

Recycled Plastic Bag Collage (art + social studies)

Rather than allowing more plastic to end up in a landfill or wreak further havoc on the environment, you can raise your students' level of social conscience and demonstrate the art elements of line, shape and texture with this lesson in "green" art.

By twisting and forming recycled plastic into coils and shapes, students assemble artwork on a piece of adhesive-backed film. It's a tidy way to create a collage — no glue or paint are required. When the pieces are finished, turn them over so they can be viewed in reverse.

Grade Levels 3-12

Note: Instructions and materials are based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.

Preparation

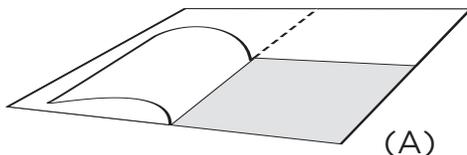
1. Gather plastic in a variety of colors and weights. Clean any plastic that needs cleaning. Look for materials that are lightweight and flexible so they can be easily manipulated.
2. Cut clear, adhesive-backed film into 10" x 12-1/2" pieces. Each student will need one piece.
3. View examples of recycled art. Many websites are devoted to arts and crafts items made from recycled materials. Recommended resources:

[Crystal™ Interdisciplinary Video Program, "Recycled, Re-Seen"](#) (72048-1001)

[Crystal™ Recycled Art Prints](#), (68628-1009)

Process

1. If desired, create preliminary sketches on a piece of newsprint. Since the adhesive-backed film is transparent, the sketch can be placed beneath for reference.
2. Peel the backing away from the adhesive film, working with 1/4 of the sheet at a time to keep the unused adhesive protected until it's needed. Bend the backing paper away from half and fold, then use scissors to cut the first part of the page in half. Press the top section against the adhesive again to keep it covered, see (A).
3. Apply small pieces of plastic bags, plastic wrap and other plastic materials to the adhesive surface, pressing them down firmly to hold them in place.



Materials

Plastic trash bags, shopping bags, bread bags, sandwich bags, plastic wrap, packing materials, gift bags and more.

[Dura-Lar™ Clear Adhesive-Backed Film, .005" medium-weight \(55525-1021\)](#); share one 20" x 25" sheet among four students

[Acme™ Junior Scissors \(57058-1025\)](#), one per student

[3M™ Highland™ Transparent Tape \(23017-0050\)](#); share five rolls across classroom

Optional:

[Hygloss™ Transparent Cellophane, assorted colors \(11219-\)](#); share one 20" x 25-ft roll across classroom

[Iridescent Film \(11209-1036\)](#); share one 36" x 12-ft roll across classroom

Process, continued



Hints:

- Create a variety of lines and shapes by twisting, rolling, bunching, folding and forming the plastic.
- Cut precise shapes with scissors, if desired.
- Overlap pieces of plastic. Layer translucent and clear plastics to create different, shaded looks.
- For added effect, also use colorful cellophane or iridescent plastic film.
- Use clear tape to secure any loose edges on the back of the piece.

If an error or change of direction occurs, gently peel the plastic away from the adhesive and make the needed adjustment. Keep changes to a minimum, or the adhesive will lose its tack.

NOTE: some garbage bags are treated with an odor-controlling powder and will not stick well.

4. Trim excess plastic away from the edges with scissors, or leave it as part of the design.
5. Use **3M™ Scotch® Double-Coated Tape** (23016-0050) to mount finished pieces to a 14" x 17" sheet of **Bienfang® Plate Surface Bristol Board** with 50% recycled fiber (13302-1017).

Options:

1. Instead of mounting the finished piece, cover the back side with a second sheet of adhesive film and display the piece in a window where light can shine through.
2. Use Blick Permanent Markers on the front of the film to draw details and define areas of the collage; see example below.

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Front side view

National Standards for Visual Arts Education

Content Standard #5 — Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

K-4 Students understand there are various purposes for creating works of visual art

5-8 Students compare multiple purposes for creating works of art

9-12 Students correlate responses to works of visual art with various techniques for communicating meanings, ideas, attitudes, views and intentions