



James Castle House Lesson Plan: Inventing New Letters

Although James Castle never learned to read or write, his text-based artworks clearly reflect a fascination with written language.

In some of these artworks, Castle explored individual letters by cutting and then re-assembling them like a puzzle. He even invented a few of his own letters and symbols!

Put yourself in Castle's shoes as you explore the alphabet from a new perspective! This lesson plan uses collage and drawing to remix and reinvent familiar letter forms and symbols.

Materials

- Paper – any type or color will work
- Old magazines or newspapers
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers, pencils or any drawing tool

Activity

1. Find and Cut Out Letters

- Look around your home for old magazines, newspapers or packaging with large letters.
- Choose the letters whose shapes you like the best and carefully cut them out so you have an assortment of letters to work with.
- NOTE: younger children may need help with this step. Choose large letters as these will be easiest to cut out.

2. Cut and Re-arrange

- Just as Castle did, use your scissors to cut off sections of each letter. For example, cut the letter in half or cut off the serifs. Make sure to keep track of all these pieces of your letter!
- Rearrange these parts to create a whole new letter or even mix two or more letters together.
- Glue your rearrangements to a piece of paper.

3. Draw Letters

- Explore these new letters further by drawing them using your favorite drawing tool.
- You can even create your own alphabet or coded language using these new letters!
- Play around with the rearrangement of the same letter. How many new combinations can you make out of a capital G, E, K, etc. ?
- NOTE: younger children may find it easiest to work on one large letter, such as the first letter of their name, while older children could create a whole alphabet.

