

# Mean Green

## Interpreting the Emotion of Color

(art + language)

Is there such a thing as an all-black painting, all-green or all-red painting? Yes, there is! American artists around the 1950s turned from abstract expressionism to a movement labeling them colorists. Colorists painted with a monochromatic color palette using variations of one color. Their process was made easier with the introduction of acrylics and acrylic mediums in 1953. Painters like Barnett Newman, Morris Louis, Frank Stella and Ad Reinhardt created paintings in all black. They believed art was art and should be created without rules. This break in approach to art was not popular with art critics. The critics found that a closer look at the monochromatic paintings exhibited details and required more thought. Artists added texture and surface variations to enhance the monochromatic paintings. American colorists changed the artists image from that of realistic human behavior to the use of color for feelings. They worked to make color and color changes the total emphasis of their art.

This lesson is great fun, combining one color and fun words to describe emotions and meanings to that color. These titles could be wonderful white, riot red or cool blue. Students' paintings turn from monochromatic paintings to 3D collage paintings when textures and found objects are added.

### Grade Levels K-12

*Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*

### Preparation

1. Discuss monochromatic color and collage. Recommended resources:  
[Color: Barron's Creative Painting Book Series](#) (69405-1002)  
[Color and How to Use It: from the Walter Foster Artist Library](#) (70106-1005)  
[Collage Unleashed](#) (69961-1001)  
[Collage Sourcebook: Exploring the Art and Techniques of Collage](#) (69934-1001)



### Materials

[Blick Canvas Panels 11" x 14"](#) (07008-1114), need one per student

[Blickrylic Student Acrylics](#), need one basic set of six pints (00711-1049) and one pint each [Fluorescent Green](#) (00711-7266) and [Magenta](#) (00711-3046), share across classroom

[Round 10-Well Trays](#) (03041-1010), share one tray between two students

[Dynasty® Fine Ruby Synthetic Brushes](#), canister set of 72 assorted (05198-0729), share across classroom

[Weldbond® Universal Adhesive](#), (23819-1105) share six 8-oz bottles across classroom

[Crayola® Tempera Mixing Mediums](#), [Texture It!](#) (00043-1036), [Glitter It!](#) (00043-1016) share one pint bottle each across classroom

### Optional materials for adding texture

[Creativity Street® Glitter Glue Pens](#) (61737-1072) share one classpack of 72 across classroom

[Craft Button Assortment](#), 1-lb tub (61495-1001)

[Trait-Tex® Glitter Yarn](#), 4-ply assortment (65233-0009)

Scrap fabric, ribbons, lace, etc.

## Preparation, continued

In the classroom, ask students to choose a color and talk about descriptive words for it. Have them choose objects from the room to add to the one color and title process. Use magazines, yarn, plastic scraps and other collage items for the possible addition to the artwork.

## Process

1. Students each get one canvas panel. They decide on color and paint the canvas panel with that color for background. As in “Mean Green,” (see page 1), start with green.  
Using the Color Wheel (04928-1001) as reference, students apply shades, tints and hues of the first color in painting areas of texture and color on the canvas. Experiment with adding colors to the left and right on the color wheel (analogous colors) to create different hues of the first color. Also, try adding white and black to adjust the tint. Always stay with the first basic color as the outstanding color. Continue to add texture. The Crayola Mixing Mediums were designed to be used with tempera but work well with fluid acrylic.
2. Step two moves into the collage technique of the lesson plan. Cut paper and fabric in shapes or designs. Use Weldbond<sup>®</sup> adhesive to apply. This adhesive is very versatile and works well with attaching different surfaces.
3. The final step adds dimensional items. Consider breaking some items to create more detail pattern forms. Additional areas of paint may be added to tie the many monochromatic areas together.

## National Standards

Content Standard #1 – Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

**K-4** Students use different media, techniques, and processes to communicate ideas, experiences, and stories

**5-8** Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choices

**9-12** Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

Content Standard #3 – Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas

**K-4** Students select and use subject matter, symbols and ideas to communicate meaning

**5-8** Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks

**9-12** Students evaluate and defend the validity of sources for content and the manner in which subject matter, symbols, and images are used in the students’ works and in significant works by others

Content Standard #5 – Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

**K-4** Students understand there are different responses to specific artworks

**5-8** Students describe and compare a variety of individual responses to their own artworks and to artworks from various eras and cultures

**9-12** Students reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art