

Bearden, Collage and Community

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Introduction

Personal

I was born and raised in Cleveland, OH. For those who are familiar with Cleveland, I was born in Willoughby and then moved to Eastlake when I was young. Those are both suburbs on the Cleveland's east side. Then my family took the big step and moved to Lakewood, a suburb that borders Cleveland to the west. Again, for those Clevelanders out there, they know that it is not an everyday occurrence for families to move from the Eastside to the Westside or visa versa. I lived in Lakewood until my third year in college at Cleveland State University when I moved downtown within walking distance to school. This is where I obtained my B.A. in Art and my K-12 teaching license in art. I then lived in Tremont, an artsy area of Cleveland until I migrated south down I-77 to Charlotte. This is where I currently reside.

I completed all my field experience and student teaching in Cleveland and Westlake, a suburb where I worked in the school system at Link, a before/after school program and as a substitute teacher. There I was lucky enough to receive a job as a long term art sub teaching fifth and sixth grades for approximately a half of a year. I consider this to be my first real experience as a teacher. With teaching jobs being hard to find in Cleveland, I applied to jobs in both Charlotte, NC and Las Vegas, NV. I was really surprised to find out that I was offered jobs in both cities in the same week! I choose Charlotte, even though I had never even been there. I taught art in a high school for three years until I was displaced, or transferred, due to the school disbanding and ceasing to be a traditional school and instead being divided into five smaller independently run schools. I was then assigned to Lansdowne Elementary School where I am now working on my fifth year there teaching grades kindergarten through fifth.

My School District

I work for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. It is located in the city of Charlotte, NC and surrounding towns that make up Mecklenburg County. It is a very diverse school district with 178 schools. Numbers from Child Nutrition Services from October, 2010 show that there were a total of 138,619 students with a total of 53.41% of them qualify for free or reduced lunch.

My School

I teach art at Lansdowne Elementary International Baccalaureate World School. It is a K-5 school that is located in suburban south-east Charlotte. The 2009-2010 NC School Report Cards show our population, at that time, having 553 students. This is less than the districts average size of 636 students, but more than the states average of 497 students with similar grade ranges. We are a School of Distinction, meaning that at least 80% of students are at grade level. There are 39 classroom teachers of which 100% are fully licensed. 97% of the classes are taught by highly qualified teachers. 33% of the teachers have advanced degrees and six are Nationally Board certified.

Rationale

I decided to create this unit on Romare Bearden for several reasons. One is that I wanted to learn more about him as an artist and an icon of Charlotte, NC, as well as a person, so that I can share the information of which I learned with my students. I wanted to find out exactly who Bearden was and how he impacted and continues to impact his hometown of Charlotte. This coincides with my second reason which is the importance of your community in which you live, or grew up in. I want students to realize what a community is and how it can shape you. My third reason is that I wanted to expand my basic knowledge of collage to better serve my students as their art leader. If I am going to teach them about Romare Bearden and his collages and emulate them, I must be ready to give them the proper information on how to effectively create a collage.

Who is Romare Bearden?

Spending my first 30 years of my life in Cleveland, OH, I was not real familiar with Romare Bearden. Sure I had heard his name in college along with the hundreds of other artists whose names passed through my ears, but never had studied him. After moving to Charlotte, NC in 2004, I have heard or seen his name in various places. This curiosity of who he was is what led me to a trip to the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, NC. This is where I learned that Bearden primarily dealt with collage as his main form of art. It was at the Mint Museum where I saw some of his artwork in person, for the first time. I started to learn about how he impacted the art world and here locally in Charlotte.

What is a community? How does it shape you?

When growing up in any town, city or area, people always learn about influential or important people who live or originated from there. This helps shape not only the city's identity, but also an individuals. It becomes part of a person as they grow up and live there. They gain more knowledge of that that famous person or icon as they become

more familiar with him or her, simply because they are more exposed to that person. Many times an individual takes a certain pride or ownership of that person because that person was born or lived in right where they did. There is a connection. In Cleveland I grew up hearing the names John Glenn, Thomas Edison, Alan Freed, Elliot Ness, Drew Carey and LeBron James. They are some of the people who helped shaped Cleveland and its legacy for their contributions to the city and beyond. John Glenn was an astronaut and was the first American to orbit the earth. NASA's Glenn Research Center is in Cleveland and bears his name. Thomas Edison had many inventions such as the light bulb and the photograph. Many of Edison's patents and inventions can be found in the National Inventors Hall of Fame in nearby Akron, OH. Alan Freed was a disc jockey who coined the term "Rock and Roll". This helped Cleveland land the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Elliot Ness was one of the "untouchables" who helped bring down the mobster Al Capone. Elliot Ness is immortalized on a bottle beer from the local Great Lakes Brewing Company know as "Elliot Ness Amber Lager". Drew Carey is a comedian who helped give Cleveland more exposure by starring on his own show "The Drew Carey Show" which was based on blue collar living in Cleveland. Drew Carey directly affected me as I met him after the NBA all-star game and then again as he spoke at my graduation from Cleveland State University. LeBron James grew up in nearby Akron, OH and was the star of the National Basketball Association's Cleveland Cavaliers until leaving as a free agent in the summer of 2010 to join the Miami Heat. The self titled "King of Akron" was a fan favorite who turned public enemy quickly when he held a one hour special on ESPN named "the decision" stating that he was leaving Cleveland and "taking his talents to South Beach". Cleveland cheered as James and the Miami Heat lost in the 2011 NBA finals to the Dallas Mavericks.

What is a collage?

Collage has not been one of my strong points as an artist. In college, I did only a few collages in an introduction to art class. It's not that I did not like it; I just found that I enjoyed working with other mediums better. Since I have not done much collage, I felt insecure about this aspect as an art teacher. I have since made myself more familiar with the process of collage and have asked fellow art teachers for help when I needed it. I know art is about constantly learning and experimenting but sometimes one's pride gets in the way. This is something I can share with my students. I can tell them that I got help from a fellow art teacher on learning more about collage. Studying Romare Bearden has given me a deeper appreciation of the style of collage. Writing this unit has instilled the confidence in me to push myself to learn more about collages.

Content Objectives

The overarching art educational goal is that they are gaining an awareness and understanding of the life and art of Romare Bearden, collage and their own communities

culminating with creating a collage. The three reasons for creating this unit listed above in the Rationale are three main objectives in which the unit seeks to achieve along with the art they will create. Goal one: To teach the students an understanding of whom Romare Bearden was. Goal two: To help foster the students understanding of what a community is. Goal three: To educate the students what a collage is. Goal four: Create a collage based on their own community.

Goal One: Who is Romare Bearden?

His Background

Romare Bearden was an American Artist during the 20th century. He was born in Charlotte, NC on September 2, 1911, to the parents of Howard and Besseye Bearden. His family had “middle class trappings: literacy, good jobs, a large Victorian home with a wraparound porch, and a small business”.¹ He lived on South Graham Street, across which would now be the Bank of American Stadium, the home of the National Football League’s Carolina Panthers. In 1914, his family moved to New York, NY as part of the great migration. Perhaps the final push came when “a white mob in Charlotte tried to take him away from his father. Darker-skinned Howard Bearden had taken his light-complexioned child-with curly blond hair and green eyes- just a few blocks away from their grocery store in downtown Charlotte. White men surrounded them, and asserted that the “black” father had kidnapped the “white” child.”² Bearden spent his primary and high school years in New York, Canada and Pittsburgh, PA. He attended first grade in Harlem, but then moved to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada for second and third grade. Moving back to the United States in 1920, he lived with Bessye’s grandmother in Pittsburgh to enroll in school for fourth grade while his parents move back to Harlem.³ He started high school in New York, but then would move to Pittsburgh. In 1929, he graduated from Peabody High School in Pittsburgh. He graduated New York University in 1935 with a degree in Education.

He became a social worker as “a caseworker in the New York City Department of Social Services in 1935, a job he kept for almost two decades. He worked with Gypsies by day and painted at night and on the weekends”.⁴ In 1940, he held his first solo exhibition in New York. He served in the United States Army from 1942-1945 during World War II. While in the Army he was assigned to guard the subways from sabotage in Harlem. He later he would be honorably discharged. After the Army, he used the money from his G.I. Bill education grant and went to study art in Paris, France at the Sorbonne.⁵ In 1954 he married Nanette Rohan who was a dancer. In 1956 he and Nanette would move into a loft in Manhattan, NY where he would live for the rest of his life. Later in the early 1970’s they acquired a second home in the Caribbean on the island of St. Martin. This became a subject for his later work consisting of collages and watercolor painting. He continued his artwork until his death in 1988 at age 76.

His Art

Bearden brought many different media, styles and themes to his artwork. While in school at NYU, he was a cartoonist for the university journals. He studied under George Grosz from 1933-1935 at New York's Art Students League. Grosz helped Bearden develop in a couple of key ways. "First, he taught Bearden techniques of draftsmanship that they young artist use to draw cartoons and later to plot collages" and "Second, he conveyed the excitement of three decades of European modernism by relating his American students' artistic inclinations to the new European movements. By the 1940's, Bearden's own work incorporated Fauvism, Cubism, and the photomontage of Dadaism."⁶ He also painted with oils, watercolors and gouaches as well as continuing to draw. He then concentrated on a combination of collage work and painting. It was by the 1960's that Bearden predominately focused on collage work. Later in his life, in the Caribbean, he spent time with watercolors to help capture the lush scenery of St. Maartin. Although he had used many styles and types of art to work with in his life, he is most associated with collage.

There were many different styles in which Bearden incorporated into his work. Although Bearden did not have a degree in art, it does not mean that he did not study it. He studied and admired European masters, African sculpture and cubist artworks. Evidence of these artworks can be seen throughout his work. Soon after he moved to New York, the Harlem Renaissance started. This was a cultural movement that spanned the 1920's and into the 1930's. It began with the Great Migration, an influx of blacks to northern cities escaping the south and the Jim Crow Laws seeking better treatment and better jobs. They came here for better civil rights and equal opportunity. "The Harlem Renaissance, which began in the twenties, sought to address these issues. A group of prominent African-American artists, musicians, and writers encourage one another and younger generations to create from their own experience. Romare Bearden was one of these leaders."⁷ It had started a social shift. Bearden most definitely created from his own experiences, whether it was his time in Charlotte, Pittsburgh or New York City. Bearden's "focus remained on the African-American experience. He kept a list of key events from his life on the wall of his studio."⁸ Bearden would recall places and things that happened and combine them with new or unrelated ideas and make them work in his artwork. He studied and emulated the style of certain European artists, but put the life of the black people as the content, whether it was an African or an African-American or a mix between both. He often used the places that he spent time in and remembered as his backdrop. His stories about what he saw and his life and community will be good examples to show the students how their project might look like.

Other Achievements

Romare Bearden was an extraordinary artist, but he was accomplished in other areas aside from creating visual art. He was a leader in not only the community of where he

lived, but also in his community of artists. In 1964, “Bearden was appointed the first art director of the newly established Harlem Cultural Council, a prominent African – American advisory group”.⁹ Bearden was also a writer and poet. Some of his numerous publications include: *Li'l Dan, the Drummer Boy: A Civil War Story* (a children’s book published posthumously in 2003), *A History of African-American Artists: From 1792 to the Present* (coauthored with Harry Henderson and published posthumously in 1993), *The Caribbean Poetry of Derek Walcott and the Art of Romare Bearden* (1983), *Six Black Masters of American Art*, coauthored with Harry Henderson (1972) and *The Painter’s Mind: A Study of the Relations of Structure and Space in Painting*, coauthored with Carl Holty (1969).¹⁰ He also published a number of songs. One of them, *Seabreeze*, became a hit in the 1950’s.¹¹ Romare was also a member of the board of the New York State Council of the Arts when he died in 1988

Goal Two: What is a community?

A community can be defined in different ways. It can be your family and friends, your neighborhood, your town or city or even your state. The New Oxford Dictionary of English defines community as

- 1 a group of people living together in one place, especially one practising common ownership: *a community of nuns*.
- 2 [usu. with modifier] a group of people having a religion, race, profession, or other particular characteristic in common: *Bangkok’s Chinese community* | *the scientific community*
- 3 [mass noun] the condition of sharing or having certain attitudes and interests in common: *the sense of community that organized religion can provide*.
- 4 Ecology a group of interdependent plants or animals growing or living together in natural conditions or occupying a specific habitat: *communities of insectivorous birds*.¹²

The children’s book *Community Space- How Land and Weather Shape Communities* defines community as follows: “A community is a space where people live and work together. A community can be a school, a city, a town, or even a neighborhood”.¹³ The student will be able to pick the size or definition of community. This will be the theme for their collage.

Goal Three: What is a collage?

Collage is a form of art. The art text “Artforms” defines collage as “From the French *coller*, to glue. A work made by gluing materials such as paper scraps, photographs, and cloth on to a flat surface”.¹⁴ The children’s book *Dropping in on Romare Bearden* by Pamela Geiger Stephens lists the definition as “A composition that is made by putting together a variety of objects such as newspaper or magazine clippings or “found” objects

such as buttons, scrap cloth, or cardboard. Collages are usually flat”.¹⁵ Collages can be made just about of any sort of material and the theme can be anything. It can be completed using a couple of common materials, or a plethora of items arranged any way that can be thought of. It can be of people or objects, real or abstract. It also can be of personal memories or created ideas. One can also use the process of *Decollage*, in which the artist peels back layers of paper to show the layers underneath, leaving an interesting effect.¹⁶

Besides Romare Bearden, there are plenty of other artists who worked in collage. According to Leland and Williams, authors of *Creative Collage Techniques*, collage could be credited to Picasso:

Art historians generally attribute the first use of collage in fine art to Pablo Picasso in 1912, when he glued a piece of patterned oil cloth to a cubist still life. Next, George Braque incorporated wallpaper into his artwork. The two artists experimented with *papiers colles* as an extension of cubist principles.¹⁷

Picasso's *Still Life with Chair Caning* in 1912 is the artwork which features the oil cloth adhered to his painting that is mentioned above. Also in 1912 came Braque's *Fruit Dish and Glass*, which also could have been the first collage. Besides Picasso and Braque, Juan Gris joined the collage movement shortly after. He was friends with both Picasso and Matisse and created *The Sunblind* in 1914. Later on the French artist Henri Matisse made artwork out of cut paper. *Project for "The Strana Forandola"* (1938), *Icarus* (1943) and *Blue Nude* (1952) and are some of Matisse's well known collage works. Similar to Bearden, Matisse's collages spanned decades unlike Picasso, Braque and Gris whose working in collage lasted only a few years.

Goal Four: Creating a Collage.

The students will create their own collage based on the relationship between them and their community. This will be the culminating project as we discover the artist Romare Bearden, what community means to you and the art form collage. Here the students create the collage with various found, collected and personal items that they may use to symbolize their community.

There are different types of materials that are needed or could be used. First you need to start with a base, or a mounting surface. Materials that can be used are stretched canvas or canvas board, standard pressed board, gesso board, wood, art boards or cardboard. The heavier the mounting surface is, the less chance it will buckle. An adhesive is needed to hold your materials onto the mounting surface. Examples of adhesives that could be used are can be acrylic (emulsions, gel medium or modeling paste), white glues, adhesive aerosol cans and wallpaper pastes are the most common.

Meilach and Hoor, authors of *Collage and Assemblage- Trends and Techniques*, recommend against rubber cement and library paste as they tend to leave spots and are not permanent. Tools such as scissors or blades, brushes, water container for soaking brushes, rags or towels and any other type of items you might need may be used. There are various supplies or materials that are used in collages. These materials help make your collage unique and help tell your story as an artist. Papers are very popular and may include magazines, newsprint, art tissue paper, wall paper or anything else that can be cut and glued. If you choose to use paint in the collage, you could use acrylic, watercolor, tempera, gouaches and poster paints can be used. One could use found objects, which can be old, recycled or have some personal meaning as well. Finishes can be applied to help give the object a permanency.¹⁸

Teaching Strategies

To be sure I am reaching out to all different learning types and creating a memorable experience for the students, I will use several different teaching strategies. Some of these strategies will be repeated, some will be use concurrently with another.

Storytelling

I tell stories at different times throughout the lesson. Some of the stories will be of personal experiences. These will be stories about my community growing up. I will talk about moving to different places around town and what I remember and what the city means to me. I will also share about how I felt leaving Cleveland and what I think about it today. I will also tell some stories and read some quotes about what I have learned and discovered about Bearden. I also have a couple of Children's books that tell about Bearden's life: *Dropping in on Romare Bearden* by Pamela Geiger Stephens and *Me and Uncle Romie* by Claire Hartfield. I will also read them some poetry from the book *i live in music* by Ntozke Shange with paintings by Romare Bearden. I feel that personal stories, books and poems add a more personal touch to the learning.

Lecture

While this teaching strategy does not appear to have a personal touch, I feel some discussion or short lecture is needed. This will come at various times throughout the lesson. Some will take place when talking about collage, Bearden, other collage artists and community but I feel I can interweave this with other techniques.

Nonverbal Experience

This includes visuals and music. I have several prints of Bearden's work in large posters as well as prints that are in the books. I will bring in some of my personal collage art as

well. All this can be put around the room while they are working. I plan on playing the CD “Romare Bearden Revealed” by the Branford Marsalis Quartet as well as other jazz CD’s while they are creating their collages.

Computer Technology

The students will use the computer and the search engines “Google” or “Yahoo” to find out facts and accomplishments of someone in their community.

Homework

I rarely give homework to my elementary students, but they will have to write a paragraph on someone influential or important, in their community and bring it back by next class. If we get to a computer lab, most of it will be done (if they use their time wisely!) I can arrange time that a student can use my computer or their classroom teacher’s computer if they do not have one at home.

Oral Report

They will have to present their completed homework to the class. They will also have to give a short presentation on their finished collage to the class, describing it and giving an explanation telling why they assembled it the way they did.

Demonstration

I will give demonstrations on how to create a collage. I will need to show the students the steps of how to start and to continue to assemble a collage. They should follow closely so they will understand when it comes to their turn to start.

Independent Work

This is when they will be creating their collage. They will have to work independently so they can “gather their thoughts” and create a successful composition. Music in the background will hopefully add to make this time “independent”.

Reflection

Here they will “reflect” on the project and the rest of the unit. There will be several questions for them to answer and they will have to describe their artwork. This will help them remember the collage process and really make them think about their project. What do they like about it? What do they wish they could change about it? Why did they put certain objects in certain places? Why did they decide to go with certain colors?

Classroom Activities

Lesson One: Significant figures in your community (days one and two)

I will begin the lesson by asking the students to write their definition of community on a piece of notebook paper. I will then talk about significant figures and how they may impact the area in which people live. I will tell them about growing up in Cleveland and some of those who were significant figures in Cleveland in different ways; John Glenn, Thomas Edison, Alan Freed, Elliot Ness, Drew Carey and LeBron James. I will inform the students that they will research someone that is influential or important to the area where they live or had lived. They can do this from books, the internet and/or interviewing family members/parents. A Google search can bring you many people to choose from for further research. A simple “famous Clevelanders” search on Google provided me with the website <http://cleveland.about.com>, which contained a lot of names that I had forgotten or not even known about. For example: John D. Rockefeller (Cleveland resident and possibly the wealthiest man of early 20th century who founded Standard Oil), John Heisman (from whom the NCAA’s Heisman trophy for college football’s best player is named after), Dr. Henry Swann (Father of the decorated Christmas tree) and Carl B. Stokes (first African-American mayor of a major U.S. city).¹⁹ They will then complete a questionnaire and write a paragraph on that person containing the answers to the following questions:

- What is the name of your person?
- When were they born (and/or died)?
- Where are from? (Where were they born and where did they live?)
- What is their accomplishment? (How are they famous or influential?)
- Had you ever heard of this person before you researched them?
- Have you ever met them?
- Why did choose this person?

They will present their findings to the class during the next class in the form of an oral presentation. This would be beneficial to the class since many of the students are not originally from Charlotte and they would learn about different people from across the country or world. It also would be interesting to hear who the students from Charlotte write about. I will write the names of the cities and influential people that were chosen by the class on the board to not only show the diversity of where the class is from, but also help them learn about other influential people that they themselves did not research. This will be the introduction of the unit and I will not mention to them about Romare Bearden until after they have presented.

There are several times that it may be possible to have the students complete their research. One is that if the computer lab is available, the class may be taken during their art class time. This possibility is the most beneficial as the teacher could see that it gets

gone and would be there to answer any questions or concerns that the student might have. A second possibility is that the art teacher can also coordinate a time with the computer teacher (if one is at the school) during which the students could research to find a person and complete their questionnaire. A third option is that the teacher could have the students do the research as homework on their own computers. If there are students who do not have computers, they could work out time with either their classroom teacher or the art teacher to complete this.

Lesson Two: Who is Romare Bearden? (day two)

I will introduce Bearden to the students by reading *Dropping in on Romare Bearden* by Pamela Geiger Stephens, a children's book about his life to them. This biography will serve as a good introduction to Bearden for the students in an enjoyable way. The book not only tells about his life and work, it also informs the reader about collage. It gives a definition of collage and lists a brief description on how to put one together. *Dropping in on Romare Bearden* also gives examples of how to view a collage and how to describe them using the paintings, *Early Carolina Morning*, *Pittsburgh Memories*, *Spring Way*, *Three Folk Musicians* and *Of the Blues: Showtime*. I will remind them of the book tells the reader that they'll see many trains and cats in Bearden's work and that they should be looking for them.²⁰

The students will learn about Romare, both his artwork and him as a person. I will explain to them his history and that he was born in Charlotte, NC and lived there for only three years before his family had to move away because of the unfair society that was present. The family moved to Harlem one of New York NY's five boroughs to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada to Pittsburgh and back to Harlem. How he went on trips to Charlotte, Greensboro and Atlanta to see family. He had been overseas to Europe to study art. But he still lived in New York City. He would later buy a second home in St. Martin in the Caribbean to add more stories for his artwork.

After talking about Bearden's history, I will tell the students about him as an artist. He is known for his collages, but he's done other art: drawing, painting, writing poetry, books and even children's books. He has been around the world to study art. From these places he would take in the people and scenery. He would create art that depicts people and places in the style of African-American people. Sometimes he would take something from an African culture, such as a mask, and assimilate it into the African-American culture. Sometimes he would focus on the importance pieces in the daily life of a common African-American person, such as family, religion, music and work.

Next I will explain how Romare Bearden is one of those "famous figures" of the city of Charlotte. Bearden would often draw "up memories of his childhood in rural North Carolina. The idea of homecoming fascinated him. 'You can come back to where you started from with added experience and you hope you have understanding. You leave

and then return to the homeland of your imagination.”²¹ I will inform the class that Bearden has come home with his artwork. The Southern Recollections exhibition is currently being shown in Charlotte at the Mint Museum of Art. It debuted on September 2, 2011, on his birthday one hundred years from the day he was born and ends on January 8, 2012. I will tell my students to ask their parents to take them to see this wonderful event. It is one of those one in a lifetime opportunities that will let them see 99 of his works of art as they get to study him and work in his style.

Lesson Three: What is collage? (day three)

I will begin by telling the students what a collage is. I will explain the term mixed media and how a collage can fall under that category. I will talk about some kinds of collages and the materials that can be used. The children will be shown collages from primarily Bearden, but I will show them several other artists. I will show large prints of Bearden’s *Serenade*, *She-Ba*, *Carolina Shout* and *Land of the Lotus Eaters*. (These are four of Bearden’s prints that I personally have; others can be used in their place.) They will be shown one at a time and the students will be given the chance to share what they think the artwork is about as they answer questions. Questions might include: What do you see? What do you think the artwork means? What elements of art do you see? What is your opinion? After allowing the class to answer these questions, I can tell them what I have learned about these collages. I will leave the two pieces up so they can compare and contrast these works. Here they will point out the similarities first and the differences second.

Next I will show the class some large prints of collages from other artists. The prints that will be shown are: Betye Saar’s *Habits of the Heart*, Miriam Schapiro’s *Memories of Childhood #6: Alexandra and her Painting* and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith’s *House and Home*. I will ask the children the same questions as above. When they are done, I will explain to them how the artists are similar to Bearden in that their artwork represents certain people or communities. For example, many of Saar’s artwork is influenced by African art, similar to some of Bearden’s work. Also Schapiro’s work helps her to connect with other women artists just as Bearden connects to the African-American people in his works. Finally, Quick-to-See-Smith is a Native American artist who uses her art to bring concerns about her people’s concerns. Other artists’ prints that illustrate communities or deal with issues of a certain people of a community can also be shown instead if desired.

Lesson Four: What is community? (day three and four)

This lesson will open with students volunteering to share their definitions of community with the class. I will write key ideas on the board. I will explain that community can be defined in many ways. Next, I will read two definitions of community to the students. These include the definitions from *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* and *Community*

Space- How Land and Weather Shape Communities. I will explain to the class that communities can be small or large. Examples can be counties, cities, neighborhoods or tribes. There can be urban communities, with people living in apartment buildings or condominiums, or rural ones, with people living on a farm. There can be communities within communities, such as members of a school can be members of a neighborhood which can be also members of a city.

I will then shift the focus to how communities affected Romare Bearden. Even though he lived in Charlotte for a few years, much can be taken from the time he has here. Family was a constant theme, especially in the southern works. This perhaps is due to the fact of where he was born and would return for vacations to see his grandparents. The repeating symbol of the train in his work could be attributed to his time in Charlotte. When he lived in Charlotte, there was a train trestle near his home and the train would run past his house regularly. The train could also be a symbol from his leaving Charlotte for New York to escape the prejudices for the hopes of a better life. This could be seen in a positive way, in which one is leaving for the hopes of something better or in a negative way, since that means one is leaving their home and family. Collages that I will show the class that help illustrate Charlotte as a community are *Watching the Good Trains Go By* (1964), *Carolina Morning* (1974), *Mother and Child* (1976-1977) and *Three Folk Musicians* (1967). Bearden's memories of Charlotte were fond, as he once said about his first community "I never left Charlotte, except physically".²² Here I will ask the students to explain what Bearden meant by this quote.

Bearden's time in Canada is not present in any of his work. He was young, but he remembers parts of living in Charlotte. This could be due to the fact he revisited the area after he had left. But this was not the case for Canada, "there is no Canadian landscape in Bearden's work. The time is literally frozen out of his memory as if it had never existed"²³. I will ask my students why they think this is. Why is there no recollection of his time there?

Bearden's community in Harlem was composed of many artistic, intellectual and political figures. Some of this community included:

Writers (Langston) Hughes, Countee Cullen, and George Schuyler; musicians Duke Ellington, Thomas Wright "Fats" Waller, and his lyricist Andy Razaf; actor, activist, and athlete Paul Robeson; William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard University, a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the editor of the organization's magazine *The Crisis* for more than two decades; Mary McLeod Bethune, the founder-president of the National Council of Negro Women and vice president of the NAACP; and Dr. Aubre` de

L. Maynard, the first African-American surgical intern at Harlem Hospital.²⁴

Photos of these individuals with a brief description, images or even music and videos can be used in a Power Point to enhance the learning of Bearden's life in the Harlem Renaissance.

Bearden spent most of his life time in New York. From growing up during the Harlem Renaissance, going to college at N.Y.U., working as a social worker and artist, getting married, he has had a full life in this community. Some collages I will show about New York are *Evening, 9:10, 461 Lenox Avenue* (1964) which shows an inside view of people gathering playing cards with a glimpse of the city in the background though the window, *The Block* (1971) which is a street scene in the city and *Of the Blues: At the Savoy* (1974). I can bring back *Three Folk Musicians* (1967) to compare and contrast it with *Of the Blues: At the Savoy* (1974).

Bearden's time in Pittsburgh was not as long as the time he had spent in Harlem, therefore, his writings and artwork are lesser in number. As a young boy, he had a friend in Pittsburgh whose name was Eugene. Eugene was a "sickly and handicapped Pittsburgh lad"²⁵ who after he had died, Bearden both wrote a poem and made a collage about. An excerpt of the poem follows:

Nothing like this was necessary
Eugene
I stand here amongst these tombs,
holding this flower
which will fall endlessly into this
open earth
that rejects nothing²⁶

The collage about Eugene is labeled *Profile/ Part I, The Twenties: Pittsburgh Memories, Farewell Eugene* (1978). This collage gives an idea of the people's appearance, buildings and mountainous landscape. *Pittsburgh Memories* (1984) shows the community in two lights because of the dual view that shows both the inside and outside. The inside shows a family setting, although they were probably not a family since it was a boarding house, doing daily life activities with a working man leaving the house, walking down the stairs. The outside is dark and gray, with a train blowing smoke to the left, and factories' smokestacks blowing out smoke and fire. "Sadness literally colors Bearden's Pittsburgh images. In his imagination, Charlotte appears as a tropical setting- or African- setting. The bright primary colors are exuberant... In contrast; Bearden's Pittsburgh memories are covered with a fine, gray grit. At this point all three cities can be compared. Large prints, if available, would provide the best comparison simply of their size and the fact that they can be placed next to each other. If large prints

are not available, this can be done with placing three images of the cities next to each other in a Power Point and projecting them onto a screen. I will ask the class to find examples of similarities in both the artwork and also the physical makeup of the three cities and they can volunteer to share their finds with the class. They then can focus on differences. An alternative method that can be used is having students work in groups and writing down the similarities and differences and share them with the class. This works well if there are smaller reproductions of the artwork that they can have in front of them to compare and contrast.

Before day three is over, I will ask the students to think about what their community is, what it means to them and what they could bring it in to create their collage. This would include anything that would help illustrate “their community” in their collage: magazines, pictures, newspapers, cards, cloth, ticket stubs etc. I will warn them that once they put it on the collage, they cannot take it off. If there is something valuable they should photocopy it or take a picture. If it is an important family picture, they should photocopy it or bring it in to me before hand so that I can photocopy it for them. I will also suggest to them that they ask their family before bringing in items that they might not want them to use.

Lesson Five: Assembling a collage (day four and five)

I will gather the class around to demonstrate how to put together a collage. I will show them the important of having a complete composition. *ArtForms* defines composition as “The bringing together of parts or elements to form a whole; the structure, organization, or total form of a work of art”.²⁷ I will also refer to the posters I have for the Elements of Art and Principles of Design, explaining to them that these are guidelines for putting together their compositions. It is also important that not every element or principle has to be used in a composition. It would be more advantageous to them if they only concentrate on a few. I will show them collages that I have previously done and describe them to the class. Next I will prepare to set up preparatory collage. I will begin to arrange some materials in which I might use in my collage. I will facilitate the classes understanding of not hastily gluing items down on to the mounting surface. This lesson is about trial and error. The students should become familiar with their materials. They should be arranging and rearranging their materials. Finding out “what works” and what does not. The remainder of the class should be used for this time. It is important that no one glues today.

Before the class is over I will again remind the students to be thinking about their community and bringing items to use on their collage. It is important for them to bring them in prior to starting so they know what they have to work with.

Lesson Six: Collage and Community (days five and six and seven)

During each of the next three days I will read two books to the students at the beginning of the class. The first is *Me and Uncle Romie* by Claire Hartfield. This is a fictitious story of Romare Bearden's nephew who comes from North Carolina to visit his uncle Romie in New York City. It is told through the nephew's eyes. This serves the purpose of reinforcing what they've learned about Romare Bearden while giving them some entertainment. I will read half the book each of the next two days. The other book is *i live in music* which is a poem by Ntozake Shange with paintings by Romare Bearden. This is a fun, easy going poem about music with wonderful illustrations. This will be read following *Me and Uncle Romie*.

This is the part of the unit when the students begin their actual collages. Prior to starting to students should be able to tell me what their community will represent. They will write it on the same paper on which they had previously written their definition. I will be working on college concurrently as they create theirs. I will have most of my materials prepared so I will be able to demonstrate for them what I have collected for my own collage. I will also explain my thought process as I set up my composition. I will show them how to adhere their materials onto their mounting surface. I will also show the students additional art and crafts materials they can use when they begin to work on their composition. They will now be given the freedom to create their collages. I will inform them that before they glue down their first item, they should consult with me to talk about what their composition is going to look like. The remainder of this lesson will consist of them working on their collage. I will be circulating the room, formally assessing their work, giving assistance and guidance to those who need it. I plan on playing the CD *Romare Bearden Revealed* performed by Branford Marsalis Quartet. This album was inspired by Bearden and contains the song "Seabreeze" which was written by Romare.

An alternate lesson could focus on the music of the Harlem Renaissance and how Bearden was inspired by it and was the theme of several of his works such as *Of the Blues: At the Savoy* (1974), *Carolina Shout* (1974) and *Jammin' at the Savoy* (1980). This can be contributed to his growing up in the middle of the action in Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance. Among the artistic and intellectual leaders were jazz greats Duke Ellington and "Fats" Waller and Willie "the lion" Smith. It was not just jazz music from Harlem that Bearden's artworks reflected. In addition to Harlem, his titles included places such as New Orleans, Memphis and Kansas City where his art portrayed the musical scene. Blues, gospel and folk as well as jazz were seen in Bearden's artwork.

Lesson Seven: Reflection (day seven)

When they are done with their collages they will complete an artist's statement. They will also fill out a reflection questionnaire. The following questions and statements will be represented:

- Describe your collage.

- Does your collage show community? If so, how?
- What do you like about your collage?
- What do you not like and wish you change?
- What Elements of Art and Principles of Design are represented?
- Did your collage turn out like you had thought it would?
- Overall, how do you think your collage turned out?
- How did you like this project?

When the class has completed the reflection questionnaire they will give an oral presentation and describe their collage using the reflection questionnaire as a guideline.

Resources

Vocabulary

- adhesive
- collage
- community
- composition
- critique
- elements of art
- Harlem Renaissance
- mixed media
- mounting surface
- principles of design
- Romare Bearden

Materials Needed

- notebook paper
- computers
- artist's prints
- books: Dropping in on Romare Bearden, Me and Uncle Romie and i live in music
- CD: *Romare Bearden Revealed*
- various papers (wallpaper, tissue, construction, etc)
- various craft materials (beads, buttons, popsicle sticks, etc)
- other various materials (magazines, photographs, foil, etc)
- various writing and drawing materials (pencils, markers, paints, etc)
- adhesive- Elmer's glue
- brushes
- containers of water (to rinse brushes)
- mounting surface- cardboard or cereal boxes
- cutting utensils (scissors, X-ACTO knife)

- handout- reflection questionnaire

Teacher Resources (Annotated Bibliography)

Branford Marsalis Quartet. "Romare Bearden Revealed": Cambridge, MA: Rounder Records, 2003.

Good CD. This album was inspired by Bearden and contains the song "Seabreeze" which was written by Romare Bearden.

Catalano, Angela. *Community Space- How land and Weather Shape Communities*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2005.

A good children's book for defining community and it shows examples of different types of communities (urban, rural, island, etc.)

"Famous Clevelanders." Cleveland Ohio - A guide to living in and visiting Cleveland, Akron, and Northeast Ohio.

http://cleveland.about.com/od/famousclevelanders/Famous_and_Infamous_Clevelanders.htm (accessed November 7, 2011).

This is a fun and interesting website. There are some people that I knew and some I've never heard of.

Fine, Ruth. *The Art of Romare Bearden*. Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2003.

It is a very extensive book on the artwork of Romare Bearden. The Art of Romare Bearden contains a lot of in depth information on describing his art.

Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollections*. London: GILES, 2011. 38-63.

This is a chapter from the catalog for the Southern Recollections show at the Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte. Gilmore is one of the five writers that reflect on Bearden and his work. Excellent Book!

Hartfield, Claire. *Me and Uncle Romie*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002.

An exciting children's biography on Romare Bearden fictiously told by his nephew who lives in Charlotte, NC and comes to visit Romare in NY. Also contains a nice kid friendly section on how to make a collage.

Leland, Nita, and Virginia Lee Williams. *Creative Collage Techniques*. Cincinnati: North Light Books, 1994.

Nice book for types of collages. There are 47 different types of projects to work on. Also has a good chart for acrylic mediums.

Meilach, Dona Z., and Elvie Ten Hour. *Collage and Assemblage- Trends and Techniques*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1973.
It's a little old (1973), but it has good information about the materials needed for collage and processes for some types of collage work.

Preble, Duane, and Sarah Preble. *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts*. Fifth ed. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1994.
This is a good text for someone studying art in college.

Shange, Ntozake. *i live in music*. New York: Welcome Books, 1994.
An exciting book that contains a poem about music and is illustrated with Romare Bearden's artwork.

Stephens, Pamela Geiger. *Dropping in on Romare Bearden*. Glenview, IL: Crystal Productions, 2007.
This is a great children's book that not only tells a biography of Bearden, but also shows several of his works and gives examples about questions kids can ask about art work.

The Chicago Manual of Style. Fourteenth ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.
It is an extensive source for using Chicago style in your writing. There is however, a newer edition.

Trumbauer, Lisa. *Communities*. Mankato, MN: Capstone Press, 2001.
A children's book on communities. It's under the fourth graders reading level, but it could be good for lower level readers.

ROMARE BEARDEN FOUNDATION. "WELCOME TO THE ROMARE BEARDEN FOUNDATION." WELCOME TO THE ROMARE BEARDEN FOUNDATION. <http://www.beardenfoundation.org> (accessed November 7, 2011).
This is a great source for learning about Bearden which includes a short biography, his some of his artwork and his awards and honors. It also includes a very useful timeline to follow his life chronologically.

The New Oxford Dictionary of English, first ed., s.v. "community." Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

Chicago formatting by BibMe.org.

Student Resources

Catalano, Angela. *Community Space- How land and Weather Shape Communities*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2005.

Hartfield, Claire. *Me and Uncle Romie*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002.
An exciting children's biography on Romare Bearden fictitiously told by his nephew who lives in Charlotte, NC and comes to visit Romare in NY. Also contains a nice kid friendly section on how to make a collage.

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Appendix – Implementing District Standards

These are some standards from the NC National Course of Study for fourth grade visual arts that are highlighted in *Bearden, Collage and Community*. These standards are being used throughout the unit as they help the students develop skills and increase their knowledge about materials, artists and styles. The students learn about the art of native North Carolinian Romare Bearden, and how his life and culture helped form his style and subject matter. Through this knowledge gained, they will create their own art as they reflect on their own lives and communities.

COMPETENCY GOAL 2: The learner will develop skills necessary for understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes. (National Standard 1)

Objectives:

2.03 Increase skills with familiar materials.

2.04 Demonstrate one's own thought and feelings visually, using sequential, visual narrative.

COMPETENCY GOAL 4: The learner will choose and evaluate a range of subject matter and ideas to communicate intended meaning in artworks. (National Standard 3)

Objectives:

4.01 Create extended visual narratives based on one's own life and experiences.

4.02 Discuss and/or write extended narratives based on one's own art.

4.04 Compare work of various artists' styles and cultures.

COMPETENCY GOAL 5: The learner will understand the visual arts in relation to history and cultures. (National Standard 4)

Objectives:

5.03 Compare works of art from different times and cultures.

5.07 Recognize that individuals are products of their own culture.

5.08 Explores the art and architecture of selected North Carolina artists.

COMPETENCY GOAL 6: The learner will reflect upon and assess the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others. (National Standard 5)Objective:

6.01 Describe how people's experiences influence the development of specific artworks.

Source: <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/curriculum/artsed/scos/visualarts/visual3-5>

End Notes

¹ Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 39.

² Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 44

³ Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 47

⁴ Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 42

⁵ Preble, Duane and Sarah, *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. Fifth ed.* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 11

⁶ Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 42

⁷ Preble, Duane and Sarah, *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. Fifth ed.* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 486

⁸ Preble, Duane and Sarah, *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. Fifth ed.* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 11

⁹ Romare Bearden Foundation. 1990. "About the Artist." Accessed November 7, 2011.
<http://www.beardenfoundation.org/artlife/biography/biography.shtml>: 2

¹⁰ Romare Bearden Foundation. 1990. "About the Artist." Accessed November 7, 2011.
<http://www.beardenfoundation.org/artlife/biography/biography.shtml>: 2

¹¹ Romare Bearden Foundation. 1990. "Music and Poetry." Accessed November 7, 2011.
<http://www.beardenfoundation.org/artlife/beardensart/musicpoetry/musicpoetry.html>: 1

¹² Hanks, Patrick, editor, *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 11998), 371

¹³ Catalano, Angela, *Community Space- How land and Weather Shape Communities* (New York: The Rosen Book Publishing Group, Inc.,2005), 4

¹⁴ Preble, Duane and Sarah, *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. Fifth ed.* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 11

¹⁵ Geiger Stephens, Pamela, *Dropping in on Romare Bearden* (Glenview, IL: Crystal Productions, 2007), 30

¹⁶ Meilach, Dona Z., and Elvie Ten Hoor, *Collage and Assemblage- Trends and Techniques* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1973), 42

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- ¹⁷ Leland, Nita, and Virginia Lee Williams, *Creative Collage Techniques* (Cincinnati: North Light Books, 1994), 9
- ¹⁸ ¹⁸ Meilach, Dona Z., and Elvie Ten Hoor, *Collage and Assemblage- Trends and Techniques* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1973, 31-37
- ¹⁹ The New York Times Company. "Famous Clevelanders." Accessed November 7, 2011.
http://cleveland.about.com/od/famousclevelanders/Famous_and_Infamous_Clevelanders.htm
- ²⁰ ²⁰ Geiger Stephens, Pamela, *Dropping in on Romare Bearden* (Glenview, IL: Crystal Productions, 2007), 10
- ²¹ Preble, Duane and Sarah, *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. Fifth ed.* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 11
- ²² Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 62
- ²³ Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth, "Romare Bearden's Mecklenburg Memories." In *Romare Bearden-Southern Recollection* (London: GILES, 2011), 47
- ²⁴ Fine, Ruth, *The Art of Romare Bearden* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2003), 7-8
- ²⁵ Fine, Ruth, *The Art of Romare Bearden* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2003), 8
- ²⁶ Fine, Ruth, *The Art of Romare Bearden* (Washington DC: National Gallery of Art, 2003), 8
- ²⁷ ²⁷ Preble, Duane and Sarah, *Artforms: An Introduction to the Visual Arts. Fifth ed.* (New York: HarperCollins College Publishers, 1993), 505