

The Stories of Structures & Spaces: Mixed Media Collages Inspired by Aimée Henny Brown

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TOPICS: Collage techniques; Making use of the elements of shape, texture, and colour; Conveying a mood in a scene through visual elements; Exploring the connections between place and storytelling

SUBJECT(S): Visual Arts, English Language Arts **GRADE(S):** 4-7

UNIT DURATION: 4 lessons

OVERVIEW & CULMINATING TASK: In this unit students will explore the paper collages of BC artist Aimée Henny Brown. Aimée engages archives, research, and printed matter to place historical content within her contemporary visual art practice. She constructs imagined spaces in her paper collages and purposefully removes figures in order to spark questions about scale and purpose. By leaving out the figure, Aimée also leaves room for diverse viewers to imagine themselves into the spaces that she constructs. Aimée is influenced by imagery of emergency shelters, bomb shelters, and bunkers from the Cold War era. Her depiction of shelters is also shaped by science fiction and dystopian notions of a "post-human" environment.

Students will create mixed media collages inspired by the work of Aimée Henny Brown. They will create a layered scene that incorporates a structure, its surrounding environment, as well as figures. Students will intentionally convey a mood within their scene through the use of texture and colour.

BIG IDEAS (What students will understand):

- Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives. (Arts Education 5)
- Exploring works of art exposes us to diverse values, knowledge, and perspectives. (Arts Education 4)
- Works of art influence and are influenced by the world around us. (Arts Education 5)



Aimée Henny Brown, *Futur Cache V*, 2018, hand-cut collage on cotton rag paper, 37 x 24.5 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES (What students will do):

- Intentionally select artistic elements, processes, materials, movements, technologies, tools, techniques, and environments to express meaning in their work
- Interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts
- Describe, interpret and respond to works of art and explore artists' intent

CONCEPTS & CONTENT (What students will know):

- Image development strategies
- Elements of visual art; principles of design
- Symbolism and metaphor to explore ideas and perspective

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) (What students will keep considering):

- How can you represent the mood of a place in a collage?
- How can you combine found and original imagery in the creation of collage that represents a structure and its surroundings?

FIRST PEOPLES' PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING:

Learning is embedded in memory, history, and story.

MATERIALS & TECHNOLOGIES:

- digital Images of artwork by Aimée Henny Brown (see end of document)
- digital projector and computer
- student sketchbooks
- pencils
- pre-cut 7" x 9" sheets of white cardstock (2 per student)
- pre-cut 7" x 9" sheet of white printer paper (1 per student)
- 8.5" x 14" sheet of white printer paper (2 per student)
- glue sticks
- scissors
- magazines
- black sharpies
- watercolour paint brushes
- watercolour paint sets
- water pots
- washable markers in a variety of colours
- crayons (with paper wrapping removed) in a variety of colours
- pre-cut 7" x 4.25" white paper (8.5" x 14" sheets of paper cut into quarters) (1 per student)
- photocopied "Figure Outline Templates" (see end of document) (several sets for class to share)
- photocopied "Structure Outline Templates" (see end of document) (several sets for class to share)

VOCABULARY:

collage, narrative, figure, found imagery, horizon line, exhibition, texture, mood, structure, dwelling

RESOURCES & REFERENCES:

- Aimée Henny Brown bio and artwork: <http://www.aimeebrown.ca>
- Glossary of art terms: <http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources/glossary/>

ADAPTATIONS & MODIFICATIONS:

Students with difficulties using scissors may require assistance with cutting. Portions of this assignment may also be carried out using a computer and design software such as Adobe Photoshop or MS Paint.

DISCUSSION & ACTIVITIES (Teacher Action/Student Action):

LESSON #1 (intro to Aimée Henny Brown, brainstorming, and creating a painted texture):

- Introduce the lesson by writing the word "dwelling" on the board and create a mind map, including both definitions and



Aimée Henny Brown, *Architectural Proposal III*, 2018, hand-cut collage, 12 x 12 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.

examples of dwellings (considering both structures and spaces).

- Share with students that they will consider the stories that are connected to and associated with structures and spaces and the way in which artists use texture and colour to convey mood. Ask students:
 - Can you think of any stories (personal or public) connected to structures or spaces in your city or neighbourhood (i.e. parks, abandoned buildings, restaurants, schools, trails, etc.)?
 - Can you think of specific examples of dwellings that serve as settings in stories or movies?
- Project images of Aimée Henny Brown's collages (see end of document for large images). Ask students the following discussion questions:
 - Describe the colours that the artist has included in these collages. Describe the textures.
 - How has the artist created these collages? Where do you think she might have found the images that she has cut up?
 - Describe the shape of the building that the artist has cut out. What kind of textures and colours has the artist included within the cut out shape of the building (write these on the board)? Why might the artist have included these particular textures and colours?
 - Imagine that you were transported into these spaces. How would you feel? Describe the mood of these places (write

some words on the board that can be used to describe the mood).

-What kinds of dwellings are these? Who might live here? What makes you say that?

-If the artist had included people in these collages, what might they be doing?

-Why might the artist have chosen not to include people?

-What kind of story might take place in these settings?

- Share with students information about Aimée Henny Brown (see Overview & Culminating Task section of this document). Optionally, view Aimée's website with the class, or have students work in pairs to explore her website (see Resources & References section for link).
- Explain to students that they will create their own collages inspired by the work of Aimée Henny Brown. They will depict an invented structure and the space that surrounds it. They will create a mood in their collage using colour and texture. Unlike Aimée Henny Brown, they will include figures within their image – thereby imagining how people might move and interact within their invented spaces and structures.



7" x 9" sheet of white cardstock covered completely with textures created using watercolour paints and water soluble markers.

- Have each student brainstorm a mood that they would like to convey in their own collage. Refer back to the brainstormed list of mood words on the board. Students should write their own mood word in a sketchbook and brainstorm some colours and textures that they will use to represent this mood in their collage. Students should write about and explain their choices.

- Once students have brainstormed about the

mood they'd like to convey in their collages, hand out to each student a 7" x 9" sheet of white cardstock. Students should write their name in pencil on the back of the sheet of paper.

- Demonstrate techniques for creating texture using washable markers and watercolour paints (see example, above). Students should cover their entire sheet

of paper using their chosen colours and create a variety of marks and textures.

- Let the painted sheets of paper dry in a designated drying area.

LESSON #2 (creating rubbings and selecting 2 magazine textures):

- View the collages by Aimée Henny Brown that were discussed in the previous lesson. Brainstorm with the students the various textures that the artist has included in these artworks. Ask the students:

-Can you identify textures that are human-made?

-Can you identify textures that could be found in nature?

- Hand out to each student a 7" x 9" sheet of white printer paper. Have students consider the mood that they brainstormed in the previous lesson. Students should each select 3 crayons (with paper



7" x 9" sheet of paper covered completely with texture rubbings using 3 colours

wrappings removed) in colours that represent this mood (as recorded in their sketchbooks in Lesson #1).

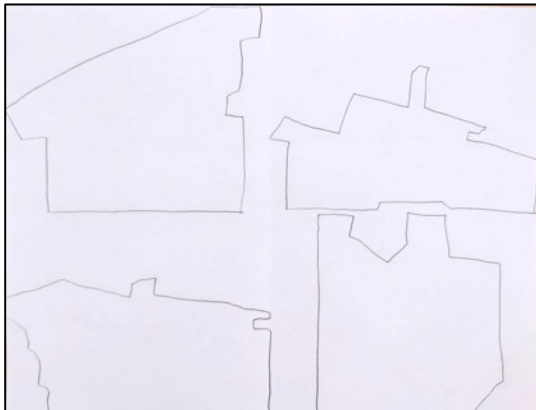
- Demonstrate to students how to create rubbings on the sheet of 7" x 9" paper by pressing hard and using the side of a crayon. Students can hunt for textures in the classroom and outside on school

grounds. Students should find a variety of textures, both natural and human-made (i.e. bark, concrete, burlap, stone, metal, etc.). Students should completely cover their sheet of 7" x 9" sheet of paper with a variety of textures. The textures can overlap (see example, above).

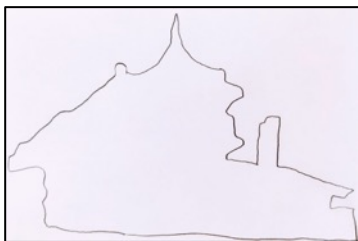
- Have students write their name on the back of their rubbing sheet.
- Have students select 2 pages from recycled magazines. Students should select pages that include colours and textures that help to represent their chosen mood (refer back to the mood students identified in Lesson #1 in their sketchbooks). Have students write their names on the back of their selected magazine sheets and save them, along with their rubbing sheets, for the following lesson.
- Have each student fold a sheet of 8.5" x 14" paper in half to create a folder to store their collection of collage paper in (students should label their folder with their name).

LESSON #3 (sketching structures and cutting out structures from painted paper):

- Have students fold a sheet of 8.5" x 14" white paper into 4 quadrants. Project each of Aimée Henry Brown's 4 collages and ask students to observe and sketch the outline of a structure in each of their 4 quadrants (see example, below). Each sketch should touch at least 3 sides of the quadrant.
- Hand out photocopies of the "Structure Outline Templates" (found at the end of this document) to be used as visual references.
- Hand out a sheet of 7" x 4.25" white paper to each student. Students should invent and draw a new structure outline on this paper by combining shapes from their 4 sketches, shapes from the Structure Outline Templates, and optionally shapes from their own imagination



4 sketches of structure outlines drawn on folded 8.5" x 14" sheet of paper



Invented structure outline drawn on 7" x 4.25" sheet of paper

or memory (see example, to the left). The finished drawing should have a horizontal orientation, should combine at least 2 structures and should touch at least 3 sides of the 7" x 4.25" sheet of white paper.

- Have students cut out their structure outline shapes.
- Demonstrate for students how to trace their structure outline shape onto their painted paper created in Lesson #1 about 2" from the bottom of the paper (see example, to the right). Students can choose whether the structure will be centered or off-center.

- Demonstrate how to cut out the shape of the structure as well as the ground beneath it (see example).
- Save both negative and positive cut out shapes (with student names written on back) for following lesson in student folders.

LESSON #4 (assembling final collages and reflection):

- Students will select one of their magazine pages to layer underneath their cut out structure shape (see example to the right). Students should consider whether they want the structure to contrast with the painted paper, or whether they want the structure and background to blend together.

- Hand out to each student a 7" x 9" sheet of cardstock. Students will use this sheet of paper to choose a section of their selected magazine page. Students will trace the 7" x 9" sheet of paper onto the magazine page using a sharpie and cut out this shape (see example to the right). They will then glue this magazine page onto the 7" x 9" sheet of cardstock.
- Students will then glue their sheet of painted paper with the structure cut out from it on top of the magazine layer (see example on following page). The top of the painted sheet of paper should be flush with the top of the cardstock (see example).

- Next, students will use their remaining pieces of paper (the rubbing, the remaining magazine page, and the scraps of painted paper) to create the following details for their collage:

- 1-3 figures
- the ground below the structure
- environmental details such as rocks, trees, bushes, lamp posts, etc.

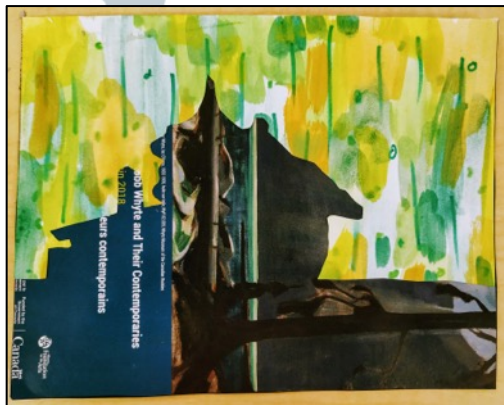


Invented structure traced onto painted paper 2" from bottom and cut out.



A section of the magazine page has been selected by tracing the 7" x 9" sheet of cardstock with sharpie. The cut out invented structure outline has been overlapped to demonstrate the contrast between the magazine page and the painted paper.

- Ask students to consider whether they want their figures and environmental details to stand out from or blend into the structure shape and background. Students will need to choose which papers to cut these shapes out from, accordingly.
- Make photocopies of the 2 "Figure Outline Templates" found at the end of this document and distribute these. Students may cut out and trace figures from these templates to incorporate into their collages.
- Students may find visual references to aid in drawing environmental details or they can draw from their imagination and memory.
- Once students have cut out the various objects and layers for their collages, they can arrange them on their backing paper and then



The selected section of the magazine page has been glued onto the 7" x 9" sheet of white cardstock. The painted paper with the cut out structure outline has been glued on top, flush with the top of the paper.

glue them down (see examples of finished collages to the right).

- Have students work in pairs to discuss their finished artworks. Each partner should take turns describing the colours and textures that they included in their collages and the mood that they intended to represent.
- Display the finished student artwork and discuss what students notice and appreciate about the finished collages, what worked well, what they would improve upon, and what successful strategies they used.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After choosing the mood and corresponding colours and textures for their collages in Lesson #1, review students' planning notes written in their sketchbooks.

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

After students complete their collages, have them create titles for their artwork and write about their creative process addressing the following questions:

- What colours and textures did you make use of in your collage?
- Did you effectively represent the mood that you had originally planned to create in your collage? Why or why not?

EXTENSIONS & POSSIBLE CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS (Language Arts):

Have students write short stories making use of their collages as a setting. Optionally display students' collages and typed stories together.

AFK RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS:

Looking for more art lesson ideas? Looking for ways to connect art to other areas of the curriculum? Visit the AFK Resources page to find lesson plans for all grade levels!

<http://tiny.cc/AFKResources>



Teacher samples of finished collages that incorporate layered figures and environmental details such as trees, rocks, and bushes.



Aimée Henny Brown, *Futur Cache V*, 2018, hand-cut collage on cotton rag paper, 37 x 24.5 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.



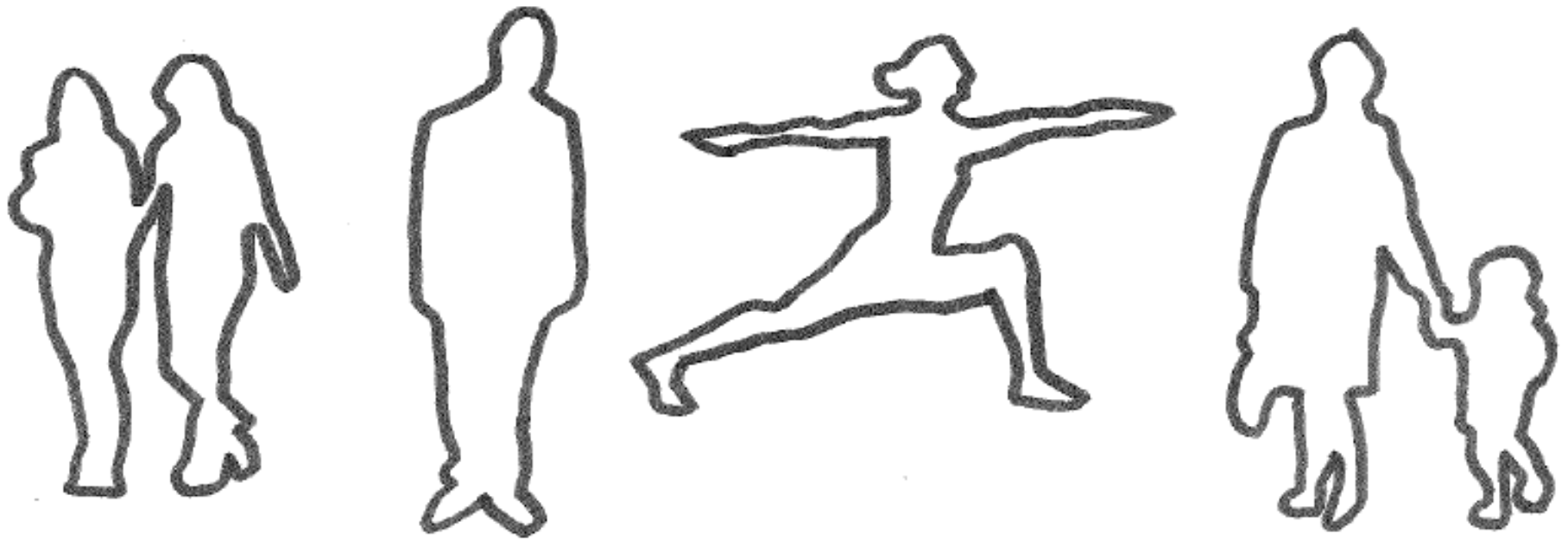
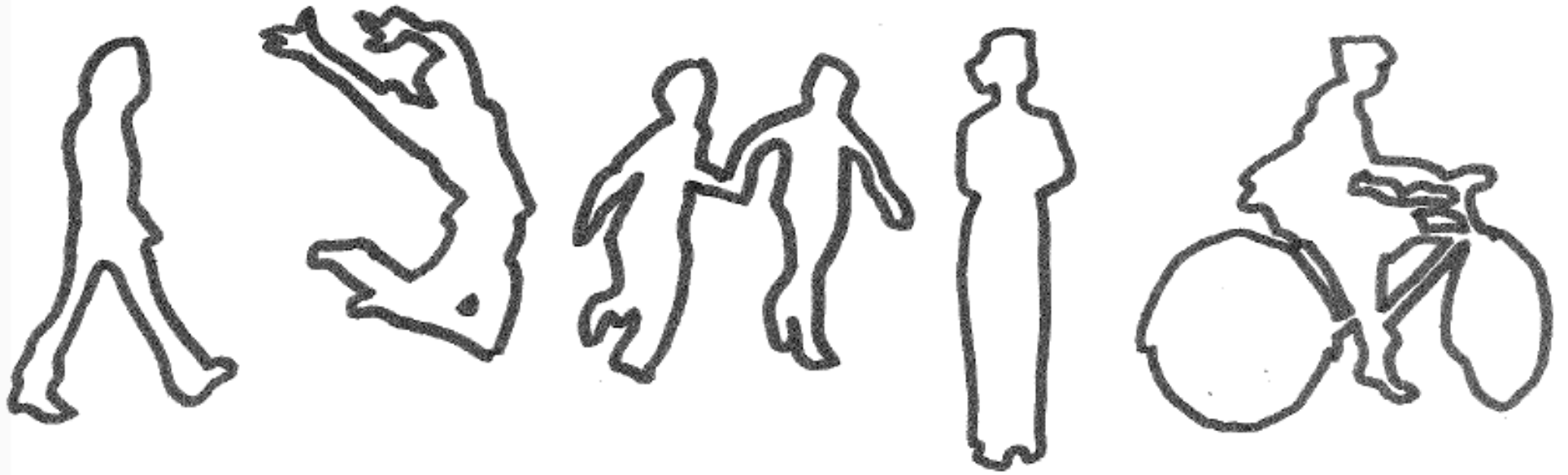
Aimée Henny Brown, *Futur Cache III*, 2018, hand-cut collage on cotton rag paper, 37 x 24.5 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.



Aimée Henny Brown, *Architectural Proposal III*, 2018, hand-cut collage, 12 x 12 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.



Aimée Henny Brown, *Architectural Proposal I*, 2018, hand-cut collage, 12 x 12 inches. Image courtesy of the artist.



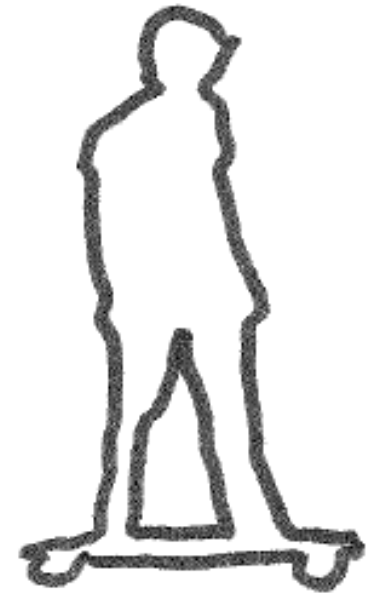


Figure Outline Template #2

