

Composition by Jackson Pollock

Print Facts

- Medium: Oil on canvas
- Date: 1934-1938
- Size: 28 ½ x 22 ½ inches
- Location: Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland
- Period:
- Style:
- Genre: Abstract Expressionism
- This painting was accomplished by dribbling, splattering and dripping paint onto a horizontal canvas placed on the floor.
- He used brushes and sticks that did not touch the canvas (see below for a teaching idea on this method)

Artist Facts

- Born January 1912 Cody, Wyoming, Died August 1956, New York
- He married Lee Krasner, a fellow artist
- Pollock had a volatile personality and struggled with alcoholism. He died in a car accident due to alcohol.
- Pollock used sticks, trowels, knives and paint cans with holes in the bottom to apply paint to the surfaces of his paintings.
- On some of his paintings you can actually see footprints where he stepped on the painting.
- Pollock was fascinated by early American cultures and used the Navajo sand painters as his inspiration. They created artwork by allowing sand to flow from their hands onto a surface.
- He was more concerned with expressing emotion than making things look real.
- Pollock was expelled from two different high schools and ended up attending the Art Students League of New York with his brother.
- At one point in his career, Pollock stopped naming his paintings and gave them numbers instead.
- "On the floor I am more at ease, I feel nearer, more a part of the painting, since this way I can walk around in it, work from the four sides and be literally in the painting." – Jackson Pollock, 1947.

Key Element of Design to Teach

- **Color** is a reflection of light. Color may be described in many ways. Primary colors are red, yellow and blue. Secondary colors are orange, green and violet. Tertiary colors are red-violet, blue-violet, blue-green, yellow-green, yellow-orange, and red-orange. Color can be described as being warm (in the red-yellow range) or cool (in the blue-green range). There are also various color schemes that the artist may use to emphasize certain parts of their work.

Possible Questions and Suggestions to Teach Color

- What colors do you see in this painting?
- Do you see warm colors? Cool colors?
- What colors do you see the most?
- What are the primary colors? (Use the color wheel to help teach students.)
- Can you see primary colors in this painting? Where?
- What are the secondary colors? Tertiary colors?

Keywords

- Primary colors, secondary colors, color wheel, abstract art, line, shape, contrast

Other Possible Questions

- What lines do you see in this painting? Are they straight or curvy? Thick or thin?
- Do you think the artist thought about where to put the lines and colors or do you think he just threw the paint on?
- Would you say this painting is peaceful or chaotic/crazy/busy?
- Does this artwork seem organized or messy?
- Does this painting look like anything to you?
- How do you think the artist created this painting? Do you think he used a paintbrush? Do you see brush strokes?
- Where do you see that the artist dripped paint?
- Where do you see that the artist splattered paint?
- Do you think it would be fun to paint like this? You may want to demonstrate how the artist painted using paper and a paintbrush wet with water.
- Is your eye drawn to one part of the painting or does it move all over the surface?