

Read the “Art from Found Items” passage set.

## Art from Found Items

### Source 1: Used Materials, New Art

by Thomas R. Miller

- 1 Art can be made out of anything, including ordinary things we find around us. Everyday objects that we usually throw away, such as metal cans or bits of newspaper, can be reused to make sculpture, jewelry, or musical instruments, for example. Their value depends on the artist’s ability to see how their shape, color, material, or design can be used in a new way. Some artists even recycle images and materials from other people’s art, adding personal touches or altering the original artwork to make their own statement.
- 2 A patchwork quilt is sewn together from scraps, remnants, and rags. Quilters, often working together, combine these irregular bits and pieces of cloth into a new pattern. In rural America, the traditional quilting bee gave friends and neighbors a chance to get together and exchange news and gossip.
- 3 Public places can become art spaces. Artists on New York’s Lower East Side have transformed an old gas station into a gallery, sculpture garden, and performance space. They turn abandoned cars and other urban debris into a community work of art that continues to grow. . . .
- 4 The German artist Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) used discarded objects to create a style of art he called Rubbish. Schwitters walked the streets collecting torn pieces of paper, ticket stubs, and bits of string—anything someone had thrown away—and used glue to combine them on a plain background. That kind of picture is called a collage, from the French word for paste. . . .
- 5 With a little imagination, any object can be used for art. During World War II, raw materials of all kinds were in short supply. The famous Spanish artist Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) hoarded “junk” such as bicycle frames, mattress springs, and gardening tools, which he made into sculptures. *Bull’s Head*, created in 1942, is made from a bicycle seat and handlebars cast in bronze.
- 6 Musical instruments can be made from recyclables. American composer Harry Partch (1901–1974) turned large glass bottles called carboys into an enormous set of hanging gongs. Partch named his instrument the Cloud-Chamber Bowls in 1950, when he found the tops and bottoms of carboys that had been cut in a laboratory . . . . Doing some experimenting of his own, he discovered ways of striking the bowls to produce beautiful and complex tones.

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## Source 2: Andy Goldsworthy—Sculpting Earth Art

by Kathryn Hulick

7 Have you ever stacked stones in a huge pile or built a fort out of sticks? Then you're an Earth Artist. You don't need paint or paper to make art: in fact, Earth Artist Andy Goldsworthy started out with a simple rule: he would work outside and only use materials he could find nearby. That meant using thorns to pin dried stalks together and spit to paste leaves to rocks! "I splashed in water, covered myself in mud, went barefoot, and woke with the dawn," Goldsworthy says in the book *Hand to Earth*. He also got rained and snowed on a lot, sometimes on purpose! To make a "rain shadow," Goldsworthy lies down on the ground when it's just beginning to rain, then gets up once he's soaked and takes a picture of the man-shaped dry spot he left behind.

8 Home is in Scotland, but Goldsworthy has worked in the United States, France, Australia, Japan, and even at the North Pole. His finished works made of stones, sticks, leaves, ice, sand, or mud look astoundingly simple and beautiful, but the process can be filthy and even frustrating. The purpose isn't just to make a nice piece of art—it's a way of learning about the world. In his book *A Collaboration with Nature*, Goldsworthy says, "I stop at a place or pick up a material because I feel there is something to be discovered. Here is where I can learn."

### Gluing Icicles

9 A man with white hair, a white beard, and a Scottish accent rubs his freezing hands together before picking up a piece of icicle, dipping it in snow and then in water, and holding it against another bit of ice. Then he waits patiently until the two pieces freeze together.

10 Andy Goldsworthy is being filmed in action for the documentary *Rivers and Tides*. The curving line of ice he's working on looks as if it weaves through and around a point of stone. If a piece of icicle doesn't fit quite right, he chews the end until it does. His hands are cold and dirty, but he can't feel the ice properly with gloves on. "It's hard going and it's hard on the hands. . . . All effort is going into trying to make something that is effortless," he says.

11 Finally, the Sun rises and shines through the curving ice; it seems to glow. "I never had any idea that would happen!" Goldsworthy says with delight, going on to point out that "the very thing that brings the work to life is the thing that will cause its death." The ice will melt in the sunlight, and the sculpture will be gone.

### Balancing Stones

12 Most of Goldsworthy's work isn't meant to last, and some of it falls apart before it's even finished! In *Rivers and Tides*, the artist tries to construct an egg-shaped cairn<sup>1</sup> on the beach out of flat stones. Although it looks sturdy, the growing pile of stone is a delicate act of weight and balance. Suddenly, the whole thing collapses! Goldsworthy hangs his head for a minute before cleaning up and starting over.

<sup>1</sup>cairn: a mound of stones made as a marker or memorial

Four times, the cairn falls over. “Each time I got to know the stone a little bit more,” says the artist. “It got higher each time. It grew in proportion to my understanding of the stone. I obviously don’t understand it well enough—yet!” The old reminder to learn from your mistakes is certainly true when it comes to Earth Art!

**Thinking BIG and Little**

- 13 Goldsworthy doesn’t always work alone or in the middle of nowhere. He’s worked in busy city parks, carted snowballs into the middle of Glasgow, Scotland, in the summer to watch them melt, and employed expert builders to help create huge installation pieces<sup>2</sup> like a 2,278-foot-long winding stone wall at the Storm King Art Center in New York state. But his fascination with small and delicate parts of nature never fades. According to Goldsworthy, creating a box out of leaves can be an even more monumental task than building a gigantic earthwork.

<sup>2</sup>installation pieces: artworks displayed in a large area as arranged by the artist

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**Source 3: Seeing the Art in Plastic Straws  
and Other Castoffs**

by Karen Jones

- 14 The contest challenge was to create outrageous art from unconventional<sup>1</sup> materials. The students in Eileen Farrelly-Moyotl’s 11th-grade fashion design class at the High School of Art and Design in Manhattan were up to it: one of them made a dress from plastic bags filled with floating fish.
- 15 “I thought it was the perfect contest for my class,” Ms. Farrelly-Moyotl said. “It allows for creative problem solving and encourages students not to have limits. It also lets them express their personalities.” She said the student fashioning the floating fish dress originally wanted to use live fish, but that idea was quickly abandoned in favor of the toy variety. Securing the bags so they don’t pop when the dress is worn, however, remains a concern.
- 16 The contest, the Materials Matter Amazing Art Challenge, is a project of the Ripley’s Believe It or Not Odditorium in Times Square, an 18,000-square-foot attraction filled with exhibits . . . Though Ripley’s already organizes field trips with local schools, Michael Hirsch, president and general manager of the Odditorium, said he wanted to have a greater impact. “One of the core elements of Ripley’s is going to the depths of your imagination,” he said. “We wanted a contest that would challenge the minds of New York City art students.” . . .

<sup>1</sup>unconventional: different from what is usual

## Grade 6 Scoring Sampler Passage Set and Prompt

- 17 Jennifer Renée Caden Merdjan, an art teacher and professor at Bard High School Early College in Queens, said using unconventional materials to create art “stems from the avant-garde movement<sup>2</sup> of the late 19th and early 20th century. It was a reaction to the Industrial Age.<sup>3</sup> Back then an artist like Marcel Duchamp questioned what is art and what materials can be used.”
- 18 Her students study contemporary<sup>4</sup> artists who use “humble or recycled materials,” and the contest seemed ideal for an environmentally friendly project. “Students are required to use one recycled item over and over to make a design that functions, as opposed to fine art,” Ms. Merdjan said. “This is not something that comes up often in an art class, where you can use recycled materials to create something unique or outrageous.”
- 19 Eagerly embracing the fun factor, her class has designed a chandelier<sup>5</sup> made from hamster tubes, a hand bag sewn together with bicycle tire tubes and a dress fashioned from soda cans. One student painstakingly pieced together a dress using 1,134 plastic straws.
- 20 “She said it was important to recycle plastic and something as small as a straw is often thrown out. People don’t often think about recycling them—but they add up,” Ms. Merdjan said. “This project allowed my class to design something of their choice, using a material of their choice and raise environmental awareness at the same time.”

<sup>2</sup>avant-garde movement: a trend of experimental or surprising art

<sup>3</sup>Industrial Age: the time in history when machines replaced hand tools

<sup>4</sup>contemporary: of the present time

<sup>5</sup>chandelier: a branching, hanging light fixture

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# Writing Prompt

Your art teacher has asked that you write a paper about a specific kind of art. Write an explanatory essay about art created from found or recycled items. Your essay must be based on ideas and information that can be found in the “Art from Found Items” passage set.

Manage your time carefully so that you can

- read the passages;
- plan your response;
- write your response; and
- revise and edit your response.

Be sure to

- use evidence from multiple sources; and
- avoid overly relying on one source.

Your response should be in the form of a multiparagraph essay. Write your response in the space provided.