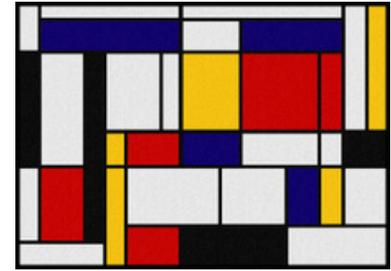


MONDRIAN'S WORLD OF LINES



Name: _____

In the early 1900s, an artist named Piet Mondrian decided to paint the world in a brand-new way. Instead of drawing trees or people, he used straight black lines and bright blocks of colour to show the "balance" of everything around him. His famous "grid paintings" are special because they only use the three primary colours—red, yellow, and blue. To Mondrian, a busy city like New York wasn't just buildings and cars; it was a rhythmic dance of shapes and lines, almost like a catchy song you can see with your eyes!

Look at the painting and imagine your eyes are following a map. In the space below, describe how your eyes travel across the artwork.

Where do your eyes land first? _____

Which path do your eyes take next? _____

And where do your eyes stop to rest? _____

How does this painting make you feel? Explain why the colours and straight lines give you that feeling. (For example: "It makes me feel calm because the lines are so straight," or "It makes me feel excited because the red is so bright.")

Now it is your turn to be the artist! In the space below, recreate Mondrian's style, but with a twist. Instead of his usual stiff squares, you will use curved, wavy, and circular lines.

- Shapes: Use a compass or trace circular objects from your pencil case (like a glue stick cap or a roll of tape) to make different-sized circles.
- Lines: Fill the space with wavy, curved, or parallel lines that flow across the page.
- Colour: Use only the same primary colours (red, yellow, and blue) plus black and white.
- Think Like Mondrian: Carefully decide where to place your "blocks" of colour. Should a big circle be bright red? Should a small wavy section be yellow? Try to keep the page looking balanced!



Title: _____

Teacher's Guide: Piet Mondrian's "Composition with Large Red Plane..."

This guide is designed to help you lead a classroom through Piet Mondrian's 1921 work. This painting is a primary example of De Stijl (The Style), a movement focused on abstraction, balance, and the underlying order of shapes.

Suggested Grades: 3 to 5

Core Themes: Balance, primary colours, abstraction, and visual rhythm.

Phase 1: Leading the Discussion (The Balance Test)

Instead of a standard observation list, have students treat their eyes like a tracking device to understand how Mondrian directs their attention.

- **The First Landing:** When you first look at the page, which shape "grabs" your eyes immediately? Is it the size of the red square or the brightness of the colour that pulls you there?
- **The Path:** Once you leave that first spot, where do your eyes go second? Are they following a specific black line like a road, or jumping to a different colour?
- **The Resting Point:** After looking at the whole painting, where do your eyes feel most "comfortable" staying? Why does that spot feel like the end of the journey?
- **The Weight Check:** If this painting were a scale, would it tip over? Why does the large red square on the left not "crush" the small blue and yellow shapes on the right?
- **The Eraser Test:** If we took a giant eraser and rubbed out all the black lines, what would happen to the colours? Would they still look like they belong together, or would they just be "floating"?

Phase 2: Analyzing Art Elements & Principles

Mondrian uses a restricted set of tools to explore how different elements interact.

- **Colour (Primary Palette):** Mondrian used Red, Yellow, and Blue because they are the "primary" colours that cannot be created by mixing others. They serve as the basic building blocks of his visual language.
- **Line (The Grid):** The lines are strictly horizontal and vertical. This creates a structure of opposites—horizontal lines suggest stability, while vertical lines suggest height.
- **Balance (Asymmetrical):** The painting is not a mirror image. Instead, it uses asymmetry, where a large area of one color (red) is balanced by the placement of smaller, high-contrast colors (yellow and blue).
- **Line Weight & Variety:** Look closely at the black lines. Are they all the same? Notice how some lines are thicker than others. These varying "weights" act like the walls of a house; the thickest lines often hold the most "weighty" colors in place, while thinner lines let the white spaces feel more open.

- Negative Space (The White and Gray): The white and gray sections aren't just "empty" spots. They are shapes themselves. Mondrian used these neutral colours to let the primary colours breathe, ensuring the painting doesn't feel too crowded or overwhelming.
- Grid Infinite Theory: Notice how the black lines go all the way to the edge of the canvas. Mondrian wanted us to imagine that the grid doesn't stop at the frame—it continues forever, like a map of the entire universe.

Phase 3: The Worksheet Questions

1. The Subject: If this painting is not a picture of a physical object, what do you think it is trying to show? (Examples: A feeling of order, a map of a city, or a mathematical balance).
2. The Rules: Mondrian followed strict rules for this style. What would happen to the feeling of the work if we added a green circle or a diagonal line?
3. Real World Connection: If you had to turn this painting into a building, which part would be the floor and which would be the windows?
4. Movement: Even though the lines are straight and still, does the painting feel "busy" or "quiet" to you? Explain why.

Phase 4: Historical Context for Teachers

About the Artist: The Path to Abstraction Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) didn't start out painting squares. He was a Dutch artist who began by painting traditional, realistic landscapes of the Netherlands. However, he became obsessed with the "structure" of things—the way a tree's branches made lines against the sky or how a building was held up. Over thirty years, his work became simpler and simpler. He moved to Paris and later New York City, where he became fascinated by the fast-paced energy of city life and the "grid" layout of the streets. He often painted while listening to Jazz, trying to capture the "beat" of the music using only lines and colors.

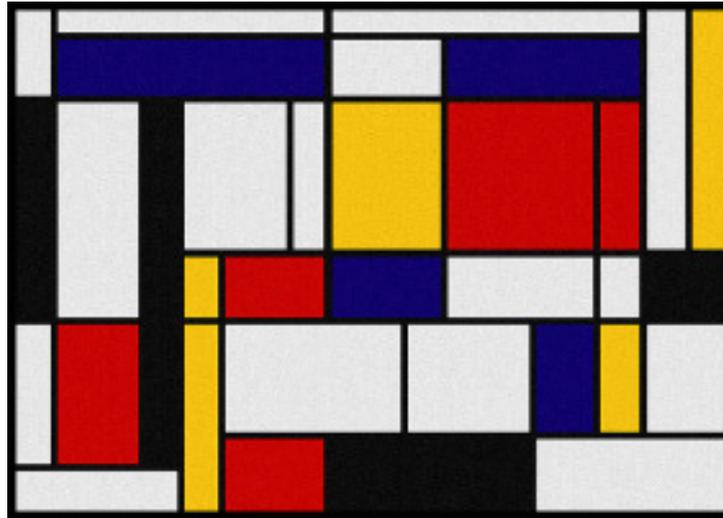
Understanding De Stijl (The Style) Mondrian was a leading member of a group of artists and architects called De Stijl (pronounced "duh-STAY-ul"). Founded in 1917, this movement believed that art should be stripped down to its most basic parts. After the world had experienced the chaos of World War I, these artists wanted to create a world of perfect order and harmony. They didn't just paint—they designed furniture, houses, and even typography using only:

- Straight lines (horizontal and vertical)
- Primary colours (red, yellow, blue)
- Non-colours (black, white, gray). They believed this "pure" style could be a universal language that everyone could understand, bringing peace and balance to modern life.

About the Work: *Composition with Large Red Plane* (1921). This specific painting was created at the height of the De Stijl movement. Mondrian didn't want any "messy" emotions or realistic details to distract the viewer. By using only primary colours and straight lines, he felt he was showing a "universal truth" that anyone, anywhere in the world, could understand just by looking at it.

Art Terms & Definitions:

- **Abstraction:** Art that uses shapes, colours, and lines to represent an idea or feeling rather than a "real" object like a person or a bowl of fruit.
- **Primary Colours:** Red, yellow, and blue. These are the "parent" colours that cannot be mixed from anything else, but are used to create all other colours.
- **Asymmetry:** A type of balance where two sides of a painting look different but still feel "equal" in weight or importance.
- **De Stijl:** A Dutch movement meaning "The Style." It focused on using only the most basic elements of art to create harmony and order.
- **Composition:** The way an artist decides to arrange the parts of a painting (like lines and colours) on the canvas.
- **Non-Objective Art:** Another word for abstraction; art that has no "object" as its subject.
- **Horizontal & Vertical:** Horizontal lines go across (like the horizon), while vertical lines go up and down (like a flagpole).
- **Plane:** A flat surface or area within a piece of art.



Mondrian, P. (1921). *Composition with large red plane, yellow, black, gray, and blue* [Painting]. Kunstmuseum Den Haag, The Hague, Netherlands.