

## Family Tree

Subject: Visual Arts

Grade Level: Grades 6-12

**Guided Instruction** (To be self-directed, or with teacher, parent, caregiver, older sibling, etc.)

Look at a part of the artwork *Family Tree*, by Wangechi Mutu on page two or view the entire artwork online here: <https://emuseum.nasher.duke.edu/search/mutu>



### Discuss the image by asking:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

A Family Tree is a visual organization tool that shows us the relationships between people in several generations of a family. Siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, great-grandparents, cousins, etc. all can make their way into a family tree.

In *Family Tree*, Wangechi Mutu constructs a female-dominated creation mythology, as if to explain the origin of the universe and life, as we know it. The group of thirteen figures presents the original ancestral pair, their three children, the two spouses of their children, and six grandchildren. Most of the figures in *Family Tree* are created by collaging illustrations from magazines and medical journals among other sources. *Family Tree* demonstrates the artist's longstanding interest in transformation and adaptation as necessary means of survival.

### Art Making

Think of a single member of your family unit. This person does not need to be a blood relative, but someone who is an important part of your life. Make a list of some of the traits that you value in this person. Make a second list of ways that this person visually communicates their identity; this could include hobbies, style of clothing, type of work, etc.

Using whatever materials you have available, create a visual representation of this person.

What can you include that will tell the viewer why this person is important to you?

What details can you include that will help others identify this person?



**Wangechi Mutu, *Family Tree*, 2012.** One of 13 mixed-media collages on paper, 20 x 14 1/4 inches (50.8 x 36.2 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum. Museum purchase with additional funds provided by Trent Carmichael (T'88, P'17), Blake Byrne (T'57), Marjorie and Michael Levine (T'84, P'16, P'19, P'19), Stefanie and Douglas Kahn (P'11, P'13), and Christen and Derek Wilson (T'86, B'90, P'15). © Wangechi Mutu. Photo by Peter Paul Geoffrion.