

**Meet the Masters**

**April Program**

Georges Braque "Musical Forms"

Pablo Picasso "Still Life"

**About the Artist:**

See following pages.

**About the Artwork:**

See the following pages:

**Topics for Discussion:**

1. In what ways are these two artworks alike? How are they different?
2. Can you find a similar theme in these two works? (musical instruments)
3. What do you think of the colors used by the artists? Are the colors warm or cool?
4. Do the artists depict the objects as they appear in real life?
5. Picasso and Braque worked in the "cubist" style, can you see and tell why this style is named cubism?
6. How would you rearrange space like the cubist artists?

**Hands-on Art Activity:**

**Make a Cubist Collage**

**Materials:** Paper (app. 9" x 12")  
Construction paper (scraps and assorted sizes)  
Wallpaper samples, wrapping paper, cardboard  
Scissors  
Glue  
Oil pastels

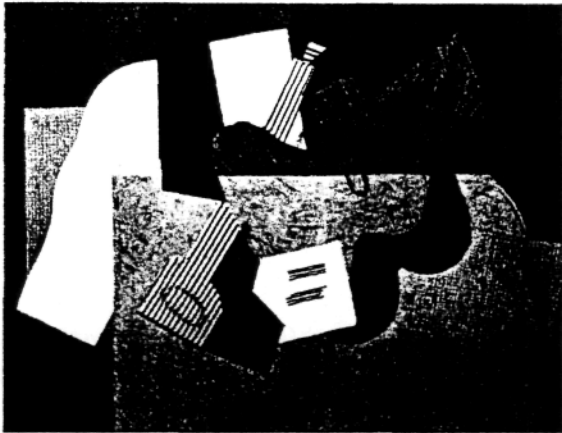
**Teacher Preparation:** An assortment of objects of various shapes are helpful for reference while doing this activity. Provide a table with a still-life containing an assortment of objects for the children to observe.

**Directions:**

1. First draw the shapes of various objects on assorted papers and cardboard. These should be large and simplified.
2. Cut out the shapes.
3. Look at the way each shape can be cut in half or fourths.
4. Arrange the shapes on the paper, rearranging their parts to make a cubist-like composition.
5. Using the oil pastels draw around the edges of the shapes and add details.
6. Each student should sign his or her name on the front when complete.

# Collage and Assemblage

## Georges Braque, *Musical Forms*



Georges Braque (zjorzj brahk), French, 1882–1963  
*Musical Forms*, 1918, Collage on Paper, 30 $\frac{3}{8}$  x 37 $\frac{3}{8}$ -in.  
Philadelphia Museum of Art: Louise and Walter  
Arensberg Collection

### The Artist

Born near Paris in 1882, Georges Braque was the son of a house painter and decorator who did landscape painting on Sundays. When Georges was eight, the Braques moved to Le Havre, a picturesque seaside port and resort favored by the Impressionists because of its color and light. Georges spent his boyhood here and was friends with Raoul Dufy and Othon Friesz. Coming from this boyhood legacy of Impressionism, these three would later become part of the colorful Fauves movement.

Although his colors were rich and unconventional, they were not exuberantly wild, and Braque did not stay long with the Fauves. He began to limit the colors on his palette and to investigate the new concepts of form and space Cezanne had introduced in his later paintings, a "breaking up of nature into cylinders, cones, and spheres."

The title Cubism came from Matisse's scornful criticism of Braque's work in 1908, when he labeled an exhibit of them "little cube paintings," but by 1922, both Braque and Picasso were exhibiting as Cubists. The analytical Braque and the imaginative Picasso soon took the movement in many directions. Braque is credited with introducing collage as an art form, though so much was to evolve from the many experiments of Braque and Picasso that *who* actually invented *what* is still controversial.

Today, Braque is recognized as one of the fathers of Modern Art. His explorations in painting, collage, and sculpture helped pave the way for a new understanding of space, form, subject matter, color, reality, beauty, and function in art.

### The Art

*Musical Forms* is one of Braque's later collages. Music was a favorite subject in Braque's work, and he represented many different instruments in his studies, including some that are rarely featured in painting, such as the zither, the mandola, and the bandoneon, similar to a concertina or accordion. His interest in this particular subject might have stemmed from his childhood days when he took flute lessons from Raoul Dufy's brother! He also played violin and "shoulder-strap piano" (accordion) well enough to entertain his artist and musician friends when they gathered to share ideas.

Though Braque never used actual musical scores in his collages, he suggests this aspect of music often on his canvases, as he does here in *Musical Forms*. How is the idea of sheet music represented? Could it be something other than sheet music? Why or why not?

The shapes in this piece are large and very simple. The materials are nothing more than plain and corrugated papers, with patches of imitation woodgrain wallpaper which, though obviously flat, suggests the color, volume, and texture of the guitar. Braque is credited with introducing scraps of woodgrain, marble, and other textural surfaces into painting, and the idea was eagerly picked up by Picasso and others. The space of *Musical Forms* is typically Cubist in its shallowness. Background and foreground are mostly defined by which shapes are applied first to the ground, and which follow progressively. See if you can find the first shapes applied to the last. The intense blue-gray background sets a pleasurable tone and contrasts the whites, grays, and tans, the actual colors of the papers themselves.

An additional feature of many of Braque's collages is the spare use of line drawn in paint or crayon directly on the cutouts. These help the eye complete the illusion of guitar, clarinet and written page. Braque has also added line drawing to other portions of the collage. What purposes do they serve? *Balance, shading, defining, and repeating scissor-cut lines.*

### Guided Analysis

#### Style:

Collage as introduced by Braque represents one of many outgrowths of the art movement known as Cubism. Cubism was originally a reaction to Impressionism. It continued Cezanne's search for

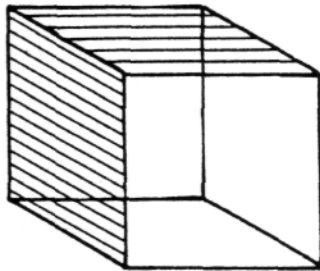
## Georges Braque, *Musical Forms*

geometric forms in nature but carried it further. First experimenting with traditional subject matter such as landscapes, still lifes, portraits, and nudes, the Cubists willfully rejected the principles of perspective. They sought to create more than the illusion of three-dimensional form in a two-dimensional space (the canvas). They wanted to achieve new forms from their subjects, making them both dimensional and flat at the same time. The technique represented what could be known about an object's appearance instead of what could be seen from one point of view. In Cubism, the manner of representation was as important as the subject itself.

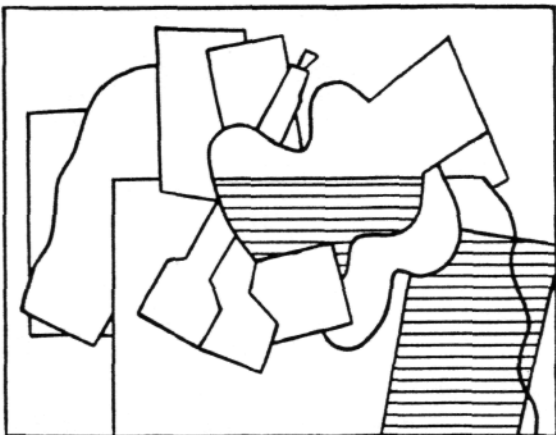
Around 1912, Synthetic Cubism began to dominate, bringing a strong interest in textures, either painted in simulation or through actual objects pasted to the canvas or paper in a trompe l'oeil or "fool-the-eye" technique.

### Point of View:

The Cubists proposed a new vision: the eye must look at multiple views of the same object, at the same time, and in the same space. From how many different angles can you see this cube?



Notice that some of the shapes appear to be both opaque and transparent at the same time! Can you locate these areas? How did Braque create this effect? This technique makes the eye work hard to see the multiple perspectives so favored by the Cubists.



The table appears both behind and on top of the guitar and rectangular shape.

### Principles of Design:

How has Braque emphasized the guitar and clarinet in his collage? *Their central location in the composition; the use of textural paper, especially with the clarinet; the drawing of these subjects; the use of the darkest "shadow" color to make them stand out.*

Draw a line with your finger to indicate the path your eye takes when you first look at this piece. What do you look at first? From there, where does your eye go? As simple as it might appear at first glance, Braque very carefully organized this collage to create a masterful composition. Where are colors repeated? Textures? Shapes? Locate the table. How can you tell? What might the shapes behind the table represent? Do they need to represent something specific or might Braque have placed them in the picture to balance and unify his other elements?

### Technique:

"Coller" is French for "to gum or paste", and collage means the process of pasting natural or manufactured materials onto a painted or unpainted canvas.

### Judgment:

To appreciate or understand a painting of a guitar, for instance, is it necessary that the subject be presented realistically? How might the Cubist view of a guitar better help us understand a real guitar? *Reducing it to its basic forms and planes, allowing us to see volume from many perspectives.*

Because Braque has abstracted and simplified the instruments in *Musical Forms*, are we justified in using the lack of realistic representation to conclude that the collage is not a "real" picture of a guitar or clarinet? Without knowledge of the title, how might you have identified the instruments?

### Comparison:

In what ways is *Musical Forms* like music? *Answers will vary with levels of sophistication. Accept all brainstorming to generate ideas. Some thoughts might be: Harmonies can overlap in a song —(Row, Row, Row Your Boat) as do the shapes in the collage; the use of different shades of the same color (brown to light tan) might correspond to the composer's use of different instruments to play the same note.*

**Activity:** Make a collage based on a theme of sports, music, or a hobby. Cut the shapes from different colored and textured papers.

### *Pablo Picasso* (1881 - 1973)

"Of all the twentieth century painters, the greatest was Pablo Picasso." So wrote one art critic upon the death of the great Picasso in 1973. But Pablo Picasso was more than just the greatest artist of the century. He was perhaps the boldest, most innovative, most enigmatic, and most versatile artist who ever lived. He could draw like Raphael, yet he destroyed traditional notions of beauty in art. Never content to stand still, he changed styles countless times throughout his life. He was a leader, not a follower, and his influence is still felt today. More than any other artist since Michelangelo, he deserves the title "genius."

Picasso was born in Malaga, Spain, in 1881. A child prodigy, he was already painting realistic works by age 14. He enrolled at the Barcelona Academy of Fine Arts as an advanced student, and quickly began experimenting with most of the avant-garde styles prevalent at the turn of the century. In the early 1900s, Picasso moved to Paris, where he would remain for the rest of his life. Inspired and stimulated by Parisian life, Picasso entered the first of his famous artistic "periods" — the Blue Period. From 1901 to 1904, Picasso painted melancholy scenes of crippled or impoverished people in a predominantly blue palette. After 1904, Picasso began his Rose Period, in which he painted scenes of harlequins and circus performers in lighter and warmer colors. But in 1907, Picasso unveiled a painting that shocked even his friends, and forever changed the art of painting. It was called "*Les Femmes d'Alger*," and it showed five large, angular women with strange mask-like faces. This painting marked the emergence of a new style called "cubism." Cubism was an attempt to explore the representation of three-dimensional objects on a two-dimensional surface by reducing them to overlapping planes. Picasso's experiments in cubism paved the way for later abstract painters, and they can be considered the basis for much of what we call "modern" art.

Throughout the 1920s and '30s, Picasso continued to try new styles. He combined elements of cubism and surrealism to produce "*Guernica*," a passionate anti-war painting completed in 1937. Picasso also created startling, innovative works in ceramics and graphics. As he grew older, Picasso seemed to grow more content, and his art became more lyrical and less frenzied. But he never allowed his artistic impulse to stagnate, and by the time of his death in 1973 he was hailed as the foremost artist of the era.

