



Developed with Beth Allums

# Mixed media mail art

Volume 123 | Gr. 5-12



## VA:Cr2.1.5a

Experiment and make skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.

## VA:Cn10.1.5a

Apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design to view surroundings in new ways through art-making.

## VA:Cr1.1.5a

The student will express personal ideas, images, and themes through artistic choices of media, techniques, and subject matter.

## Objectives

*Students will...*

- Be introduced to Mail and Correspondence Art
- Learn collage and mixed media techniques
- Learn how to create a piece of art to be sent through the mail

# Introduction

Mail art is a collaborative art form with a long and fascinating history populated by famous artists, as well as everyday practitioners.

The term “mail art” refers to pieces of art sent through the mail rather than displayed or sold in traditional venues. Mail artists often use inexpensive and recycled materials including postcards, collage, rubber stamps, and photocopied images. Mail art is a truly international activity and a fun way to connect with people around the world.

# Instructions

**Begin** the lesson by introducing students to the history of mail art and show examples such as Vincent van Gogh’s letters to Theo, Kurt Schwitters, and Ray Johnson. (Other artists of note: Anna Banana, Guy Bleus, and John Held Jr.)

**Discuss** artists trading cards and other formats for mail art. Introduce collage, mixed media, and materials and techniques. Discuss responsible and safe concerns regarding correspondence. Determine who you will swap with. You may go to a resource such as IUOMA (International Union of Mail Artists) or swap with another school.

*Educators should only use the school address for any mail art swaps and only allow children to include their first names. Messages should be short and impersonal, and keep the subject of any text simple or about the artwork.*



1. Have students look at examples of mail art and gather collage materials to begin making their own mail art.
2. Pre-cut card stock, recycled cereal boxes, or railroad board to 4" x 6" for postcards and 2½" x 3½" for artist trading cards. Have students collage the substrate and create a background.
3. Have students add a focal point, and/or words or a quote to the piece.
4. Finish off the work with some mark-making to add emphasis to the elements in the artwork.
5. Complete the back of the postcard with a message. If you are mailing an artist trading card, complete the back of the card with the student's first name, city, state, date, and title of the piece. Remember to embellish the envelope as well.





# Materials list

- Blank postcards and envelopes: You can cut thin cardboard to 4" x 6" ([9705802](#))
- Pencil ([9727482](#))
- Glue bottle or glue stick ([1100269](#) or [9716153](#))
- Brush with small paint set ([9734023](#))
- Pens ([9736785](#))
- Paint pens and markers ([9734354](#))
- Ribbon/lace, paper ephemera, trinkets and/or decorative glue-ons ([9721370](#))
- Postage stamps for mailing

## Resources

### Blendspace Presentation:

[https://www.tes.com/lessons/VIOuFG\\_qWLsLog/you-ve-got-mail-art](https://www.tes.com/lessons/VIOuFG_qWLsLog/you-ve-got-mail-art)

### Prezi:

[http://prezi.com/ig3enzvilra/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/ig3enzvilra/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

## Websites

<http://thehappymailproject.blogspot.com>

<http://mailmesomeart.blogspot.com>

<http://www.sendsomething.net>

<http://iuoma-network.ning.com>

<http://www.swap-bot.com>

<http://mailartprojects.blogspot.com>

## Books

[Good Mail Day: A Primer for Making Eye-Popping Postal Art](#), 2009, Jennie Hinchcli

[Mail Me Art: Going Postal with the World's Best Illustrators and Designers](#), 2009, Darren Di Lieto

[Creative Correspondence](#), 2003, Judy Jacobs

[Envelopes: A Puzzling Journey Through the Royal Mail](#), 2005, Harriet Russell

[Mail Art: An Annotated Bibliography](#), 1991, John Held Jr.

[Not Nothing: Selected Writings by Ray Johnson 1954-1994](#), 2014, Elizabeth Zuba, Kevin Killian and Ray Johnson

[Griffin & Sabine: An Extraordinary Correspondence](#), 1991, Nick Bantock

[Sabine's Notebook: In Which the Extraordinary Correspondence of Griffin & Sabine Continues](#), 1992, Nick Bantock

[The Golden Mean: In Which the Extraordinary Correspondence of Griffin & Sabine Concludes](#), 1993, Nick Bantock