**Making a Mosaic Monogram**

**Essential Question** How can engineering small shapes together into bigger shapes create an interesting piece of art?

**Grade** 1st

**Time** 45 minutes

**Art Concepts** Mosaic, inlay, shapes, collage

**Materials** Colored construction paper (or white printer paper, brown-paper bag, gray side of cracker or cereal box), scissors, glue stick

**Artwork in Focus** [*Mosaic Mask,* A.D. 400-1520 by Artist Unknown](https://collections.lacma.org/node/238043)

**Talking about Art** What do you see? This is a small **mosaic** mask, made some 500 to 1,000 years ago during the Classic Maya period in Chiapas, a region in the southeastern part of Mexico. (Making art by piecing together interconnecting **shapes** onto a surface is called **mosaic**.) During this period, art flourished among royal and other wealthy, powerful families. Perhaps at one time, this mask was even owned by a king. The artwork is only two and a half inches tall, but it is composed of a beautiful and very intricate interlacing of turquoise stone with pearl-colored shell.

A mosaic is different from a drawing or painting: It is made by fitting shapes together almost like a jigsaw puzzle. You can see work similar to mosaic in jewelry made with **inlaid** stone, old tile work in kitchens or bathrooms, stone pathways, or stonework on a fireplace. Stained-glass windows are also similar, except the pieces of glass are held together by lead strips instead of mortar or grout, which is the sticky material that holds mosaic pieces in place.

**Making Art** The way the shapes fit together in this work of art may remind you of a jigsaw puzzle. How could the artist have engineered the pieces to fit so well together?

We are going to use **collage** (cutting and gluing paper) to experiment with this idea of making the pieces fit together.

1. Choose a piece of construction paper, white paper, paper bag, or anything you can glue other pieces of paper to.
2. Take other colors of construction paper and cut them into lots of different shapes, like rectangles, squares, and diamonds. Don’t make them too small because you may need to trim them to make them fit together.
3. As you cut the shapes, start laying them out to form a large letter, the first letter of your name. Shapes should be right next to each other, but not overlapping. If you don’t have all the shapes you need, trim shapes you’ve already cut, or cut the shape you need.
4. Add more shapes to make designs around the letter.
5. Glue down your shapes.

**Reflection** Was it easy or challenging to cut shapes that fit together to make the initial of your name? Didn’t it feel like you were creating your own jigsaw puzzle?

Some artists that like this kind of project become designers or engineers, because they enjoy the creative problem solving involved.

**Curriculum Connections** California Arts Standards for Public Schools—Visual Arts

1.VA—Cr1.1: Use observation and investigation in preparation for making a work of art. 1.VA:Cr2.1: Explore uses of materials and tools to create works of art or design. 1.VA:Cn11: Understand that people from different places and times have made art for a variety of reasons.

Common Core State Standards Math

[1.G.A.2](http://www.corestandards.org/Math/Content/1/G/A/2/): Compose two-dimensional shapes (rectangles, squares, trapezoids, triangles, half-circles, and quarter-circles) or three-dimensional shapes (cubes, right rectangular prisms, right circular cones, and right circular cylinders) to create a composite shape, and compose new shapes from the composite shape.

Next Generation Science Standards

[ETS1.C: Optimizing the Design Solution](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13165&page=208). [Because there is always more than one possible solution to a problem, it is useful to compare and test designs. (K-2-ETS1-3)](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=13165&page=208)

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