

# Henri Matisse

## French Artist

### 1869-1954



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### The Matisse unit meets the following Mesa County Valley School District #51 Content Standards for elementary visual art:

Standard	Grades K-2 Benchmarks	Grades 3-5 Benchmarks
1: Students recognize and use the visual arts as a form of communication.	Students create a picture in the style of Matisse.	Students create a picture in the style of Matisse. In addition, the student will prepare an oral or written description of what his/her work communicates.
2: Students know and apply elements of art, principals of design, and sensory and expressive features of visual arts.	Students use and identify selected elements of art (e.g., line, texture, color, shape, form, space) in his/her artwork.	Students integrate elements of art (e.g. line, texture, color, shape, form, space) and principals of design (e.g. pattern, balance, contrast, proportion) in his/her artwork.
3: Students know and apply visual arts materials, tools, techniques, and processes.	Students use art tools, materials and processes with care and safety to create a picture in the style of Matisse. Students can describe the tools, materials, and processes he/she used to create their artwork.	Students use tools, materials, and processes with care and safety to create a picture in the style of Matisse. Students can describe the tools, materials, and processes he/she used to create their artwork.
4: Students relate the visual historical and cultural traditions.	Students recognize and identify the works of Matisse. Students examine and produce art that represents the style of Matisse.	Students compare and contrast the work of previous art heritage presentations (Van Gogh, Picasso, etc.) with the present artist, Matisse. Students examine and produce art in the style of Matisse.
5: Students analyze and evaluate the characteristics, merits, and meaning of works of art.	Students talk about the elements of art and principals of design used in Matisse's and their own artwork. Students look carefully and describe what he/she observes in Matisse's art as well as their own.	Students use elements of art and principals of design as criteria for planning, creating and analyzing Matisse's artwork, as well as their own artwork. Students observe, describe, compare and contrast Matisse's art work to that of previous Art Heritage presentations.



# Henri Matisse

## SUMMARY

- Henri Matisse (*ON-REE MAH-TEESS*) may be considered an “Accidental Artist” because he began his career as a law clerk. By accident he discovered his talent as an artist when he was recuperating from a serious illness. During an illness later in his life, he developed a style of art which became his most recognized work.
- Matisse initially became famous as the “King of the Fauves” (which means “wild beast” in French), an inappropriate name for this gentlemanly intellectual, there was no wildness in him, through there was much passion. He was an awesomely controlled artist, and his spirit, his mind, always had the upper hand over the “beast” of Fauvism.
- He explored a variety of different mediums throughout his long life including painting, paper cutouts, fresco murals, stained glass, sketching, printmaking, and sculpting as well as creating theater and costume design, book illustrations and publishing an illustrated book of prose of his own.
- Matisse loved simple, contrasting colors and believed they could tell stories. For instance, Matisse used blue to show truth or heaven, orange to show love or gentleness, red to show excitement or fire, and green to show growth or change.

## SETTING THE SCENE

Matisse lived during a very dramatic time, witnessing some of the most traumatic political events in recorded history, the worst wars, the greatest slaughters, and the most demented rivalries of ideology, without it seems, turning a hair. Matisse never made a moralistic painting or signed a manifesto, and there is scarcely one reference to a political event - let alone an expression of political opinion - to be found anywhere in his writings. His studio was a world within a world: a place of equilibrium that, for sixty continuous years, produced images of comfort, refuge, and balanced satisfaction. (1)

The world of art was rapidly changing, from the old rules of composition, proportion, and perspective dictated by the French Salon, to radically new methods and ways of portraying ideas. Impressionists and other Modernists strived to define the essential rather than merely portraying a realistic picture of traditional ideals. These new artists threw out the old ideas and incorporated new methods and ways of seeing in their work. They held their own exhibitions when traditional galleries and institutions would not allow them to show their work.

During this time, how people thought, perceived and viewed the world was being redefined. The acceptance of sociology and psychology as sciences as well as world

changing events and inventions caused social realities to change. More varieties of colors were available to artists because of world-wide trade and advances in pigment chemistry. The invention of the paint tube, development of the lead pencil, discovery of new pigment binders, the invention of aluminum, stainless steel, and other materials gave artists new tools. The advances in print technology as well as the emergence of middle class society meant art became more accessible and in demand by the public. Matisse's work touched on universal themes and ideas, something important to everyone.

## VOCABULARY

**Cubism** - an art movement, dating from 1907, presenting a style of abstract art that shows several views of the same object at once and breaks objects down to their basic geometric shapes

**Fauvism** - a style of art characterized by vivid colors, free treatment of form, and a decorative effect; the word *fauvism* comes from the French word *fauve*, which means wild beast

**Flat** - in painting, flat refers to an area covered by a single, plain color, without shading or varying tones that might give the illusion of depth

**Impressionism** - a school of painting that used dabs or strokes of unmixed color to simulate actual reflected light. The artists would often depict the passing mood of a landscape or scene by working rapidly, using quick brushstrokes

**Perspective** - since the 15th century, artists have used perspective to suggest distance in their paintings. As a rule, objects look smaller the further away they are

**Oblique** - a line that is neither perpendicular nor parallel

**Odalisque** - a female figure in the dress of a concubine in a harem

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Henri Matisse was the second son of Emile Matisse and Héloïse Gérard and born in Cateau-Cambrésis, France on December 31, 1869. Shortly after Henri's birth, his parents, his older brother Hippolyte, and he moved to Bohain, a small village close to Cateau. The family ran a general store that sold seeds, grains and household goods to the farmers in the area. The family struggled for a few years to build their business eventually becoming well-to-do shopkeepers. They worked in the store together and Henri's future seemed clear: when he grew up he would take over his parent's business.

But chance dictated otherwise. Henri's fragile health made it impractical for him to take over his father's shop, so in 1887, when he completed his high school studies at Saint- Quentin, he chose to pursue a legal career. Matisse became a law clerk in Saint-

Quentin, but in 1890, he developed appendicitis and experienced a year-long recuperation, which immobilized him. During his recuperation he tried painting for the first time, on the advice of a neighbor. To distract him from boredom, his mother gave him a set of paints and two cheap prints. Henri copied them and it was nothing short of a revelation for him - he decided then and there he would study painting.

Matisse continued to work at the law office but attended art classes in the mornings at a textile art school before he went to work. His father was not convinced that painting was his son's true calling, stating "You'll starve!" but nonetheless later paid for him to study at the School of Fine Arts in Paris under the serious and well-known master Bouguereau.

Matisse's studies were a disaster. The teaching was too rigidly academic and Matisse felt he could not express himself. Matisse left the school, worked briefly at the prestigious Julian Academy, and finally began to study with Gustave Moreau. Matisse was happy with Moreau, later saying: "What a charming master he was...I often went to the Louvre, but Moreau told us: 'Don't make do with going to museums, go into the street - that's where I learned to draw'."

In 1889, Matisse, who had a young daughter named Marguerite from a previous relationship, married Amélie Parayre. After marrying, the family traveled for a year, going from London to Ajaccio, Corsica, from fog to bright sunlight. Matisse adored the Mediterranean climate of Corsica. "I was dazzled there. Everything sparkles, everything is color and light," he said. On returning home in 1899, he painted his *Orange Still Life*, a work incorporating the brilliant colors he had enjoyed.

His son Jean was born in 1899, and another son, Pierre, came into the world a year later, when Matisse started studying sculpture with Bourdelle. In order to support the family, Amélie opened a milliner's (ladies hats) shop, but with frail health she found it difficult to maintain the business as well as care for the children. The business had to be closed. Matisse was having serious financial problems, so he and his family moved into his parents' home in Bohain. Relations between Henri and his father became strained, and the tense atmosphere made it difficult for Henri to work, necessitating a short stay.

As Matisse and his wife could not make a living from the sale of paintings and hats, he began to accept demanding commissions. He and another artist, Marquet, took on the task of decorating the Grand Palais in Paris for the Great Exhibition in 1900. It was exhausting work and when it was finished, Matisse and his wife retreated to Bohain for a well-earned rest. Matisse was not in the best of health, and was so despondent that he considered giving up painting. His work at the time illustrated his low spirit with his lack of color and gloomy images.

Matisse spent the summer of 1905 at Collioure, a fishing village on the Mediterranean and began a turning point in his creative life. He started using the bright, uninhibited colors and images of the warm sun in his works, prompting a storm of public controversy. When he and other artists exhibited their works at a show in Paris critics were quick to brand them as "*Fauves*" (wild ones). The Fauves made color their major element in their paintings, and were unanimous in their rejection of the nuances of the

Impressionist palette and their quest for the expressive potential of pure colors. Realistic images of nature played little part in their aims.

Matisse was the main target of criticism, particularly for his *Woman with the Hat*, which he had barely completed in time for the show. It was the biggest of the pictures he submitted to the Salon. In the painting, Amélie Matisse is three-quarters turned to the viewer and dressed in a costly gown and magnificent hat, like an elegant lady posing for a formal middle-class portrait. Conventional forms are replaced by lurid patches of color. Her face is the least affected by the process but still is trapped between the explosive colors of hat and dress. Michael Stein bought the painting and successfully saved Matisse from ruin and scandal. Others of the Stein family (Leo, Gertrude, and Sarah), who valued the avant-garde bought several of his works and urged others to do the same. Gertrude and Leo Stein displayed Matisse's works in their New York home and invited others to view them.



Picasso was a frequent visitor to the Stein's home. The two artists admired one another's work and would exchange paintings. Wassily Kandinsky in his book, **Concerning the Spiritual in Art**, (1912), in which he expounded a theory of abstract art, took the contrast between the two painters as exemplary: "Matisse -- color. Picasso -- form. Two approaches to one great goal."

In 1906, Matisse's restless spirit and appeal for travel took him to Algeria, where he visited the oasis of Biskra. For the space of the journey he did not paint: "One is quite aware that it would be necessary to spend years in such countries to find anything new, and that one cannot simply come along and apply one's own palette and method." The themes of Matisse's sculptural work developed parallel to his painting. For example, when a sculpture was accidentally broken, before repairing it, Matisse took the shape and position of the broken pieces, without any alteration, and put them into a painting, complete with twists and awkwardness. In the process, it came to seem particularly large, dynamic and powerful.

Matisse brought a collection from Biskra of ceramics, cloths, and other objects that he frequently found a use for in his paintings. Islamic ceramics gave Matisse new 'rules of thumb' that were vital in his own work, colors were applied pure and in flat planes, draftsmanship was reduced to arabesque lines, and dimensional space was rendered flatly. All manner of overabundance and luxury were permitted as long as they were lightly and decoratively used. The aim was to achieve a maximum of splendor with a minimum of effort; to do this Matisse came to prefer tendril-like arabesque ornamentation. Matisse was also influenced by Oriental rugs and is probably the only modern painter to have placed such emphasis on rugs and cloths. (2)

Several of his supporters encouraged Matisse to open an art school, and from 1907 to 1909, he taught over 60 students. However, he found teaching distracted him from creating his own work. In addition, he was disappointed the students were not open to creating their own original work but seemed to only wish to copy his style, so he found himself forced to close the school. Matisse had finally achieved recognition and was a

well-to-do man. He was able to set his father's mind at rest when he purchased a home for his family, complete with a garden, pond and flowerbeds.

Matisse continued his exploration of color, and frequently used his wife and children as his models. Amélie patiently wore the costumes and struck the poses the artist required. Her involvement and interest, qualities all too rarely shared by professional models, gave her a serious dignity which is visible in paintings even when an exotic costume reduces her to a mere "extra".

The painter's family was sternly subjected to his artistic needs. At the dinner table, Madame Matisse would ask the children to be quiet, so as not to disturb their father's concentration on an important painting. Doubtless the family had no easy time of it under Matisse's disciplined regimen - but neither did Matisse himself. His own obsession, experiments with new approaches to configuration, and dangers of failure, all tormented him.

In August, 1914, the First World War broke out. Matisse was in Paris, and terrified. The family home in Bohain was destroyed in the German attack. He tried desperately for news of his frail, widowed mother. His brother had been taken away by the Germans as had all the men of the village. In fear, Matisse moved his wife and children away for a time, later returning to Paris. In the summer of 1917, his sons went off to war: Pierre (age 17) to an armor division and Jean (age 18) to air force ground staff. The Matisse family began to go their own ways. Once the war was over, life was no longer lived together and Matisse responded by withdrawing even more completely into his work.

Matisse paintings began reflecting his need to relax; he increasingly painted scenes of reclining women, odalisques. He stated, "...I was in need of a breathing-space, quiet, a recuperative spell far from Paris and my cares. The odalisques were born of this contented longing: a beautiful, living dream, and an experience known in ecstasy, by day and night, in the magic of a climate." Matisse continued to paint and travel for many years, and his work continued to be his life. In the 1920's he began using a greater sense of reality, depth and detail in his paintings. He was established and recognized as an artist and his works were quickly purchased by museums, galleries and wealthy patrons. Matisse was awarded the cross of the Legion of Honor for his achievements.

Matisse referred to his numerous journeys as merely "changing places"; the only time he felt he was genuinely vacationing was in February 1930, when he journeyed to Tahiti via New York. He was enthusiastic about New York, "If I weren't accustomed to sticking to a decision once it's made I should stay in New York. It really is a new world, vast and majestic as the ocean. There is a sense of great human energy being released."

America fascinated him, but he went on and took a ship to Tahiti. His stay there was not of immediate benefit in his work; under the influence of the constant quality of the light he submitted to indolence, boredom and depression and stated he missed his work at home. On his return journey, in September 1930, Matisse visited his most important collector in the USA, Albert Barnes at Merion. Barnes had a private museum, the Barnes Foundation, where masterpieces by Seurat, Cezanne, Renoir and Matisse hung, and he now asked Matisse to decorate the areas above the three French windows in the main hall. The painter accepted the challenge and laid down this guiding principal: "It would

have been inappropriate to treat my decorative work like any other painting. I was aiming to adapt my fresco to cement and stone. I do not think this is very often attempted nowadays. People who paint on walls now create paintings and not true murals.”

Matisse spent a great deal of time planning and preparing for this assignment. He returned to Merion to make sure of the exact measurements of the area. For his subject, he chose a motif from *La Joie de Vivre* (which hung at Merion) the dance. Matisse had a large area to cover and to produce work on this scale he rented an old film studio in Nice. Matisse's life-long love of music (he played the violin) and dance is reflected in the work. He stated he often whistled or hummed musical tunes from his childhood while he painted it.

Preparation took a long time; he had problems with the distribution of color. For the first time, he used colored paper, cut to the required shape. “For three years, my work consisted in shifting eleven areas of color around, like moving pieces in a game...the colors were cut-outs and it took me that long to establish an arrangement that I found satisfactory.” By 1932 he had finally found the balance he wished between the drawn figures on grey paper and the colored paper background, and he began to transfer the composition to canvas - and only then did he discover that a mistake had been made in measuring the Merion area. Rather than correct his work, Matisse started over. He was suffering from acute nephritis (kidney ailments) and sheer exhaustion, but pressed on with work on the first version, which he completed by the end of 1933.

For Matisse, seeing the work installed at Merion brought a sense of relief. With pride, he felt he had ‘given birth’ to his creation, and was now ready to allow its own independent existence. “Having seen the picture in place, I now feel disconnected from it. It has become part of the building; and I no longer think of the work that has gone into it, the past...this was a real birth and the mother delivered herself of all the pain of the past.”

In the years that followed, Matisse worked on tapestry projects and book illustrations. A series of etchings of scenes from the ‘Odyssey’ were done to illustrate James Joyce's ‘Ulysses’, and he drew a great deal.

Matisse had always drawn a lot but after 1930 it became a particularly important medium in his quest for simplicity. Matisse's theme for his works in the 1930's was eroticism. Unlike Picasso, Matisse did not see love as being necessarily connected with sexual potency. For him, it was an inward feeling that made a positive view of the world accessible. Most of his major works of 1935 and 1936 are nudes. The figures are often distorted with exaggeration of the limbs, an angling of the head, and just a suggestion of breasts. The background is a mere setting, with no perspective depths, no more than a pattern and the nude a sketch of the human body.

In 1937, Matisse took ill and was hospitalized, his convalescence would be long. He and his wife legally separated. In late 1938 Matisse moved out of his apartment and into a hotel. A phase in his career had drawn to a close. In this period he had designed the scenery and costumes for a Russian ballet. The backdrop behind the dancers featured the same slanting swaths of color that marched across his mural in the Barnes exhibit.

Matisse was beset with worries in the Second World War, but his art remained one of tranquil and consolatory power. In May 1940 German troops marched into France, and Matisse, though he had a visa valid for Brazil, decided to remain. From Nice, he wrote to his son, Pierre, who was running a gallery in New York: "I would have felt like a deserter. If everyone of any value left, what would remain of France?" In 1944, he learned his former wife and daughter had been arrested and imprisoned by the Germans for their involvement in the French Resistance (the movement against the German occupation of France). Madame Matisse was imprisoned by the Germans for six months. After being tortured, Marguerite escaped shortly before she was to be sent to a Nazi camp. (3)

During the war, art materials were in short supply, but Matisse continued his busy life of painting and drawing. His work shows little of the strain of war. He remained true to his desire to paint pictures of calm and tranquility. In 1941, Matisse had surgery for an intestinal disorder. He became bedridden for an extended length of time.

In 1945 the war ended, Matisse was able to return to Paris, newly liberated from the Nazi occupation. He felt lucky to be alive and to have survived his illness. "I consider that I'm living on borrowed time," he said. "Every day that dawns is a gift to me and I take it in that way." Matisse continued to paint, despite the fact that he often had to spend most of the day in bed.

Some of his works followed his earlier themes, but it was **Jazz** that demonstrated the energy of his imagination and his originality, even at the age of 73. **Jazz** is a collection of 20 images, accompanied by text that contains some of Matisse's memories and thoughts on painting. The pictures for this were created using paper cutouts, a technique that Matisse had begun to experiment with during the 1930's. Matisse called it "drawing with scissors". The cutouts for Jazz were later copied so they could be printed by hand stenciling. Jazz was published in 1947, to great critical acclaim.

This amazing, bedridden man, who could very well have been finished with his artistic life, thus discovered a way to once again overcome his destiny. Above all, he seized the opportunity to do something he'd always wanted, to work toward an absolute synthesis of everything he had acquired up to that moment. With a simple pair of scissors, and paper painted to the exact colors he wanted, Matisse solved the problems of space and form, contour and color, structure and orchestration that he had always tried to reconcile. Even better, with this new adventure, the linear rhythms and forms finally achieved the importance that Matisse had, before then, often sacrificed to color and to the relationship between tones.

Matisse was nearly 80 and yet he sounds like a young man just beginning his working life. This "crazy old man of drawing", like Hokusai, who could draw the body of a female figure in a single line, was able to recapture his strength in old age through drawing. This is the same artist who, on the threshold of death and forced to stay in his room because of his illness, discovered the ceiling above his bed was a white surface, same as a sheet of paper. He immediately attached a piece of charcoal to a fishing pole and started drawing the huge smiling faces of his grandchildren on the ceiling. (3)

Matisse was determined to continue working. At the end of World War II, many artists turned their attention to religious themes, as if they wanted to find some meaning in life after the destruction of the war years. Although Matisse was not a follower of any particular faith, he had always felt his art was in some way an expression of religious feeling. In 1948, Matisse contributed paintings to a new church called Notre-Dame-de-Toute-Grâce at Assy. That same year, at the request of Sister Jacques (who'd been one of his nurses prior to her entry into the order), he began work on the chapel at Vence.

Matisse did not simply create the stained glass windows for the chapel - he took over the entire decoration of the chapel, designing the murals and even the priest's robes and the crucifix. He felt that "this is essentially a work of art...The essential thing is to put oneself in a frame of mind which is close to that of prayer." Matisse was delighted with the result of his work on the chapel, saying, "I consider it my masterpiece."

*The preparatory drawings for the stained-glass windows were created using gouache cut-outs. After long reflection, the theme was drawn from the Book of Revelation: "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which... yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations".*

*Picasso was furious that Matisse was creating a church. "Why not do a market instead? You could paint the fruit and the vegetables!" Matisse confided to a nun: "But I don't care: I have greens greener than pears and oranges more orange than pumpkins..."*

In 1949, Matisse moved back to the hotel in Cimieux, where he was to spend most of the rest of his life. Soon the walls of his room were covered with cutouts. Matisse suffered increasingly from asthma and heart trouble. Cutouts provided a way for him to continue working when his health prevented him from standing at an easel and painting. But the cutouts did not simply replace painting; they were themselves a new and important art form. He would do the cutouts himself, then direct his assistant to position the pieces on backgrounds pinned to the wall. Ironically, his life as an artist began because of appendicitis. Fifty years later, because of another operation, he entered the most glorious phase of his career.

Matisse was a kindly old man, humble about his achievements. He remained open to fresh ideas and followed developments in modern art. When he saw the new and very free abstract work by younger artists, he said he did not understand it so would not judge it. In 1952 he helped to found the Musée Matisse in his birthplace, Le Cateau-Cambrésis. Matisse's last work dates from 1953, when he was 84. He died at Cimiez the following year, on November 3, 1954. (10)

Matisse created over 70 bronze sculptures, hundreds of drawings, paintings, etchings, cutouts, and works in a variety of diverse mediums such as jewelry, theater scenery, and dance costumes. Matisse stated, "Exactitude is not truth. A subject's inherent truth - the only truth that matters - differs from outward appearance. To find this core of truth means searching for an irreducible sign to represent an object...**I have worked for years in order that people might say, 'It seems so easy to do.'**" We are all capable of expressing ourselves in the creative process. Matisse described how this is possible in a simple statement, "**Close your eyes, visualize the picture, and get to work.**"

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## SLIDES

1. **Self Portrait of Artist with a Jersey:** 1906. *Oil on canvas. Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen*

(OHN REE MA TEES) Henri Matisse was born in a small town in France in 1869. His parents owned a general store that sold seeds, grain and household goods.

When he was 21 years old, he was working as a law clerk and became very ill with appendicitis. During a long recuperation, his mother gave him some paints to keep him from being bored. He had never worked with art before but found he really liked it. After he became well again, he began taking art lessons and eventually left the law office to become an artist.

2. **“Madame Matisse” The Green Line:** 1905. *16" x 13". Oil and tempera on canvas. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, Denmark.*

Matisse was married and had three children, a girl and 2 boys. In this painting of his wife, he used wild, bright colors. The green stripe down the center of her face acts as a shadow line and divides her face with a light and dark side. He used cool and warm colors to paint her.

3. **Open Window, Collioure,** 1905: *Oil on canvas. 23" x 18". National Gallery of Art, Washington, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Hay Whitney*

He enjoyed traveling to the south of France where the climate is very sunny and semi-tropical. Because he'd grown up in an area where it was frequently rainy and gloomy, he was amazed at the wonderful bright colors he saw there. This is a view from his room. Matisse frequently used a window in his paintings; he liked the idea of showing both the inside and outside of a room.

4. **Harmony in Red.** 1908. *Oil on canvas. 71" x 87". The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia.*

Matisse believed color expressed emotions. What do you feel when you look at this painting? Does the red color influence your feelings? What about the lines? It is hard to see where the table and wall are separated.

Here the view out the window almost looks like a painting on the wall. Light colors seem to bring objects closer while dark colors make them appear farther away. Look at how Matisse used lighter color to draw your eye to the whole picture.

5. **Red Fish.** 1911. Oil on canvas. 57" x 39". The Pushkin Museum of Fine Art, Moscow, Russia.

Matisse wanted to create paintings that made people feel comfortable. In this painting, Matisse chose a color pattern that uses complementary colors - those colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel (the green and the reddish-orange of the fish and the violet and yellow of the garden and fish bowl). He softened the colors so they are not as jarring as they could be. Notice how he suggests the transparency of the fishbowl; he was able to fool our eyes by using colors and shading to mimic reflections.

6. **The Fauves** (cover of Maquette) 1949, paper cutout, 12.75 x 20"

The word "Fauve" means in French, "wild beast". The people who first viewed Matisse's bright and unusual color combinations described him and other painters like him as "wild beasts" because they weren't used to seeing such bold colors in paintings. Notice how he uses only 4 colors, black, red, blue and yellow on the white background.

7. **Photo of Matisse in bed.** Much later in life, when he was in his 70's, Matisse had some very difficult health problems. He had to spend a lot of time in bed. That did not stop him from painting, as you can see here. He would attach a piece of charcoal or a paintbrush to a fishing pole and draw on the ceiling over his bed!

8. **Icarus.** 1943 (from "Jazz" book)

Matisse said that there came a time when he'd said all he had to say in painting. Painting and drawing became very hard for him to do, and he started cutting out paper shapes and having his assistants arrange them on the walls. Those cutouts, which he did during the last few years of his life, were just as original and alive as his paintings had been. His work became known as "Drawing with Scissors".

This art piece, called "Icarus" (eh care us) is about a Greek story of a young man who tried to fly by using wax to glue bird wings to his shoulders. He flew too close to the sun, which melted the wax, and crashed to earth.

*Matisse used a technique called "gouaches decoupees" (G-WASH DAY-COO-PAY) to create the colors he wanted, but could not find in paper.*

*He would paint gouache (a thick paint) on paper, giving it a uniform, dull surface, then paint over it with a color he wanted before cutting it out.*

*He then moved the shapes around until he was satisfied with the arrangement.*

*He compared this process with how a musician plays jazz, they take a theme and play around with the notes.*

*He made a number of images based on childhood memories of the circus, fairy tales, and his travels and combined them with his handwritten thoughts and poems in a book called Jazz.*

9. **Dragon.** 1943-44. Paper cutout.

Matisse said, "Scissors should be used to carve, not clip...Scissors can acquire more feeling for line than pencil or charcoal." He felt using scissors was like sculpting with clay, which he also did as an artist. Matisse's dragon looks like a sea serpent. Is the fire from the dragon surrounding the picture?

10. **The Wolf.** 1944. (Paper cutout from Jazz book) Terinade, Paris

Here we see Matisse's creation of a wolf. Matisse wanted to simplify an idea to its most basic form. When you think of a wolf, what do you think of? Would this picture have the same impact if the wolf was black instead of white? What if the background were pale pastel colors?

11. **Polynesia - The Sea.** 1946. Paper pinned to tapestry. 1946, Mobilier National, Paris

He traveled to the tropical islands of Polynesia about 10 years before he created this art piece. While he was there, he did not paint or do cutouts, but took photographs. He said he was "too overwhelmed by the pure air, pure light, and pure color" that he could do nothing else.

12. **Beasts of the Sea.** 1950. Paper cutout. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

13. **Snow Flowers.** 1951. Paper cutout: 68" x 31". Private Collection.

Can there be such a thing as a snow flower? How has Matisse carried out this idea? The white images almost look like holes cut into the background. At the top, you see a negative image of the same shape or what remained after the shape was cut out. Matisse would save the scraps when he cut out something and use them in other pieces.

14. **The Tree of Life.** 1949. 202" x 99". *Paper cutouts - patterns for a stained glass window, Vatican Museums, Rome.*

One of Matisse's nurses was a lady who later became a Catholic nun. She encouraged him to create a chapel for a church. Although he was not religious, he appreciated her care of him and in her honor, planned the building, designed the interior, and even designed the priest's robes and cross. This is the design for stained glass windows that Matisse created.

15. **Interior of Chapel of Vence.** *Designed and built, 1948 – 1951. Vence, France.*

Here is the actual chapel of the church that Matisse designed. The brilliantly colored windows are surrounded by stark white walls with black line drawings on them representing religious stories.

16. **Thousand and One Nights.** *Gouache on cut-and-pasted paper, 54.75 x 147.25 in. Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute.*

During his lifetime, Matisse created hundreds of drawings, paintings, etchings, cutouts and bronze sculptures. He designed jewelry, theater scenery and dance costumes. He said, "...I have worked for years in order that people might say, 'it seems so easy to do'". We are all capable of expressing ourselves creatively. Matisse tells us to, "close your eyes, visualize the picture, and get to work."

**Henri Matisse was one of the most important painters of the twentieth century. He said he wanted his artwork to give people pleasure, and be soothing - kind of like a comfortable armchair you can rest in after a hard day's work.**

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## ART PROJECTS

***\*\*Encourage students to bring scissors, glue, and construction paper from their classroom. \*\****

(Only a few of the bright colors are needed as students can share and will only use a portion of the larger colored paper)

### **Namely Me - Matisse inspired name collage**

**Submitted by: Michelle Peacock, [Mohave Middle School](#), Scottsdale, Arizona**





### **Objective:**

The student will refer to the artwork of Henri Matisse to create their name with shape and color representing their personality, applying symbolism in the background to represent their interests.

**Materials:** white paper, assorted construction paper and scraps, scissors, glue, punch

**Process:** students cut their names out of colored paper, glue them to the white paper, and add cutouts of things that symbolize their personality, likes and favorites.

### **Story Color Collage**

#### **Materials:**

- Scraps of colored paper, such as - bright art tissues, construction paper, origami paper, pieces of fingerprinting cut into scraps, wallpaper samples, etc.
- white glue thinned with water in a dish with paintbrush
- other glues of choice, such as glue sticks or glue in bottles
- scissors
- masking tape
- poster board

#### **Process:**

Collect an assortment of colored papers. Select some that go together or contrast nicely. Glue some larger squares or rectangles of color on the paper as a background. Art tissues painted on with thinned glue will give a transparent bright effect. Other papers work well too.

Next, cut some of the papers into interesting shapes. To imitate Matisse, the shapes should be bold and simple in their designs. Glue the shapes on the background papers of the collage. Add more shapes in black or deeper colors to give centers of interest to the collage, if desired.

- To express a story, decide on what the colors and shapes of the paper will symbolize. Then glue them on the collage in a way that expresses feelings or tells a story like a colorful dreamlike photograph. For example, the arrival of a new baby might be shown with a bright pink rounded shape in the center of other colors (the adults surrounding the baby) The ideas for this type of expression are completely up to the artist.

### **Lesson Plan-Cut-Out Designs A La Henri Matisse**

*(This project was created for an on-going art class for kids, however it could be adapted to a much shorter version as needed for your students)*

**Objectives:** Students will be able to 1.) use postcards and prints of Henri Matisse as a starting point for their own designs 2.) draw, cut, arrange, and glue cut-outs in an aesthetic manner.

**Materials:** different colored construction paper 9" x 12", 6" x 9", 4 1/2" x 6", White construction paper 12" x 18", Scissors, Pencils, Glue, Newspapers to cover the tables

On the first day of the lesson each child was instructed to take a piece of white paper, and one of each of the larger pieces of construction paper that was available. This was to be the groundwork for their backgrounds. They were then instructed to take **4 pieces of the 4 1/2" by 6" paper**. That was the paper they were to cut into the desired shapes. In an hour's time they had cut out their shapes and clipped them to the white paper. The following week, students were told to glue down only the background pieces. Time was given to arrange and rearrange the cut-out pieces. Then they were to glue down the pieces and the results were wonderful!

### **STAINED GLASS DESIGNS**

**Materials:**

- white drawing paper
- pencils
- colored tissue papers
- watered down glue
- sponge or fat brushes
- left-over laminating paper or thick plastic paper
- black markers
- newspaper to cover work surfaces
- 

**Procedure:** Students sketch out a design for a "stained glass window" on a piece of white paper (simple designs work best!). Lay the sketch under the piece of plastic and trace over the design lines with black marker on the plastic.

Students then cut or tear tissue paper to generally fit in the area desired (a little overlap is ok as with the glue they can scrunch it to fit within the lines). Glue the tissue to the area using watered down glue and fat brushes, it works best to spread a layer of glue on the plastic first then lay the tissue on (filling in any gaps with more tissue), and "paint"

over the top of the tissue with more glue. Continue until the picture is complete. Let dry. Repeat with additional layers of watered down glue as desired.

The finished piece can be attached to the classroom window where light can shine through. (Sometimes the plastic can be gently removed after it is fully dried, check and see what works best for your class)

### **THE NAME GAME** *(crb 1/01)*

#### **Materials:**

- 8 ½ x 11" piece of white paper (that can be seen through when held before a light or window)
- colored construction paper
- black markers
- pencils
- glue
- scissors

**Procedure:** Fold the white paper in half, hot dog style. With the fold on the bottom, write your name in large letters so that it fits across the paper (in cursive, plan so that hanging letters like “y” or “g” sit on top of the fold). Then, holding the paper to the light, trace through so your name appears the same way on the reverse side:

Go over your name with the black marker, then using scissors, cut around your name using as much detail as possible. Hold your name up and notice it’s unusual design. You can either place the white paper with your name on a larger piece of construction paper or trace around it again on colored paper to create a unique cut-out featuring YOU. Add other colored paper as details around your name.

**DRAMA:** (Adapted from lesson on Matisse by: **Michelle Peacock, Mohave Middle School, Scottsdale, Arizona**)

**Prepare:** Show Matisse lesson and discuss the story of his life with students.

**Setting:** Create a stage set with a home setting including a bed (teacher's desk?)

**Actors:** *Henri Matisse, his mother and father*

*Playact a "French accent," emphasizing how to pronounce Henri Matisse' name (In the country he was born, you would say it: Aanray Matisse, what country was Aanray born in? everyone say 'Aanray Matisse.'")*

*Discuss Matisse being in bed sick: what did he not have (cell phone, computers, and computer games, color T.V., IPod – how boring was that?)*

*(Mama enters holding a cloth bag with items inside) "My poor Henri, what shall I do, he is so sick."*

*(Mom opens bag and takes out a box of paints and a couple prints, gives it to Henri:) "Here Henri a box of paints for you."*

Henri: **"Thanks mama (ah mothers, I want to be a lawyer)"**

Henri starts painting, loves to paint, and discovers: **Ah this is what I want to do, I want to become an artist.**

Henri gets better.

Dad enters the room.

Henri: **Dad I've decided to become an artist**

Dad: **Henri, you are crazy, what are you thinking, artists don't make money, you will starve!**

Henri: **Dad, I'm going to be an artist, au revoir**

Narrator 1: **Henri Matisse moved to Paris and studied to become an artist. His paintings were full of wild and unusual colors. People did not like them and would not buy them.**

Narrator 2: **Later in life, Henri Matisse became unable to paint anymore. He began creating colorful paintings made from painted paper glued on to canvas. He became famous for "Drawing with scissors."**

*Discuss* the history of Henri Matisse, emphasize his being bed ridden, drawing on the ceiling with charcoal at the end of a stick, having apprentices who pay him, cut and glue his designs.

**Fast forward to the future, guess what, Henri is sick once again, and once again he is lying in bed bored out of his mind, he has stomach cancer, he has assistants who pay him to learn from him, what is he to do?**

**He is looking at the ceiling and guess what? Yes, he sees it as a place to work. He gets his assistants to bring a long stick, a piece of charcoal, tape, and he begins to draw on the ceiling (mime drawing on ceiling with stick).**

**Then he decides to cut paper with scissors. He gets his assistants to paint huge sheets of papers all different colors, he tells them what shapes to cut out, and where to place them.**

He signs his name on all the artwork. The assistants are never acknowledged.

*Demonstrate* drawing with scissors: what letter shall I cut out? (Students call out letters, vote.) Example: "K" cut out K without preliminary drawing, describe cutting process. Emphasize no use of pencil, create letter into funky type animal/gargoyle creature with hair... kids like to guess what it could be turning into. Point to negative space. (Note cut any letter - be inventive with font).



We learned about **Henri Matisse** in Art Heritage.

Matisse was a French artist who lived from 1869 to 1954. He created "paintings" using cut out paper designs.

**How to Spot a Matisse:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

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**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_