

Paper Hearts: Experiment with Positive and Negative Space in Art

Make this Valentine's Day an educational one with this fun, hands-on exploratory art project. Your child will experiment with important art and design concepts like positive and negative space, shape, symmetry, and the figure-ground relationship as well as the concept of fractions in math as he creates this simple, yet striking piece of art.

This activity will not only help your child understand major design concepts, but will also encourage him to think creatively and use his problem solving skills. For budding artists and graphic designers, this activity is sure to be a holiday hit!

What You Need:

- 1 sheet of white or pink construction paper
- 1 sheet of red construction paper
- Marker, crayon, or pencil
- Scissors
- Glue or glue stick

What You Do:

1. Ask your child to fold the red sheet of construction paper in half like a book.
2. Have your child draw a half heart on the folded paper starting at the fold.
3. Cut out the heart. The fold should run down the center of the heart along its line of symmetry. Place the red heart against the white sheet of paper and explain to your child that in this image, the red heart is the positive space (or figure) and the white area is the negative space (or background).
4. Now cut the folded red sheet of paper in half along the fold. Your child should have two red paper halves, each with a heart cut-out in the middle. This is a great opportunity to introduce your child to the concept of fractions. Choose one of the red paper halves and glue it to the sheet of white paper, taking care to line up the corners exactly.
5. Have your child cut the red heart in half.
6. Glue one of the red heart halves onto the white paper opposite the heart-shaped cut-out to form a complete heart, half red and half white. Discuss with your child how this image differs from the first image. On one side of the image the positive space is red against a white background (negative space), but on the other side the colors are reversed so that the white space is positive and the red space negative, playing with the figure-ground relationship. In art and design, the boundaries between positive and negative space are not always clearly defined, and playing with these boundaries can lead to interesting and often surprising compositions, like the one you just created!

Now you can hang your art on the wall, or turn it into a Valentine's Day card to give to someone special!

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