



Celebrate Black Art and History
2025-2026 School Year
Grades: 9-12

Lesson Overview

Students will celebrate and explore the work of Tomashi Jackson to understand how art reflects history, identity, and possibility. Inspired by their personal culture and identity, students will create a multilayered mixed media artwork that engages the theme of past, present, and future.

Learning Objectives

Essential Questions

- How does Tomashi Jackson use layering and transparency to represent memory and history?
- How can students use art making to represent their own timeline of past, present, and future?

Students will be able to...

- Experiment with transparency, layering, and cutouts as visual metaphors for time and memory.
- Create a work of art inspired by Tomashi Jackson's artistic style and process.

Performance Tasks

- Discussion-based observation
- Art-making exploration

Vocabulary

- Balance
- Color
- Continuum
- Contrast
- Emphasis
- Layering
- Metaphor
- Mixed media
- Rhythm
- Social commentary
- Transparency
- Unity

Materials

- 6" x 9" tracing paper
- 6" x 9" transparency sheet
- Scissors
- Spools of string or thread
- Hole punchers
- Paper clips
- Colorful Sharpies
- Colorful construction paper or cardstock for collage

- Image from the High's collection

High Museum of Art Collection Connection

[Tomashi Jackson, *Is Anyone Gonna Be Saved?* \(1948 Middle of Voter Registration Line\) \(1965 Abernathy and King Watch the Signing of the Act\)](#)

Sample Works of Art



Procedure

Introduction (15 minutes)

Introduce students to Tomashi Jackson's [*Is Anybody Gonna Be Saved?* \(1948 Middle of Voter Registration Line\) \(1965 Abernathy and King Watch the Signing of the Act\)](#) as a starting point to discuss the theme and references used in her work.

Tomashi Jackson's art reminds us that history goes beyond photographs or dates in a textbook; it's layered into our everyday lives. By mixing bold colors, abstract shapes, and powerful images from Black history, she asks us to look closely, ask questions, and imagine what role we play in shaping the future.

Touch on the key themes represented in this work of art: layering history and memory, color as meaning, civil rights and social justice, and abstraction and representation. Jackson often combines historical photographs with abstraction and bright colors. This layering shows how history is present, even when it feels like it's in the past. She uses color as a tool to express emotion, urgency, and hope. Jackson's works often connect to major moments in history. She shows how laws and struggles

of the past still shape the present. The artist mixes figurative elements such as photographs of people or events with abstractions using shapes, colors, and textures.

Ask students to look closely at *Is Anybody Gonna Be Saved?* What do they notice? The title refers to voter registration in 1948 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Ask students why they think Jackson layered these historical moments together. Jackson uses layering to connect history to today. How can students use layering to tell their own story of past, present, and future?

Demonstration (10 minutes)

Share the sample works of art with students and demonstrate how to layer papers; cut out windows and shapes to reveal imagery underneath; use paper clips to keep work aligned; and use Sharpies on transparency sheets.

Art Making (25 minutes)

- **Past (Base Layer):** Ask students to choose a work of art from the High's collection. Do not cut this layer. Students may add color or symbols that represent some aspect of their past or their personal history.
- **Present (Middle Layer):** Students can then cut shapes or windows to *frame* or *reveal* the past. Encourage them to add symbols of who they are today. This can refer to their personal interests (hobbies, moods, favorite colors), identity, or relationships.
- **Future (Transparency):** For the last layer, students will add a sheet of transparency paper and use Sharpies to depict their dreams and goals through colors, shapes, or words.

To finish their work of art, students will secure the layers with paper clips. They will then punch two to three holes at the top of the work and bind the three layers together with string. Once the string is secured, they can remove the paper clips.

Reflection and Cleanup (10 minutes)

Ask students who feel comfortable doing so to share their works with the class. As they share, ask them which work of art they chose for their base layer and what they wanted to communicate with the other two layers.

Allow time for students to tidy their stations and throw away scraps.

Georgia Standards of Excellence Alignment

Social Studies

SSSocC1 Analyze forms of social inequality.

a. Explain how unequal distribution of power and resources affects the life chances of individuals in that society. b. Analyze the sources and effects of stratification on the basis of social class, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and emotional, mental, and physical disabilities.

Visual Art

VAHSVA.CR.1 Visualize and generate ideas for creating works of art.

VAHSVA.CR.2 Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan and create works of art.

VAHSVA.CR.3 Engage in an array of processes, media, techniques, and technology through experimentation, practice, and persistence.

VAHSVA.CR.4 Incorporate formal and informal components to create works of art.

VAHSVA.CR.5 Reflect on, revise, and refine works of art considering relevant traditional and contemporary practices as well as artistic ideation.

VAHSVA.RE.1 Reflect on the context of personal works of art in relation to community, culture, and the world.

VAHSVA.RE.2 Critique personal works of art and the artwork of others, individually and collaboratively, using a variety of approaches.

VAHSVA.RE.3 Engage in the process of art criticism to make meaning and increase visual literacy.

VAHSVA.CN.1 Develop personal artistic voice through connecting uses of art within a variety of cultural, historical, and contemporary contexts.