

Torn Paper Portraits

A Value Study

In this lesson, students “paint” with torn paper using a limited number of values found in a grayscale image. Using torn paper instead of direct painting requires them to visually divide the gray areas into separate shapes and define each shape individually. Students work directly on a piece of styrene over the image, eliminating the need for preliminary sketches and keeping the image constantly in front of them so they can “copy” the values. Any black and white image can be used, but creating portraits will give students a chance to study the placement of features, facial planes, shadows and highlights.



Grade Levels 9-12

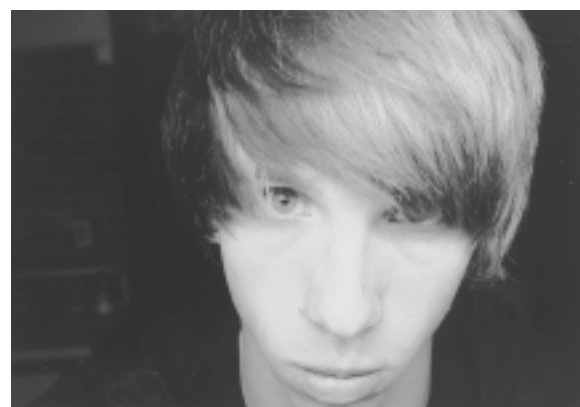
Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Objectives

- Students will look for grayscale values in a photograph then select matching values from a limited palette of pre-painted grays on paper
- Students will view areas of the photograph in terms of shapes, forms and planes rather than line and color
- Students will use collage as an impressionistic painting medium

Preparation

1. Take digital photos of students on black and white setting, print out on 8.5"x11" (letter) paper, trim to 8" x 10". Use regular bond paper and print with black toner only. OR, have students choose a photo to bring in and enlarge on a good quality photocopier to 8" x 10". Either way, make sure photo has multiple levels of gray.



Materials

[Blick White Sulphite Drawing Paper](#), 80-lb (10209-1043)
9" x 12" sheets, cut in half, need six half-sheets per student

[Blickrylic Student Acrylic Paint](#), quarts
Mars Black (00711-2047) and Titanium White (00711-1117),
distribute across classroom

[Rectangular 6-Well Tray](#) (03068-1006), need one per student

[Clear Styrene Sheets](#) (18908-1952) 8" x 10", one per student
OR, for less rigid but more economical pieces, use:

[Matte Acetate Sheets](#) (55508-1005), .005" thick, 25" x 40"
sheet, cut to 8" x 10" pieces for 12 per sheet,
need one piece per student

[Blick Scholastic Golden Taklon](#), 1/3" Flat Wash (05859-4012),
need one per student

[Aleene's® "Tacky" Glue®](#) (23826-1005), 8-oz bottle, need one
per student

8" x 10" Black and White, inkjetted or Laserprinted photos

[Blickrylic Polymer Gloss Medium](#), quart (00711-1027),
distribute across classroom

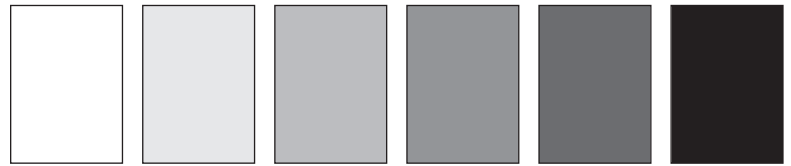
Process

1. Distribute to each student six sheets of heavy-weight drawing paper, size 9" x 6". Have students leave one sheet white, and paint one sheet with Mars Black. Instruct students to mix black and white to make 4 shades of gray for the remaining 4 sheets of paper, see (A). Students will need water on hand for rinsing brushes, but should be cautioned not to thin the paint with water or it will cause too much buckling of the paper. Allow paint to dry.
2. Remove protective cover from both sides of the styrene. Tape the black and white photo, face up against the styrene, see (B). Tape photo on all 4 sides to make sure it doesn't move. Clean front side of styrene to remove any clinging lint.
3. Students begin to tear the paper into pieces and use small amounts of glue to position the pieces directly onto the styrene. It is not necessary to make sure all edges are secure because the final "painting" will be coated. It's difficult to decide where to begin, so you may wish to specify doing all the black areas first or doing the white first.

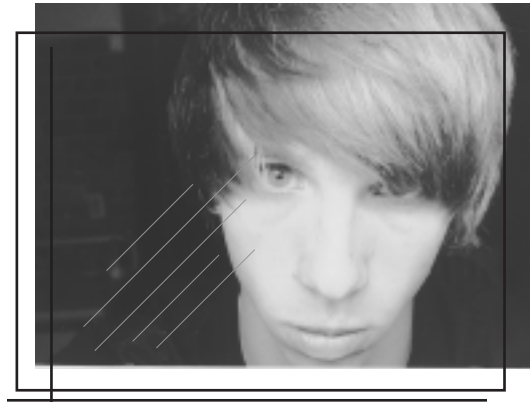
As the styrene becomes covered by the paper, less light will be able to penetrate down to the photo and it will be more difficult to see the details, so it would be best to start with facial features and do the background last.

Remind students to try and match the gray values they see in the photo beneath. Encourage them to use a variety of sizes of torn paper swatches, and to layer them over each other rather than try to position them next to one another, see (C). If an error is made, students can either lift the paper swatches away or simply layer over them. The rough, white edge of the torn paper adds a dramatic line quality and should be used within the piece. Do NOT allow the use of scissors or cutting materials!

4. When the styrene is covered, remove the photo from the back. The back of the collage is a work of art in itself! Cover the piece with a coat of Gloss Medium to make sure all the pieces stay in place. Pieces may be mounted and matted for a finished look.



(A)



(B)



(C)

National Standards

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

- **9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate and understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

- **9-12** Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems.