

Beginning-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare and contrast the lines, shapes, colors, and function of a seventeenth-century cabinet with contemporary cabinets;
- discuss the use of **symbols** to represent countries and ideas;
- create a cardboard cabinet that uses symbols to communicate a message about themselves or the United States.

Materials

- Reproduction of *Cabinet on Stand* by André-Charles Boulle
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the cabinet
- Student Handout: *Compare and Contrast Cabinets*
- Blank copy paper and/or construction paper
- Colored pencils
- Scissors
- Cereal, tissue, or shoe boxes (each student can bring one from home; for younger grades, students can make one class cabinet out of a cardboard box)
- Masking tape
- Glue
- Construction paper, gold foil, foam mosaic tiles and corresponding grid cards, and/or foam sheets in assorted colors
- Paper punches in assorted shapes (optional)
- Paper cups (optional)
- Brass fasteners with pointed tips (optional)

Lesson Steps

Note: Upper elementary students will need a cereal, tissue, or shoe box to complete this activity. Begin asking students to bring one from home at least two weeks in advance of conducting this activity.

1. Display a reproduction of the *Cabinet on Stand*. Have students look closely at the work for about one minute, then ask them the following questions:
 - What kind of object is this? (*A cabinet on stand.*)
 - What do you notice about how it is decorated?
 - What lines do you see? What shapes? Do any of these lines or shapes form patterns?
 - What colors do you see?
 - What do you think the cabinet is made of? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - What do you think it was used for? What do you see that makes you say that?
 - If you owned this cabinet, what would you put in it?
2. Pass out the *Compare and Contrast Cabinets* handout. Allow students time to fill in the first column of the handout, describing the lines, shapes, and colors they see in the seventeenth-century cabinet.

HISTORICAL WITNESS

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3. Point out to students that the cabinet was not just made to store things. It was also used to communicate a message about the French king **Louis XIV**. Experts believe that the cabinet might have been made for Louis XIV to send to another country as a gift. If students were given the cabinet as a gift, what would it communicate about the person who gave it to them?
4. Explain to students that a symbol is something (i.e., an object or picture) that represents something else. Review common symbols, such as the American flag, the eagle, and logos of clothing companies or fast food restaurants. Ask students for some examples of symbols. You may wish to prompt students by asking them if they can think of any colors that symbolize something (i.e., green symbolizes nature) or by having them describe the colors or symbols of their state or favorite sports team.
5. Share with students age-appropriate information about *Cabinet on Stand* (see Background Information). In particular, discuss the animal symbols on this cabinet and the message conveyed by the animals' relative positions to one another. In addition, mention that the cabinetmaker used expensive and exotic materials such as **pewter**, **ivory**, tortoiseshell, and animal horn. Explain that the cabinet was intended to impress people with the wealth and power of the king and the country that he ruled. Point out that the detailed decorations were made through a process called **marquetry**, in which many tiny pieces of wood or other materials are cut to fit together like a puzzle. You may wish to show students detailed views of the cabinet that are available on the Getty Museum Web site (www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?artobj=6328).
6. Ask students to think of a cabinet in their home. How is the seventeenth-century cabinet similar to or different from the contemporary cabinet? Invite students to describe to a partner a cabinet in their home and the objects contained within it.
7. Hand out a blank piece of paper and colored pencils. Instruct students to draw a picture of a cabinet from their home. When their drawings are complete, students will fill in the second column of the *Compare and Contrast Cabinets* handout, describing the lines, shapes, and colors of the contemporary cabinet in their home. Discuss students' responses as a class and point out any overarching differences between a seventeenth-century cabinet fit for a king and a contemporary cabinet. Point out that *Cabinet on Stand* cannot contain as much as one would think a cabinet of that size would hold (see interior of cabinet at www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artObjectDetails?handle=detail&artobj=6328&artview=56242). Discuss the differences between the contents of contemporary cabinets and those of the seventeenth-century cabinet. Point out that most contemporary cabinets don't communicate political messages.
8. Tell students that they will create a cardboard cabinet that will communicate a message just like the seventeenth-century cabinet. Students will imagine that they are giving a cabinet as a gift to a stranger in another country. They will consider what they would like other people to know about them and/or the United States. Ask students to think of symbols that communicate something about themselves and/or their country. Pass out scratch paper to students and allow them to brainstorm ideas for symbols.



9. After students have an idea of what their cabinet will communicate, pass out scissors and have students take out their cereal, tissue, or shoe box. Help students to cut out three edges of one panel of the box so that the panel can open up as if on a hinge. If students accidentally cut out the entire panel, they can tape the panel on one side so that the tape functions as a hinge. (With younger grades, provide one cardboard box for the class and allow students to contribute decorations for the class cabinet.)
10. Pass out glue and construction paper, gold foil, foam mosaic tiles and corresponding grid cards, and/or foam sheets in assorted colors. Tell students that they will decorate their cabinets by using symbols to communicate a message about themselves or the United States. Students should create a decorative pattern by repeating lines and shapes of their choice. You may wish to pass out punches with which students can produce various shapes from the foam sheets or paper. These punches will allow students to create designs that mimic the technique of marquetry. Students could easily use the punches to create circles and stars in different colors and mix and match the shapes by fitting them into backgrounds of different colors. Allow students ample time to explore different materials and design the exterior of their cabinet. You may wish to point to the medallion of Louis XIV on *Cabinet on Stand* and encourage students to make their own medallion using the gold foil. You may also wish to provide students with paper cups that they can use to create a stand for their cabinets. Students can affix the cabinets to the paper cups using brass fasteners with pointed tips. Help students to use a sharp pencil or scissors to poke small holes in their cups and cabinets for the brass fasteners.
11. Display all cardboard cabinets. Allow students to explain the messages on their cabinets to the whole class or to another class. Encourage students to give their cabinets to someone as a gift.

Assessment

Check students' *Compare and Contrast Cabinets* handouts to determine if students described the lines, shapes, and colors of both the seventeenth-century cabinet and a contemporary cabinet in their home. Assess students' cardboard cabinets to determine if students used symbols to communicate a message about themselves or the United States and if they used a pattern.

Extensions

Discuss positive and negative **space** created by the placement of foam cutouts on the cardboard cabinets. What shapes do students see in the positive space (the space created by the foam cutouts)? Do students see any shapes in the negative space (the space between the cutouts)?