



# SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

## CHARACTER EDUCATION VISUAL ART KITS

### Set 7: Family Responsibility and Commitment

#### Discussion Topic

What is a family? How do we communicate love and affection?

#### Picasso, Pablo

1881–1973 Born in Spain, worked in France, painter, innovator, sculptor

#### *Baboon and Young (1951)*

bronze (cast 1956), after found objects

21" high, base 13.5" x 7" (53.3, 33.7 x 17.4 cm)

Museum of Modern Art, New York

#### Classroom Time 4 periods of 40 minutes

**About the Artist** Early-20th-century Spaniard Pablo Picasso, one of the most prolific artists who ever lived, left behind thousands of paintings upon his passing at the age of 92. While his paintings will always be his definitive legacy, keen observers of art have always celebrated his hundreds of sculptures as an equal, if lesser known, tribute to his genius.

Recognition for Picasso's sculptures came late because Picasso himself had made them one of the best-kept art secrets of the 20th century. Until the 1960s, he kept his sculptures away from the public and, until his death in 1973, almost all of the originals remained in his possession. At Picasso's first retrospective in the Galeries Petit in 1932, only seven sculptures were exhibited. It was not until the important exhibitions in Paris, London and New York of 1966 and 1967 that these sculptures were made public.

Picasso's sculptures were notable for their ingenious transformation of everyday objects into art forms. The playful *Baboon and Young* is a striking example of Picasso's humor and creativity. He took two toy cars and fashioned them into the head of the baboon. To form the rotund body, he used a jug and affixed handles from other pots to indicate the shoulders. The result is a sculpture that can be interpreted on two levels, with a cursory glance yielding a mildly stylized monkey, but a closer look revealing the wildly inventive integration of common objects into a new, yet familiar, form. *Baboon and Young* would become one of Picasso's most famous sculptures and is extremely popular among children.

The piece remained an assemblage smoothed and held together by plaster until 1955 when six bronze sculptures were cast from the original. The Museum of Modern Art's bronze was the fifth to be cast. One of the six cast sculptures, which was owned by a private collector, was auctioned at Christie's in 2002 and fetched \$6.7 million. The previous record for a sculpture by Picasso was \$1.8 million.

**Objectives *Students will:***

- Understand how Picasso created *Baboon and Young*, and interpret the expressive content of the work.
- Discuss and define what a family unit consists of, and form conclusions of their own.
- Identify and consider methods of communication family members use to express love and caring.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how people communicate at home. Report reactions and responses received.
- Transform found objects and materials into a new three-dimensional construction using the assemblage method pioneered by Picasso.

**Teacher Preparation *Several days before the lesson:***

- Display the reproduction. Challenge students to tell you what the sculpture was originally made of.
- Outline methods of communication in chart form (see Preparation, in Character Education Activity).
- Ask the librarian for a collection of books with photos of animals or locate photos from magazines and other classroom resources.
- Organize a collection of found objects, and gather other materials for the sculpture project.

**Guided Looking *Lead a discussion, with comments and questions such as:***

1. Pablo Picasso, created this piece during 1950–1951 in his studio, where he lived with Françoise Gilot and their children, Claude and Paloma. The piece is 21” (53.3 cm) high. Fifty years ago it was considered very unusual. *What animal are we looking at? What do they appear to be doing?* (The sculpture is titled *Baboon and Young*. The mother baboon is supporting the baby in her arms while the baby holds onto its mother with its limbs stretched across her chest.)
2. *Look closely at the sculpture. What do you see that is unusual or unexpected?* (The sculpture is made of objects **appropriated** from **everyday life**. The mother's head consists of two toy cars given to the artist's son, Claude, by the dealer Kahnweiler. The top of one car is placed so that the roof is the baboon's head and the grille at the front of the car is the upper portion of the face. The second car, placed upside down, creates the heavy lower lip and chin typical of baboons.) *Can you find other objects in this sculpture?* (The rump and tail were created from a metal cooking pan with the handle bent up at the end, and the ears fashioned from two metal handles. A large pot is the base for the rotund body (some sources indicate that this was a soccer ball). To this Picasso affixed handles from other pots, plus pieces of wood and metal.)
3. This technique is called **assemblage** and was pioneered by Picasso in 1914, so it is a recent development in sculpture compared to the history of modeling and carving. The **composition** is formed by joining together **found objects**; individual manmade

pieces that originally served another purpose such as the soccer ball, toy cars and ceramic pieces Picasso used in the work. Once the pieces were assembled and attached, Picasso covered the sculpture with plaster, permitting him to fill in and smooth the **spaces** between the objects (**negative spaces**), thus making the sculpture look whole and creating a sense of **unity**, rather than a collection of unrelated pieces of junk.

4. For four years, Picasso kept the sculpture stored in his studio just as it was — a creation of found objects and plaster. Then in 1955, he allowed the sculpture to be **cast** before it started to degenerate with age. Making a cast from an original piece involves making a heat-resistant **mold** around the sculpture. Once the mold is cast, **liquid bronze** is poured into the mold and left until it hardens. This process makes the **original** sculpture permanent and allows **duplicates** to be made. *Since the mold was made, how many Baboon and Young sculptures do you think were cast?* (There are six. This one belongs to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and was the fifth to be cast.)
5. *What kinds of **forms** did Picasso create by combining and assembling such disparate elements with one another? (**Cylindrical, spherical.**)*
6. *Casting the piece in bronze also added to the effect of a **real** creature. Notice that the sculpture does not have a uniform **texture**. Which parts of the sculpture are **matte** and which are **shiny**?* (Mention that, after casting, the sculpture was a single color; by its nature, bronze metal has little variation. A **patina** or chemical coloring was painted and rubbed on the sculpture, adding golden highlights to the face, chest and other areas. The rougher areas are reminiscent of patches on a baboon's body where the fur has worn away, making the animal more realistic.)
7. *What do you think people might have thought about Picasso when they saw the sculpture? How do you feel about art made from junk and other **found materials**? In your opinion, is this acceptable?* (Picasso made his first **assemblage** in 1914, and even in 1951, when this one was produced, transforming discarded junk into sculptures was still very modern and sometimes shocking to the public. Today it is acceptable and taken for granted that sculptors and painters will use their creativity to give new meaning and life to castaway junk.)
8. *Look at the **shape** of the mother's feet. Are baboons' feet really that large? Why would Picasso exaggerate the feet as compared to the body?* (Baboons' feet are much smaller than that. The large feet give the **three-dimensional** figure more stability and allow it to stand on its own. It also gives the mother a feeling of strength — both in the sense of supporting her own weight and in being a mother.)
9. *What kind of balance did Picasso use (**asymmetric, symmetric**)?* (The sculpture is very close to being symmetrical. Note that, while the heavy rump and tail stick out and add interest to the piece, they also help to balance the whole.)
10. *The theme of caring is expressed in the sculpture. How is the loving and caring relationship **emphasized** in the work?* (The baby is shown hanging onto its mother. The mother supports the child. We sense tenderness and love.) *How does the sculpture*

*make you feel?* (Help students make connections between their feelings about caring and those expressed by the artist.)

11. *In your opinion, what is especially interesting about this piece? Does it have a sense of humor? Is it outrageous? How well did Picasso capture the essence of the baboon figure? What if the sculpture had been carved of stone instead of assembled and cast in bronze — would it be as interesting? More or less? Why?*

### **Character Education Activity** *What Is a Family?*

**Preparation:** Prepare the *Communications Chart*. Outline in chart form three methods of communication among family members: *Words as Communication*, *Physical Forms of Communication*, *Actions as Communication*.

**Procedure:** Discussing the nature of family requires sensitivity and a definition sufficiently open that it can embrace groupings such as single-parent families, foster care and children living with grandparents. Begin by discussing what constitutes the nuclear family unit. Then consider what the term *extended family* means and list various groupings on the chalkboard. Next, examine ways that family members communicate love and caring. Mention to students that people have different ways of expressing caring and are sometimes uncomfortable with the ways we may want them to use to communicate their feelings. For instance, when a father works hard providing for the family's needs and security, his children might wish that he would show them caring and affection in the more open sense of hugging and saying "I love you." Use the *Communication Chart* to list valid suggestions from students. To help students get started, offer a few suggestions: *Words as Communication* might include verbal or written expressions such as a sending a card, note, e-mail or letter. *Physical Forms of Communication* could involve a hug, a pat on the head, and a kiss on the cheek. *Actions as Communication* is a much broader category, and possibilities might include, playing sports with parent(s), helping with the household chores, mom or dad driving me to my practice.

**Assessment** Ask students to consider the *Communication Chart* and select three things, one from each list, that they can and will do at home to express their caring feelings toward a parent, sibling, or guardian. After a specified amount of time, have students report on what they accomplished and the responses received from the person targeted by presenting them verbally to the class or in writing.

### **Art Activity** *Amazing Assembled Animals*

**Materials:** A collection of discarded manmade objects: plastic containers such detergent jugs and food tubs, cylindrical tubes from paper towels and toilet paper, aluminum pie pans, egg cartons, fabric remnants, colored wrappings, foil, ribbons, boxes and containers of various shapes and sizes, packaging material, plastic and Styrofoam drinking cups, and more... Other found objects might include old toys, tools, nuts, bolts, corks, bottle caps, wood chips, metal strips, etc. The cooperation of class members, parents and the whole school population should be enlisted in collecting and saving materials. Other sources that might be solicited: neighborhood stores, hardware stores, drugstores, printing shops,

furniture manufacturers, etc. Set up labeled “drop” boxes for storage of donated items. Materials needed for the actual construction of the sculpture: utility or matte knives, scissors, adhesives such as epoxy, white resin glue, rubber bands, pins, masking tape, string and possibly wire; finally, colored and clear acrylics, paper, and/or fabrics for finishing the surfaces

**Preparation** Display the collection of magazines and library books on animals, and the collection of discarded objects.

**Procedure:** Encourage students to let the “stuff” inspire them in the construction of an animal. Guide them in understanding the potential of the materials available and seeing what kind of animal they might construct. Browsing through animal books will help them to decide what is feasible, given the materials they have to work with.

Teachers of young children need to limit the choices of materials to assemble, and give very concrete instructions such as specifying that the body must be made of a plastic cup or drink bottle, while still encouraging inventiveness.

Older students should be given free rein with the materials. Remind them that the goal of the project is to transform found objects into a freestanding sculpture of an animal. Provide tools and other construction materials. Be sure students choose objects to suit a purpose within the construction. Assist and guide students in improvising — finding ways the materials can be manipulated and changed — cut, joined, bent, combined, etc. Remind students to observe and work from all sides of the assemblage. Mention must be made of the qualities and limitations of adhesives available to securely attach the parts of the assemblage together. In some instances, layers of paste-soaked strips of paper or fabric could be used to hold the structure more solidly, and also to provide unity and a smoother finish.

Finishing the surfaces: To give visual unity to their assemblage, students should be limited to one color. Painting the artwork with a bronze or ocher color and rubbing another brownish hue on as a patina would result in an effect more similar to Picasso’s *Baboon and Young* (optional). Pattern and the texture of the animal might also be added. A final layer of clear acrylic would add another dimension to the work.

**Assessment:** Ask students to explain how they gave new meaning and life to this otherwise castaway garbage. Were students able to explain how they used manipulation and combined the objects to represent the animal? Give a number to each sculpture, and display them somewhere safe in the school (e.g., library). Post paper and a pencil next to the display inviting students from other classes to guess what animal is represented and determine how it was made. Share these remarks later in class.

## Resources

### *Books for the teacher*

Spies, Werner. *Pablo Picasso: The Sculptures*. Ostfildern, Germany: Hotje Cantz, 2000.

***Books for students***

Anholt, Laurence. *Picasso\_ and the Girl with a Ponytail*. Brea, CA: Barron's Juveniles, 1998.

Boutan, Mila. *Art Activity Pack, Picasso*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998.

Ibi, Lepscky. *Picasso\_* (Famous Children Series). Brea, CA: Barron's Juveniles, 1993.

Pfleger, Susanne. *A Day With Picasso* (Adventures in Art Series). New York: Prestel USA, 1999.

Venezia, Mike. *Picasso* (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists). New York: Children's Press, 1993.

***Web sites***

The on-line Picasso Project (Texas A & M University) includes a catalog of over 6,000 of Picasso's works. The artworks are cataloged chronologically with images available for each.

[www.tamu.edu/mocl/picasso/tour/thome](http://www.tamu.edu/mocl/picasso/tour/thome)