



# Making an *Imprint*:

## an introductory survey of printmaking

*Unit Plan for High School, Visual Arts*  
*Prepared by WEM Staff*

### OVERVIEW

One of the most critical transformations throughout Esherick's eclectic career occurred when he turned from painting to printmaking in the early 1920's. We began our annual *Imprint* Competition and Exhibition in 2010, with the aim of keeping the rich history of printmaking alive among high-school-age artists. This year, we are pleased to add additional resources to enhance students' study of the art form. In this Unit, we invite students to take a deep dive into its rich history, explore some of Esherick's prints, and, finally, practice printmaking themselves!

 *Wondering how to utilize this Unit for virtual learners? While the entire Unit is meant to be flexible, allowing you to adapt it for any learning environment, keep an eye out for this icon () for more ideas to support your virtual classroom!*

### EDUCATION STANDARDS

#### ***Social Studies***

Standard - CC.8.6.9-10.C

Standard - CC.8.6.9-10.D

#### ***Visual Arts***

9.1.12.A, C, E, H and J

9.2.12.A, C-D, F-I, K-L

9.3.12.A-B, E

9.4.12.A, D

## BIG IDEAS

1. Art is a means of communicating and understanding ideas.
2. Art is a means of understanding the time period and/or culture in which it was created, as well as other disciplines.
3. An individual response to art may be formed through thoughtful analysis and reflection.
4. There are various types of prints and, therefore, various types of elements, skills, and techniques that can be practiced to make a print.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

1. What can be learned from studying the history of an art form?
2. How can a print be “read”?
3. Why do artists choose prints over other art forms?
4. How does the study of others’ art help artists improve in their craft?

## LESSONS

1. *Change Change Change: A Brief History of Printmaking*
2. *Rhythms: The Elements of Art*
3. *Reflections: Mastering Art Criticism*
4. *The Forger (Part I): An Introduction to Relief Printmaking Techniques*
5. *The Forger (Part II): An Introduction to Surface Printmaking Techniques*

## END OF UNIT ASSESSMENT

The Unit will culminate with a comprehensive printmaking project. In the final two lessons of this Unit, students experiment with relief and surface printmaking techniques. This project, however, should be far more detailed and complex than any of the printmaking activities completed over the course of the Unit. Students will produce an entirely original design to turn into a relief or surface print. They must be prepared to explain the process for creating the print including their inspiration and, if applicable, historical context.



# *Change Change*

## *Change:* a brief history of printmaking

*Lesson 1 of 5, Making an Imprint, High School Unit*

*Change Change Change*, 1922, Woodcut, Wharton Esherick.

## OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Esherick's introduction to printmaking came in 1922, when a young writer named Mary Marcy approached him with an ambitious idea. She wanted to write a book of poetry for children on the highly controversial topic of evolution. Wharton was to illustrate it. Among the prints he made for this project was a jungle scene entitled *Change Change Change*. It is with the notion of *Change* in our minds that we embark on this five-lesson unit on printmaking with this brief look to the past, with the hope it will foster a richer understanding of printmaking. Students will create their own miniature exhibit to inform peers about a chosen era of printmaking history, as well as its relationship to the present and future.

## OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Discuss the general history of printmaking,
- Analyze works of art for historical, cultural, and/or artistic significance, and
- Develop a small exhibit (whether virtual or physical) of their own.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Prints (either physical or digital photos, along with some means of displaying them),

*Looking for inspiration? We have linked to some amazing museums around the country that hold Esherick*

work in their collections, right on [our website](#)!

2. Internet ready computers for further research (and note taking, if applicable). (*Note, if creating virtual exhibits, software to create a presentation or some other form of virtual exhibit is needed.*),
3. *Optional:* Paper, Poster Board, Scissors, Pens/Pencils, Colored Pencils, etc. (or anything that may be handy for creation of a physical exhibit), and
4. *Optional:* [Our Companion Teachers' Guide](#) to help guide your discussion. It may also be offered to students, for reference.

## VOCABULARY

Albrecht Dürer- 15th century German printmaker with a remarkable ability to draw the audience into his work utilizing contemporary imagery, depth, and perspective not before seen.

Elizabeth Catlett- African-American and Mexican artist whose work, including her various prints, sought to capture the experience of women of color in early 20th century America.

German Expressionism -Art movement with roots in the 1920s that sought to capture an emotional reality over a physical one. This was expressed well by bold and flat woodcut images that also happened to be cheaper and quicker to produce and disseminate.

Katsushika Hokusai- Japanese ukiyo-e artist whose woodblock prints, like The Great Wave off Kanagawa, represent not only evolution in printmaking skill and technology, but also a critical time in art history when Eastern and Western cultures met.

The New Woodcut Movement- Refers to the early 20th century Chinese Movement that valued the woodcut for its potential to disseminate messages of social change.

Ukiyo-e- Literally, “pictures of the floating world,” this refers to an artistic style which originated in 17th century Japan and is marked by contemporary subject matter.

## ACTIVITY

### *Introduction*

Begin with a lecture/classwide discussion on prints and their evolution. Consider taking a counter-chronological approach to this, beginning with a general introduction to contemporary printmaking and then working backward and making connections as you go. Our [Teachers' Guide](#) may help you. *Note, this may take more than one class period, depending on the story you decide to tell.*

Then, introduce the task at hand. You may wish to include discussion of how students have encountered artwork, including prints, in museums. Discussion questions around museum exhibits may include; *Why do you think the works were chosen?, How did that impact your experience?, Is there anything you wish was different to make the experience more engaging for you?, etc.*



If working in the classroom or if technology allows, consider allowing students to work in pairs or small groups.

### *Developmental Activities*

Students will begin by picking an era in the evolution of printmaking that you discussed. This will serve as the theme for their own small original exhibit.

They will then begin researching key prints produced in this era and select at least five (5) prints and/or related artifacts to be included in their exhibit. Each piece selected should have a corresponding label which identifies it and offers a small explanation of its connection to the subject era in art history.

Challenge students to make connections to other eras (including the present or even the future) with their text and/or graphics.

### *Closure*

If possible, students should share their exhibits with their peers. If not, they should describe what they learned and submit their work for assessment. If time allows, ask students to reflect on the process of creating this project. What worked? What didn't? Given the chance, what might you do differently? Finally, allow students to share comments and questions.

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on the level of understanding and creativity displayed in their exhibits. Thorough research should be evident. Presentations should clearly demonstrate a thorough understanding of the chosen theme and its importance to the evolution of printmaking.

## DIFFERENTIATION OPTIONS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

### *Advanced Learners*

Advanced students may wish to explore more specific themes for their exhibits. For instance, rather than simply "The New Woodcut Movement," students may wish to examine "Women and The New Woodcut Movement" or "Politics and The New Woodcut Movement." This may offer the opportunity for inclusion of more diverse artifacts and historical context in exhibits.

Further, students may wish to create a gallery map that evidences consideration of geographic placement of pieces as it relates to visitor experience. *What will visitors look at first? Second? Third? Why?* Students familiar with design software may wish to utilize same to create a virtual gallery to house their exhibit.

### *Learners with Special Needs*

Apply more structure to the current plan for learners with special needs. Deliver systematic instruction on museum exhibits and offer examples (including [our own virtual Imprint Exhibition!](#)).

Consider offering students a selected list of themes and resources to choose from (for instance, Esherick's [\*Hickory Dickory\*](#) may fit themes ranging from German Expressionism, to 1930s, to posters).

Labels should be written at each student's comfort level and may simply identify pieces, rather than including longer descriptions.

If technology allows, provide assistance (and/or encourage frequent check-ins) throughout the process.

Finally, assistive technology (such as text-to-speech software) may be useful for students in completing the written component of this project.

### *English Language Learners ("ELLs")*

While the present plan may involve a great deal of language, in research and production of exhibits, all can and should be translated, as needed. Activity can be modeled and/or supplemented with guided notes. Entering or Emerging ELLs may produce labels with names and dates for pieces, where Expanding and Bridging ELLs may be able to further develop tombstone information and/or wall text, with support.



# Rhythms:

## the elements of art

Lesson 2 of 5, Making an Imprint, High School Unit

*Rhythms*, 1922, Woodcut, Wharton Esherick.

### OVERVIEW

*Rhythms* is a Matisse-inspired study in detail and movement. Before students find their *Rhythms* as printmakers, they must understand the elements of art. Thus, the present lesson seeks to introduce (or reintroduce, as the case may be) students to the elements of art, specifically as they relate to prints. Then, they will practice their art critiquing skills as they seek to practice identifying various elements in a series of Esherick's prints.

### OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to identify and describe key elements of art and design in various prints.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Internet Ready Computers ,
2. Examples of Prints (See, [our website](#) for some helpful hints!), and
3. *Optional:* Our [Companion Presentation](#), to guide your discussion of the elements (and provide some useful examples!).

### VOCABULARY

Color- Artistic element produced by light reflected off a surface. Consider the difference between primary and secondary colors, as well as the properties of hue, value, and intensity.

Elements- Stylistic building blocks (color, form, line, shape, space, texture and value) which an artist uses to construct a work of art.

Form- A three-dimensional shape. In printmaking, this third dimension is somewhat of an illusion which may be created by perspective or other elements, like value. Form also refers to the

physical makeup of the piece.

Line- As the most basic element, this is where all art begins. It is represented by a point moving through space. Contour, cross-contour, hatching and cross-hatching are all lines found in prints.

Shape- When two points of a line meet, they form a shape. This is a two-dimensional closed area, usually marked by some contrast (such as a change in color or value). Shapes can be geometric or organic, positive or negative.

Space- Describes any area above, below, or within a piece. Perspective is among the many tools that help an artist create the illusion of space in a two-dimensional work, like a print.

Texture- The way an object feels or may appear to feel. In two-dimensional work, this is called Invented Texture and is created with a pattern of lines and shapes.

Value- Refers to relative lightness or darkness of a color or hue.

## ACTIVITY

### *Anticipatory Set*

If you are working in a classroom, consider setting up a gallery walk by hanging the prints you have chosen around the room.



Create a virtual gallery walk experience with slideshow software!

### *Introduction*

Begin with a classwide discussion. Introduce the various elements of art and design, as they relate to prints/printmaking. Remember, our [Companion Presentation](#) can help to guide this!

Now, introduce the task at hand.

### *Developmental Activities*

Students should take time to view your “gallery” and choose one print to which they will respond by writing a one paragraph evaluation. Evaluations should include discussion of the subject print’s use of the elements studied in the present lesson.

### *Closure*

If possible, allow students to share and/or discuss their evaluations. Finally, allow students to share comments and questions. All written work should be submitted for assessment.

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on their level of participation in lesson activities/discussions and the level of understanding displayed in their written product. Each written evaluation should accurately identify and describe any elements/principles contained in the subject artwork.

## DIFFERENTIATION OPTIONS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

### *Advanced Learners*

This Plan contains ample possibilities for content differentiation. Discussion and resultant student products may reflect a deeper understanding of each element and its impact on the overall finished piece. For example, rather than simply identifying value, students may create a value scale or pick out the individual values in a piece of art. Further, evaluations may include theories as to how said value contributes to the finished piece.

### *Learners with Special Needs*

Consider limiting the elements discussed. For instance, line, shape, and space may be most basic and relevant to Esherick's prints. Have students label elements in a list of pre-selected artwork. Provide assistance and examples, as needed.

### *English Language Learners ("ELLs")*

Similar to the above, for Beginner ELLs, provide students with select artwork to work from and ask them to label basic elements like line and shape. For instance, if considering *Rhythms* (pictured above), they may label contour lines.

# Reflections

## mastering art criticism

*Lesson 3 of 5, Making an Imprint, High School Unit*



*Reflections*, 1922, Woodcut, Wharton Esherick.

### OVERVIEW

Time to move past the basic elements, do some deep *Reflecting*, and start to “read” prints. In the present lesson, students will explore more abstract ideas like movement, theme, and emphasis in various prints and will use these ideas to formulate an individual response.

### OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to recognize and describe principles and themes in prints and, ultimately, use them to formulate a personal response to a work of art.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Art! Use any of the pieces you have used thus far, in this Unit, or create an entirely new set! *Don't forget, you will need a means of displaying them (whether physical or virtual),*
2. Internet ready computers, and
3. Pens/Pencils and Paper or word processing software for notetaking and writing assignment.

### VOCABULARY

Emphasis- A principle that describes the focal point of the piece, as communicated by the artist.

Interpretation- A philosophy of art through which meaning is prescribed.

Movement- Principle that describes an illusion of movement created by any one or combination of the other elements. This may also refer to a historical grouping of artists with a common style or philosophy (i.e. Impressionist Movement).

Principles- Criteria that explains how elements are arranged within a work of art, used in analysis.

Rhythm- Refers to the pattern in which your eye travels through a work of art, created through repetition of elements.

Theme- Refers to the subject of the work of art.

## ACTIVITY

### *Anticipatory Set*

As a continuation of the previous lesson, consider keeping the same gallery walk setup. Alternatively, you may wish to update your selection of prints.

### *Introduction*

Begin with a classwide discussion. Discussion should include explicit instruction on the basic framework for critiquing art, beginning with close looking and progressing through analysis and reflection. You should select an example from your list of prints and identify key ideas like theme and movement, as outlined in Vocabulary, above. Discussion questions may include, *What do you see?*, *What do you think the artist was trying to communicate with their use of these ideas?* *Why?*, and *What do you think of this piece of art?*

Now, introduce the task at hand.

### *Developmental Activities*

Students will, once again, choose one print (which may or may not be different from their choice in Lesson 2!) and formulate a personal written response to it. Responses should include a discussion of the above ideas (or any others you may necessitate) that are incorporated and how that contributes to (or detracts from) the overall theme/ message of the piece. This may include a discussion of the elements as well.

*Note, this may be an ongoing activity, in which students formulate a journal entry in response to a specific work of art on a regular basis. They may include sketches. Said journal entries may take the form of responses to specific prompts, as well.*

### *Closure*

If possible, allow students to share and/or discuss their responses. All written work should be submitted for assessment. Finally, allow students to share comments and questions.

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on their level of participation in lesson activities/discussions and the level of understanding displayed in their written product. Each written evaluation should accurately identify and describe artistic ideas contained in the subject artwork.

## DIFFERENTIATION OPTIONS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

### *Advanced Learners*

Advanced learners may cross curricula, adding historical research to their responses. Consider allowing students (whether advanced or not) to select their own subject artwork.

### *Learners with Special Needs*

Consider use of a graphic organizer or guided notes to help structure responses. Content may be limited to one or two basic ideas like emphasis. Simply ask students to identify these concepts in pre-selected prints (i.e. “What does the artist want you to focus on? Why do you say that?...”).

### *English Language Learners (“ELLs”)*

Similarly, a graphic organizer may help guide ELLs. This plan is extremely language intensive and, therefore, translations should be utilized, as needed. What’s more, you may wish to provide simplified language. If possible, students should be allowed to work together. Heterogeneous groups may help provide needed support.





# *The Forger (Part I):*

## an introduction to relief printmaking techniques

*Lesson 4 of 5, Making an Imprint, High School Unit*

*The Forger*, 1923, Woodcut, Wharton Esherick.

### OVERVIEW

In 1855, Walt Whitman's *Song of the Broad-Axe* was originally published as part of a compilation called *Leaves of Grass*. Flash forward nearly 70 years to 1924 when Esherick illustrated the poem in a new publication. Like the craftsman depicted in the woodcut illustration for *Song of the Broad-Axe*, students are now prepared to start *Forging* (last time, we promise!) prints of their own! The present lesson is intended to provide students with a general introduction to basic relief printmaking techniques, the method favored by Esherick.

*Note, the ultimate goal of the next two lessons is to compare and contrast two different means of creating prints. Though these lessons focus on relief and surface printing, feel free to substitute any two techniques you choose.*


### OBJECTIVE


Students will be able to identify, explain, and replicate relief printmaking techniques.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Printmaking supplies (get creative and use whatever is available!),

*Note, this might include wood or linoleum, brayer, sponges, water containers, etc. **Feel free to assemble your own list, with any materials that best suit your needs.***

 Supplies are available at retailers from [Amazon](#) to [Blick](#). Even potatoes will do, if that's all that's handy!

2. Printmaking paper (medium weight),
3. Ink and/or paint, with tray and brushes,
4. *Optional:* Paper and pencils (for drawing a template),
5. Safe cutting and/or carving tools (  A nail or pumpkin carving tools may work, if that is handy) , and
6. Don't forget your apron and any other protective gear you may need!

## VOCABULARY

Block/Plate- The material into which a design is carved to make a relief print.

Intaglio- Refers to a collection of techniques all involving the etching of an image into a surface. The opposite of a relief.


Relief- Collection of techniques involving the carving of an image from a flat surface. Ink or paint must then be applied to the surface left raised.

Woodcut vs. Wood Engraving- While both refer to relief printing using wood, a woodblock is carved along the grain while a wood engraving is carved into the end of the woodblock, allowing for more detail.

## ACTIVITY

### *Anticipatory Set*

If working in the classroom, take the time before class to set up supplies at student workstations.

 Disperse a list of supply needs to students in advance.

### *Introduction*

In classwide discussion and lecture, review the types of printmaking and reasons for using same. If possible, consider modeling basic relief carving and printing. Ask students to reflect on their individual creative processes and introduce the task at hand.

### *Developmental Activities*

Students will produce a very small and simple design (i.e. a star or other such icon or symbol). Designs should be simple enough to be produced quickly and easily, during time allotted. Said design will then be used to create a small relief print.

### *Closure*

Regroup for closing discussion. Allow students to share any comments or questions. Students should retain their work as they will be revisiting it in Part II!

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on their level of participation in developmental activities and class discussion.

## DIFFERENTIATION OPTIONS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

### *Advanced Learners*

Consider adding a challenge by introducing more of an element of choice. Perhaps students may wish to etch or produce an intaglio print, rather than carve. Maybe they may even wish to explore a new technique! Maybe they will wish to integrate history, updating a famous print or creating an original (and more complex) design, utilizing that same style.

### *Learners with Special Needs*

Students may require one-on-one support. This may be achieved through frequent check-ins with teacher.

Students with mobility limitations may benefit from working with partners or small groups, so as they may contribute to the overall design and witness the process of printmaking, but peers may carry out carving. If assistance or one-on-one support is available (i.e. paraprofessionals, family, etc.), it should be utilized.

For students with cognitive delays, consider further simplifying designs. This may include either a simple geometric shape or even a line or collection of lines.

### *English Language Learners*

The present lesson requires limited language for Developmental Activity. Instructions should be translated, as needed. Student presentations of work may also be translated or simplified to include a few brief explanatory phrases, as applicable.



# *The Forger (Part II):*

## an introduction to surface printmaking

*Lesson 5 of 5, Making an Imprint, High School Unit*

*The Forger*, 1923, Woodcut, Wharton Esherick.

### OVERVIEW

In the present lesson, students will continue their exploration of basic printmaking techniques by recreating the designs they created in Part I as a surface print. The two prints will then be compared/contrasted.

### OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to identify, explain, and replicate surface printing techniques.

### MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Printmaking supplies (which may include plexiglass, ink, oil, sponges, water containers, etc, but get creative and use whatever is available!)

■ [This Kitchen Lithography Demo](#) on YouTube does it with tin foil, vinegar, and soda!

2. Printmaking paper (medium weight),
3. Trays
4. Brushes, and
5. Apron and any other supplies to ensure you and your space remain clean and safe!

## VOCABULARY

Drypoint- Intaglio related technique in which an image is etched onto a metal surface.

Lithography- Method of printmaking involving the transfer of an image from a repellent surface (i.e. oiled) to a receptive surface.

Silk Screen- Refers to a type of surface printing in which an image is printed through a screen.

Surface Printing- Refers to the process of printing from a flat surface. Among the most common methods of surface printing is lithography.

## ACTIVITY

### *Anticipatory Set*

If working in the classroom, take the time before class to set up supplies at student workstations.



*Disperse a list of supply needs to students, far enough in advance for them to assemble said supplies.*

### *Introduction*

In classwide discussion and lecture, introduce students to surface printing and the reasons for using it, as opposed to relief printing. If possible, consider modeling basic surface printing. Introduce the task at hand.

### *Developmental Activities*

Students should take the designs they created in Part I and translate them to a surface print (whichever process they choose or that is available).

### *Closure*

Regroup for closing discussion. Discuss the differences in the images created over Parts I and II. Allow students to share any comments or questions. Work should be submitted for assessment. Now you're ready for the End of Unit Assignment!

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed based on their level of participation in developmental activities and class discussion. Relief and surface prints should demonstrate clear and thorough understanding of processes. Resultant discussion should demonstrate understanding of the similarities and differences between relief and surface printing.

## DIFFERENTIATION OPTIONS FOR DIVERSE LEARNERS

### *Advanced Learners*

The present lesson is designed to be inherently flexible, allowing teachers freedom to edit as needed to best serve their students. Thus, for advanced learners, consider adding a challenge by transferring some of that freedom to them. Perhaps *students* can choose which technique or style they wish to explore. They may even wish to invent their own! Whichever techniques or processes they choose, they must be prepared to compare/contrast them and make inferences concerning the optimal use for each.

### *Learners with Special Needs*

Though the present lesson will likely present less of a physical burden than relief printing, group work may still be required.

What's more, there are still ample opportunities for differentiation. For one, consider making the above activity as simplified as is dictated by student needs. Perhaps designs are simple shapes and/or lines. Perhaps assistance may be needed in completing physical tasks. Any and all avenues for support should be explored.

### *English Language Learners*

As with Part I, Part II requires limited language for Developmental Activity. Again, instructions should be translated, as needed. Developmental activities should be modeled. Student presentations of work may also be translated or simplified to include a few brief explanatory words or phrases, as applicable.