

## Figure Drawing: Shape, Form and Proportion

Additional lesson: Ellis Mason and exploration of human figure drawing

### LESSON OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

This lesson introduces the art of figure drawing by studying shape and form. Students will learn about and draw the basic shapes that comprise the human figure. They will practice drawing the wooden figure in a variety of poses from a range of angles. In studying the structure of the human figure, students will understand proportion and relationship of parts to one another.

### KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:

Based on Utah State Visual Arts Core Curriculum Requirements (3rd Grade)

**Standard 1 (Making): The student will explore and refine the application of media, techniques, and artistic processes.**

**Objective 1: Explore a variety of art materials while learning new techniques and processes.**

- a. Practice using skills for beginning drawings.
- b. Use simplified forms, such as cones, spheres, and cubes, to begin drawing more complex form.
- f. Establish more natural size relationships among objects in drawings.
- h. Explore the design possibilities of a 3-D object by examining views of it from many angles.

**Objective 3: Handle art materials in a safe and responsible manner.**

- a. Ventilate the room to avoid inhaling fumes from art materials.
- b. Dispose and/or recycle waste art materials properly.
- c. Clean and put back to order art making areas after projects.
- d. Respect other students' artworks as well as one's own.

**Standard 2 (Perceiving): The student will analyze, reflect on, and apply the structures of art.**

**Objective 1: Analyze and reflect on works of art by their elements and principles**

- a. Determine how artists create dominance in their work; e.g., size, repetition, and contrast.

**Objective 2: Create works of art using the elements and principles.**

- b. Group some significant works of art by a common element or visual characteristic.
- c. Discover how an artist has thoughtfully used all of the space within an artwork.
- d. Create a work of art that uses all of the space on the paper.
- e. Create a work of art that uses contrast to create a focal point. Use that to convey the most important idea or part of the work.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

### Students will: Visual Arts

- Use of circles and ovals (“balloon people”) as the basis for drawing the human figure.
- Represent proportion and movement in the human figure.
- Represent objects with simple shapes.
- Understand shape and form.

## SUPPLIES

- Pencils
- 8-1/2” X 11” white paper
- 11” X 17” 20-lb. white paper
- Black crayons, black charcoal
- Samples of balloon people drawing
- Wooden Figurines
- Black sharpies
- Diagrams of figures

## VOCABULARY

**Proportion:** In art the size relationship between an object and the human body is significant. In experiencing the scale of an artwork we tend to compare its size to the size of our own bodies. Proportion refers to the relative size of parts of a whole (elements within an object).

**Frontal View:** The most common views drawn of an object in an orthographic drawings are the front view, top view, and right side view. After the views have been drawn on a sheet of paper notes and dimensions are then added. Most prints today are often created in the form of multiview drawings.

**Shape:** An element of art that is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width.

**Form:** An element of art that is three-dimensional (height, width, and depth) and encloses volume. For example, a triangle, which is two-dimensional, is a shape, but a pyramid, which is three-dimensional, is a form. Cubes, spheres, ovoids, pyramids, cone, and cylinders are examples of various forms.

**Movement:** Movement is the design element that operates in the fourth dimension - time. Movement is the process of relocation of objects in space over time. We can speak of movement as literal or compositional.

**Movement:** A figure drawing is a drawing of the human form in any of its various shapes and postures using any of the drawing media. The term can also refer to the act of producing such a drawing. The degree of representation may be from highly detailed, anatomically correct renderings to loose and expressive sketches.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

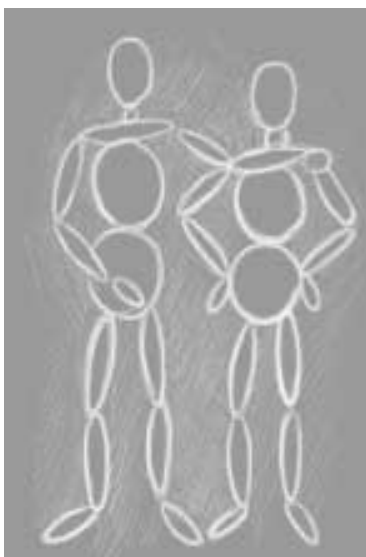
### Lesson Introduction:

Before beginning the lesson, show students the wooden figurine and figure drawing diagrams (included). Tell students that they will draw their own figure paintings and will learn how to use “balloon people” in order to achieve more accurate proportions. On the chalkboard, demonstrate how to use circles and ovals to draw “balloon people,” and how each shape connects to another at a joint. Various movements of the figure can be demonstrated by varying the placement of the shapes.

For proportions, introduce the idea that the head is the basic unit by which a human figure is measured. In the ideal figure, the body is eight times the height of the head and the waist generally falls right in the middle

### Lesson

- Start by giving each student paper and black charcoal or pencil. Looking at the diagrams and with teacher demonstration, have the students draw each of the shapes of a balloon figure and make their own front facing figure as practice.
- When ready, place the wooden figurine in a pose on tables for students to see. Talk about how these basic shapes can be drawn to show poses and movement of the human figure. Teachers can draw an example to show students.
- Divide a new piece of paper into four and tell students they will have an opportunity to practice four different poses. Place the figurine on each table in a pose and give the students time to draw. Change the pose three additional times to give students practice in drawing the figure’s shapes and poses.
- Give students a clean sheet of paper. You can either pose the figurine one more time for students to draw or invite the students to make up a figure in motion. Remind them about proportions and have them measure their bodies by the head size in the way you demonstrated in the beginning of the lesson.
- With the large figure, have students color in the shapes with black sharpies. When finished, they can make up a background with crayons, pencils, sharpies etc. that have shapes like that of the figure to make an abstract background or they can draw a realistic setting etc.
- Save time for students to share their drawings with one another. Talk about what the process was like, easy, difficult and why. Celebrate their first efforts at figure drawing and show how they can build on these skills to make realistic human figure renderings down the road.



### Extended Lesson (can be broken up into multiple classes):

Ellis Wilson was born in Mayfield, KY and lived from 1899 to 1977. He was one of the earliest African-American painters to portray the everyday lives of people, and many of these paintings incorporate full-length figures. Included among such works are Funeral Procession, Two Mothers, To Market, and Jamaican Paysans. Using Jamaican Paysans as an example, students will study proportion and movement in the human figure, then paint two-figured “self-portraits.”

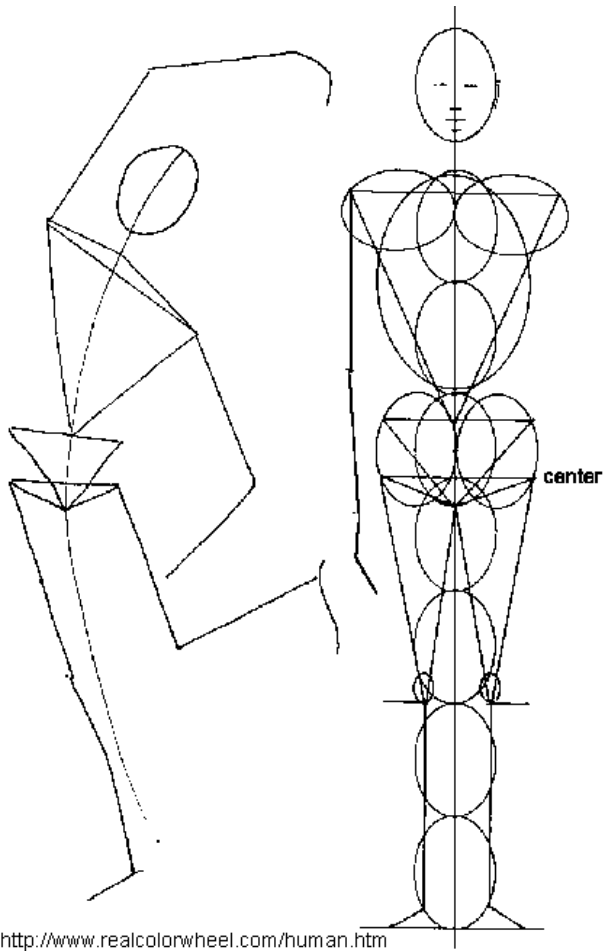
- The class will learn about Ellis Wilson’s life and view and discuss his artwork, focusing mainly on his figure paintings. Tell students that they will paint their own figure paintings and will learn how to use “balloon people” in order to achieve more accurate proportions. On the chalkboard, demonstrate how to use circles and ovals to draw “balloon people,” and how each shape connects to another at a joint. Various movements of the figure can be demonstrated by varying the placement of the shapes.
- Students will use pencils and 8-1/2” X 11” paper to experiment with the drawing of their “balloon people.” They should try several different poses.
- Demonstrate how to use the “balloon people” to make a clothed figure drawing. Lay an 11” X 17” piece of 20-lb. white paper over an 11” X 17” photocopy of a “balloon person.” Using the “balloon person” as the “skeleton,” trace out the contour of a human figure, stressing the simple shapes used by Ellis Wilson for the clothing.
- Give each student two ready-made “balloon people,” one shorter than the other (representing themselves and a taller relative), and an 11” X 17” piece of paper. (Ready-made photocopies are used here instead of having the students once again draw out their own “balloon people” in order to shift the emphasis from drawing the “balloon people” onto the next step of drawing the clothed figure.) Using pencils, students should trace out the two figures and then fill in the background with a pattern. (Many of Ellis Wilson’s backgrounds are repeated leaf foliage.) Once the drawings are completely finished, students should go over all pencil lines with a black crayon.
- Students will begin to paint their figure drawings. Emphasis should be placed on choosing contrasting colors (tints and shades), striking color combinations (Ellis Wilson was a colorist), simple shapes, and very few details—including the lack of facial features.
- Students will finish painting their figure paintings. Closure of the project includes viewing of all artwork and analyses of the project.

Lesson credit: [www.ket.org](http://www.ket.org)

### Additional Resources:

[www.ket.org/elliswilson/gallery.htm](http://www.ket.org/elliswilson/gallery.htm)

Images:



STANDARD BODY PROPORTIONS

