

# Horizontal and Vertical Line Designs

by Pat Johns

A quick and easy way to get artwork ready for the art show is to cut 2-inches off the top and side of any paper that will be used for drawing or painting *prior* to the lessons. After the student work is completed, a 12" x 18" piece of colored paper is glued to the back of it, resulting in a clean, 1-inch frame around the finished piece.

As a result, I have stacks of 2-inch paper strips. The black strips that I cut are useful for a project I do with my first-grade classes in which they use horizontal and vertical lines.

To prepare for this lesson, I cut the scraps of black strips into two lengths. I make one pile of 9-inch strips and another pile of 12-inch strips. These strips are then cut into various widths, from wide to thin.

We begin this lesson by discussing Dutch painter, Piet Mondrian, and viewing reproductions of his art. Mondrian went to art school and, although he was more successful with painting landscapes, he found himself interested in abstract art.

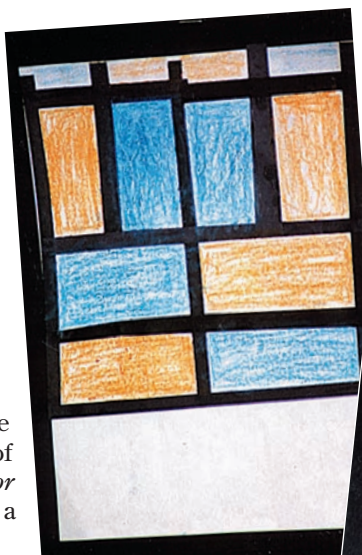
After art school, Mondrian moved to Paris, France, to explore Cubist art. It was at this time he developed a hatred for curved lines, and he began to paint geometric abstracts using horizontal and vertical lines. His art consisted only of sharp lines, shapes and color. He would paint only horizontal and vertical lines. In addition to black and white in his paintings, he used only the primary colors of red, yellow and blue.

To have students better understand what horizontal and vertical means, the students and I participate in some fun activities. First, I ask them to put their arms in a vertical position. Then, I ask they change their arms to a horizontal position. Next, I ask them to put their bodies in a vertical position, at which time they stand up. When I ask them to put their bodies in a horizontal position, they usually hesitate but end up lying on the floor, giggling.

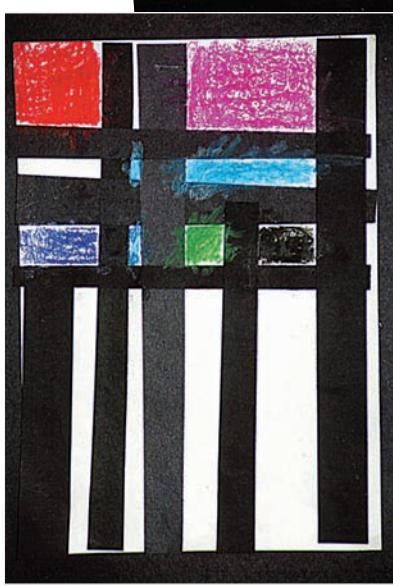
The students are now excited and ready to make their own geometric abstracts, using horizontal and vertical lines. After having been given a piece of 12" x 9" white construc-

- MATERIALS**
- 9" x 12" white construction paper
  - 9-inch and 12-inch black paper strips, cut into various widths
  - Paste or glue
  - Crayons
  - Prints of Piet Mondrian's geometric, abstract paintings

< Danie Hagan



^ William Jacobs  
< Caleb Morse



tion paper, they are instructed to take one strip at a time from one of the two piles of strips. The students then measure the strips against their paper. The long strips will fit across the 12-inch side of the paper and the short strips will fit across the 9-inch side. Each strip will be glued in place, overlapping and crossing one another.

The class will begin to see different shapes and sizes of rectangles and an occasional square. They can put their strips anywhere on their paper as long as they are in a vertical or horizontal position. If they wish, they can cut the strips to end on a black line rather than the edges. Otherwise, the strips should be touching the top and bottom or either side of the paper.

The final step is to pick out any rectangles or squares in their designs to color. Although Mondrian used only primary colors, my students may use colors of their choice. I suggest that they make their colors bright by first stroking horizontally and then coloring over the same shape again with vertical strokes. I repeat the words "vertical" and "horizontal" many times in order to reinforce the meaning of these words.

At the end of the class, I display all the students' artwork. This lesson results in many interesting geometric designs. Some are full of color, while others are a few lines with a touch of color. None looks exactly the same as another.

In addition to completing a beautiful and exciting design, this lesson gives the students some art appreciation and they learn some new vocabulary words. They also get some beginning experience with measurement. ■

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will...

- learn about Piet Mondrian and his style of painting.
- learn new vocabulary words.
- practice measuring.
- practice pasting.
- create a geometric abstract work of art.



Young Victoria concentrates as she colors in some of her rectangles.

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