

Finding Shapes

By Ben Ezzell | Enid, OK

[24 Works on Paper](#)

Summary

1. **Big Idea and/or Question(s):** How do we find the shapes in a reference image when doing relief printing?
2. **Medium(s):** Relief printing, print block carving
3. **Grade Levels:** 6th– 8th grade (and up)
4. **Time Breakdown:** Approx. 2-hour lesson
(Video–45 minutes; Activity–60 minutes / *30 minutes for carving, 20 minutes for test printing, tweaking, and final printing; 10 minutes for clean up; Wrap up–15 minutes*)

Materials

- Blick Blue Easy-To-Cut 4" x 6" sheets
- Pencil
- Speedball Lino Set No. 1 carving tool (can often be found in craft stores) OR Blick Lino Cutter Set (more affordable alternative available via Blick)
- Scissors
- Double Sided Masking Tape, “containment tape”, I use Shurtape DS 154
- Any ink pad such as Ranger Archival Ink, in any color OR Block Printing Ink and a Brayer
- Paper, whatever is available on hand
- Nitrile gloves

Materials Resources: The Easy-To-Cut carving tools and ink can be most affordably found at www.dickblick.com. Blick also makes a double-sided masking tape called “double-coated paper tape”. There is also a great classroom pack available via Blick that comes with everything needed for a class of 24 (except for the double-stick tape, scissors, and gloves). It can be found here: <https://www.dickblick.com/items/blink-blue-easy-to-cut-class-pack/> and as of this writing costs less than \$200.

Video

a. **Introduction:**

My name is Ben Ezzell, I was born in Enid, OK. I attended undergrad at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, and law school at the University of Oklahoma College of Law. I am a self-taught artist, and although I've been a maker of things my whole life, I only started doing printmaking a few years ago.

b. **Present a Big Idea and/or ask an Essential Question:**

Printmaking is a great way to learn how to see shapes in everyday objects. You have to translate an image to its most essential parts to start with, and then look at each piece of your image and find more detail that can be translated into the form itself. Once you understand the basic idea, you'll see that everything around you can be broken down in the same way.

c. **Show an Artwork that Relates to the Idea/Question:**

In the video, I show a few examples of my own prints and talk about how I get started by finding shapes. I also talk about reduction prints, and how you can use the same block with multiple colors of ink to show more shapes by building up layer after layer. Using different printing blocks, kinds of ink, and cutting tools can create varying final products.

d. **Assign an Activity to Investigate the Idea/Question:**

I walk through the process of making a rubber stamp of my dog, and how to use trial and error to find the appropriate amount of detail.

e. **Wrap-Up:**

What shapes do you see around you right now? How can you break up an object into smaller and smaller shapes in your mind? Try to do something different with each print you make, try out a different texture or type of ink, or method of printing. The fun part about printmaking is that you'll never run out of new things to try!



Ben Ezell, *Wood Mosaic Print*, 2022. Multi-color, hand-cut reduction print. 20"x16".