

# Picture CONSEQUENCES

## Nancy Walkup

**P**icture consequences is a circle game in which a group of people cooperatively draw a person or creature. Historically, it was played by European artists commonly called Surrealists, beginning in the early 1920s. Picture consequences was also known as *exquisite corpse*, although that name also described a more widely known process of writing, rather than drawing.

In this process, a figure is drawn in portions, with the paper folded after each portion and passed to the next artist so that they cannot see the earlier portions. At the end, the paper is unfolded and the completed figure is revealed.

## Philip Campbell Curtis

Our lesson was inspired by and focused on the Surrealist Philip Campbell Curtis (1907–2000). Born in Jackson, Michigan, Curtis became a highly respected artist in his adopted state of Arizona. After earning a four-year certificate in art from Yale, Curtis moved to New York where he served as an assistant supervisor of mural paintings for the Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The WPA transferred Curtis to Phoenix where he founded and later became the director of the Phoenix Art Center (now the Phoenix Art Museum). Following on the heels of his Arizona success, the WPA sent Curtis to Des Moines, Iowa, to start an art center there. It was during this time that Curtis entered the museum

studies program at Harvard University, but his studies were interrupted by World War II.

Curtis returned to Arizona after the war where he settled in Scottsdale in a converted stable now known as the Cattle Tracks Arts Compound. His studio windows provided a view of the desert landscape. This view strongly influenced Curtis's style and is often seen as a backdrop in his work. From the late 1940s until his death, Curtis continued to paint. His work has been celebrated through solo exhibitions, multiple awards, and a permanent exhibition at the Phoenix Art Museum.

The student artworks you see here are collaborations between fifth graders. Each figure was completed by four different students.

## Warm Up

Discuss Surrealism and show teacher-made PowerPoint presentation. Demonstrate procedures for picture consequences drawing.

## Procedures

Have students each fold a 6 x 18" (15 x 46 cm) sheet of white paper into four equal parts. Leaving the paper folded, ask them to draw the head of a person or animal in the first section (so that the finished drawing will be vertically positioned), making the drawing fill that section as much as possible.

Students first draw in pencil and then outline the drawings with a permanent black marker. Color can be added with colored pencils at this time or later when the figure is complete. Be sure to remind students to write their names in pencil on each section as they work.

Next, have students refold the drawing so that the head is not visible (bend it back) and pass it to the next person to their left (they will take one from the person on their right). In the second section, have students draw a torso of a person or animal.

Students continue in this method, drawing legs in the third section and feet in the last. When the final section is complete, students open the drawing to see the completed figure. Display the artworks alongside a written explanation of the process. ☺

*Nancy Walkup is the editor of SchoolArts and an art teacher at W.S. Ryan Elementary in Denton, Texas. nwalkup@davisart.com*

## NATIONAL STANDARD

*Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art.*

## WEB LINK

[www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/curtis\\_philip.html](http://www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/curtis_philip.html)



## Objectives

Students will:

- recognize the work of Surrealist artists, especially Phillip C. Curtis.
- collaborate on detailed picture consequences drawings.

## Materials

- 6 x 18" (15 x 46 cm) white drawing paper
- pencils
- fine-point permanent black markers
- colored pencils
- teacher-made PowerPoint presentation on Surrealism