

Janice Mason Art Museum  
LESSON PLANS FOR WIER EXHIBIT  
Background Information

**ARTIST NAME : Jasper Johns**

**ART PIECE(S) ON DISPLAY: “Target, 1967”; “Targets, 1967”; “White Target, 1968”**

**About the Artist**

Jasper Johns was born in 1930 in Augusta, Georgia. He was raised in Allendale, South Carolina and grew up wanting to be an artist. He says, “ In the place where I was a child, there were no artists and there was no art, so I really didn’t know what that meant.” A recent book has made public that Johns had a lonely and painful childhood. He received no formal art training as a youth, but attended the University of South Carolina for two years. In 1949 he moved to New York City but was drafted into the Army and was stationed in Japan for a time. After his discharge from the Army, he moved back to New York where he worked in a bookshop and later did display work with Robert Rauschenberg for Bonwit Teller and Tiffany.

During this time, he painted in his spare time and began painting objects that were familiar to both him and his audience. In 1954 he painted his first flag picture. He once stated, “Using the design of the American flag took care of a great deal for me because I didn’t have to design it. So I went on to similar things like targets-things the mind already knows.” In 1958, Johns had his first solo exhibition in New York. The show was sold out, and the Museum of Modern Art bought a total of five pieces, an unprecedented amount from an artist’s first show. In that same year, he did his first [sculpture](#) of mundane objects, and in 1960 he began working with [lithographs](#). For Johns, [printmaking](#) was a [medium](#) that encouraged experimentation, and his innovations in [screen printing](#), [lithography](#), and [etching](#) have revolutionized the field. The following year he did his first large map picture. Beginning in 1959, his work became increasingly [abstract](#), influenced by [Surrealism](#) and [Dadaism](#), with the painting surfaces combining bold colors with letters, and other symbols. He also began to create [assemblage](#), and from 1972 on, used a [cross-hatching](#) method.

Johns also was Artistic Advisor for the composer John Cage and Merce Cunningham’s Dance Company until 1972. In the early 1980’s, Johns incorporated into his work a proliferation of new [motifs](#) – three dimensional objects (including body casts) and literal depictions of planks, faucets, clothing and [ceramics](#). In the 80’s, [autobiographical](#) traces began to appear in his work, and he assembled [artifacts](#) and [symbols](#) to [narrate](#) the stages of life and periods of his career. Johns changed directions in the 90’s and turned his attention to the transformed, borrowed images that were traced from unknown sources.

His paintings now sell for more than any living artist in history, and his work is represented in nearly every major museum collection.

**About the Art**

Jasper Johns is credited as a founding father of [Pop](#), [Minimalism](#), and [Conceptual art](#). He was the first painter to use everyday objects and commonplace images in his art. His emphasis on the concrete led the artistic community away from [Abstract Expressionism](#), the dominant art movement of the time. His use of commonplace symbols and images focused the attention onto the surface of the canvas and contrasted with the [abstracted](#), emotion-filled paintings of [Abstract Expressionism](#). His painting, sculpture, prints, and drawings all contain either [autobiographical](#) elements or recognizable [symbols](#) from the second half of the twentieth century, and he changed

the direction of American painting with his adaptation of the commonplace and emphasis on the technique of painting. His paintings and prints are simple, yet can be viewed on a number of different levels.

All three Jasper Johns' pieces in this exhibit are [lithographs](#). "Target" 1967 is one of the simplest of all of Johns' lithographs, despite the use of six [stones](#) in producing it. It is printed on handmade paper and measures h 23" x w 23". "Targets" 1967 is also printed on handmade paper. The six [stones](#) used in "Target" were used to print the upper target, and were again run through the press, printing with white and varnish for the barely visible lower target. In "Targets", if the viewer concentrates on the black dot in the upper target for several seconds and then switches his focus to the lower target, a transfer of a complimentary image occurs to the lower target. The [primary colors](#) in the first print are seen in the lower target in this print. This piece measures h 34" X w 25". "White Target" was completed in 1968 and is printed on black Japan paper. The same six [litho stones](#) were used to create this piece as were used to create "Target" and "Targets". The three prints on exhibit are related in several ways:

1. The same [litho stones](#) are used in each of the three prints.
2. Prints progress from [primary colors](#) to [secondary colors](#) to white/black.
3. The background goes from white to gray to black.

### **Related terms**

abstract  
artifacts  
assemblage  
autobiographical  
ceramics  
collage  
Conceptual art  
cross hatching  
Dadaism  
etching  
litho stones  
lithograph  
lithographic method  
lithography  
medium  
Minimalism  
motif  
narrate  
Pop Art  
primary colors  
print  
printmaking  
screen printing  
sculpture  
secondary colors  
stones  
Surrealism  
symbol

## Specific Lesson Plans Grades K-5

### Kentucky Core Content

AH-E-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate art terminology (subject matter, ideas, elements of art, principles of design).

AH-E4.1.34 Describe a variety of media and processes used to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.1.35 Media-crayon, pencil, paint, fabric, yarn, clay, paper, paper-mâché (Used to produce artworks).

AH-E-4.2.35 Recognize that artists choose to express themselves in different styles and subject matters.

AH-E-4.1.42 Use a variety of media and art processes to produce two-dimensional (2-D) and three-dimensional (3-D) artwork.

AH-E-4.1.32 Art elements- line, shape, form, texture, and color (primary and secondary hues) and color groups (warm, cool, neutral).

### Objectives

1. To learn that different methods can be used to produce art.
2. To understand that art work may be done by [printmaking](#).
3. To realize that there are different ways to do [printmaking](#) ([lithography](#)).
4. To grasp the concept of [abstract](#) art.
5. To learn that Jasper Johns used common American images in his paintings such as the American flag, targets, maps.

### Suggested Questions

1. Jasper Johns did [abstract](#) painting, printmaking, and sculpture at one time in his life. What does [abstract](#) mean?
2. Jasper Johns did different types of [printmaking](#). What do we mean by [printmaking](#)?
3. What is [lithography](#)?
4. What do we mean when we say Jasper Johns used the same [litho stones](#) in making the three “Target” works in the museum?
6. Jasper Johns, later in his career, began to use concrete objects from everyday life such as numbers, flags, targets and maps in his art work. The subjects of his art were concrete, simple, and familiar objects. This was called [Pop Art](#). Sometimes he put objects together to form collages or assemblages of these objects. What is a [collage](#)?
7. What is a [print](#) and how is it different than a regular picture?
8. In the “Target” works discuss the different types of colors used in these prints?

### Related Activities

1. Have students make some prints utilizing purchased stamps.
2. Have students make and design a potato stamp, then make their own print.
3. Have students paint a picture and attach real everyday objects to it.
4. Have students design and paint a picture of an every day object.

## Grades 6-8

### Kentucky Core Content

AH-M-4.1.31 Principles of Design: repetition, pattern, balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal point), contrast (light and dark), rhythm, proportion, and movement.

AH-M-4.1.32 Art Elements: line, shape, color (tints and shades) and color groups (monochromatic), form, texture, space (positive/negative and perspective), and value (light and shadow).

AH-M-4.1.34 Identify and describe a variety of art media, art processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, experiences, and stories.

AH-M-4.1.35 Media: two dimensional-crayon, pencil, fabric, yarn, paint (tempera, watercolor), ink and pastels.

AH-M-4.1.39 Subject Matter: landscape, portrait, still life, abstract, and non-objective.

AH-M-4.1.42 Effectively use a variety of art media, processes, and subject matter to communicate ideas, feelings, and experiences.

AH-M-4.1.37 Art Processes: two-dimensional-painting, fabric design, printmaking, and mosaics.

### Objectives

- To learn why Jasper Johns is considered by many critics to be America's leading and most important artist.
- To name and explain the different art movements in America that Jasper Johns began or was instrumental in fostering.
- To understand that Jasper Johns has produced different types of art during his career.
- To learn that Jasper Johns used targets, numbers, American Flags, maps and other common items in his art.
- To realize that Johns' three [lithographs](#) displayed in the museum have several things in common. The same [lithographic stones](#) were used in making the prints. Prints progress from [primary colors](#) to [secondary colors](#) to white/black. The background goes from white to gray to black.
- To understand the process of producing a print by the [lithographic method](#).

### Suggested Questions

1. Why is Jasper Johns considered by many critics to be America's leading and most important artist?
2. Name and describe each of the art movements in America that Jasper Johns began or was instrumental in fostering?
3. How did Jasper Johns' art contribute to the above art movements?
4. Name some of the common objects you will find featured in Johns' work.
5. Why did he enjoy utilizing these every day items in his work?
6. What are [lithographs](#)? [Litho stones](#)?
7. What different types of art has Johns produced during his lifetime? Discuss the similar skills and abilities needed to produce these different types of art.
8. The three "Target" pieces in the Janice Mason Art Museum are [lithographs](#) and have three things in common, discuss the similarities and differences.

**Related Activities**

1. Create a timeline of the different art movements in America that have occurred since 1950 when Johns emerged upon the art scene.
2. Make a [collage](#) using familiar objects/pictures of our day as Johns did.
3. Make a poster board display of the steps in making a [lithograph](#).
4. Have students try to make a [lithograph](#) utilizing common items they may find at home instead of real lithographic supplies.

## Grades 9-12

### Kentucky Core Content

AH-H-4.1.31 Describe works of art using appropriate terminology.

AH-H-4.1.32 Art Elements: color and color theory: primary and secondary hues, values (tints and shades), intensity (brightness and dullness); color relationship: triadic, complementary, and analogous.

AH-H-4.1.33 Principles of Design: Balance (symmetry/asymmetry), emphasis (focal pattern), pattern, repetition, contrast, variety, movement, rhythm, proportion, transition/gradation, and unity.

AH-h-4.1.34 Defend personal interpretations of works of art and architecture by using arguments.

AH-H-4.2.36 Subject Matter: portrait, landscape, still-life, abstract, non-objective.

### Objectives

- To learn why Jasper Johns is considered by many critics to be America's leading and most important artist.
- To understand that Johns' paintings now sell for more than any living artist in history, and his work is represented in nearly every major museum collection.
- To name and explain the different art movements in America that Jasper Johns began or was instrumental in fostering.
- To learn that Jasper Johns used targets, numbers, American Flags, maps and other common items in his art.
- To realize that Johns' three **lithographs** displayed in the Museum have several things in common. The same **litho stones** were used in making the prints. Prints progress from **primary colors** to **secondary colors** to white/black. The background goes from white to gray to black.
- To understand the process of producing a print by the **lithographic method**.
- To be able to trace John's career through the different types of art he has created at different stages of his life.

### Suggested Questions

1. Why is Jasper Johns considered one of Americas most important artists whose paintings sell for more than any living artist in history?
2. Why is his work represented in nearly every major museum collection?
3. Trace Jasper Johns career through the different types of art and different techniques he has used at different stages of his life.
4. What is the **lithographic method** of producing a print?
5. Explain the similarities and differences of the three "Target" **lithographs** displayed in the Janice Mason Art Museum.
6. What are some of the common items Johns portrays in his work? Why did he enjoy using them so much?
7. Name and explain the different art movements in America that Johns was/is instrumental in beginning.
8. Explain why you think "**Pop Art**" became so popular in America.

### **Related Activities**

1. Have students write a paper discussing the impact Jasper Johns has made on the American art scene since 1950.
2. Develop a timeline showing the different facets of art that Jasper Johns has developed at different times in his life.
3. Through the internet/library find information about [lithography](#) and write a paper explaining the process.
4. Design a piece of [Pop art](#). Explain why it is representational of [Pop art](#).
5. Have students critique a piece of Jasper Johns' work you can find on the web site at the beginning of this article. Use the [Four Step Method of Criticizing Art](#) found on this web site.