

Colourful Cut-Outs: An art lesson for children aged 5-7

Teacher Guide



This art lesson has been designed for use with children aged 5 – 7 but could be adapted to use with younger or older children. The PowerPoint presentation can be edited to suit the needs of your learners.

We recommend splitting the lesson over two sessions, to allow the children's painted sheets of paper time to dry before they cut out shapes from them. You could split the sessions over a lunch break or over a couple of days. Alternatively, you could teach this lesson using coloured paper for the children to cut shapes from, instead of painting the sheets of paper first (like Henri Matisse did).

The Lesson's aims

- **To learn about an art technique** – Children will learn about the collage technique and will learn to consider composition. They will paint sheets of paper*, then cut out shapes from the painted paper. They will arrange their shapes on a background and stick them down.
- **To learn about a famous artist** – Children will learn about the French Artist Henri Matisse, focusing particularly on his cut-outs.

*If you do not wish to paint sheets of paper (and allow time for them to dry), you can provide children with coloured paper to cut their shapes from.

Background information

Sustainably managed forests

Children will be introduced to sustainably managed forests for paper production. Sustainably managed forests are crucial for paper production, providing a reliable and renewable source of wood fibre while ensuring ecological and social benefits.

Key facts about sustainably managed forests for paper production

Renewable resource

Paper production relies on a renewable resource, trees, which are replenished through sustainable forestry practices.

Biodiversity and ecosystem services

Well-managed forests preserve biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services, such as carbon sequestration and clean water.

Growing forests

European forests are growing, with new growth exceeding harvested wood, ensuring a sustainable supply of timber for paper production. Between 2005 and 2020, European forests grew by 58,390 square kilometres – that's an area bigger than Switzerland and amounts to over 1,500 football pitches every day!

Certification

Certification programmes like FSC® and PEFC ensure responsible sourcing, traceability, and adherence to sustainable forestry standards.

Circular economy

The paper life cycle is a well-functioning system which minimises waste, with high paper recycling rates. The European paper recycling rate is 79% and 83% of paper packaging is recycled.

Low carbon intensity

Paper production, especially when utilising renewable energy and recycled fibre, has a surprisingly low carbon intensity. The print and paper industry is one of the lowest industrial greenhouse gas emitters in Europe, accounting for just 0.8% of emissions in 2022.

Reduced water consumption

The paper industry is constantly working to reduce water consumption and implement water management practices. In 2022, around 90% of the water used in the European paper industry was returned to its source (having been reused within the mill before being suitably treated), with the remainder either evaporated, staying within the product, or bound up in solid waste.

Environmental benefits

Sustainable forest management helps to mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and preserving forest ecosystems.

Social and economic benefits

Well-managed forests support local livelihoods and contribute to the broader economy through the production of paper and paper-based products.

Sources

- FSC® [What Is Sustainable Forestry?](#)
- PEFC [What Is Sustainable Forest Management?](#)
- Two Sides [Myths & Facts Booklet](#)
- WWF [Why Forests Are So Important](#)
- Forest Europe [State of Europe's Forests 2020](#)
- Love Paper [The Paper Fact File](#)

Henri Matisse (1869 – 1954)

The French visual artist, Henri Matisse, was a draughtsman, printmaker and sculptor, but is most well-known for his paintings and colourful cut-outs.

Matisse employed the cut-out technique in the last decade of his life after being confined to a wheelchair, following surgery for cancer.

Studio assistants painted sheets of paper with gouache. Matisse then used scissors to cut shapes from these painted sheets and arranged the shapes in compositions.

The Snail is a famous piece by Matisse, that shows his interest in bright colours. Simple shapes cut from painted paper have been arranged to resemble a snail shell, inside an orange border. Complimentary colours have been placed together to attract our attention.

Other cut-out collage works he produced also used vivid, bold colours but involved more complex shapes, such as *The Horse, the Rider and the Clown*. In this piece, the shapes have been carefully arranged on top of one another.

The Sheaf is an equally colourful piece but the many similar, yet unique leaf shapes that almost fill the picture do not overlap each other.

Some say that the shapes and colours that Matisse used look as if they are jumping and dancing, reflecting his approach to life – even after becoming ill. He once said:

“He [or she] who loves, flies, runs, and rejoices...is free and nothing holds them back”

We recommend sourcing some examples of Matisse’s cut-out artwork online to share with your class.

Resources needed:

- Colourful Cut-Outs Presentation
- Sheets of plain paper to paint
- Sheets of plain paper to stick cut-out shapes on
- Scissors
- Glue
- Aprons or protective clothing
- Table coverings and damp cloths for easy clean-up
- A selection of paints in bright colours
- A range of paintbrushes, sponges and any other tools for applying paint to paper
- Images of Matisse’s cut-out artwork (these can easily be found online)

The Lesson sequence

Use the PowerPoint presentation to guide children through the lesson. You'll find useful notes on each slide in the presentation which expand on ideas and suggest relevant explanations, questions and points for discussion.

Slides 2-8	These slides provide children with a little background information on where paper comes from and how, when sourced responsibly, from sustainably managed forests, it is a renewable resource.
Slide 9	<p>After learning about sustainably managed forests for paper production, tell the children how important paper is to artists and about the many things we can do with paper. Explain that the children will need to paint their sheets of paper to allow time for them to dry to use later in the lesson.</p> <p>Encourage the children to use one colour per sheet of paper and experiment with applying the paint with different paintbrushes and other tools, such as sponges, cloths or rollers. Remind them not to apply the paint too thickly, as it will take a long time to dry and might make the paper soggy.</p>
Slide 10	<p>After the children have painted their sheets of paper, bring them back together as a class to learn about a famous artist – Henri Matisse.</p> <p>Introduce Matisse and some of his work. At this point, we recommend you share some images found online of Matisse's cut-out artwork. We recommend looking at:</p> <p><i>The Snail</i> – Ask the children why they think it is called The Snail. Discuss the way the shapes are placed on the paper and the bright colours he has used.</p> <p><i>The Horse, the Rider and the Clown</i> – Discuss the way the coloured shapes overlap or sit on top of one another in this picture. Talk about the composition and balance, with the black shapes in diagonally opposite corners, and mention the border he has created.</p> <p><i>The Sheaf</i> – Ask the children what this picture makes them think of and how it makes them feel. Ask what they notice about the shapes and the direction in which they are all pointing. Point out that although the shapes may look the same, they are actually all unique.</p>
Slides 11-14	Use these slides to help the children understand more about the different shapes Matisse used in his cut-out artwork and about how he arranged the shapes into compositions he was happy with. Encourage them to compare and discuss the two compositions, stating their preferences.
Slide 15	<p>Take children through the process they will follow to cut out their own shapes from the painted sheets of paper. You can suggest that they might like to draw shapes in pencil on the back of their painted paper, then cut the shapes out.</p> <p>Encourage children to share some of their painted paper with each other, so they can cut out shapes in a range of colours.</p>
Slide 16-19	<p>Reflect on the knowledge and skills that the children have developed in this lesson and ask them what they have enjoyed the most. Allow time for the children to move around the class and view each other's artwork, encouraging discussion about colour, shape and composition.</p> <p>You might like to display all the children's artwork in the school and share it with parents and carers on the school website.</p>