

Activity

Powerful Pictures & Poems

Diego Rivera was a man with a message. Many of his colorful paintings and murals express his thoughts about the hardships of being poor. In his painting *The Flower Carrier*, Rivera's message is about how hard the man carrying the basket has to struggle to make a living. To do this, Rivera included three elements: a man, a woman, and one very large basket of flowers. The elements fill up the picture, touching the edges. Does it make you feel a bit cramped when you look at it? This tension makes the picture dramatic.

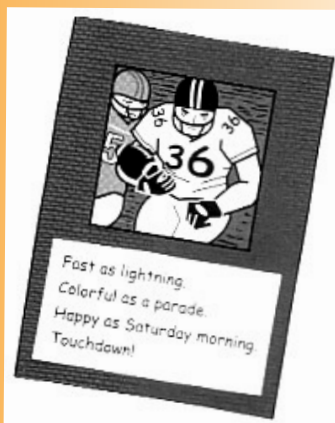
The poet Maya Angelou uses Rivera's dramatic images to illustrate her powerful words in her poem *Still I Rise*. Try it out! Choose a photo and crop it using Rivera's method. Then, write a poem about the image.



The Flower Carrier by Diego Rivera

1 Look through magazines or photographs to find a large picture showing people or animals engaged in an activity. The scene might be of two friends laughing, someone eating an ice cream cone, or a dog curled up and taking a nap. It's OK if other elements surround the pictures; you will crop them out.

2 Draw a rectangle on top of the picture to box in your scene. Your lines should touch the figures. Cut the shape out.



Here's how a photo of a football game could be cropped. The poem celebrates the thrill of scoring.

Here's What You'll Need

Magazines or photographs
Pencil
Ruler Scissors
Glue stick
Writing materials
Construction paper

3 Cut a piece of construction paper that is 2 inches wider and twice as high as your picture. (This allows for a border along the sides & top and room at the bottom for your poem.)

4 Now it's time to add words to your picture. But first take a moment to study the scene. Is it a happy scene, or one that is serious, peaceful, or scary? What message does the picture send? For example, a picture of two friends of different races or cultures might send a message about world peace.

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Here's how it works

Using the steps to write a simple poem for a picture of a football player running with the ball, a poem could be:

Fast as lightning.
Colorful as a parade.
Happy as Saturday morning.
Touchdown!

Diego Rivera

Diego Rivera was born in Guanajuato, Mexico on December 8, 1886. By the time he was four years old, Diego was a very busy artist. He grabbed whatever pens and pencils he could find around the house, and drew on everything! When he was nine years old, he knew that he wanted to be a professional artist. He persuaded his mother to enroll him in evening art classes at the San Carlos Academy. It was one of the best art schools in Mexico, and he became one of its most talented students.

Diego Rivera wanted to do more than paint pretty pictures. He was concerned about the welfare of the poor peasants in his country and thought he could inspire them through his art. To do this, he painted huge murals in public places, like schools. On them, he showed the history of Mexico-- its Aztec ancestors, accomplished countrymen, and proud moments in Mexico's past. Rivera knew the peasants couldn't read, but they could understand the inspiring messages in his murals. He also made paintings, filling his canvases with images of Mexico-- often, the farmers and vendors who sold the beautiful flowers that grow there. At age 42, he married the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.

Follow these steps to write a simple poem

1. Write three adjectives (words that describe) one under the other. Each word should describe something about your picture. Examples of adjectives are *beautiful*, *peaceful*, *cold*, *crazy*, *happy*, and *wild*.
2. Combine each adjective with the word "as" followed by a noun (a person, place, or thing) or phrase. For example: *as ice cream* and *as a bird in flight*.
3. Think of one word that can be the title of your poem. Write this word by itself on the last line.



This Activity is from: *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera -- Their Lives and Ideas -- 24 Activities* by Carol Sabbeth

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