

**Orpheus I, 1997**  
collage on paper  
H. 24 x W. 29.75  
inches  
Group I

**Paul Keene**  
b. 1920



### Looking Questions

What do you see? Who do you see?

Where is this scene taking place? How can you tell?

What colors do you see?

What kinds of shapes do you see? How are they arranged?

Describe the textures. What do they remind you of?

Think about the title *Orpheus I*. Who was Orpheus? Why do you think the creator of this work chose it?

How does *Orpheus I* make you feel? Why?

### Vocabulary

Collage  
Cool colors  
Orpheus  
Silhouette  
Warm colors

### Art Activities

- As a class, discuss *Orpheus I* using the “Looking Questions.” Which figure appears closest? Farthest away? Use black paper to create three silhouettes of each student’s head and torso. Add details with oil pastels, increasing the number of details gradually from silhouette to silhouette. Glue the three silhouettes to a larger piece of paper and add a geometric border, if desired.
- Find stencil shapes and identify the primary colors (red, yellow, blue) and secondary colors (orange, purple, green) in *Orpheus I*. Create all-over designs using stencils of letters and numbers by drawing several stencil shapes, filling them in with markers (primary and secondary colors), and adding more shapes and colors to create a layered effect.
- Read *Me and Uncle Romie* by Claire Hartfield and discuss the collage illustrations. Look at additional examples of Romare Bearden’s work and compare them to *Orpheus I* ([www.nga.gov/feature/bearden/img-list.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/feature/bearden/img-list.shtm)). Create a collage using the suggestions found at the end of *Me and Uncle Romie*.
- How is the figure on the right of the collage like a mask? Search for examples of African masks at [www.images.google.com](http://www.images.google.com). Create a papier mâché mask of yourself, simplifying your facial features and adding interesting colors.

National Standards: NA-VA.K-4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5; NA-VA.5-8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5.

### Language Arts Activities

- Discuss the three large figures in *Orpheus I*. Are they strangers on a street, a family, or a group of friends? What is their story? Write narratives from each person’s point of view that explains what the person is doing here.
- Examine the crowd in the upper left-hand corner of *Orpheus I*. Do you think the three large figures in the foreground were ever part of this crowd? Write a personal essay about a time when you felt alone in a crowd or had to break away from a crowd.
- Silently study *Orpheus I* for five minutes. Then, individually brainstorm words, phrases, or sentences about whatever it makes you think of in a “stream of consciousness” manner for ten minutes. Afterward, read your writing, highlight words or phrases you could use in a poem, and create free verse poems about whatever emerges from the highlighted sections.
- The title of this collage is *Orpheus I*. Read aloud several different versions of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (see [www.pantheon.org/articles/e/eurydice.html](http://www.pantheon.org/articles/e/eurydice.html) and *D’Aulaire’s Book of Greek Myths* by Ingri and Edgar P. d’Aulaire). What part of the myth do you think this artwork could represent? Why? Write a diamante poem about someone you lost and then found.

National Standards: NL-ENG.K-12.4, 12.5, 12.7.

## Math Activities

- Look for three main sections in *Orpheus I*. Create a chart to show how a fraction, such as  $\frac{1}{3}$ , can be turned into a decimal (0.3) and a percentage (33  $\frac{1}{3}$  %). Find other equivalent decimals and percentages for benchmark fractions such as  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{2}{3}$ , etc. Afterward, work in a small group to discuss why you would use different forms in different situations. Find examples of fractions, decimals, and percentages in the real world and use them to create posters.
- Examine the rectangles and squares of pure color in *Orpheus I*. Create a table to record the colors and their frequency. Use the data to make a bar graph. Make sure your graph has all five labels.
- Look for similar and congruent shapes in the collage. How many pairs can you find? What makes two shapes similar or congruent? Use a ruler and colored paper to create five pairs of congruent shapes and five pairs of similar shapes. Glue the shapes on a piece of paper and have another student find the matching pairs.

National Standards: NM-NUM.3-5.1; NM-DATA.3-5.1; NM-GEO.PK-2.1; NM-GEO.3-5.1, 5.3.

## Social Studies Activities

- Where is *Orpheus I* taking place? Is this a rural, suburban, or urban setting? Compare and discuss the similarities and differences of various communities. What stereotypes do we tend to have about each of these communities? As a class, create a K-W-L chart and a list of stereotypes for each community. In a small group, research one category while your classmates research the other two. Then, share what you learned using a jigsaw activity.
- Read aloud *Harlem: A Poem* by Walter Dean Myers and discuss the illustrations in it. Compare Harlem with your community. What historical events have taken place where you live? Who lived there in the past? Where did they come from? Why did they choose to live where you now live?
- Paul Keene is a huge fan of jazz, and it inspired much of his work—paintings, prints, and mixed media artworks. Research the origins of jazz. Compile a list of the different types of jazz. Which type do you prefer? Why?

National Standards: NSS-US.H.K-4.1, 4.3; NSS-G.K-12.2, 12.4, 12.5; NSS-US.H.5-12.4, 12.7, 12.8; NL-ENG.K-12.2, 12.7, 12.8.

## Technology/Graphic Arts Activities

- Listen to jazz on a CD. Use a computer art program to design a CD cover that conveys the feeling of a jazz song that you like.
- Use colored cellophane or acetate and black construction paper to create a series of collages on an overhead projector. Project the images onto a blank wall or screen and have a class discussion about what you see and how it makes you feel. Which shapes are transparent? Translucent? Opaque?
- Read *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* by Maya Angelou. Discuss the graffiti-like illustrations by Jean-Michel Basquiat and compare them with *Orpheus I*. Read this poem aloud, individually and then in a group. Tape record the readings and edit them into one version, combining a variety of voices. Project *Orpheus I* as large as possible in the classroom and play the recording.

National Standards: NT.K-12.1, 12.3.

## Compare and Contrast

Compare *Orpheus I* to a cityscape mural painted for the Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia: *Ode to West Philly* by Ras Malik (see mural #670 at [www.muralarts.org/](http://www.muralarts.org/)).

## Cultural Connections

View Benin bronze sculptures at [www.randafricanart.com/Benin\\_Oba\\_commemorative\\_heads.html](http://www.randafricanart.com/Benin_Oba_commemorative_heads.html) (scroll to Figure 20, *Head of a Queen Mother*). Compare this sculpture with the figures in *Orpheus I*.

## Contemporary Connections

Compare jazz with rap music. Listen to CDs of each kind of music. Write a persuasive paragraph about which kind of music you prefer.

## At the Michener

Compare *Ned's Cigar Shop* by John Foster with *Orpheus I*. Focus on the communities depicted. What can we figure out about the people who live in each community by looking at these artworks?