

Balance (Symmetry/Asymmetry)

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Art Concept: Balance (Symmetry/Asymmetry)

Balance: a principle of design; the arrangement of elements that makes individual parts of a composition appear equally important; an arrangement of the elements to create an equal distribution of visual weight throughout the format or composition. If a composition appears top- or bottom-heavy and/or anchored by weight to one side, it is not visually balanced.

Types of balance:

- **Symmetrical balance** (or Symmetry) means that the work of art is the same on one side as the other, a mirror image of itself, on both sides of a center line.
- **Asymmetrical balance** (or Asymmetry) means that the two halves of the work of art are different, however, try to create balance. In other words, although the sides may not be exactly the same, there will be elements that interact in a way that makes each side equally important.
- **Radial symmetry** means the weight of the image or form radiates from a center point.

Show students symmetrical and non-symmetrical balance and talk about how color, size, position, line, etc. can create asymmetrical balance in a composition. Show students the images below and talk about the balance in each piece of art. Is it asymmetrical or symmetrical? What makes the balance in the asymmetrical works?

Sample Projects:

- [Elongated & Symmetrical Portrait](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Kaleidoscope Radial Symmetry](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Paper Cut Aliens](#) (2nd Grade) art lesson.
- [Assemblage Sculptures](#) (5th Grade) art lesson.
- [Printing with Nature](#) (5th Grade) art lesson.
- Fold a piece of paper in half. With different colored glitter glue, make a design on one half of the paper. Fold it together and then open it up to make a symmetrical pattern.

- On the center line of a folded piece of paper, have the children write their name in cursive, then go over it in paint. Close and open the paper to make a mirror-image print of the name. You can leave it or have them make it into a monster or bug.
- Using your three initials make a mirror image top to bottom, then left to right.
- Make a “playing card” such as a Jack of Spades.
- Do a painting of a landscape reflected in water.
- Make a symmetrical design on a mask.
- Make an Australian aboriginal design using roofing paper (for bark), stencils, and powdered paint attached with spray adhesive.

Examples of Balance (Symmetry/Asymmetry) in Architecture & Artwork:

Coronation of the Virgin, Enguerran Quarton (Dutch), 1454. symmetrical

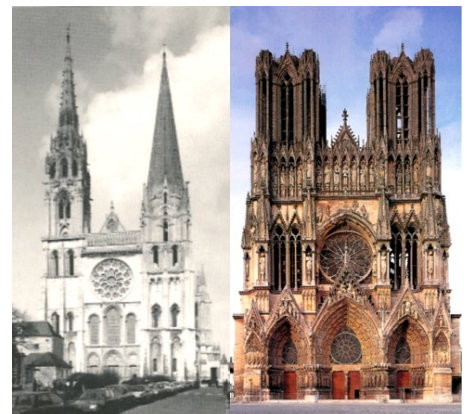


Westreich Family, Alice Neel (American), 1978. asymmetrical but balanced



Chartes Cathedral (1140) and Riems Cathedral (1254). one is symmetrical, one asymmetrical

Crowded Globe, Zhen Xuen (China), 1991. symmetrical



How Will Our Future Be? Donatella Zenotti (Italy), 1991. diagonally symmetrical

Two Women at the Window, Murillo (Spanish), 1670. asymmetrical but balanced

North by Northwest, Alfred Hitchcock (American), 1959.
asymmetrical but balanced

Peruvian Feather Blanket (Nazca), 3rd or
4thc. symmetrical

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