

Current Event Collage

By Angela Wong

Looking for a fun, visual way to help your students get involved in current events?

This beginner-level project challenges students to develop and communicate a personal stance on an issue of importance today. Students use online search tools to find images, and then combine them in Adobe Photoshop CC to create a collage that tells a story and conveys an opinion. Students can either use basic Photoshop tools or push themselves further to create beautiful works of art.

This project includes:

- [Lesson plan](#)
- [Technical tutorial](#)
- [Rubric](#)
- [Peer review form](#)
- [Student work samples](#)
- [Design guidelines](#)



Women's March by Emily G., Natick High School

About the Author



Angela Wong is a Visual and Media Arts educator at Natick High School in Natick, MA. She teaches a variety of courses to students in grades 9–12, including classes like Graphic Design, Advanced Graphic Design I, Advanced Graphic Design II, and Yearbook in which students use Adobe Creative Cloud. Her students have earned ACA Certification in Adobe Photoshop CC, Illustrator CC, and InDesign CC. She holds an MAT in Art Education from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston in partnership with Tufts University, and she has bachelor's degrees in Fine Arts, Art History, and Film Studies. She is currently ACA certified in Photoshop CS6, Illustrator CC, and InDesign CC. Angela lives in Lowell, MA with her husband (also a high school teacher), and her two cats, Rae and Stormy.

Timing: 5 class periods, or about 3.5 hours

Grade Level: Secondary (9-12)

Subject: Humanities

Current Event Collage

In this interdisciplinary lesson, students select a current event and develop a personal stance or opinion on the issue. Then, they communicate their stance visually by creating a collage using found images and Photoshop CC. Students also create a written summary and a Works Cited page, and participate in a peer review session.



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Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Articulate a personal stance or opinion on a current event.
- Define "juxtaposition" and identify examples in a work of art.
- Effectively communicate a message through a visual work of art.
- Create a digital collage using Photoshop CC.
- Summarize in writing the intended message behind a visual work of art.
- Create a Works Cited page.
- Critically analyze the work of their peers.

Suggested Pacing

- **Day One** - Introduce project. Students identify their current event and reflect on their personal opinions.
- **Day Two** - Students find and select images for their collages.
- **Day Three and Four** - Students create their collages, write their summaries and compile their Works Cited pages.
- **Day Five** - Peer review and project wrap-up.

Materials and Preparation

- Refer to [this Google Slides presentation](#) for inspiration on how to introduce this project
- Photocopy handouts: Student Work Examples, Technical Tutorial, Design Guidelines, Rubric, and Peer Review (1 per student)
- Ensure that each student has access to the Internet (for image searching) and Photoshop (for collage creation)

Teacher Tip

If you like, you can pre-select current events or issues for your students to explore with this project. Or, you can modify the project to focus on past events (such as those in a work of literature or a historical period you're studying).

Lesson Procedure

1. Motivation

Ask students to brainstorm a list of topics that are currently in the news — national or local — that they believe are relevant or important for young people to understand. Write responses on the board.

When the list is complete, read the list aloud. For each item, ask students to stand if they have a personal opinion or stance on the issue, and remain seated if they do not. Ask the class: Which of these issues feel the most personally relevant to us, as a class?

2. Direct Instruction

Introduce the project:

- Explain that you'll be creating collages that express a personal opinion or stance on a current event or issue. Students can choose an issue from the list you just generated as a class, or they can choose another issue they feel deeply about.
- Define "collage" as a work of art that combines multiple images or textures to create one cohesive, balanced whole. Pass out the Design Guidelines handout and discuss the tips presented.
- Define "juxtaposition" and explain how visual artists often juxtapose images in order to show both sides of an issue.
- Show some examples of student work and discuss: What was the current event the student chose? What message was he/she trying to convey? How did he/she juxtapose images to create tension and interest in the image? Which of the Design Guidelines did the students follow?
- Pass out the rubric and explain your expectations and evaluation criteria.



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3. Independent Work

Allow class time for students to:

- Choose a current event to focus on.
- Write a journal entry or short personal draft expressing their opinion on the issue.

Time permitting, group students with similar current events together to share their opinions and fine-tune their thoughts on the issue.

4. Direct Instruction (OPTIONAL)

- Show students how to use image search engines to find and save images for their collages.
- Demonstrate how to use Photoshop to lay out and refine collages. Refer to the Technical Tutorial handout for ideas.

5. Independent Work

Allow class time for students to:

- Find and save images for their collages.
- Create their collages in Photoshop.
- Write a summary.
- Create a Works Cited page.

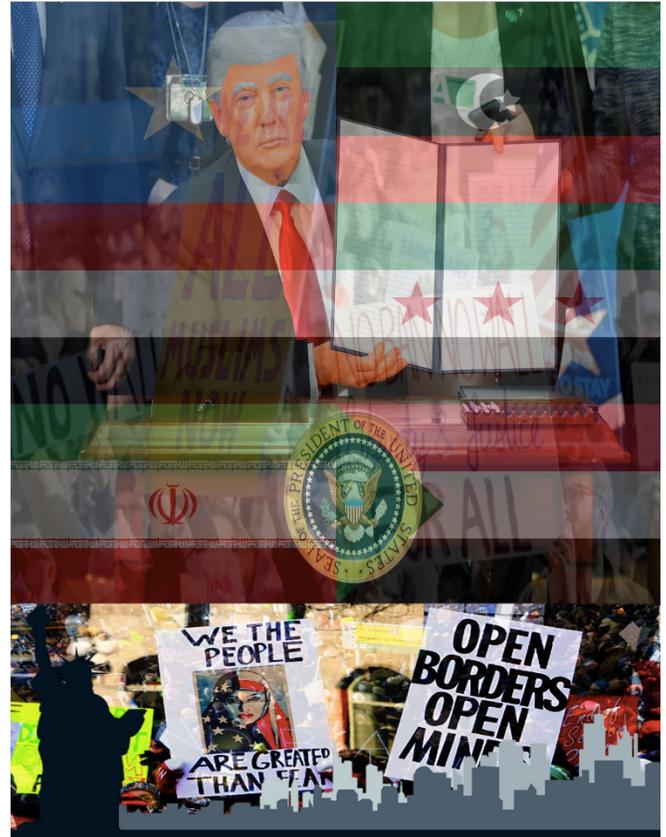
6. Group Work

Lead the class in a Peer Review, using the guiding questions provided.

7. Close and Summary

Summarize the project by discussing as a whole class:

- What was easy or hard about communicating your personal opinion or stance using images versus words?
- How can images tell stories that words cannot?



Immigration Ban by Emily H., Natick High School

For more information

Visit the Adobe Education Exchange:

<http://edex.adobe.com/adobeforteachers>

Student work samples courtesy Angela Wong.



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Technical Tutorial

After you've identified your current event and summarized your personal stance on the issue, follow these steps to create your collage.

Step 1: Find and select images

Use search engines to find images related to your event. Here are some suggested places to look:

- [Google Images](#): Use the "Tools" dropdown to look for images within a certain date range or with other characteristics that matter to you.
- [Flickr](#): Use "Advanced Search" to set your search criteria.
- [Adobe Stock](#): Use the "Filter" button to set your search criteria.

When searching for images, be sure to:

- Look for images that capture both sides of the issue, so you can juxtapose them later.
- Make sure you're finding images that are licensed under Creative Commons for your use, or make note of the source of the image so you can add it to your Work Cited page later.
- Save the images to your working folder, and give them a name you'll remember so you can find them later.

Step 2: Lay out a rough draft of your collage

Using Photoshop, create a new document. Then, begin placing your chosen images on the blank canvas. Play with the layout of your images until you're happy with the basic arrangement.

Remember: If your chosen images are too big for your layout, you might want to open each one individually in Photoshop to crop them and make them smaller.

Here are some Photoshop tutorial videos that will help you as you work:

- [Creating, opening and importing images](#)
- [Using the Crop tool](#)

Step 3: Fine tune your collage

Once your layout looks good to you, it's time to start fine-tuning it to make it truly shine. Blend and mix your image layers together to balance your collage.

Try these Photoshop tutorial videos to learn more about the different tools you can use to do this:

- [Selecting pixels](#)
- [Quick Select tool](#)
- [Marquee tools](#)
- [Selection adjustments](#)
- [Blending modes](#)
- [Color Replacement brush](#)

Step 4: Save and export your final collage

When you're satisfied with your work, save the Photoshop file to your device. Then, go to "File > Export as" and select ".png".

Rubric for: Current Event Collage

Assignment + Criteria	Points	Comments
<p>Content <i>10 pts each</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current event is school-appropriate and from the past year. All images relate to the event and support the end goals of the collage, helping to convey the intended message. 	_____/20	
<p>Communication <i>10 pts each</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collage successfully communicates the intended message about student's personal stance/opinion. Objects/images are thoughtfully placed in a way that creates juxtaposition between them. 	_____/20	
<p>Written Work <i>10 pts each</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed a short (3 - 4 paragraph) essay about the current event. Essay explains how the collage utilizes juxtaposition, how the images support the event and how a personal stance/opinion was displayed. 	_____/20	
<p>Work Ethic/Effort <i>5 pts each</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used class time effectively and came to class prepared. Actively participated in class. Demonstrated perseverance and problem solving throughout project. All work handed in on time. All projects submitted as .png files. 	_____/20	
<p>Works Cited</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Works Cited page, in MLA format, has been submitted and includes citations for all images. <p>**This is exempt if the student is using ALL their own images.</p>	_____/10	
<p>Technical Skills <i>2 pts each</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finished collage delivered in the proper file format. Photos are sharp (not pixelated/blurry). Used all tools proficiently and purposefully, knowing which tools to use to create desired effects. Student used blending modes and the color replacement Use of technical elements and effects adds to the overall design by supporting the goals and purpose of the project. Use of such elements or effects is not distracting or excessive. Student has created a balanced composition with a point of emphasis. Color and shape are used to effectively move the viewer's eye throughout the composition. 	_____/10	
TOTAL	_____/100	

Peer Review Form

****Remember - your feedback should not be critical of the person. Your goal is to provide information/ideas/suggestions that could improve their artwork.****

Artist:

- What was your current event? How do your images relate to it?
- How are you using juxtaposition to tell the viewer the story of your event and your personal stance on the issue?
- Do you feel you were successful, how?
- What would you like to rework?

Peer Reviewers:

- Describe how they were successful in their use of juxtaposition and in communicating their intended message. Were you able to know what the event was before they told the class? How?
- What areas are working particularly well in their collage?
- What would you suggest to add/change to further strengthen/enhance their collage? (Even really strong work can be pushed further!)



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Design Guidelines: Collages

Here are some tips for creating more professional-looking and visually affecting digital collages:

Start with good source images

A collage is only as strong as the materials you have to work with. As you're searching for images, look for high quality images you can easily manipulate. If the images you want to combine are pixelated, too dark, or poorly cropped, spend some time editing them in Photoshop before bringing them into your collage layout. Not sure how? Try [these tips for basic photo editing in Photoshop](#).

Choose (and highlight) a point of emphasis

Collages can look messy if all of the images are of equal size, brightness and priority on the page. A strong collage chooses one point of emphasis, which the artist can make stand out by making it bigger, brighter, or more prominent. Then, the rest of the images can take second stage. Learning [how and why to choose a point of emphasis](#) is a great first step to becoming a better designer.

Identify a color scheme

To make your images look like they belong together, you'll want to choose a few colors to focus on. Otherwise, your collage can look messy and overwhelming to your audience. Remember that your choice of color can communicate a lot about your intended message, so choose carefully. Bright colors can feel happy or aggressive, depending on how they are used, whereas blacks and greys can feel subdued and sad. Are all your images different colors? No worries! You can easily recolor them individually in Photoshop, or use filters and masks to apply a color to your entire collage when it's done. Try the [Match Color function](#) to make everything more visually harmonious.

Blend and blur to create a cohesive whole

Anyone can plop a bunch of images onto a page and call it a collage. But the real magic of collage work happens when you can create one piece of art from many pieces. The easiest way to do this? Learn how to blend and blur your layers so that the different images flow together visually, and start looking like one piece. Learn more about how to blend layers in Photoshop with [this beginner tutorial video](#).