LESSON GUIDE

GRADES 7–12
Letterpress printing, invented in 1455, changed the world. It gave way to the rise of literacy worldwide and put knowledge and information into the hands of the people. In Nashville, Tennessee, there is an active, unbroken link to the earliest days of printing: Hatch Show Print. Founded in 1879 and still operating largely in the same manner, the shop continues to remain relevant in the twenty-first century by honoring its time-tested traditions and by opposing conformity to the expectations of the digital world.

These pre- and post-lessons prepare students for a field trip to Hatch Show Print. In the pre-lesson, students are introduced to the process of letterpress printing and the design work of the print shop. Students theorize answers to the question: Why would someone choose to spend time laying out, typesetting, and printing a poster on a printing press instead of creating it on a computer using design software and a laser printer? Students also begin to contemplate how a poster can be designed to suit the needs of a client.

Upon visiting the shop, students participate in an interactive tour of the production space and classroom, known as the Universal Music Group Hatch Show Print Space for Design, view historical artifacts, and print a limited-edition, commemorative poster. As a post-lesson, students design their own poster.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Students will examine the origins of letterpress printing.
- Students will evaluate the role of letterpress printing in the digital world.

**GRADES**

- 7–12

**CROSS-CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS**

English Language Arts, Fine Art, Social Emotional Learning, Social Studies
STANDARDS

Visual Art

7.VA.Cn2.A Analyze how responses to art are influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.

7.VA.P1.A Compare and contrast how traditional and emerging technologies have changed the way artwork is preserved, presented, and experienced.

7.VA.Cr1.A Apply formal and informal methods to overcome creative blocks.

7.VA.Cr1.B Develop criteria to guide art-making or design to meet an identified goal.

7.VA.Cr2.C Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

8.VA.Cr1.A Document early stages of the creative process using traditional or emerging media.

8.VA.Cr2.C Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.

8.VA.Cr3.A Apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in process.

8.VA.R1.B Explain how aesthetic choices are influenced by visual and material cultures and can impact perceived meaning of artworks.

HS1.VA.Cr1.A Formulate and develop creative approaches to art-making.

HS1.VA.Cn2.A Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

HS1.VA.R2.A Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

HS1.VA.Cr1.B Investigate an aspect of contemporary life utilizing art and design.

HS1.VA.Cr3.A Apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in progress.

HS2.VA.Cn2.A Compare and connect functions of art in a variety of societal, cultural, and historical contexts to contemporary and local contexts.

HS2.VA.Cr1.B Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary practices to plan works of art and design.

Social & Emotional Learning

1C. Demonstrates self-awareness and understanding of external influences—e.g. culture, family, school, and community resources and supports.

2B. Demonstrates responsible decision-making and problem-solving skills.

5A. Demonstrates a range of communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.

3A. Demonstrates the skills to set, monitor, adapt, persevere, achieve, and evaluate goals.

English Language Arts

7-12.SL.PKI.5 Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

9-12.RI.KID.1 Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw inferences; support an interpretation of a text by citing and synthesizing relevant textual evidence from multiple sources.

Social Studies

7.44 Analyze Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press and William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible into the English language as vehicles for the spread of books, growth of literacy, and dissemination of knowledge.

7-12.SSP.01 Collect data and information from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including: printed materials; graphic representations; artifacts; media and technology sources.

7-12.SSP.02 Critically examine a primary or secondary source in order to: extract and paraphrase significant ideas and relevant information; draw inferences and conclusions.

7-12.SSP.05 Develop historical awareness by: perceiving and presenting past events and issues as they might have been experienced by the people of the time, with historical empathy rather than present mindedness; evaluating how unique circumstances of time and place create context and contribute to action and reaction; identifying patterns of continuity and change over time, making connections to the present.
This pre-visit lesson prepares students to visit Hatch Show Print. Students are introduced to the basics of letterpress printing, Hatch Show Print's distinctive style, and the importance of creating a design that meets the client expectation.

**TIME**
- 1 class period

**MATERIALS**
- Hatch Show Print Posters PowerPoint Presentation found in the Teacher and Student Resource Portal
- “Letterpress Printing” reading found in the Teacher and Student Resource Portal

**ACTIVITY**

1) As a bell ringer, have students predict what the process of letterpress printing might be or look like, based on the words themselves.

2) After the bell ringer, explain to students that they will be visiting Hatch Show Print, a letterpress print shop that has been in business since 1879. Have students read “Letterpress Printing” in the Teacher and Student Resource Portal.

3) After reading, discuss the following questions with the class:
   - What is letterpress printing?
   - Who is credited with the invention of moveable type?
   - What changes and innovations occurred in order to make printing faster and more cost-effective?
   - Why does Hatch Show Print continue to design posters as they did in the nineteenth century?
   - Why has Hatch Show Print survived when other letterpress shops have disappeared?

4) After discussing, show students the PowerPoint Presentation of poster examples provided in the Teacher and Student Resource Portal. As a class or in small groups, have students analyze the posters produced by Hatch Show Print. Provide students with the following questions:
   - Does this poster look like it was created on a computer or through a letterpress process? Why or why not?
   - What can you infer about the subject or purpose of the poster, based on its design?

5) As an exit ticket, have students answer the question: In what ways do you predict that twenty-first-century technology has impacted the antiquated printing practices at Hatch Show Print?
Students will apply what they learned at Hatch Show Print to design their own poster.

TIME
• 1–2 class periods (See Teacher Note below.)

OBJECTIVE
• Students will design a poster.
• Students will explain how their design relates to the subject material of the poster.

VOCABULARY
• Balance – the visual weight of art elements feeling equally distributed throughout a design
• Rhythm – repeating elements to create the illusion of movement
• Pattern – the arrangement of repeated or alternating elements
• Contrast – the juxtaposition of opposite elements in a design to create visual interest
• Emphasis – the focal point of a design
• Scale – the relationship or differences in size between objects
• Unity – the feeling that all elements of a design have come together to create something that feels complete, with no elements out of place
• Variety – using a variety of different elements to create visual intrigue

MATERIALS
• Paper
• Pencil
• Principles of Design
• Choice of artistic medium
(See Teacher Note Below)

TEACHER NOTE
We encourage a printmaking lesson following the visit to Hatch Show Print.

The shortest version of this lesson involves sketching the design for a poster in pencil, and turning in that sketch as the final product. That sketch can also establish the framework for a poster where the imagery is drawn on linoleum, carved, and printed in relief. If relief printing is not practical for your classroom, poster drafts can also be the beginning of a digital design or a poster that is hand drawn and painted.
ACTIVITY

1) As a bell ringer, have students answer to the following questions:
   - What makes Hatch Show Print posters different from other posters you may have seen?
   - What was the most memorable poster that you saw at Hatch Show Print? Why did it stand out?

2) Next, explain that each student is going to create/design his or her own poster. Below are three possible options:
   - A historic or literary event/character (This can present a great opportunity to collaborate with English or history teachers.)
   - A contemporary artist or event
   - A fictional event/character

TEACHER NOTE

If students need help creating a fictional concept, students can invent one by writing down their favorite month, favorite number, a descriptive adjective, his/her favorite animal, and the name of their elementary school or first summer camp. The month and number will be the date of the show, the adjective and animal compose the band name, and the school or camp will be the venue.

3) Tell students they will present their designs to the class, so decisions on color, imagery, font, etc., should make sense and be explained in their presentation. For example, a Lil Nas X poster might feature a horse in reference to lyrics from “Old Town Road.”

4) Give students the class period to design their poster. Have students start by making multiple thumbnail sketches. Next, have the student consult with a partner on which of their own designs is the strongest. Then, have the student further develop that design as a larger sketch. At the end of the period, have students present their larger sketches to the class or in a group. Students should explain their reasoning behind:
   - The color(s)
   - The imagery that supports the subject
   - The size and placement of text
   - The ways they used the principles of design

5) These sketches can be used to create a more developed piece, if time allows.

CHALLENGE

As an alternative, students can be paired to design and create a poster for a fellow student, playing the role of both the client and the designer. In this way, the poster making process mimics the commercial design model of Hatch Show Print. Students will need additional time for planning and consultation with their partner.

To conclude the lesson, have students reflect on their experience creating poster art for a client, either as a class discussion or in writing.
Letterpress printing is the process of pressing raised, inked surfaces (usually made of wood, metal, or linoleum) onto paper. It is essentially the same process used by Johann Gutenberg, the German goldsmith credited with the invention of movable type, which revolutionized the printing process in the West and made mass production of printing possible. Before Gutenberg, all books were written by hand, and were more expensive and harder to access. The invention of movable type and the printing press led to an unprecedented rise in literacy and spread of knowledge and information.

Gutenberg’s invention in 1455 was so effective that it set the standard for printing technology until well into the nineteenth century, when economic pressures for faster, more cost-effective printing led to a series of fundamental changes that continue to this day. Despite technological innovations such as Linotype\(^1\), lithography\(^2\), offset printing\(^3\), graphic design software, laser printers, and color photocopiers, Hatch Show Print has managed to survive when most of its peers in the letterpress printing industry did not.

(Continued...)
A typical poster at Hatch Show Print is still created the way it was in the late nineteenth century at the shop. The process begins with wood or linoleum blocks that feature carved designs or attached metal letters, called type. Printmakers select blocks, arrange them, and then lock them down into a frame, positioned like a mirror image—upside down and backwards. The entire frame is then inked with rollers, and paper is pressed across it to obtain a right-side-up impression. Posters with more than one color require separate woodblocks or type for each color. Each application of additional color requires a new pass through the press. Two or three colors is typical for a Hatch Show Print poster.

Why has the shop survived when other letterpress shops have disappeared? It might have something to do with the shop's consistent focus on the needs of its clients. The sheer artistry that the shop's designers and printers have consistently displayed over the years surely has something to do with the shop's longevity. Perhaps there was some luck involved as well. Whatever the reason, by its uninterrupted use of letterpress printing technology from the shop's beginnings in 1879, Hatch Show Print remains one of the last living, continuous links to the earliest days of printing.

(End)

1 A machine that sets and casts lines of type, which can be melted down and re-cast into new lines of type.
2 The process of printing from a flat surface, based on the scientific principle that water and oil will not mix. The printing surface is treated to repel the ink except where required for printing.
3 A printing technique where an inked image is printed from a metal plate to a rubber pad and then transferred to the print surface (usually paper).