



Flexi-Cut Collagraph Prints

Collagraph is a method of printing in which materials are attached to a flat base to create a relief surface. It can be very experimental and offers less control than other printmaking methods. One popular method is to glue “found” objects such as yarn, seeds, fabric, etc. onto a cardboard back. The surface is then inked and printed, with slight variances between each print.

A very simple and successful way to make collagraph prints is with Flexi-Cut printmaking plates. Flexi-Cut is a rubber-like sheet with an adhesive back. Students use regular scissors to cut shapes, then simply peel and stick them. Finished plates can be inked with block printing ink, or, for a very easy and neat project, try following the directions below for printing with water-based markers.

Grade Levels K-8

Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives

- Students will employ easy-to-use and safe materials in an introductory printmaking lesson
- Students will become familiar with the process of collagraph relief printmaking by following these steps:
 - 1) preparing a plate by creating a pattern on a rigid surface

Materials

[Blick Flexi-Cut Printing Plates](#), (40406-1006) package of twelve 6" x 9" sheets, need 1/2 sheet per student

[Blick Masterprinter Paper](#) (10402-1003) 100-sheet package 9" x 12", need one sheet per student

[All-Purpose Chipboard](#), single thickness (13115-2222), 22" x 28" sheet, cut to 5-1/2" x 7" pieces, need one piece per student

[Armada™ Velvet Touch Scissors](#) (57062-2005), need one per student

[Blick Economy Graphite Pencils](#) box of 12, (20302-2009), need one per student

[Prang® Washable Markers](#) (21267-1189) share six 8-color sets across classroom

[Atomizer Bottles](#) (02912-1003), share eight across the classroom

[Speedball® Soft Rubber Brayers](#), 6" (40104-1006), share six across classroom

Optional

[Armada™ Paper Shapers](#) (57056-1007), decorative-edge scissors

[Redi-Mats](#), (17205-1003) size 9" x 12" for artwork 6" x 9"

Objectives, continued

- 2) “inking” the plate by applying color
- 3) pulling a print using pressure to lift the color from the plate

- Students will understand the benefits of being able to produce multiple prints by applying alterations until they receive results that they find the most pleasing
- Students will select and arrange shapes to convey an idea or expression

Process

1. Students begin by cutting shapes from thin, rubber-like Flexi-Cut with good-quality scissors. Decorative-edge scissors create exciting lines, but require a little more skill to use. If desired, students may wish to mark their shapes on the Flexi-Cut material before cutting. Keep in mind that the final prints will be a mirror image, so that any lettering must be made in reverse. Students can create recognizable imagery, but patterns and abstract shapes usually produce the best results. Encourage students to use a variety of lines and sizes in creating their shapes.
2. Students create a printing plate by peeling the backing paper off the Flexi-Cut shapes and adhering them to the chipboard base. Instruct students to leave space between shapes - they should not touch one another. Make sure that shapes are pressed down firmly.
3. Students “ink” the plate by coloring just the Flexi-Cut shapes with washable marker, not the chipboard base. Colors may be blended together and built up in layers for greater intensity. Once a shape is covered with marker, patterns such as stripes or dots can be layered over it. The marker color may be allowed to dry.
4. To pull a print, mist a piece of Masterprinter paper lightly with water (it shouldn't be wet or dripping, just moist) and lay the paper over the printing plate. Try to center the paper over the plate as much as possible. Using one hand to hold the paper still, the student rolls the brayer across the back of the paper. Use firm pressure and make sure to roll across all edges and surfaces. Lift one corner of the

paper and gently peel away from plate to view print.

- Troubleshooting: If print is too light, pressure may need to be increased or amount of marker color used. If edges of shapes look smeared, pressure may need to be decreased. If colors run like watercolor, the paper is too wet.
5. To pull multiple prints, clean any remaining color off the Flexi-Cut shapes with damp tissue or wet wipe and repeat steps 3 and 4. Mat final prints with Redi-Mat and display.

Options

- Prior to inking, Flexi-Cut shapes can also be carved with Speedball® Linoleum Cutters (40203-1029) to add texture and line.
- Link with cultural studies by researching tribal patterns and having students reproduce or create their own.
- Use assorted colors of [Blick Water-Soluble Block Printing ink](#) (40305-) instead of water-based markers. Use a brayer to apply or paint the ink on the Flexi-Cut pieces lightly with a brush.

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National Standards:

Content Standard #1 — Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- **K-4** Students know the difference between materials, techniques and processes.
- **5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experience and ideas.

Content Standard #3 — Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas

- **K-4** Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning.
- **5-8** Students integrate visual, spatial and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks.