

MUSEUM  
AS→LEARNING  
RESOURCE

CARNEGIE  
MUSEUM OF ART

VISUAL ARTS,  
MATH,  
WORLD LANGUAGES

**Title:** RELATIONSHIP // AUTONOMY // COMPETENCE // FUN

**Teacher-in-Residence:** Steph Flati

**Grades:** 9–12

**Subjects:** Visual Arts, Math, World Languages

**Goals:**

- Develop visual literacy, imagination, and perception skills and appreciation and knowledge of art.
- Foster creativity, self-expression, autonomy, self-confidence, and self-discipline.
- Expand craftsmanship, problem-solving abilities, cultural understanding, and safety procedures.
- Participate in cleanup, share and help others, respect others and their property, and collaborate. Gain a deeper understanding of ourselves, who we are, and where we come from.

**Objectives:**

- Analyze a work of art through class critique.
- Brainstorm possible solutions (three pages full in sketchbook).
- Collaborate with classmates to plan and create a finished work.
- Improve craftsmanship skills through the use of art materials.
- Critique our own work as well as classmates' work: twice during the creative process and once at the end of the unit.
- Describe our feelings and ideas using language with words incorporated into images for our artworks.
- Make connections between our own lived experiences and those of Cy Gavin (comparing and contrasting his experiences with our own during critique and/or at home).
- Manage time to complete the work by the due date, creating a schedule to stay on track.
- Organize thoughts and ideas through brainstorming in our sketchbooks to create a piece of visual art.
- Plan with others to create pieces that fit together.
- Sketch multiple possibilities and ideas for compositions in our sketchbooks.
- Create a finished artwork that fits with classmates' work to form a mural.

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**Federal Common Core Standards:**

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.2  
Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
- CC.2.3.6.A.1  
Apply appropriate tools to solve real-world and mathematical problems involving area, surface area, and volume.

**PA Standards:**

- VA:Cr1.1.6a  
Combine concepts collaboratively to generate innovative ideas for creating art.
- VA:Cr1.2.6a  
Formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art.
- VA:Cr3.1.6a  
Reflect on whether personal artwork conveys the intended meaning and revise accordingly.
- VA:Pr5.1.6a  
Individually or collaboratively, develop a visual plan for displaying works of art, analyzing exhibit space, the needs of the viewer, and the layout of the exhibit.

**World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages/Communication:**

**Presentational Communication:** Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

**Vocabulary:**

- self-portrait
- color
- warm colors
- cool colors
- color wheel
- symbolism
- proportion
- identity
- shape
- organic shapes

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- geometric shapes
- scale
- similar figures
- mural

**Artwork Used:**

Cy Gavin, *Untitled (Gibbet Island)*, 2019

<https://collection.cmoa.org/objects/74ddc404-3684-4d7e-ab95-d37620eee7a8>

**Materials Needed:**

- reproduction(s) of artwork
- color wheel(s)
- sketchbook
- pencil
- ruler
- illustration board or gessoed cardboard
- acrylic paint (primary colors, secondary colors, black, white)
- gloss medium
- mat cutters/box cutters
- cutting mats
- sticker letters
- Command strips

**Steps:**

**Introduction:**

Hold a general critique of Cy Gavin's painting *Untitled (Gibbet Island)*. What do students see, think, and wonder about the work? Focus on the colors and shapes used in the work. After students discuss their thoughts, opinions, and ideas about Gavin's work, the teacher will offer insights into Gavin's life and this painting. Students will then reassess the piece with this new knowledge.

**Main activity:**

The students will brainstorm their own family history in their sketchbook. They will fill a page with words and images that come to mind when they think about their family histories and where they are from. Are there any questions/concerns/mysteries/questions that they have about their family histories or upbringing? Would using a language other than English suit their family histories better? After the first class period, students will do some independent research, using parents

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and/or other family members as resources to learn interesting facts about their families/themselves. This can be done overnight, as homework.

Students will choose a shape from the underwater portion of Gavin's painting. In their sketchbooks, using their chosen shape as a border, students will come up with three different composition ideas to fill the shape with images and words that illustrate parts of themselves and their family histories. Remind students of the elements that go into making a strong composition.

Students will choose their best composition and modify it as necessary. Students will scale their border shapes up to a shared, agreed-upon scale and carefully draw the shapes on their illustration boards in pencil. Students will then cut out the shapes using mat cutters on cutting mats. Students will make sure that their shapes can all fit together, like puzzle pieces, for the final mural.

Students will sketch their chosen compositions onto the cut illustration boards using pencil. When the drawings are complete, students will use acrylic paint to add color. Once all of the pieces are complete and dry, students will hang them together, like puzzle pieces, using Command strips.

**Transition(s):** Hold two critiques of students' works in progress throughout the unit. Every third class would probably be sufficient, but if the teacher feels the class would benefit from it more frequently, they should do it. Students should share stories and explain why they chose the images, words, phrases, and language they did to express these aspects of their family histories

**Questions:** What do you see, think, and wonder as you look at Cy Gavin's piece? Why do you think he chose the colors he did? Do you think there is any symbolism in his color choices? What is a self-portrait? How can you create a portrait of yourself without showing a physical representation of yourself? What is the most interesting fact about your family history? What have you learned about Cy Gavin's family history? Is there a geographic location that holds any significance to you/your family history? Would you use more warm or cool colors to depict that place? Would you use more geometric or organic shapes? Why?

**Assessment (if applicable):**

Have students complete exit slips each day describing how they are feeling about their progress so far.

Students can write journal entries explaining how they came up with their final works.

The entire class can participate in an oral critique of the process and final work.

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**Lesson Extensions / Modifications:**

- Take a field trip to Carnegie Museum of Art to see his work in person.
- Have students use technology to create an interactive tour of the final work in which each student writes a narrative about creating their work and/or the individual parts of their work.

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Cy Gavin, *Untitled (Gibbet Island)*, 2019

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NAME (UPPER CASE)  
Grades (lowercase)  
Subjects (lowercase)

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