

# "STRING FAMILY" COLLAGE

CREATE A TEXTURAL COLLAGE FROM DRAWINGS, SHEET MUSIC, & MORE  
ART AND MUSIC

GRADES: 6-8

## BASED ON



Joseph Rodefer DeCamp  
(American, b.1858, d.1923), painter  
*The Cellist*, 1908  
oil on canvas  
John J. Emery Fund 1924.476



Juan Gris  
(Spanish, b.1887, d.1927), painter  
*Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*,  
1914  
oil on paper collage on canvas  
Bequest of Mary E. Johnston 1967.11

## OBJECTIVES

- Students will participate in a discussion about the four members of the violin family as they view images from the CAM Collection.
- Students will use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast Joseph Rodefer DeCamp's *The Cellist*, 1908 and Juan Gris's *Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*.
- Students will combine their sketches of stringed instruments with sheet music, student-made textured papers, strings and other objects to create a mixed media music collage.

## CONCEPT

After learning about the string instruments of an orchestra, students will create a "stringed instrument" collage in the Synthetic Cubist style of Juan Gris's *Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*.

## MATERIALS

Stringed instruments for observational drawings OR  
 Images of stringed instruments  
 Pieces of sheet music  
 Heavy paper or canvas boards  
 Oil pastels  
 Watercolors  
 Acrylic paints  
 Elmer's Glue or Tacky Glue  
 Tracing paper  
 Textured objects- ribbons, buttons, string, etc.

## VOCABULARY

**Timbre**- the distinct voice of an instrument or tone color.

**Realism**- art that represents an object, person or scene accurately or true to life.

**Still life**- art that represents an arrangement of everyday objects, such as bottles, flowers, bowls of fruit, etc.

**Abstract**- art that does not attempt to represent an accurate depiction- focuses on line, shape, color and form.

**Synthetic Cubism**- an art movement from about 1912-1914 that shows objects from more than one viewpoint, simplifies art into geometric shapes and planes and uses collage.

**Collage**- from the French word "coller" meaning "to glue"- an art technique of assembling different types of art to create a finished piece.

**Texture**- refers to the surface quality of an object. Real or actual texture feels as it appears, such as smooth, rough or silky. Implied or simulated texture is created to appear like a texture but is not.

## PROCEDURE

- The teacher will guide a discussion about string instruments using the following questions:
  - "Does anyone play on a sports team?" "What position do you play?" "How many years have you practiced your sport?"
  - "Does anyone play an instrument? "What instrument(s) do you play?" "How long did it take to become good at playing your instrument?" *The teacher will emphasize that it takes a great deal of time and practice to become accomplished at playing a sport, an instrument or becoming a great artist.*
- Tell students, "In this lesson, we will make connections between music and art. We will start by learning about the largest family of the orchestra, the strings. They consist of four sizes, the violin (smallest), viola (slightly larger), cello (bigger) and double bass or contrabass (biggest). "
- Show images of these instruments using images from the CAM collection.
- Ask, "What similarities do you notice between the instruments?" *They are all shaped alike with wooden necks and curved wooden bodies. They all have strings which stretch over a bridge and then attach to a decorative scrolled head. The small pegs on the head adjust the tune of the strings.*

5. Tell the class that, "The part of the instrument that actually makes the sound is the strings. Stringed instruments can be plucked by the musician's fingers or played by drawing a bow across them. The bows are made of nylon, steel, horsehair or even gut."

6. Ask, "Which of the four stringed instruments do you think would make the lowest pitch?" *The large double bass makes the lowest pitch because it has the largest hollow space in which to vibrate the sound coming from vibrating strings.* Play clips of each instrument so students can distinguish their timbre. (Vienna Symphonic Library-see resources)

7. Group students in pairs or small groups. Using a Venn diagram, ask students to compare and contrast the mood, types of lines, shapes, colors, textures and objects of Joseph Rodefer DeCamp's *The Cellist*, 1908 and Juan Gris's *Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*. Have students share their group results with the class.

8. The teacher will use additional information to help students distinguish between DeCamp's realistic painting of the woman playing a cello from the abstracted version of a still life with violin by Juan Gris.

- a) Cincinnati artist, Joseph Rodefer DeCamp studied at the McMicken School of Design and then enrolled at the Royal Academy in Munich in 1878. He worked under well-known Covington, Kentucky figure and portrait painter, Frank Duveneck in the Bavarian village of Polling and also studied old master paintings in Venice and Florence. When DeCamp returned to America, he became a respected instructor in art academies in Cleveland and Boston, where he eventually settled.
- b) Joseph Rodefer DeCamp's 1908 painting, *The Cellist*, is believed to be one of his favorites because he exhibited it in sixteen exhibitions between 1908-1916 and still owned it at his death in 1923. *The Cellist* conveys a true-to-life image of a seated woman playing a cello, with a background of subdued lighting, providing a hazy atmosphere. The artist uses a classic painting technique called chiaroscuro to contrast a dark palette of browns found on the cello and the background with the intense light source shining on the female cellist. (FYI- *chiaroscuro* is also a musical term used in opera to denote contrast between a brilliant "squillo" sound and a dark timbre called *scuro*.) In *The Cellist*, the artist's brushstrokes are evident providing a sense of texture on the wall. Part of an empty chair is shown on the left side of the painting. Ask students: What type of music do you think the cellist is playing? Do you think she is practicing a difficult passage or performing a recital for others in the drawing room?
- c) Juan Gris was born José Victoriano Carmelo Carlos González-Pérez in Madrid, Spain in 1887. He began his career as an illustrator but after moving to Paris, he began to paint in the style of the Cubists Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. Gris's *Homage to Picasso* is an example of Analytic Cubism, which focused on linear grids and sharp angles. Gris then began to move into his Synthetic Cubist period with still life and portrait paintings of brighter colors and added collaged materials, such as newsprint, advertisements and wood.
- d) In Gris's *Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*, the artist created a well-balanced composition using the horizontal lines of sheet music, repeated shape of a violin and actual and implied wood textures. A large wine bottle creates a vertical line that connects the upper right portion of the piece to the wooden table on which it rests. Gris shuffles planes between the curved objects of the still life, triangular spaces created by overlapping shapes and the contours emphasized in black. The artist's use of harmonious colors of blue, green, pink,

yellow and orange may have been inspired by the palette of his friend, painter Henri Matisse.

9. After your students understand how the Synthetic Cubists created collages they will begin to create or gather items for their own instrumental collage.

10. If possible, bring a variety of old stringed instruments into the classroom, so students can observe and sketch parts of the instruments. If actual instruments are unavailable, have students use digital media to find images of stringed instruments to draw in their sketchbooks. Have them sketch several close-ups of the instrument, including the neck, pegs, bridge, curved body, strings and textural elements.

11. Next, have students create several textural pages in their sketchbooks or on additional paper. They can mimic the look of real wood or create several full sheets of unique painted or stamped textural sheets.

12. Students can use tracing paper to retrace the main shapes of the instruments they drew. They can also retrace the main shapes of the instrument onto the textural sheets they created. Have them carefully cut out the shapes and then save the remaining textured paper.

13. Ask the music educators in your district for old or damaged sheet music. The teacher or student can also print copyright free sheet music to use in the composition. The sheets can be cut into shapes mimicking parts of the instrument or basic geometric shapes such as triangles, rectangles or ovals. Color can be added to the paper with colored pencils or a watercolor wash.

14. Once the students have a variety of pieces to incorporate into a design, have them arrange the shapes on the heavy paper or canvas board. Ask them to experiment with the placement of the shapes to decide if they need to make additional pieces. They can also divide the canvas into sections by tracing the instrument parts again or drawing crossing vertical and diagonal lines with charcoal.

15. When an interesting composition begins to emerge, students can carefully glue one piece on at a time. Some pieces of the design should overlap others. Some areas should be left blank so they can be painted with acrylic or colored with oil pastels.

16. The final music collage will have 5 requirements. (see assessment)

## ASSESSMENT

Students will participate in a class discussion about string family instruments. They will work with a group to compare and contrast Joseph Rodefer DeCamp's *The Cellist*, 1908 and Juan Gris's *Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*. Students will create a collage that meets the criteria of the assignment- contains 1) sheet music, actual, printed and/or painted 2) a fragmented pencil drawing or painted image of a stringed instrument, which has been repeated several times 3) two student-made textures (rubbing, drawn or painted by the student) 4) a real textural object (string, wood, etc.) and 5) a minimum of eight divided sections or planes. Students will also write an artist statement about their completed music collage.

## NATIONAL STANDARDS

### Visual Arts

#### Standard 1

Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes related to the visual arts.

Level III (Grade 5-8)

#### Benchmark 1

Understands what makes different art media, techniques, and processes effective (or ineffective) in communicating various ideas.

Standard 4 Understands the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Level III (Grade 5-8)

Benchmark 2 Understands the historical and cultural contexts of a variety of art objects.

### Music

#### Standard 7

Understands the relationship between music and history and culture.

Level III (Grade 6-8)

#### Benchmark 1

Understands distinguishing characteristics (e.g. relating to instrumentation, texture, rhythmic qualities, melodic lines, form) of representative music genres and styles from a variety of cultures.

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

### Music

Have students listen to the world's renowned cellists, such as Yo Yo Ma, Pablo Casals and Jacqueline Mary du Pré.

In Juan Gris's *Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet*, the sheet music he painted shows two treble clefs. With your class, talk about the 3 clef signs used in modern music notation: treble, bass and moveable C clefs, which include the alto for the viola and tenor for cello.

The great jazz musician and composer, Charles Mingus, is pictured in Lee Friedlander's 1959 photograph in the CAM collection. Have students listen to the jazz music of this double bassist.

Much of western music has texture that is called homophonic, with a melody that stands out and a background of harmonic accompaniment. Discuss the textures of music, including monophonic, biphonic, homophonic, and more.

For a light-hearted, modern connection, have students watch the video *Cello Wars (Star Wars Parody) Lightsaber Duel by the Piano Guys*.

### Language Arts

Students can read, "*The Amati Viola: a Cincinnati Art Museum Treasure*" by Jennifer Lyn to learn about the history of the rare viola in the museum's collection. (see resources)

Younger students can read *A Cello Named Pablo: How Amit Peled Came to Play Pablo Casals' Favorite Cello* or listen online to the story and music on Classic Kids Storytime.

Middle to high school students can read Kathryn Lasky's *Broken Song*, written about her grandfather, gifted violinist Reuven Bloom. In 1897, at the age of fifteen, Reuven fled the cossacks who murdered his family members and friends. He then traveled across Russia to Poland and eventually reached America where he became a symphonic violinist.

#### Science

Galileo discovered the relationship of the number of vibrations per unit time to pitch. Explore the science and history of stringed instruments with your students (see resources).

#### RESOURCES

The Amati Viola: a Cincinnati Art Museum Treasure

<https://www.jennifer-lyn.com/2014/09/30/amati-viola-cincinnati-art-museum-treasure/>

Bloomington School of Music-Instrument Discovery

<http://www.bsmny.org/exploring-music/features/instrument-discovery/index.php>

Cello Lessons for Beginners <http://www.cello.org/heaven/lessons.htm>

Cello Facts <https://www.johnsonstring.com/cellos-facts/>

Cello Wars (Star Wars Parody) Lightsaber Duel - The Piano Guys

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgAlQuqzl8o>

Classical Kids Storytime: A Cello Named Pablo

<https://www.classicalmpr.org/story/2018/12/28/classical-kids-storytime-a-cello-named-pablo>

Free Handouts and pdf Files for String Teachers & Students

<http://beststudentviolins.com/library.html#handouts>

Joseph Rodefer DeCamp

[https://rogallery.com/DeCamp\\_Joseph-Rodefer/DeCamp-bio.htm](https://rogallery.com/DeCamp_Joseph-Rodefer/DeCamp-bio.htm)

Juan Gris by James Thrall Soby- online book about the artist

[https://www.moma.org/documents/moma\\_catalogue\\_1887\\_300062180.pdf](https://www.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_1887_300062180.pdf)

Juan Gris Bio <https://www.theartstory.org/artist-gris-juan.htm>

List of Children's Fiction- Stringed Instruments- K-8 <https://suzukiassociation.org/discuss/5585/>

Parts of a Cello <https://www.theinstrumentplace.com/parts-of-the-cello/>

The Science of Stringed Instruments

<https://logosfoundation.org/kursus/The%20Science%20of%20String%20Instruments.pdf>

String family <https://www.orsymphony.org/learning-community/instruments/strings/>

Vienna Symphonic Library <https://www.vsl.co.at/en/Instrumentology/Strings>



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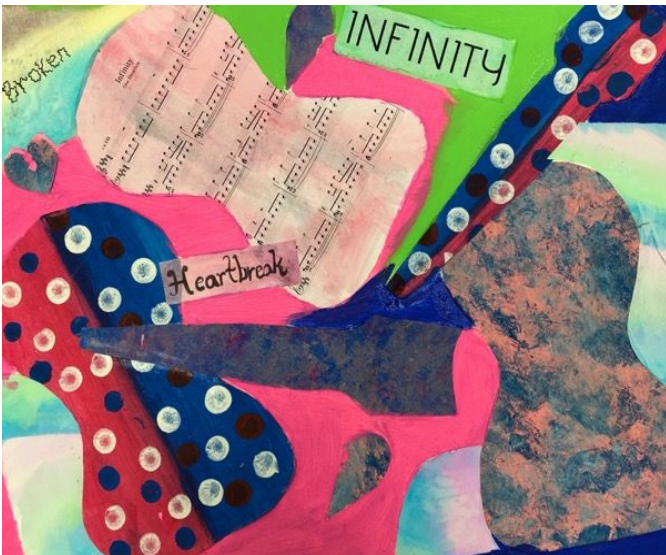


Antonio Amati (Italian, b.Circa 1540), maker & Girolamo Amati (Italian, b.1561, d.1630), maker  
Viola, 1619  
maple, spruce, other woods, ebony, brass;  
chin rest: ebony and nickel  
Gift of Mrs. Peter Gibson 1911.1911



Lee Friedlander (American, b.1934),  
photographer  
Charles Mingus, 1959  
Iris print  
Museum Purchase with funds provided  
by  
Carl Jacobs 2006.18

EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK





*Still Life with Violin and Music Sheet,*  
1914  
oil on paper  
collage on  
canvas  
Juan Gris  
(Spanish, b. 1887,  
d. 1927), painter  
Bequest of Mary  
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*The Cellist,*  
1908  
oil on canvas  
Joseph Rodéfer  
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BOTH

Group # \_\_\_\_\_

cincinnati  art museum