



The Snowy Day and the Art of Ezra Jack Keats

A Guide for Families

Welcome to The Jewish Museum! Use this guide as a family to explore the art and stories of author and illustrator Ezra Jack Keats. Keats created books that celebrate the joys of childhood and of growing up in New York City. Let's begin on the second floor.

Enter the first gallery to the left and find the series of artworks on the wall to your left, made for the book *Goggles!*



Final illustration for the book *Goggles!* (1969).



Perspective is the way people or objects are depicted to create the illusion of depth and space on a flat surface. Things can look very different when you change the perspective, angle, or viewpoint of an image. **Can you find the works of art where the viewer is looking at the scene from above? From far away? Close up? Or through a hole?**



Stand back and look around this room. To change your perspective, close one eye, then the other. How does the picture you are looking at seem to move?

Create your own goggles by making circles with your hands. Carefully kneel down and describe your point of view.



Find the painting on the opposite wall, labeled, "Out came Mr. Muntz, crunching a mouthful of potato chips."



Final illustration for the book *Apt. 3* (1971).

This is an illustration made for the book *Apt. 3*, a story about two brothers in search of the mysterious music in their building. The story is based on a similar experience Keats had as a child.

Find the third painting to the right, titled, "He stood up suddenly, raised his harmonica to his mouth, and began to play."

Compare the mood of this painting with the one you just saw.



Final illustration for the book *Apt. 3* (1971).

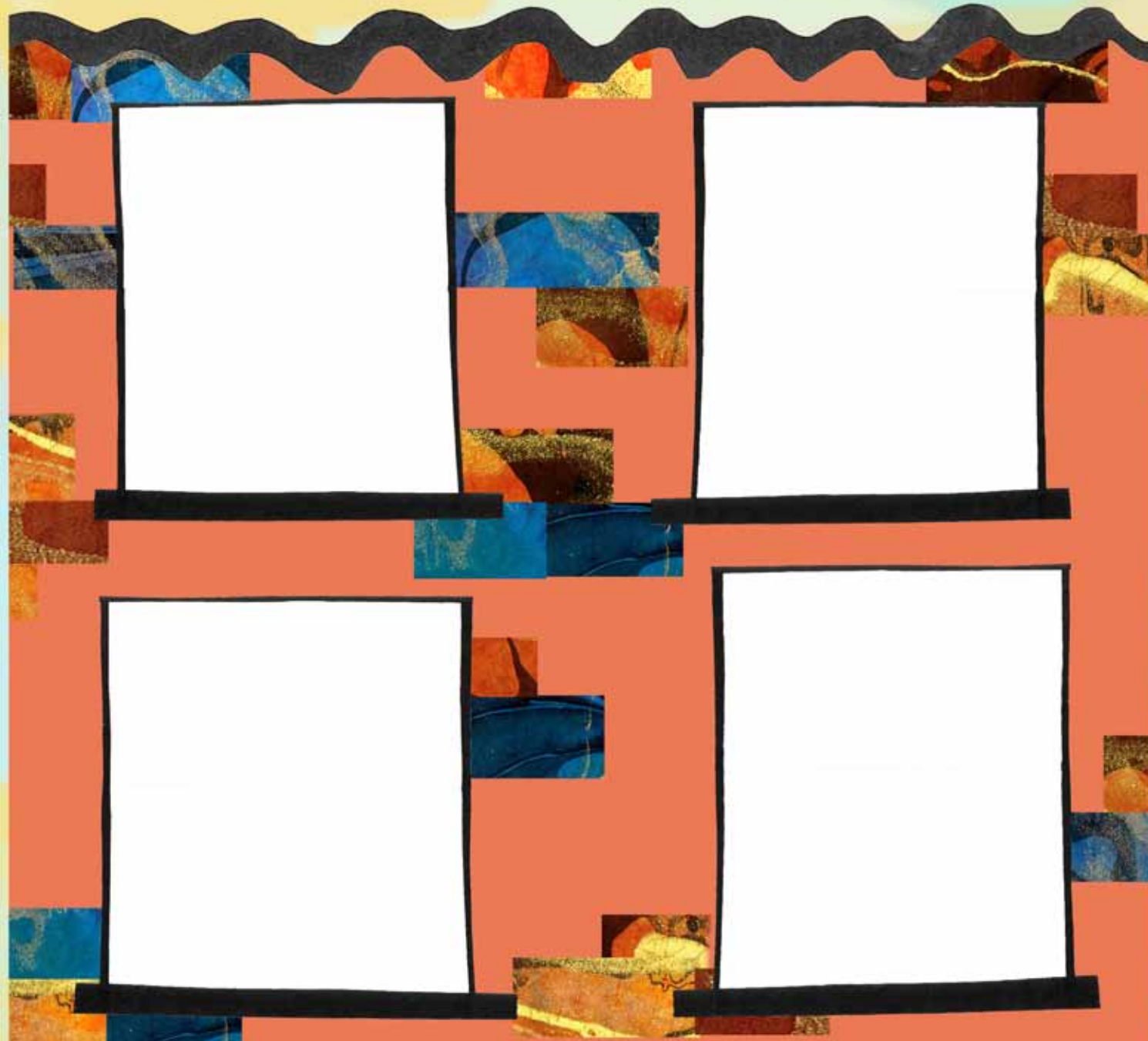
In the book, the boys discover that the music is coming from the apartment of a blind man playing the harmonica.

How are the colors similar to or different from those in the first painting? Where do you notice bright colors? Why might Ezra Jack Keats have used brighter colors in this painting?

Move to the series of illustrations to your right, created for the book *Dreams*.

The images from both *Apt. 3* and *Dreams* reflect Ezra Jack Keats's experiences growing up in an apartment building surrounded by the activity of city life.

In the window frames below, draw what might be happening inside the building.



Before you leave this room, notice some of Keats's other characters. After you are finished, move past the next gallery and enter the following room. Go to your left and find the illustrations for the book *The Snowy Day*. Stop at the fifth image along the wall, shown below.

What is happening in this scene?

Describe what it might feel like to slide down a hill in the snow.
Would it be exciting? How would the wind feel?

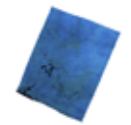
What noises would you make as you move through the snow?

This painting is called "He pretended he was a mountain-climber."
What kinds of outdoor adventures have you had in your neighborhood?

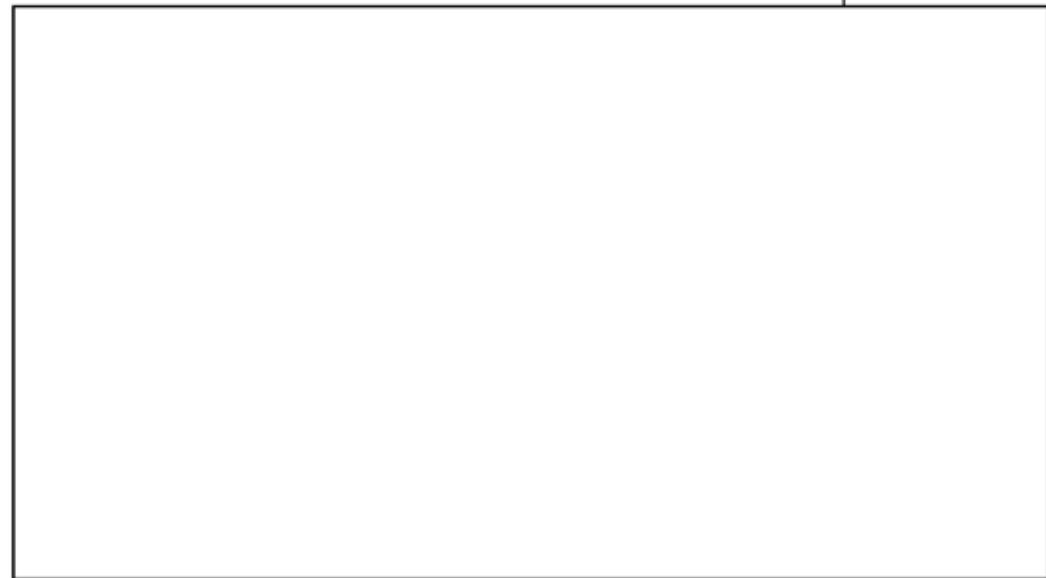
Tell your companion about one of your adventures.



Final illustration for the book *The Snowy Day* (1962).



How many different shapes can you find?
Draw the shapes you find in this space.



Go to the opposite wall in this gallery and find the work of art called "When he stopped everything turned down ... and up..." from the book *Whistle for Willie*, pictured to the right.



Final illustration for the book *Whistle for Willie* (1964).

How many patterns and colors do you see in this scene?

Ezra Jack Keats often used a technique called **collage**, in which various materials are pasted together to make a work of art. He explained:

"A decorative paper becomes a room; flat shapes of color and designs become buildings, snow, a pillow, pajamas on a boy, and so on."

What kinds of materials do you notice in Ezra Jack Keats's artwork?

Describe how Keats creates objects and characters from the collaged shapes, patterns, and colors in this scene.

Quote from: Keats, Ezra Jack, "The Artist at Work," *The Horn Book Magazine* 40 (June 1964), p. 270.



Move into the reading room and find a book by Ezra Jack Keats to read.



Final illustration for the book *Goggles!* (1969).

Who are the main characters in this book?

What happens in the story?

Have you ever had a similar experience?

How does Ezra Jack Keats use pictures to tell the story in this book?

In the next section of this room find the illustration, pictured below, on the wall to your left, labeled, " 'Oooh, I'm hurt bad,' he groaned. 'I can't get up.' "

The hero of the book *John Henry: An American Legend* is a character from a folktale whose strength, bravery, and kindness save many lives.

What do you see happening in this illustration?

The legendary character John Henry was likely based on the life of a real man.

Do you have any heroes in your life?

Who are they and why do you look up to them?



Final illustration for the book *John Henry: An American Legend* (1965).

Find the works of art across the gallery, related to the book *Jennie's Hat*.

What do you notice?

Does Jennie's hat remind you of something you have seen before?

If you could add anything to a hat of your own, what would it be? Why?



Draw your own unique hat below.



Before you leave, take a look at some of Keats's sample art materials near the collage for *Jennie's Hat*.



What do you see?

Ezra Jack Keats used a variety of techniques to create his lively scenes. He combined unusual materials and experimented with new ways of putting paint on the surface of his paper. For example, he would dip objects in paint and stamp them on paper, use a toothbrush to create splattered backgrounds, or tear colored paper in interesting ways.



Final illustration for the book *Mi, Cat?* (1970).

At-Home Project

At home, create a collage inspired by your neighborhood. Gather different kinds of papers and cut or tear them into various shapes and sizes. You may also use old newspapers and magazines. Paste these papers onto one large sheet to create your own collage scene. Experiment with new techniques inspired by Ezra Jack Keats's work.

We hope you have enjoyed exploring the art of Ezra Jack Keats!

This guide was written and designed by Rachael Abrams, Education Department, The Jewish Museum. www.thejewishmuseum.org/families
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