

Gordonn Solomon, Harold's Picky Head Boy, 2010.

Inspiration Artist: Gordon Solomon

Age Range: Secondary +

Subject Areas: Art, Mathematics (geometry)

CUBISM AND GEOMETRY







In this Packet

This lesson inspired by the work of Caymanian artist Gordon Solomon teaches students about basic concepts of geometry and how they are used in the modern art discipline of Cubism.

In a follow-up art activity, students will create their own Cubism-style self portrait using geometrical shapes.

*This lesson is best achieved with the guidance of a parent or guardian

Lesson Vocabulary

Angle: The space between two lines at the point where they meet.

Cubism: A style of modern art known for the breaking up and putting back together of objects and shapes.

Composition: The way a mixture of different parts comes together into a whole.

Three-dimensional: Not flat. Having length, breadth and depth.

Geometry: A type of mathematics that looks at lines, shapes, angles and dimensions.

Line: A long extending mark, straight or curved.

Subject: The person, object or thing that is being discussed.

Symmetry: Exact parts facing each other around a central point.

What is Geometry?

Geometry is a type of mathematics that looks at lines, shapes, angles and dimensions.

Here are some simple geometrical shapes and concepts that you may already know:







Circle: A round figure where all the sides are the same distance away from the centre point. **Square:** Four connected straight lines that are all the same length, with four right angles of the

Triangle: A figure with three straight sides and three angles.

same size.



Angle: The space between two lines at the point where they meet.



Three-dimensional: Not flat. Having length, breadth and depth.

What is Cubism?

Cubism is a style of art that is best known through the work of famous artists <u>Pablo Picasso</u> and <u>Georges Braque</u>. In 1907, these two artists created a revolutionary art form that changed everyday objects into geometric shapes. It was a whole new way of looking at what they were painting! They would break their subject up into many different shapes (sometimes physically and sometimes just with their imagination), then paint it from different angles. Before this, the popular way of painting was called 'realism'. In 'Realism' the subject of the artwork was painted exactly as it appeared in real life.

There were two main types of Cubism:

Analytical Cubism - The first stage of the Cubism movement was called Analytical Cubism. In this style, artists would study (or analyze) the subject and break it up into different blocks. They would look at the blocks from different angles. Then, they would put the subject back together by painting it from different angles and viewpoints.

Synthetic Cubism - In this stage of Cubism, other materials were added into a collage. Artists could use coloured paper, newspapers, and other materials to represent the different part of the subject.

How is Geometry Used in Cubism?

In Cubism, objects are taken apart into geometrical shapes, analysed and then put back together — but not always in their original order or size!

Cubism is known for making complicated, threedimensional objects appear to be flat. This style of art also often ignores 'symmetry". Symmetry means that one shape is exactly like another when you move it in some way: turn, flip or slide. For two objects to be symmetrical, they must be the same size and shape. There can also be symmetry within in one object, such as a face.

Cubism uses imagination to play with shapes, angles and dimensions in order to think about objects in a new and interesting way.



Local Cubism Art

In Harold's Picky Head Boy, Caymanian artist **Gordon Solomon** uses a brightly coloured geometric composition to make it seem as if his subject is popping up and off of the canvas. In this semi-autobiographical work, the artist claims the title of 'Picky Head' and in doing so overturns the derogatory nature of the term through a positive and confident visual language. He has used many different shapes in different sizes and colours to reimagine the landscape. He has used both flat and three-dimensional shapes in different sizes and groups to create many ways of looking at and understanding the painting.



International Spotlight

Check out these international Cubism artists who have created artwork using geometry.

Pablo Picasso

Pablo Picasso is well-known as one of the original creators of Cubism. His Cubism paintings are some of the most famous in this style. Take a look at his portrait, such as *The Weeping Woman* (1937) and *Girl Before a Mirror* (1932).

Learn more at: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/pablo-picasso-1767

Georges Braque

George Braque was a 20th-century French painter, printmaker

and sculptor . With Pablo Picasso, he developed Cubism. Some of his most famous Cubism paintings include Violin and Candlestick (1910) and Bottle and Fishes (c. 1910-1912.

Learn more at:

https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/georges-braque-803



Art Activity

Materials:

- Drawing paper (regular printer paper also works fine)
- Crayons, coloured pencils or markers
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue stick
- Mirror (or photograph of yourself)
- Textured materials such as felt or fabric (optional)

Using a mirror or a photograph of yourself, draw a picture of your own face. Colour in your picture - don't be afraid to choose bold and bright colours! Cut your finished picture up into different shapes of different sizes. As you cut, can you name what shapes you are creating? Now, put the picture back together in a new way. You can organise your shapes into a composition you like first before gluing them down.

*Older students can try this exercise using textured or 3D materials like felt, old fabric, magazine clippings, buttons or old book pages.

Follow-up Questions

- Look around your house. What different shapes do you see? Are there any objects that are made up of many shapes?
- What shapes do you see in Gordon Solomon's painting?
- Why do you think Gordon Solomon used Cubism to do his painting?
- Do you think Cubism can help you to look at everyday objects in new ways?
- What shapes, angles or dimensions did you use in your portrait?
- Did you find it difficult to put your portrait back together in a new way? Why or why not?