORS)

- “Linus and Lucy” Vince Guaraldi Trio (jazz/piano).
- “Happy” Pharrell Williams (pop).
- “The Entertainer” Scott Joplin (ragtime piano).



SHAPE EXPLOSION COLLAGE

Objective: Experiment with geometric and organic shapes in abstract composition.

Materials:

- Construction paper (various colors)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Large background paper

Directions:

1. Cut out shapes (circles, triangles, wavy organic shapes, etc.).
2. Arrange them in unexpected, overlapping, layered ways.
3. Glue pieces down once satisfied.
4. Combine individual collages into a class “abstract quilt.”

Discussion Questions:

- What choices did you make when arranging your shapes?
- How does layering change the look of your art?
- What do you notice when all the collages are put together?

Standards Connection:

- **VA.K.C.1.1:** Create and share personal works of art.
- **VA.3.O.1.1:** Demonstrate how elements of art create balance.
- **VA.912.O.1.1:** Use various art media and processes to develop original works.



ABSTRACT TEXTURE RUBBINGS

Objective:

Students will explore textures in their environment and use them to create an abstract collage composition.

Materials Needed:

- Paper
- Crayons (unwrapped work best for rubbings)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Background paper (optional)

Directions:

1. Give each student a piece of paper and an unwrapped crayon.
2. Have students walk around the classroom (or outside) and place their paper on top of textured surfaces (tiles, desks, walls, leaves, etc.).
3. Rub the side of the crayon gently over the paper to capture the texture.
4. Once students have collected several texture rubbings, ask them to cut or tear their papers into different shapes.
5. Arrange the texture pieces into an abstract collage on a background paper.
6. Glue the pieces down to complete the composition.

Discussion Questions:

- What textures did you discover that surprised you?
- How does layering different textures change your artwork?
- How do textures add interest and variety to abstract art?

Florida Standards Connection:

- **VA.K.C.1.1** – Create and share personal works of art with others.
- **VA.68.O.1.3** – Use a variety of strategies to solve artistic problems.
- **VA.912.O.1.1** – Use various art media and processes to develop original works of art.



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ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

FOUND OBJECT ABSTRACTS

Students use everyday objects like sponges, bottle caps, or leaves to stamp, roll, and press paint onto paper. By layering shapes and colors, they create an abstract design full of patterns and textures.

Discussion: Which object made the coolest pattern? How is this different from painting with a brush?

Standards:

VA.K.F.1.1, VA.3.O.1.1, VA.912.S.1.2

ABSTRACT ART WITH MOVEMENT

Students listen to music and use their whole arms to draw lines, swirls, and marks that follow the beat. Different songs inspire different movements, and the finished artwork shows the energy of the music.

Discussion: How did your movements change with the music? Do you see energy in your art?

Standards:

VA.K.S.1.1, VA.2.C.1.1, VA.68.H.1.3

ABSTRACT PORTRAITS

Students draw themselves or a friend using shapes, lines, and colors instead of realistic details. The artwork shows personality through abstract design rather than exact features.

Discussion: How does your portrait show personality? Was it easier or harder without realistic details?

Standards:

VA.3.C.1.2, VA.5.S.1.3, VA.912.H.2.1

SYMMETRY FLIP ABSTRACTS

Students paint or color on one half of a folded paper, then press it closed to transfer the design. When they open it, a symmetrical abstract image appears, which they can add details to.

Discussion: How did the fold change your art? Does symmetry make it feel more balanced?

Standards:

VA.2.S.1.2, VA.4.O.1.1, VA.912.C.1.2



ADDITIONAL VIDEO ACTIVITIES



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BE A STAR PARTICIPANT AT BAM!

BAM! Festivals are hands-on, outdoor adventures where YOU are part of the fun. To make the most of the day, come prepared:

Here's how to help make the show magical:

★ BRING WATER

Stay hydrated! Field trips are more fun when you're feeling your best.

★ BE SUN SMART

Wear sunscreen, sunglasses, or a hat. You'll be outside, so protect yourself from the Florida sun.

★ DRESS FOR THE MESS

Some activities use paint, chalk, or other materials — so wear clothes and shoes that can get a little messy.

★ STAY ENGAGED

Each station is designed for YOU. Listen, try new things, ask questions, and participate fully.

★ RESPECT THE SPACE

Take care of the grounds and materials so everyone can enjoy them.
NO LITTERING PLEASE!

★ SHOW APPRECIATION

Say "thank you" to artists, volunteers, and presenters. They're here to make the day special for you.

★ HAVE FUN!

Explore, create, discover, and enjoy the experience. BAM! is all about making memories through the arts.



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Youth Educational Programs

Questions?

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