

Sample Lesson using the Art Docent website for Romare Bearden

1. Use teacher's computer and projector, or Smart Board, to bring up the Art Docent website. (Some teachers will allow you to use their log in for the computer; others will want you to log in as an art docent. The art docent log in will be sent to all current docents in an email.)
2. From the Art Docent home page click on **Romare Bearden**. A picture of him will appear. Give a very brief introduction: "Today we are going to learn about the artist Romare Bearden. He was an African-American who was born in the southern United States but moved to New York during the Great Migration. He was famous for his collages depicting the life of African-Americans in the south and the north. Let's watch this video about his life."
3. Click on **Biography** under Romare's name.
4. In the yellow box to the right of the biography page click on **Video: Bearden Biography**. Ask the class questions during or after the video:
 - a. What kind of music is playing? Can you define "Jazz" music?
 - b. Do you think it was unusual for Romare's parents to be college educated? (It most definitely was)
 - c. I mentioned The Great Migration earlier; does anyone know what that was?
 - d. The video mentioned The Harlem Renaissance. What is a renaissance?
5. If there seems to be interest in either The Great Migration or the Harlem Renaissance or you have the time, you can click on those videos on the biography page. If not, skip this step.
6. Can anyone tell me what a collage is?
Click on **Bearden's Style** under Biography and discuss the art of collage. Bearden once described his work as "putting something over something else." The word collage comes from a French word meaning to paste or glue. What are some things you can use to make a collage?
7. Romare Bearden loved jazz music. Does anyone know what jazz is? Can you define "Jazz" music? What is improvisation? Watch and carefully listen to this next video. Click on **Video: Example of jazz improvisation**. The young

man starts out with a bass rhythm. The man who joins him is just someone who happened to be walking by. They have never even met before this let alone rehearsed.

Explain that when he was a boy, Bearden's family apartment was just across the street from the stage door of the Lafayette Theater. It was famous for its musical revues and plays. Bearden was influenced by the jazz he heard. Both collage and jazz change the rhythm of the line and work outside the usual frame. There is not a right way to make jazz or a collage. Both jazz and collage are considered improvisation, created spontaneously, on the spur of the moment, and noticeably by an individual or a group of individual performers, unlike an orchestra in which no individual performer stands out.

7. “We are going to look at a collage which expresses Romare’s love of jazz music”. Click on **Wrapping it up at the Lafayette.**

8. Click on **Click here for high resolution picture** which is located above the picture. This will bring up a large, high resolution picture of the collage.

9. Discuss the elements of the collage:

Look at this picture closely. Now close your eyes. What do you remember? What features stand out? Who are these people? Where are they? What time of day is it? What sounds can you imagine as part of this picture? What title would you give this work of art? What do the students think this collage is about?

What kinds of lines do you notice? How does this irregularity make you feel? What are the shapes, spaces, creating by the overlapping papers? How did the size (distortion) of some of the pieces affect what you remembered about the picture when you closed your eyes?

Romare Bearden conveyed the lively rhythm and vibrant color of the Lafayette during its heyday. Using pictures from magazines, scraps of paper, and bits of fabric, Bearden arranged several scenes, as they would appear to the theater audience. The band plays below in the pit, while dancers and singers perform energetically above on stage. African masks and exotic tree and flower forms decorate a backdrop topped by a scalloped red curtain. Bearden excelled in the

medium of collage, using it to express the spirit and reality of African-American culture.

10. Art Activity

Before your presentation: Click on **Activity: Jazz Music and Collage** in the yellow box on the Wrapping It Up at the Lafayette page for ideas and gather your supplies.)

You can click on any of the videos in the yellow box on the Wrapping It Up at the Lafayette page to play jazz or bring in a CD.

11. Clean up.