

# schoolarts

Inspiring Creativity Since 1901

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THEME:  
Living  
with  
Nature

# Fall into Symmetry

Bill Grabowski



Paper collage. Sonia Allahdad.

When our elementary school considered creating a website, we envisioned it to be more of a teaching tool than an informational site. With that in mind, the idea for the "Art Room" was designed to address the elements of art by providing visitors to the site with lesson summaries, accompanied by student artwork. One such posting on "Art Room" was the fourth grade interdisciplinary lesson on texture and symmetry described in this article.

### The Science Component

We discussed autumn and the many environmental and visual changes that take place with the arrival of colder weather. The transformation of leaves is the most significant visual, as well as chemical, event. As we gathered leaves, we continued to discuss why and how leaves change color. We summarized that in the fall, as colder weather sets in, the trees' food-gathering process slows down as sunlight and water sources grow scarce. This causes the chlorophyll stored in leaves to break down. The green fades and

reveals the colors that have always been present but hidden.

### The Art Component

We spread out our collection of leaves on the table and discussed differences in shapes, textures, and colors. We also discussed the one physical attribute that they all share—symmetry. On the chalkboard, I illustrated the difference between bilateral and radial symmetry.

I introduced the art problem as a challenge to create an autumn collage from leaf shapes created from imagination. To ensure understanding of symmetry, students demonstrated with classmates the folded-paper technique where a leaf is half-drawn on the fold. I then provided 6 x 9" (15 x 23 cm) colored construction paper in an assortment of fall colors. We discussed the difference between positive and negative shapes. I encouraged students to use both types of shapes in their collage. Students discovered that several colors can be placed in the negative shapes, mimicking how fall leaves often contain several colors. After students glued the

shapes to a background, they used permanent markers to design intricate, symmetrical vein patterns.

### An Enrichment Follow-Up

Students collected leaf samples and scanned them using a flatbed scanner. The results were then opened up in an image-editing software program. I instructed students how to replace color, draw veins, add filters, and rearrange their composition using cut and paste commands. The weathered textures apparent in the scanned natural leaf added a pleasant counterpoint to the strong graphic statements found in the cut-paper collage. Both media offered students the opportunity to creatively express a colorful yearly event. ❖

Bill Grabowski is an art teacher at Center Street Elementary School in Williston Park, New York. You can visit his school's website at [herrickses.org/center](http://herrickses.org/center) and click on Art Room.

### NATIONAL STANDARD

Students use visual structures and functions of art to communicate ideas.



Digital leaf design. Grace Justino and Pooja Rambia.