Name: _____ Date: _____

Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

Circle group

You want to print the word STOP with a wood block. Here is a surprise. You must carve the word backward!

Here is how it works. An artist draws a picture on a flat block. She cuts away the parts that should stay white. What is left is a raised shape, like a stamp. Next she rolls ink on the block. Only the high parts get ink. Last, she puts paper on the block and presses. When she lifts the paper, the picture is there.

The block is pressed face down. So the paper gets a mirror picture. Left turns to right. A word carved the normal way would print backward. So printmakers carve the letters in reverse. Then they read right on the page.

One block can be inked again and again. It makes many copies.

Questions

1. Which parts of the block are cut away?

_____

_____

2. What does the artist roll on the block?

_____

_____

3. What happens when the paper is lifted?

_____

_____

4. Why are the letters carved backward?

_____

_____

5. What is good about one block?

_____

_____

6. What would happen to a word carved the normal way?

_____

_____

Words to know

carve: to cut a shape out of wood or stone
raised: standing up higher than what is around it
printmaker: an artist who makes pictures by printing

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

Triangle group

Imagine you want to print the word STOP with a block of wood. You might be surprised by the first step. You must carve the word backward!

Here is how block printing works. An artist draws a picture on a flat block. Then she cuts away every part that should stay white. What is left standing is a raised shape, like a stamp. Next she rolls ink over the block with a roller. Only the high parts touch the ink, and the carved-away parts stay clean. Last, she lays a sheet of paper on the block and presses down. When the paper is lifted, the picture appears on it.

Now think about what happens to the picture. The block is pressed face down, so the paper takes a mirror image of it. Left becomes right, and right becomes left. A word carved the normal way would come out reading backward on the paper. That is why careful printmakers carve their letters in reverse on the block, so they read correctly on the page.

The big treat is that one block can be inked again and again. That lets an artist make many copies of the same picture.

Questions

1. Which parts of the block does the artist cut away?

_____

_____

2. What does the artist roll over the block?

_____

_____

3. What happens when the paper is pressed on the block and lifted?

_____

_____

4. Why must the letters be carved backward on the block?

_____

_____

5. What is the big advantage of using a block?

_____

_____

6. What would happen to a word carved the normal way?

_____

_____

Words to know

carve: to cut a shape out of wood or stone
raised: standing up higher than what is around it
mirror image: a picture flipped so left and right are switched
printmaker: an artist who makes pictures by printing

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

Square group

Suppose you wish to print the word STOP using a block of wood. The first step may surprise you, because the word has to be carved backward!

Block printing proceeds like this. An artist sketches a picture on a flat block and then cuts away every part that ought to stay white. What remains standing is a raised shape, much like a rubber stamp. Next she rolls ink across the block with a roller, and only the high parts take up the ink while the carved-away parts stay clean. Finally, she lays a sheet of paper over the block and presses down firmly. When the paper is lifted, the picture has appeared on it.

Consider what happens to the image, however. Because the block is pressed face down, the paper receives a mirror image of it, with left becoming right and right becoming left. A word carved in the ordinary way would therefore read backward on the paper. This is why careful printmakers carve their letters in reverse on the block, so that they read correctly on the page.

The great advantage is that a single block can be inked over and over, which allows an artist to produce many copies of the same picture.

Questions

1. Which parts of the block does the artist cut away?

_____

_____

2. What does the artist spread across the block with a roller?

_____

_____

3. What happens once the paper is pressed on the block and lifted?

_____

_____

4. Why do printmakers carve the letters backward on the block?

_____

_____

5. What is the great advantage of using a block?

_____

_____

6. What would happen to a word carved in the ordinary way?

_____

_____

Words to know

carve: to cut a shape out of wood or stone
raised: standing up higher than what is around it
mirror image: a picture flipped so left and right are switched
printmaker: an artist who makes pictures by printing

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

Easier · 137 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1

1. The parts that should stay white.
2. Ink.
3. The picture is on the paper.
4. The paper gets a mirror picture, so they read right on the page.
5. It can be inked again and again to make many copies.
6. It would print backward.

Triangle: Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

This passage · 198 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.3

1. The parts that should stay white.
2. Ink.
3. The picture appears on the paper.
4. The paper takes a mirror image, so backward letters on the block read correctly on the page.
5. It can be inked again and again to make many copies.
6. It would print backward on the paper.

Square: Why the Letters in a Block Print Face Backward

Harder · 206 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.5

1. The parts that ought to stay white.
2. Ink.
3. The picture has appeared on the paper.
4. The paper receives a mirror image, so reversed letters read correctly on the page.
5. It can be inked over and over to make many copies.
6. It would read backward on the paper.