
Art Masterpiece: *Cycle*, 1938 by M.C. Escher

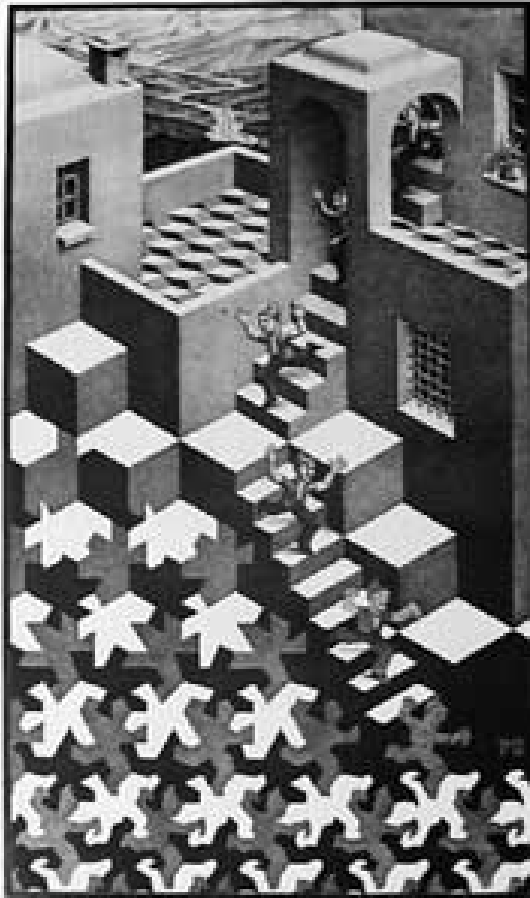
Pronounced: Esh-er

Keywords: Graphic Art, Tessellations, Metamorphosis

Grade: 5th Grade

Month: Sep

Activity: Making a Tessellation



Meet the Artist:

- He was born in 1898 in Holland. The MC stands for Maurits Cornelius.
- He didn't do very well in school, but he continued on through the university level, eventually studying graphic arts.
- Escher was considered the foremost authority on graphic art. **Graphic art** is the art or the science of drawing, especially according to mathematical rules. His work was a sort of bridge between the scientific world and artistic imagination.

- Escher was Dutch but as a young man moved to Italy and traveled across Europe. While traveling, he met his wife, had three children and settled down outside of Rome. In 1935, he and his family moved to Switzerland. Unhappy in Switzerland, he returned to Belgium and finally to The Netherlands.
- He was especially taken with the floor tile in Spain. He became very interested in Mosaic, pattern and repetition and began to include it in his own art. Eventually he came to use a mathematical art technique called tessellations. **Tessellations** are mosaic patterns where the pieces fit together like a visual jigsaw puzzle. There is no background and foreground and the outline of one figure becomes the boundary of another. They are mostly seen in quilts, fabrics and wallpaper. Escher was one of the first to put a recognizable image into tessellations.
- He also liked to use the theme of **metamorphosis** or the complete change of an object, in his work. Birds transform to fish, fish to frogs and night turns into day.
- Escher was not a fan of modern art, and his art did not receive much attention until he was about 52 years old. Although the key to Escher's art is geometry: spheres, cubes and spirals he did not claim any ability to understand mathematics. His original fans were physicists and mathematicians.
- He died in his home in 1973 of cancer.

Possible Questions:

- Have you seen tessellations before?
- Where (floor tiles, rugs, mosaics, quilts, ceiling panels in ornate buildings)
- Where would you see them, any in the room?
- What kind of lines do you see?
- What kind of shapes do you see?
- What would you title the painting?
- Do you like it? Why or Why not?
- Do you see a story in it or is it just nonsense?

Activity: Making a Tessellation

Materials Needed: masking tape, pencils, colored pencils, crayons, tag board (lined note cards or manila envelopes will work as well), rulers, scissors, white paper, black fine tipped markers, black construction paper, glue

*Explain activity -students will transform a *2"square template into an unusual shape that they will tessellate onto a sheet of white construction paper (8.5 X 10.)

Process:

1. *Hand out 2" squares of tag board to the students to use as their template.
2. Have the students cut out a **simple** pattern along the top edge of the square. Then move it to the bottom edge of the square and tape it.
3. Then, have the students cut out a pattern along one side edge of the square. Then move it to the opposite edge and tape it.
4. Starting at the top of one side of the white paper, trace the outline of the template.
5. Moving it across the page horizontally, repeat the tracing of the template so the end result looks like a puzzle. Repeat until the page is full. Then outline all the shapes with a black marker.
6. *Turn the paper so it is vertical. Try to imagine what image your shapes look like. (i.e. alien, pirate, football, animal) Add details to the inside of the shape in pencil so they all look identical. The students will use their **imagination** to come up with a name/title for their shape.
7. Color the shapes with crayons or colored pencils using alternating complementary colors (or light and dark colors).
8. Outline the details of your shapes in black marker.
9. Mount your paper onto a larger piece of black construction paper.
10. Title and sign it at the bottom of the black construction paper using a white crayon, or a white colored pencil

