PIET MONDRIAN
Lesson For Ages 10 - Adult
Step 1 - Introducing the Master Artist: Slideshow Guide

MOTIVATION

BEGIN READING HERE

Do you like music? Do certain kinds of music make you feel different moods, like relaxed, nervous, excited, or angry? I have a musical problem for you to solve today! I want you to listen to several different kinds of music while looking at the first slide. Look carefully at all the elements of this composition: the lines, colors, and balance. Listen carefully to the rhythm of the music and match it to the sense of movement you see in the shapes. Try to think of the overall feeling it gives you. Listen to the three short music selections, and try to select the best match for this painting.

Click Start Lesson To Begin

1, 2, 3. BROADWAY BOOGIE WOOGIE

We are going to hear three different types of music and I want you to choose the music segment you think best matches the painting: number 1, number 2, or number 3. Wait until you have heard all three styles before you make your decision.

PLAY EACH AUDIO SEGMENT BY CLICKING Next and Then Audio

If you voted for number 3, the jazz music, then you felt the same way an artist named Piet Mondrian did when he painted this picture. He was listening to jazz music as he painted. Even the title of the painting sounds like music. It is called *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. Broadway is a famous street in New York City. Boogie Woogie was a popular form of jazz music while Mondrian was living there.

Click Next To Change Slide

4. PIET MONDRIAN

Mondrian was a great lover of music and was considered to be a very good ballroom dancer. He loved jazz most of all and regarded it as the music of the future. Mondrian’s favorite jazz musician was Louis Armstrong who was one of the greatest ever. Mondrian also enjoyed listening to classical music, Johann Sebastian Bach being his favorite composer.

Mondrian was born in Holland, a small country in Europe. It’s famous for its old windmills and beautiful flowers, especially the tulip. As a young boy, Mondrian was surrounded by
painters in his family, and he began to paint at a very young age. His first job after college was teaching art in high school.

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5. EARLY 1900’s

His most treasured possession was a small gramophone in red. A gramophone was an early record player. Can you find the picture of a gramophone of Mondrian’s time on this page. These ads from products of the early 1900s will give you an idea of what life was like in Mondrian’s time.

Mondrian’s artwork gives us the chance to follow his steady growth as an artist. Step-by-step we can see him learn and change by looking at his drawings and paintings. As you see his paintings today, you will notice a big change from his first artwork to his last paintings.

Let’s begin by following Mondrian as a young artist in Holland.

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6. RED TREE

Mondrian liked to paint one subject over and over again. Can you guess that subject from looking at this painting? (TREES) The title of this painting is Red Tree. This is an apple tree with widespread branches, and Mondrian tirelessly painted it many times, changing the color and making it simpler. Now let’s look at that same apple tree painted two years later and see how it has changed.

Click Next To Change Slide

7. FLOWERING APPLETREE 1912

Can you tell this is still the same apple tree? (NO) Look closely. Can you find the trunk… the branches? Did the color change? (YES) Mondrian kept simplifying the lines of the tree until it became totally ABSTRACT. Abstract is a word in art that means it is not realistic. This tree does not look like the real tree, so it is an abstract painting. Was there anything at all abstract about the first tree you saw, Red Tree? (YES, SKY AND COLORS) Notice how important lines are in this painting.

Here is another judgment for you to make. Does this painting show BALANCE? (YES) It is balanced with line and color. Is there any part of the COMPOSITION that seems “heavier” than the rest and pulls it out of balance to make it look lopsided? (NO) In fact, this painting is so balanced that we could turn it upside down and sideways, and it would still seem right.
Now you will see the next change in Mondrian’s art. I think you’ll be surprised! Try to guess what he might try next.

**Click Next To Change Slide**

8. COMPOSITION 1932

Is this anything like you guessed he might paint? (NO) This was Mondrian’s next stage, and as you can see, he gave up his broken and curved lines. What shapes did he use? (SQUARES, RECTANGLES) He began to use only straight lines. What are the lines that go up and down called? (VERTICAL) How about the lines going from side to side? (HORIZONTAL)

How do you think he was able to paint such straight lines? (USED A RULER) Yes, he used rulers and strips of transparent tape to measure out his lines. He had to wait for a line to dry completely before he could paint another one, or his ruler and tape might have smeared the paint.

Look carefully at how Mondrian balanced the squares and rectangles. The blue and yellow shapes at the top balance the large red square at the bottom. He separated the top and bottom colors by the horizontal lines to keep the COMPOSITION balanced. Mondrian worked very hard to create balance in his paintings. Is this composition totally abstract? (YES) Listen to Mondrian’s words about being realistic, “The modern painter must turn completely away from nature and seek inspiration in his own mind.” He stopped painting his trees and started painting straight lines and shapes.

Do you remember where Mondrian was born? (HOLLAND) When he worked on this painting he had moved to Paris, France. He loved the city, but he was so poor he had to live mostly in shabby houses.

He was poor throughout his life, because his style of art did not sell. When he ran out of money completely, he was forced to paint a portrait or a flower composition to sell. He could paint realistically but chose not to unless he was desperate.

Mondrian continued to experiment with different styles of painting. The next artwork will show you how he continued to change. He stayed with this same style for the rest of his life. Notice how he changed in each painting, however, and see if you can tell me what he added each time.

**Click Back To Change Slide**

9. COMPOSITION III

After seeing these similar but different works by Mondrian, can you tell me what he changed? (ADDED MORE LINES, PUT LINES CLOSER TOGETHER, USED LESS SQUARES AND RECTANGLES) Did lines become increasingly important to Mondrian?
The lines were always horizontal and vertical. He brought them closer together, he increased the number, but always they created balance.

What did you notice about color? What colors did he always use? (RED, YELLOW, BLUE WITH BLACK LINES) What is the art word for the pure colors of red, yellow and blue? (PRIMARY COLORS) Listen to Mondrian's statement about his kind of art, "Painting, once it is purified, operates with lines and colors alone." He stayed with this belief throughout his life, even when it meant no one would buy his paintings. His style of art was new and it was not popular.

In the year 1938, Mondrian decided to leave Paris because of the threat of World War II. He moved to London, England, but the air raids began there, and war was too close. When bombs hit the house next door to his, he decided to move to New York City. He lived the rest of his life there and liked America very much. In fact, he painted a composition titled New York City. Have you ever been to a big city like New York City? If you've been to a big city, you remember the bustling crowds of people, the noisy traffic, the flashing neon lights, the tall buildings called skyscrapers. Everything is on the move. See if Mondrian's painting of New York City makes you experience big city life.

10. NEW YORK CITY

Did Mondrian capture that feeling of life in New York City? (YES) What do you see that reminds you of a big, noisy, busy city? (ANSWERS WILL VARY) It's amazing that with only lines, Mondrian can make us feel that!

What did Mondrian do differently in this painting with his lines? (NO BLACK LINES OR SHAPES, ONLY COLORED LINES) Do the yellow lines seem to jump out at you? (YES) Why do you notice them first? (MORE LINES IN YELLOW, MOSTLY PAINTED IN FRONT OF RED AND BLUE LINES) The lines look almost three-dimensional, like the yellow lines are way in front and the blue and red lines are in the back. The colored lines seem to move. He made it feel busy and lively just like the real New York City. Let's visit Mondrian's studio where he painted "New York City."

11. MONDRIAN’S STUDIO

This is a photograph of Mondrian's apartment in New York City. Do you notice a similarity between his paintings and his apartment? Mondrian even decorated his apartment to look like his paintings. He decorated everything in his painting style with the colors of red, yellow, blue, and black. Included in his decorating scheme were the walls, the floor, even the furniture. His kitchen table was painted white with a red drawer. His front door was painted blue. The picture he was working on is leaning on an easel. What do you notice about that painting? Is it similar to one you have seen? (SIMILAR TO BROADWAY
**BOOGIE WOOGIE** This composition is titled *Victory Boogie Woogie*. When this photograph was taken, he was working on that composition. Other finished canvasses were carefully placed to fit in with the wall patterns. Let’s take a close look at *Victory Boogie Woogie*.

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**12. VICTORY BOOGIE WOOGIE**

Piet Mondrian was very concerned about the war in Europe. When he died in 1944, he left this unfinished painting on the easel titled *Victory Boogie Woogie*. It was his way of showing hope that World War II would soon end, and the allies would be victorious.

What do you notice that is different about this final, unfinished painting? *(DIAMOND SHAPE CANVAS)* Even though he turned his square canvas on point, he still kept his lines vertical or horizontal. Can you see the areas he did not finish? *(CORNERS, MIDDLE WHITE AREAS)*

Just like in *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, his final finished painting, Mondrian was trying to paint the rhythm of his favorite music. Do you remember what that was? *(JAZZ MUSIC)* Jazz has a lively beat or rhythm, and you can feel that rhythm in these two paintings. Mondrian even said they have the look of a broken rhythm of jazz. Can you see the uneven or broken rhythm in his lines, shapes, and colors? Can you feel the broken rhythm as your eyes dance around the various sized rectangles of different colors? Our eyes see the broken rhythm of jazz that our ears hear.

In his paintings and in his ideas, Piet Mondrian has shown us how colors and shapes can be put together to decorate any part of our life. Have you ever seen a modern product designed in Mondrian’s style of artwork? Mondrian’s art had a profound effect on modern advertising and product design. Let’s take a look at one such example.

**Click Next To Change Slide**

**13. ART OF CLOSETOLOGY**

This advertisement for a closet company very cleverly combines the art of Mondrian with their product. Notice the painting at the bottom painted in the distinctive Mondrian style. The colored shapes in the painting match the colored spaces in the closet. They don’t even use Mondrian’s name in the ad, because his style is so recognizable. Now that you are aware of Mondrian’s art, you’ll be surprised how often you will see other examples of his influence on the modern world.

**Click Next To Begin Game With Pierre**
Did you enjoy learning about our Master Artist? Now it’s time to practice the techniques you will use in your art activity.

When Complete Read Pierre’s final thoughts on Piet Mondrian.

When complete, click Back To Units to Exit.
Step 2 - Learning From: Mondrian’s Balance

Add three to five horizontal or vertical lines to each design below. Keep the designs balanced.

Add one, two or three shapes to the designs below, keeping them balanced.
Design Balance

Mondrian used only 2 shapes, three colors and horizontal or vertical lines in his compositions.

In the frame below, create a balanced design by following the directions in order, from 1 to 3. Use crayons, pencils or markers.

1. Draw a large square or rectangle shape anywhere in the frame. Have it touch one side of the frame.
2. Balance the large shape with several smaller square or rectangular shapes. Color the shapes.
3. Add three horizontal or vertical straight lines to your composition. They may be thick or thin.
The last few pages of this section contain the Art Activity for Piet Mondrian. This step-by-step outline will be a guide for instructing your child(ren) through the activity. The parent/teacher should review all steps necessary to complete this project before beginning any work.

Cut out the Artist Profile Slip below and attach it to the back of your completed art project.

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**Piet Mondrian**

*(Peet MON-dree-ahn)* - Dutch (1872-1944)

Mondrian’s geometric, abstract art illustrated the balance of shapes and colors in modern art. After being introduced to the work of this master artist from Holland, the children imitated his expressive arrangements of colors, lines, and shapes.

**ART ACTIVITY EMPHASIS:** Balance of shapes, lines, and colors  
**MEDIA:** Construction Paper

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Step 3 - Working With: Art Activity Instructions

ARTIST
Piet Mondrian (Peet MON-dree-ahn)
(1872 - 1944) Dutch

TECHNIQUE
Paper design

ART ELEMENTS
Balance

EMPHASIS
Balancing color, line, and shape

MEDIA
Paper

VISUAL
Print: Broadway Boogie Woogie (page xxix)

VOCABULARY
Balance, primary colors, composition
abstract, vertical, horizontal, rhythm

SUGGESTED MUSIC
Music from the 1900’s, American Jazz
1940’s, or Bach

MATERIALS FOR INSTRUCTOR AND CHILDREN
Three 3" x 3" squares of construction paper (1 each of red, yellow, blue)
Twelve 1/2" x 12" strips construction paper (2 blue, 2 red, 8 yellow)
One 12" x 12" sheet of light gray construction paper
Artist profile slip (page 65)
One piece of scrap paper (for dab of glue)
One Q-tip
White glue
White and yellow pencils
Scissors

PREPARATION
Construct an example so that you become familiar with the procedure. Place the Mondrian print and your demonstration papers where they can be easily seen. Have glue, Q-tip, and scissors nearby.

SET-UP [ 5 minutes ]

Distribute the following materials to each child:
SUPPLIES: Q-tips
PAPER: Colored squares, gray paper, paper strips (2 blue, 2 red, 8 yellow), and the artist profile slip
SCRAP PAPER: small scraps of paper and a dime-size dab of glue
ORIENTATION [ 5 minutes ]

(Have the children put their Learning Packets and pencils at their work area. Point out the print, *Broadway Boogie Woogie.*)

Can you name the artist of this painting? Are his paintings realistic or abstract? *(Abstract)* What do you see in his paintings? *(Squares, rectangles, lines, primary colors.)* Mondrian called his paintings COMPOSITIONS. Why do you think he used that word instead of design? *(His paintings were serious studies of the relation and balance of colors and lines.)* He numbered each composition, and sometimes you can find it hidden on a line with his initials in the painting. *(Point out signature in print.)*

Mondrian worked very hard to make his painting seem BALANCED. You did some balancing exercises in your Learning Packets. You balanced horizontal and vertical lines with shapes. *(Find an example to show.)* Then you balanced your own design. Did you have difficulty keeping the design balanced when you added texture? *(Find some examples to share.)* Today you’ll leave out texture, and use line, color and shape to create your own Mondrian-type composition. Let’s get organized so we can begin!

ORGANIZE THE WORK AREA
1. Put your Learning Packets out of the way.
2. Put your scrap of paper for glue and Q-tip in one top corner of your work space.
3. Put your artist profile slip in the other top corner of your work area.
4. Put your small colored pieces of paper on top of your gray paper.

DEMONSTRATION [ 5 to 10 minutes ]

CREATING RHYTHM STRIPS [ 5 minutes ]
Mondrian loved American jazz with its unique and exciting rhythms. What is rhythm? In music, of course it is the beat and tempo of the musical composition. In art, rhythm would translate as a pattern. You will create some patterned pieces to use in your composition.

Choose one of the 3” x 3” squares and a contrasting color strip. Begin by gluing one end of the strip across the top of the square. Make sure the glue is applied all the way across the entire strip before it is pressed down flat and straight. Trim it at the edge and repeat, leaving an even space of the under color. Continue until the square is filled with glued-on strips that are evenly spaced apart. When square is complete, set it aside to dry. When dry, cut it into strips that go across the original strips creating patterned pieces. Add these pieces to the composition to create “rhythm.”
ARRANGE THE COMPOSITION
1. First you will try arranging just your colored squares on your background paper. (Try several different arrangements and ask yourself each time if they seem balanced.)
2. Then you will add some horizontal strips. How do they look if they are separate from the colored squares? (Demonstrate.) How do they look if they are touching or overlapping the colored squares?
3. Do they seem to need some vertical strips for balance? (Add some vertical strips and get reactions.) What happens when I make a strip slant a little? (It is not pleasing or balanced.)
4. If you want a shorter strip or a smaller square, use your scissors. Keep it straight by folding the piece to size first, then cutting on the fold.
5. Try to be as creative and as different as you can with your composition. But keep all lines and shapes vertical or horizontal. (No diagonals!)
6. Students have the option of mounting the background (gray) diagonally. All lines remain vertical and horizontal.

GLUE THE SHAPES AND STRIPS TO THE BACKGROUND
When your design is balanced and pleasing to you, gently lift each corner of a shape and slip a little glue under it with a Q-tip. Apply glue along the entire strip so that each strip lies flat and straight. Then press it down. Work very carefully from the top to the bottom so that you don't forget what you have glued!

SIGN YOUR NAME
Students may want to sign their names as Mondrian did. He often printed the number of the composition, the date (last two digits only), and his initials somewhere within the design. A white or yellow pencil works well to write student’s initials on one of the blue or red lines.

ACTIVITY [ 20 to 25 minutes ]
Now that you know what to do:
1. Arrange and balance the pieces.
2. Glue them down.
3. Add your special signature.

You may begin. (Start the music.) Listen to the music of Mondrian’s time while you work! Mondrian loved to listen to Bach and Jazz on his gramophone while he worked. He felt the relationship between art and music. He composed paintings as composers would compose music.
MOUNTING THE ARTIST PROFILE SLIP  [ 2 minutes ]
(Profile slips for each artist are provided. They give a brief description of the artist, the technique, and the media used in the art activity. They should be mounted on the back of each art project after it is completed.)
1. Write your name on the front of the artist profile slip.
2. Using glue, mount the profile slip on the back of your artwork.
3. Encourage students to discuss their artwork with others using this artist slip of information.

CONCLUSION

Let’s share your wonderful abstract pictures. I see great balance of shapes and colors. Isn’t it surprising to know that you could make many different works of art with just four colors and two shapes! Mondrian would be so pleased to see your creations!

GUIDANCE

Limit the students to the horizontal and vertical format, but challenge them to be as creative as they can within it. Remind them that they do not have to use all of the pieces! Encourage them to make their composition as different as they can.

While they are working, encourage the students to listen to the music of Mondrian’s time (instead of talking). This stimulates creativity centered in the right side of the brain.

This Concludes The Piet Mondrian Unit.