



Gel Plate Monoprint Kit: Lesson Plan

Created in collaboration with artist Annie Canto

Activity

Using the materials in this kit students will create a four-panel comic using gel plate monoprint techniques. Students will experiment with textures, colors, and shapes to create both visual interest and meaning in their comic panels.

Inquiry Questions

- What are examples of comics?
- What comics features help to tell a story?
- How can texture, pattern, and color convey meaning in a print?

Big Ideas

Artists experiment in a variety of ways to discover new possibilities and perspectives. **(Arts Education)**

Materials Provided in Gel Plate Kit

- Class set of gel plates on plexiglass sheets
- Set of Brayers
- Stencils of butterflies/worms/ladybugs
- Stencils of speech bubbles
- Wooden stamps (for optional step)
- Cotton swabs
- Soap
- Sponge
- Teacher artwork samples (finished work)

NOTE: Please ensure that there are no objects stacked on top of the gel plates when they are packed inside the kit. This may result in permanent indentations. Also, please ensure that sharp objects are not pressed or scratched into the surface of the gel plates.

Materials Provided by Teacher/School

- Tempera paint: 1-3 warm colours (red, orange, yellow, pink) and 1-3 cool colours (green, blue, purple, black)
- Optional: Silver acrylic paint
- Black oil pastels
- Colored pencils
- Glue sticks
- Fine sharpies
- Opaque vellum or mixed media paper (7" x 28", 1 per student)
- Cartridge or printer paper (6" x 6", 6 per student)
- Sticky notes

First Peoples Principles of Learning

Learning is embedded in memory, history and story.

Curricular Competencies (What students will do)

- Create 4-panel comic using ideas inspired by imagination, inquiry, experimentation, and purposeful play (Arts Education)
- Communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts. (Arts Education)

Concepts & Content (What students will know)

- Processes, materials, and techniques required for creating monoprints including: using a brayer to roll out layers of paint on a gel plate; creating a ghost print; using a stencil to block out shapes in a multi-layered monoprint; safely and responsibly cleaning a gel plate and brayer after printing (Arts Education)
- Elements and principles that create meaning and help to tell a story in visual artworks and specifically comics, including: framing, panel layout, dialogue, character design, and lettering (Arts Education)

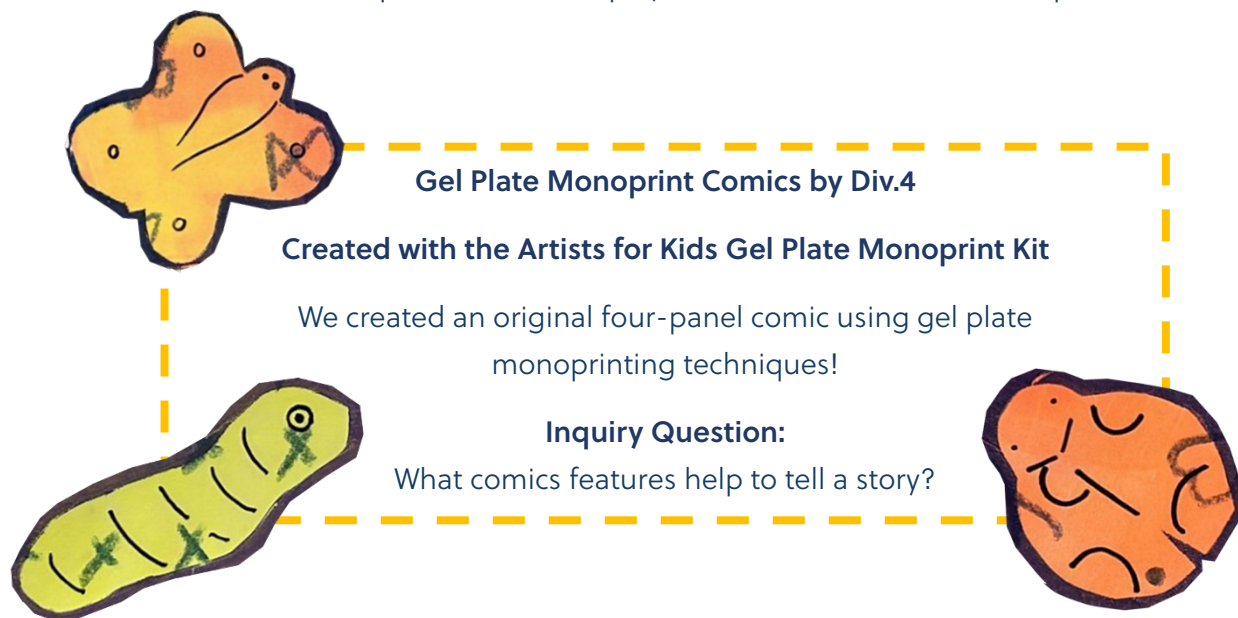
Core Competencies (Questions for reflection)

- **COMMUNICATION:** How did you use visual elements (such as color, texture, and design) to communicate the emotions or themes of your comic?
- **THINKING:** What did you learn from the process of trial and error during the project? How did your creative choices evolve as you experimented with different techniques?
- **PERSONAL AND SOCIAL:** How did you tell a story in your four-panel comic? (For example, did you do this through lettering, character design, patterning, or dialogue?)

Displaying Student's Work

The following are tips for displaying the finished four-panel comics at your school:

- Have students work together to arrange and sequence their finished artworks. Artworks can be tacked on a bulletin board or can be displayed on a table or ledge.
- Include a title and description with the display of finished artwork. For example:



Step-by-Step Gel Plate Lesson Guide

CLASS DISCUSSION:

- What is a comic? What are examples of comics?
- What comic features help to tell a story?
 - Encourage students to think beyond the conventional boundaries of comics and explore the deeper, philosophical questions of storytelling and art. If storytelling is the core of comics, then could every image, in some way, be a comic?
- What is a monoprint?
 - Introduce the idea of a monoprint as a print that is unique, not reproduced multiple times. Discuss how it allows for creative, one-of-a-kind designs.
- How can texture, pattern, and color convey meaning in a print?
 - Discuss how different textures, patterns, and colors can create mood or help tell a story, especially in a comic format.

VIEW AND DISCUSS EXAMPLES OF ARTWORKS:

Optionally share artworks attached at the end of this lesson guide, and ask the students these following questions:

- How do the artists use textures and patterns to convey different moods or themes?
- What visual elements (e.g. color, line, shape) are used to tell a story in these artworks?
- How might these elements inspire your own printmaking and comic creation?

INTRO PROJECT:

- Students will combine their exploration of gel plate printmaking with narrative storytelling, using the printed designs to represent characters, scenes, and dialogue.

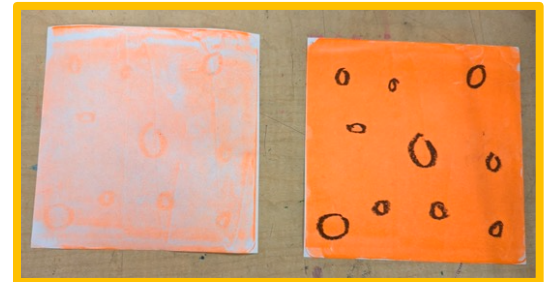


DISTRIBUTING MATERIALS:

- Distribute 6" x 6" sheets of cartridge paper (6 sheets per student)
- Distribute gel plates (1 per student), brayers, oil pastels, and warm-coloured tempera paints (i.e. red, orange, yellow, pink)
- Ensure each gel plate sits on a piece of plexiglass throughout the lesson to protect the gel plates.
- Begin the lesson by having students write their names on all 6 sheets of cartridge paper.
- Ask students to divide the 6 sheets into two groups of 3 sheets each.
- One group of 3 sheets will be used for "ghost prints," and the other group will be used for patterns.
- Have students draw patterns of their choice on the 3 sheets of paper using black oil pastels.

PRINTING LAYER #1 (WARM COLOURS & GHOST PRINTS):

- Once the 6 sheets of paper are prepared, students will apply a pea-sized amount of warm-coloured tempera paint to their gel plate and use a brayer to evenly roll the paint across the surface, ensuring full coverage.
- Students can use two colours to explore combinations of colours. Remind them to pour half a pea sized amount per colour if they choose to use more colours.
- Lay the patterned paper faced down onto the painted gel plate.
- Students should use 3 fingers to gently rub the surface of the entire paper to make the paint is transferred from the gel plate to the paper.
- Lift off the paper to reveal the printed sheet.
- Next, students will do a "ghost print" by pressing a plain sheet of cartridge paper onto the leftover paint on the gel plate. This will create a lighter, faded print.
- If done well, the ghost print will pick up both the paint and also a light version of the oil pastel pattern left over from the first print.
- Repeat these steps 2 more times. By the end of this step, students will have 3 patterned prints and 3 ghost prints.

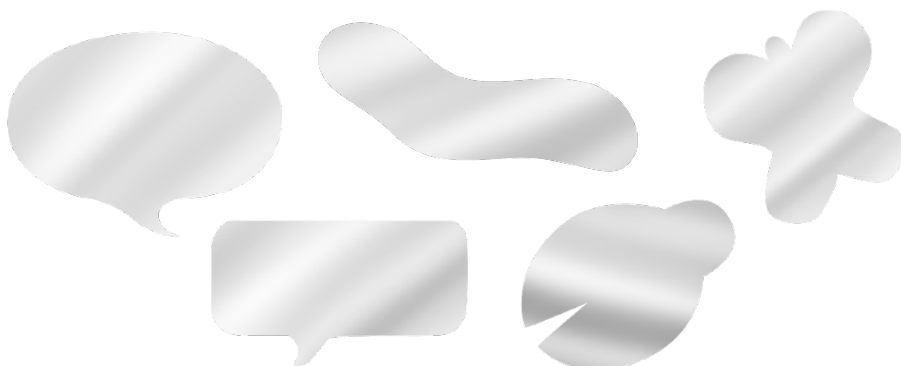


Left: Ghost print, Right: Patterned

PRINTING LAYER #2 (COOL COLOURS & STENCILS):

ADDING CHARACTERS AND SPEECH BUBBLES TO PRINTS

- Remove the warm-coloured paint from the tables and distribute cool-coloured paint (i.e. blue, purple, black).
- Distribute acetate bug stencils (butterfly, worm, ladybug) and speech bubble stencils.
- Students will choose one acetate bug and two speech bubbles.
- Students will roll out a pea-sized amount of paint on their gel plate.
- They will then carefully place the speech bubble and bug stencils **on top of the painted surface**.
- The stencils will act as a mask, protecting the areas underneath them from the paint, so the shapes of the bugs and the speech bubbles be visible when the students print the image.
- Remind students to take off their stencils before rolling out paint for their next design.



- Ensure that the side of the stencils that have paint on them always faces down each time it is placed on the gel plate to achieve clean results.
- Encourage students to experiment with the composition of their characters and speech bubbles.
- Repeat these steps on all the 6 cartridge sheets.

(OPTIONAL) PRINTING LAYER #3 (SILVER PAINT & TEXTURES):

- Put away the cool-coloured tempera paint and hand out silver acrylic paint. Hand out Q-tips and wooden stamps (provided in the kit).
- Students will roll out less than a pea-sized amount of silver paint onto the gel plate. They will then use Q-tips to draw into the paint, as well as stamps to add additional texture.
- Students will then take one of their prints and lay it face down on the gel plate.
- Students will print a silver layer on two of their sheets, focusing on fine details and texture.



CLEANING PRINTMAKING TOOLS:

- After completing their prints, students will use the soap and sponges provided in the kit to wash their gel plates, brayers and bug/speech bubble stencils at designated sinks or wash stations.
- Ensure gel plates stay on the plexiglass when washing them to prevent them from getting damaged.
- Remind students to clean the sides of their brayers, as dried paint can prevent the brayers from rolling properly in future uses.
- Leave the gel plates to dry for a day before stacking and putting them back into the kit.

SELECTING FOUR PRINTS:

- Students will choose their 4 favourite prints, considering how they look in sequence and how they fit together in terms of narrative flow and composition.
- Encourage students to think about how their prints can tell a cohesive story when arranged in order.

ADDING WORDS AND SYMBOLS TO THE COMIC PANELS:

- Ask students the following questions:
 - How does text in a comic inform our understanding of the visual elements?
 - Does the text in comics always have to explain what is happening, or can it create ambiguity that encourages the viewer to imagine more?

- Hand out sticky notes and have students draft 1-3 words or symbols for each panel. These can be simple words, punctuation, or even visual symbols.

- Once students have chosen their dialogues, they will use sharpies to write their words or symbols inside the speech bubbles.

- Encourage students to write their phrases in capital letters inside the speech bubbles. Capital letters are often used in comics because they make the text easier to read, allowing the reader to focus more on the imagery.

- Students will add details to their characters (e.g., dots, lines) to enhance their design. Encourage students not to add too many details, as this may take away from the textures of the print.



COMPLETING THE 4-PANEL COMICS:

- Distribute the opaque vellum or mixed media paper (7" x 28", 1 per student).
- Have students fold the paper into 4 even squares, using the folds to create an accordion-style fold.
- Students will glue their finished comic panels onto each section of the accordion fold.
- Using sharpies and colored pencils, students can decorate the borders with patterns that relate to the themes or words on each panel.



REFLECTION:

- After completing their comics, students will reflect on the process, considering how their use of texture, color, and design choices helps to communicate a story or message.
- Ask students how experimenting with different tools and techniques influenced their final work.
- Optionally ask students the following questions to guide their self-reflection:
 - What did you learn about printmaking or storytelling through this project?
 - If you could do this project again, what would you have done differently?
 - Were there any mistakes you changed into happy accidents?
 - Looking at your final comic, what message or story do you think it communicates? How did the visual elements (like color, texture, and design) support that message?

Teachers are invited to adapt and edit the following summative evaluation rubric:

GEL PLATE MONOPRINT COMIC

Image Development Creates a cohesive 4-panel comic with images and dialogue that enhance the story.	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXTENDING
Composition Effective panel arrangements with clear flow and visual impact.	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXTENDING
Technique & Craftmanship Shows consistent, clean prints with effective color, texture, and layering	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXTENDING
Studio Habits Demonstrates careful tool handling throughout the entire printmaking process	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXTENDING
OVERALL:	EMERGING	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	EXTENDING

NAME: _____ DIV: _____ DATE: _____

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Teacher Samples



Artworks from the *Playhouse* exhibition at the Gordon Smith Gallery, 2024-2025



Guná Jensen, *Self Portrait*, 2019, oil on canvas, 60" x 48"



Joan Smith and Barbara Zeigler, *Earthmakers (Proof)*, 1996, Etching on Kozo paper, 35" x 24"