

17-B The Dove, 1964

Romare Bearden, (c. 1911–1988)



17-B Romare Bearden (c. 1911–1988), *The Dove*. 1964. Cut-and-pasted photoreproductions and papers, gouache, pencil, and colored pencil on cardboard, 13 3/8 x 18 3/4 in. (34 x 47.6 cm.). Blanche Rockefeller Fund (377.1971). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by SCALA / Art Resource, New York. Art © Estate of Romare Bearden Trusts / Licensed by VAGA, New York.

The Art

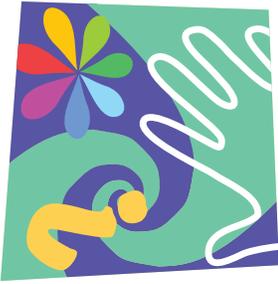
The Dove is a collage made of cut-up pictures, newspaper and magazine clippings, and colored paper glued to cardboard. Collage is another medium artists can use to create their art. The word “collage” comes from the French word that means “to glue.” *The Dove* is an artwork full of activity and includes animals, human body parts, fronts of buildings, and doorways. The dove in the picture is perched on a doorsill looking out over a busy scene in Harlem, New York. Because the collage has a mix of many different things, it creates a feeling of movement, excitement, and change in those looking at it.

The Artist

Romare Bearden was born in Charlotte, North Carolina. At the age of five, he moved to New York City with his family. Bearden’s mother was a writer who held gatherings of African American artists and leaders in the family’s home. Bearden graduated from New York University with a degree in math but made his living as a social worker. His art told stories about African American life in North Carolina, Harlem, and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Historical Perspective

In July 1963, one month before the historic march on Washington, D.C., led by Martin Luther King, Jr., Bearden and 15 other African American artists formed a group called Spiral. The group tried to answer the question “What is black art?” and explore what black artists should do at a time when blacks and whites were separated in the United States. The symbol of the spiral and its direction—moving upward and outward—sent a positive message about the issues these artists cared about. *The Dove* was one of 21 works Bearden made when he was involved with Spiral.



Conversations and Teaching Activities

Head Start Children ages 3 to 5

Encourage children to look carefully at this collage. It is quite detailed and full of objects children could easily recognize and describe. Introduce new vocabulary and find books that relate to the images included in this collage.

Analyzing and Interpreting



Ask the following questions to stimulate thinking and discussion:

- The title of this artwork is *The Dove*. Why do you think the artist gave it that name?
- Do you think this is a real place? Why or why not?
- What one word would you use to describe this artwork? Children might say torn, messy, colorful, dark, busy, interesting.
- Why do you think the artist made this collage?
- Why do you think he included animals? Why a dove? Where have you seen doves or other birds included in artworks before? You may have already shown children posters of *The American Flamingo* or *The Peacock Room*. If so, help them recall these artworks. Perhaps compare and contrast these images with Bearden's collage.
- How does this artwork make you feel? What do you see that makes you feel this way?
- Are there other things you would like to tell me about this artwork?

Describing



- ✓ Use your "I Spy" telescope to look carefully at this collage. There are many parts of objects to see, but can you find some whole objects too? There are two cats, one black and one white. Can you find the bird in this artwork? Do you know what kind of bird it is?
- ✓ Bearden uses pieces of magazine and newspaper images to create new pictures. What do you see in this picture? Children might say people, windows, steps, a street, a sidewalk, a woman.
- ✓ Ask the children to look closely and carefully at the details of this collage and then ask: Can you find a dove (top)? A black cat (center)? A white cat (lower left corner)?
- ✓ If you made a collage, what would you include in it?
- ✓ Explain that Romare Bearden lived in New York City when he created this collage. He lived in Harlem, and this collage includes parts of what his neighborhood looked like to him. Guide the children to think about their own neighborhood. Then ask: Are there any parts of the collage that look similar to your neighborhood? How are they similar or different from the neighborhood where you live? Are there buildings made of brick? Are these apartment houses? Are there cats or other animals in the neighborhood? What kind? Are there any doves?



Connecting and Extending

Introducing Vocabulary

apartment	dove	peace
bricks	magazine	photograph
collage	neighborhood	symbol
doorway	newspaper	window sill



Connecting and Extending continued...

Related Family Literacy Experiences

Parents and children can:

- ✓ make a collage of pictures from magazines and newspapers that shows environments similar to their neighborhood.
- ✓ recreate their neighborhood using recycled materials such as shoe boxes, toilet paper rolls, yogurt containers, etc.
- ✓ read *Town Mouse, Country Mouse* and create a collage based on a country neighborhood.

Related Educational Experiences

- ✓ Draw children's attention to the part of the collage that shows the dove. If possible, pass around a feather. Have children examine it and describe how it looks and feels. If you have already shown children *The American Flamingo* or *The Peacock Room* artworks, remind them of the birds pictured in these artworks. Display these posters side-by-side. Compare and contrast the bird images in these artworks. Discuss similarities and differences.
- ✓ Talk about sounds that birds make (humming, singing, screeching, etc.).



Books

City Sounds by Craig McFarland Brown (HarperCollins Publishers, 1992)

This book enumerates the many different sounds a visitor might hear in the city, including the honking of trucks, the sound of a jackhammer, and the bonging of a big clock.

Me and Uncle Romie: A Story Inspired by the Life and Art of Romare Bearden by Claire Hartfield (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002)

A boy from North Carolina spends the summer in New York City visiting the neighborhood of Harlem, where his uncle, collage artist Romare Bearden, grew up. The book includes a biographical sketch of Bearden and instructions on making a story collage.

Officer Brown Keeps Neighborhoods Safe by Alice K. Flanagan (Scholastic Library Publishing, 1998)

This book introduces a female deputy chief of the Hartford, Connecticut, police and discusses the things she is expected to do in her job.

The Jones Family Express by Javaka Steptoe (Lee and Low Books, 2003)

Steven tries to find just the right present for Aunt Carolyn in time for the annual block party. The book includes collage illustrations.

Town Mouse, Country Mouse by Jan Brett (Putnam Juvenile, 2003)

When the town mouse and the city mouse visit each other, they discover they prefer very different ways of life.

Have children make bird sounds they've heard. Ask them if they can recognize any birds by the sounds they make.

- ✓ Add descriptive words on your "word wall" or place them near the display of the poster of this artwork.
- ✓ Take a neighborhood walk or look at the area around your center. How is your neighborhood similar to or different from what is in *The Dove*?
- ✓ Construct an office or apartment building from large cardboard boxes. Add windows and doors. What were these buildings like in the books you read or the city you visited?

- ✓ Closely supervise children as they paint the buildings and add details. Review the photographs you took when you visited the nearby city. Could you create a post office and store fronts that you saw?

The ideas listed are just a few of the many activities that could be used to introduce or extend children's learning. Your knowledge of your children and families supports your ability to ensure positive learning experiences and outcomes for students. As an educator, you probably have ideas for books, songs, finger plays, and activities that you have thought of when introducing or extending children's learning related to the "A Head Start on Picturing America" artworks. We encourage you to confer with your colleagues, visit the local library or bookstore, and share your ideas with others.