

# POP ICON PRINTS

Visual Arts 9 (can be adapted for other grades)

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SD#73

## Overview

In this unit, students will

- use simplification to render a face in two colours
- create a work of art using digital technology, such as GIMP or Photoshop.
- make informed choices about what colours would best suit the icon you have chosen (e.g. what colours should be used for a portrait of Bob Marley? Taylor Swift? Gene Simmons?).
- create a linocut print of a pop icon that reflects that person's personality and captures the essence of his/her facial features

## Resources

- examples of work by Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons, Picasso, George Littlechild, etc.
- Charles A. Riley II, *The Art of Peter Max* (ISBN: 0-8109-3270-9)

## Process

1. Have students explore works by several artists (see list above) and examine the various techniques used in rendering the human face. You could prepare a digital slideshow, or have students research the artists for themselves. Your teacher librarian could do an "artists book talk" for your class. Discuss the impact created with choice of colour, composition, etc.

2. Have them choose a pop icon to represent in a print. He/she should have made a significant impact on popular culture in the 20th or 21st century, whether it be in sports, music, film, popular fiction, fashion, etc.

3. Students should then find an image (or images) of their icon to use as a reference, and practice drawing his/her face in their sketchbook or visual journal.

4. Discuss copyright laws and have students write away for permission to use images that have been

copyright protected. It's entirely possible that students will not get a response to such letters, but it's a good experience for them to attempt to get permission. If they don't hear back, it's quite likely that non-commercial use of the images for educational purposes is fine with the use of the image. Another factor to consider is that the images need to be changed by at least 40%. I always tell students to change an image by at least 50%, as it can be difficult to know whether or not enough changes have been made.

5. The next step is to use Photoshop/Photoshop Elements or GIMP to create a 2-tone image of their celebrity. Have them crop the image to fit the size of the linoleum (or Safety Kut) first. Next, they need to "Filter" from the pull-down menu, making sure to use the default black and white in the toolbox. Select "Sketch", and then "Stamp" to convert the image into black and white. Make the necessary adjustments using the sliding scale. (Students can also experiment with some of their colour ideas by creating and/or selecting other colours from the swatches menu.) Flip the image horizontally so that it will not print backwards.

5. They may use this image as a reference for their linoleum or Safety Kut design, and redraw the reversed face onto the linoleum. Once they have decided on their colour scheme, they will then carve out the portion(s) that will be in the lightest colour. Prior to them carving out the stamps, give them carving instructions and a safety demon-

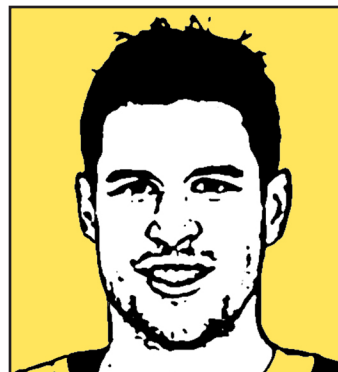
## Materials and Technologies:

- linocut or Safety Kut blocks (Safety Kut works better for younger students)
- linocutters/blades, bench hooks
- block printing ink, brayers, barens, inking plate/glass
- digital technology (Photoshop or GIMP)
- photographs of assorted pop icons from magazines, the internet, books, posters, CD covers, etc.

station, ensuring that they know how to use the bench hooks and that they will carve away from their bodies/hands, and not towards them.

6. Demonstrate the inking method for your students. Show them how to roll out block printing ink with a brayer onto a pane of glass until the coat of ink is as thin as they can get it. The lightest shade of ink will then be rolled onto paper to make the background. Have them rinse the linoleum, and when both the lino and the paper are dry, roll the darkest shade of ink they've chosen onto the linoleum, and transfer it to the paper. They should lay the linoleum onto the paper, and rub the back with a baren, or use a printing press if one is available. The back of a wooden spoon will do the trick as well. They should remove excess ink from the print by placing a sheet of newsprint on top, and rubbing the back. Have them repeat this step until no more excess ink can be lifted from the print.

7. Encourage students to try several combinations of colour, and mount their four best prints together on one background sheet of paper.



**Criteria:**

Composition – good balance of light and dark; use of space

Print Technique – consistent quality; good use of brayer; image has been “pulled” skillfully

Carving Craftsmanship – Skillful use of carving equipment; safe procedures (e.g., use of bench hook, carving away from the body, etc.)

Technical Difficulty: – design is appropriately challenging, and detail is suitable for the task

Colour Scheme: – colour combinations are effective and consistent with the subject’s contribution to popular culture

## THE BIG IDEA

*What they will understand.*

**The visual arts use a unique sensory language for creating and communicating.**

### Curricular Competencies

*What they will be able to do.*

- Explore materials, technologies, and processes [of block printing]
- Demonstrate active engagement and discipline in creating works of art and resolving creative challenges
- Select and combine elements and principles of the arts to intentionally create a particular mood or meaning

### Concepts and Content

*What they will know.*

- elements of design: line, shape, space, colour
- principles of design: balance, contrast, proportion
- image design strategies: elaboration, simplification
- personal and social responsibility associated with creating, performing, and responding in the arts
- the ethics of cultural appropriation and plagiarism