

Sense-sational Snowballs

Paige V. Baggett and Rebecca M. Giles

Whether children live in a place with frequent snowfall or a climate where it's warm year-round, they will enjoy using collage to create their own snow characters. The word *collage* is derived from the French word *coller*, meaning "to paste." A collage is an artwork built out of bits and pieces of things put together to make a new design in the form of a picture, sculpture, quilted fabric motif, or other type of artwork.

Collage is a technique that is often seen in early childhood classrooms because it can be produced using only scissors, glue, and inexpensive or discarded materials. It also provides an invaluable opportunity for children to play with shapes, colors, patterns, and textures as they use their senses of sight and touch to apply principles of design. The technique was introduced to the world of modern art by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in 1911, and is often associated with such artists as Henri Matisse, Romare Bearden, and Hannah Höch. It has also become a popular illustration technique for children's books.

Lois Ehlert

Author/illustrator Lois Ehlert is best known for the innovative collage style found in many of her books. She often uses cut-paper





Objectives

Students will:

- create art with familiar objects.
- use their senses to learn about the environment.
- experience the art elements of line, color, shape, and texture through seeing and touching.

Materials

- various paper scraps and found-objects suitable for gluing
- white construction paper
- scissors
- glue
- cardboard or poster paper to serve as a base

of varying textures and designs along with found objects on bold-colored backgrounds to masterfully depict scenes complemented by her simple, engaging text.

While Ehlert uses a variety of media in her collage illustrations, including acrylic and watercolor paints, colored pencils, crayons and pastels, her signature technique is the use of an eclectic combination of materials—from fabric scraps, buttons, sheet metal, and wires, to feathers, nuts, branches, and seeds—that compel readers to repeatedly examine the use of everyday objects to create uniquely memorable pictures.

In Ehlert's *Snowballs* (Harcourt, 1995), double-page collages are used to bring winter alive as a family's anticipation of the season's first snowfall culminates in the creation of a snow dad, snow mom, snow boy, snow girl, snow baby, snow dog, and snow cat. From a compass nose to a cinnamon stick mouth, it becomes immediately apparent that there are no limits to the versatility of the "good stuff in a sack" collected by the family specifically for this special occasion.

Inspired by Ehlert's imaginative creations, first graders in Mobile, Alabama visited their own "sack of good stuff"

to transform white construction paper into a wide variety of original characters ranging from more traditional depictions, such as Gabrielle's *Frosty* and Katie's *Cat*, to modern-day marvels such as Camilla's *Clothes Designer* and Cole's *Superhero*.

Each child's original use of objects was extraordinary as plastic beads became hair, earrings, or eyes depending upon the child's particular vision. No two were alike, as each one reflected the individuality of the artist. Their unique features were further realized when finished

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products served as descriptive writing prompts in a subsequent lesson.

As children discover the endless variety of materials that can be used to personalize their snow figure, they will anxiously await the next snowfall . . . or their next chance to create a collage. 🌀

Paige V. Baggett, pbaggett@usouthal.edu, and Rebecca M. Giles, rgiles@usouthal.edu, are professors at the University of South Alabama, Department of Leadership and Teacher Education, in Mobile, Alabama.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students explore and understand prospective content for works of art.

WEB LINK

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