

Middle School Art LESSON PLAN

GRADES
6-8



LESSON:

DIGITAL PHOTO COMPOSITION

Combine images, ideas, and creativity to tell a story in a digital work of art.



OBJECTIVE

Students will create a digital photo composition that communicates a message, theme, or idea using image manipulation and design principles.



ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can I combine images and design elements to communicate a powerful message?



STANDARDS

VA:Cr2.2.6a – Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

VA:Cr2.1.6a – Use digital tools and composition skills to create original works.

VA:Re7.2.6a – Analyze how visual components affect meaning and mood.



MATERIALS

- Computer with photo editing software (Photoshop, Photopea, or GIMP)
- Images files (provided or student-sourced)
- Headphones (optional)
- Planner/worksheet



TIME

4 Class Periods (45 minutes each)

- 1 Explore & Plan
- 2 Gather & Compose
- 3 Refine & Edit
- 4 Present & Reflect



ASSESSMENT

- Creativity & Originality
- Use of Composition Principles
- Technical Skill
- Message/Story Clarity
- Reflection

OVERVIEW

Students will learn how to combine multiple photographs and digital elements to create a new image that communicates a message or tells a story. They will apply design principles and digital editing skills to create a finished composition.

VOCABULARY

Composition • Layers • Blending
• Contrast • Focal Point • Mood
• Manipulation • Storytelling

LESSON PROCESS

1 EXPLORE PLAN



Students explore examples of digital photo compositions. They brainstorm ideas and complete a planning sheet to map out their message, images, and composition.

2 GATHER & COMPOSE



Students gather or select images and import them into their editing software. They arrange elements using layers to build their composition.

3 REFINE & EDIT



Students adjust colors, lighting, contrast, and blending. They add effects or text if needed to strengthen the message and mood.

4 PRESENT & REFLECT



Students present their digital composition and explain the message, choices, and techniques they used.

PLANNING EXAMPLES

PHOTO COMPOSITION PLANNER	THUMBNAIL LAYOUT IDEAS
My Message / Theme: Kindness goes a long way	
Main Idea: Small actions can make a big difference.	
Emotions / Mood: Hopeful, Encouraging	
Images / Plan to Use: Irides: Helping hands, Path / journey, Light / sunrise, Text overlay	

SHOT LIST	COMPOSITION NOTES	MOOD / REFERENCE BOARD
☒ Helping hand close-up	Use leading lines from the path to the light.	
☒ Student walking on path	Place hands on left third, subject on right third.	
☒ Sunrise over horizon	Keep colors warm and inviting.	
☐ Bench in park		
☐ Open book		

FINAL COMPOSITION EXAMPLES



Rule of Thirds



Framing



Leading Lines



Strong Focal Point



Low Angle Perspective



SUCCESS CRITERIA

- ✓ My composition communicates a clear message or story.
- ✓ I used images and digital tools to enhance my idea.
- ✓ My composition shows balance, contrast, and a clear focal point.
- ✓ I refined my work to create the mood I wanted.
- ✓ I can explain my choices and the meaning behind my work.



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What is the message or story in your composition?
- What images and techniques helped you communicate it?
- What part of the process was most challenging?
- What would you do differently next time?