

Charley Harper - Elements of Art

How do elements of art work together to create content?
How did Charley Harper use these elements to create his graphic depictions of birds, animals, insects and people?

LESSON OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about Charley Harper (1922 - 2004), an American illustrator beloved for his delightful, graphic, and often humorous illustrations of birds, animals, insects, and people alike. His unique and precise style - which he called minimal realism - continues to resonate and inspire his admirers today. Students will use elements of art to create birds, animals or insects in the style of Charley Harper.

KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:

- Art materials are tools that help artists communicate ideas and emotions
- Different materials and techniques cause different responses in viewer

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

Standard 1: 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.

- Practice using skills for beginning drawings.
- Use simplified forms, such as cones, spheres, and cubes, to begin drawing more complex form.
- Paint with complementary color schemes.
- Make one color dominant in a painting.

Objective 2: Use a broad range of art materials in supporting the visual arts needs at school.

- Use as many art materials as possible to help decorate the room.

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

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

Standard 2 : 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

- 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.

- Identify dominant elements

Standard 3: The student will choose and evaluate artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings, and purposes.

Objective 1: Describe how line, shape, color, and texture are used to express ideas or convert stories in art.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Learn about elements of art.
- Learn about the artist Charley Harper and his work.
- Identify ways artists use a variety of media and elements of art to communicate ideas and emotions.
- Learn about composition.
- Uses ideas, skills, foundations, and techniques to create visual artworks through guided exploration and mentoring.
- Implements the elements, skills, foundations, and techniques of visual arts and the principles of design to create visual artworks.
- Reflects for the purposes of self-evaluation and improvement.

FOR THE TEACHER

After familiarizing students with shapes, lines, design principles, and color, the teacher will explain that the basic elements of painting and art making is understanding and using these principles and elements. Show the students the artist examples of Charley Harper who uses line, shape and color for his compositions. Explain that once the student gains a basic understanding of these elements that they then have the freedom to create whatever they would like.

After students learn about Harper, they will create a piece of art and explore color as well as the elements and principles of art and design. Make an art exploration sheet in advance that you can show to students as an example.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Quick Writing and/or discussion

Tell students they will learn about a famous artist named Charley Harper, and they will also be experimenting with different art materials and elements of art and design to create insects or animals. Before they begin, ask the students to respond to the following:

For me, experimenting means _____

I get good ideas when I _____

When I try new things I feel _____

For me, design means _____

Introduction - Observation - Discussion

Show students some photographs of animals and insects. Use resources such as National Geographic. Then show students some pictures of Charley Harper to illustrate how he took images and made graphic representations of them. Explain and illustrate the elements of art - color, line, shape, form, space, value and texture. Show how Harper used these elements to make his images. Ask students to identify the dominant elements of art in his art work. Talk about color and composition of the works such as how color is dominant or creates an effect and how the composition of images create an effect. Tell students that they will be using elements of art to create an insect, animal or bird in the style of Charley Harper.

About the Artist

Charley Harper (1922 - 2004) is an American illustrator beloved for his delightful, graphic, and often humorous illustrations of birds, animals, insects, and people alike. His unique and precise style - which he called minimal realism - continues to resonate and inspire his admirers today. Harper is best known for his highly stylized wildlife prints, posters and book illustrations. Born in Frenchtown, West Virginia in 1922, Harper's upbringing on his family farm influenced his work to his last days. During his career, Charley Harper illustrated numerous books, notably The Golden Book of Biology, magazines such as Ford Times, as well as many prints, posters, and other works.

As his subjects are mainly natural, with birds prominently featured, Charley often created works for many nature-based organizations, among them the National Park Service; Cincinnati Zoo; Cincinnati Nature Center; Hamilton County (Ohio) Park District; and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in Pennsylvania. He also designed interpretive displays for Everglades National Park. Charley Harper died on Sunday, June 10, 2007 at age 84 after contending with pneumonia for some months.

In a style he called “minimal realism”, Charley Harper captured the essence of his subjects with the fewest possible visual elements. When asked to describe his unique visual style, Charley responded: “When I look at a wildlife or nature subject, I don’t see the feathers in the wings, I just count the wings. I see exciting shapes, color combinations, patterns, textures, fascinating behavior and endless possibilities for making interesting pictures. I regard the picture as an ecosystem in which all the elements are interrelated, interdependent, perfectly balanced, without trimming or unutilized parts; and herein lies the lure of painting; in a world of chaos, the picture is one small rectangle in which the artist can create an ordered universe.”

The results are bold, colorful, and often whimsical. The designer Todd Oldham wrote of Harper, “Charley’s inspired yet accurate color sense is undeniable, and when combined with the precision he exacts on rendering only the most important details, one is always left with a sense of awe.” Charley, on numerous examples, also went outside the medium of graphic art and included short prose poems for the artwork he made.

Create

1. Review examples of lines, shapes, color, texture and space with students. Ask students to come to the board and draw Straight, Curvy, Wavy, Diagonal, Zig Zag lines (or any others they can think of). Have students draw geometric and organic shapes on the board, explain the differences. Also have students use these ideas to create an abstract composition on their paper.

2. Give each student a large sheet of paper and several sheets of smaller paper. On a small practice sheet have students create lines and shapes to create an abstract composition. Then show some Harper template drawings where they are in outline form. Have students break down the images into recognizable forms such as circle, triangle, line, etc. and draw the Harper image.

3. Talk to students about the Principles and Elements of Design.
Elements: Line, Shape, Color, Size, Space, Texture, Value
Principles: Balance, Contrast, Emphasis, Pattern, Proportion, Gradient
Using these together in artwork will make a great composition

4. After practicing, here are some options to create their own image in the style of Charley Harper. Make sure to talk about a layered approach to creating their image. That means that the largest shape is made first, with subsequent shapes placed on top and/or overlapping the largest shape. Step by step they will “build” the image on the large paper provided. Step by step you can show how, by using elements of art, they can create their own desired image.

- a. Provide cut out shapes that can be traced.
- b. Have students draw each shape that combined, makes the image.
- c. Provide textured looking scrapbook paper for students to cut out each shape to make the image.

Students can embellish their images with markers, colored pencils, paint etc.

5. For the background, below are options for instruction. Focus on creating contrast between the image and the background. You can show Harper examples to give ideas.

- a. Make the background out of patterned scrapbook paper that has a contrasting color or colors to those that are used for the image.
- b. Have students create the background with markers, cut out papers etc. that contrast the image in color. If its a drawn background, have students create supporting elements such as a branch for a bird etc.

6. Depending on how the image and background are created, glue the image to the background as needed. When finished, students should write their name, age, grade, teacher name and school name on the back of the art work from the label provided. Students must assist instructor with proper clean up. Once the students' projects are complete, display all the works to show how many ways there are to create an image in the style of Charley Harper.

7. Hang artwork in hallway for display.

Reflect

Arrange students' work on tables or desks and give them a few minutes to look at each other's work. As a group, discuss the different technique experiments. What do some of the examples bring to mind? What else do the students see or notice in their work? Can they imagine how they might use these processes in other artworks they might create?

Have students respond to one of the following prompts in their journals.

- The best thing about this activity was _____.
- It was hard for me when I had to _____.
- Next I would like to experiment with _____.

Lesson Extensions

Visual Arts and Writing

- Based on the work of Charley Harper, students will choose an animal to depict in Harper's style.
- Have a range of photographs of animals available, preferably in color. Have the students choose an animal to re-create. Other options are computers/internet/printers for pictures, magazines etc. Make sure each student has an animal photo from which to work.
- Have students create 2-3 thumbnail drawings to get some ideas going for how they want to graphically portray their animals and how they will represent their backgrounds. Next, have students create a color scheme for both the animal and a separate one for the background. Once the students have completed their thumbnails and color schemes, have students pick the image they are going to illustrate.
- Give each student a piece of heavy weight paper to start penciling in their animal design. They will need access to rulers, protractors, templates, compasses and anything else that would work to allow them to create geometric shapes to create their animals.
- Once they have their animal and background ideas penciled in, the students can choose to go over their line drawings with thick and thin Sharpie markers, or go straight to painting. Next, students will use their color schemes to start painting their animals and backgrounds. Remember that it should be flat color and a graphic representation of their animal. If students need to they can go back over Animal with Sharpie when done.
- Have students write a poem, lyric, or short piece based on something they created in this lesson.

Lesson based on Charley Harper Animals - by Sabrina Wingren- A Space to Create

VOCABULARY

• **Minimalism:** In the area of fine art, Minimalism is characterized by extreme simplicity of form and a deliberate lack of expressive content. Objects are presented in their elemental, geometric form, wholly devoid of emotion.

• **Abstract:** Artwork presented in a highly stylized manner that stresses the elements and principles of art. This artwork is based on recognizable objects, but often the objects are so distorted they are almost nonrepresentational.

• Elements of Art

Line: A line is the path between two points. Lines define the edges of shapes and forms.

Shape: Shape is an area enclosed by line. It is two dimensional and can be geometric or organic.

Form: Forms are 3-Dimensional. They occupy space or give the illusion that they occupy the space.

Color: Color is the most expressive element of art and is seen by the way light reflects off a surface.

Value: Value is the lightness or darkness of a surface. It is often referred to when shading but value is also important in the study of color.

Texture: Texture is the actual surface feel or the simulated appearance of roughness, smoothness, etc.

Space: Space is the illusion of objects having depth on the 2-dimensional surface. Linear and aerial perspective are used.

SUPPLIES

- PDF of Charley Harper templates
- Video of Charley Harper and his work (attached at the end of this lesson)
- Anticipatory set, follow this link to play this introduction to Charley Harper - <http://vimeo.com/6833957>
- Reference materials for nature photographs such as:
 - National Geographic <http://photography.nationalgeographic.com/photography/?source=NavPhoHome>
- Art pencils H& B, crayons, colored pencils (Prismacolor), charcoal, markers, oil pastels
- Large drawing paper (16" x 20" or 11" x 17" or 8.5" x 11"). One large sheet and several smaller sheets of paper per student
- An array of textured looking scrapbook papers
- Shapes for tracing/templates such as circles, triangles, squares, rectangles etc.
- Paint Brushes in various sizes, small, medium and large if possible.
- Water
- Paper Towels
- Scissors
- Glue
- Color Wheel Chart - to remain in classroom or accessible for students
- World Map - to remain in classroom or accessible for students

VISUALS





Supplemental Resources

Video:

<http://vimeo.com/6833957> (video about Charley Harper)

<http://www.dickblick.com/products/charley-harper-an-illustrated-life/>

Source for video VoiceOver from the following website: <https://charleyharperartstudio.com/Bio.html>

Supplemental Materials

Elements of Art

- Line
- Shape/form
- Color
- Value
- Texture
- Space/perspective

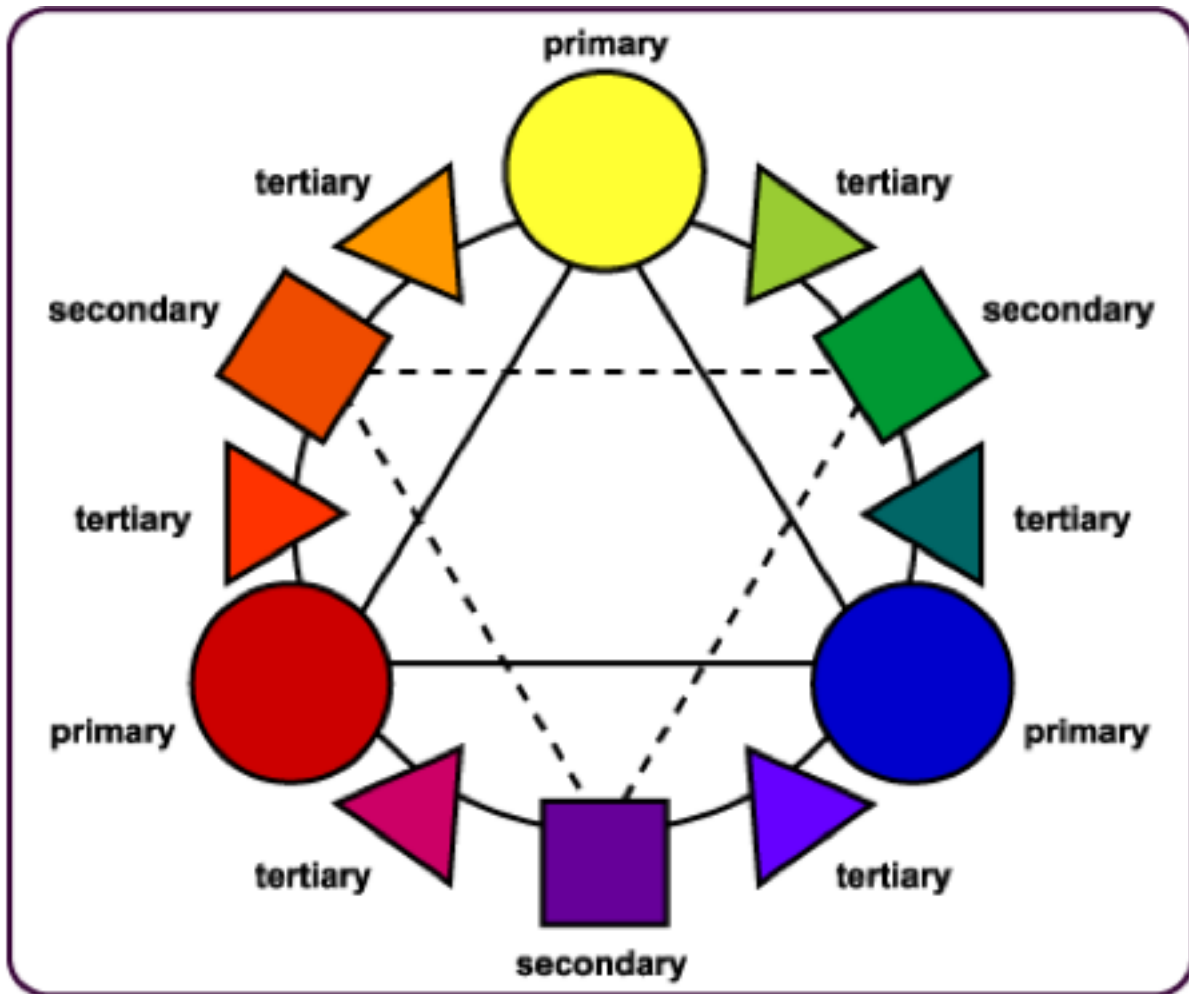
Principles of Design

- Pattern
- Rhythm/movement
- Proportion/scale
- Balance
- Unity
- Emphasis

Color

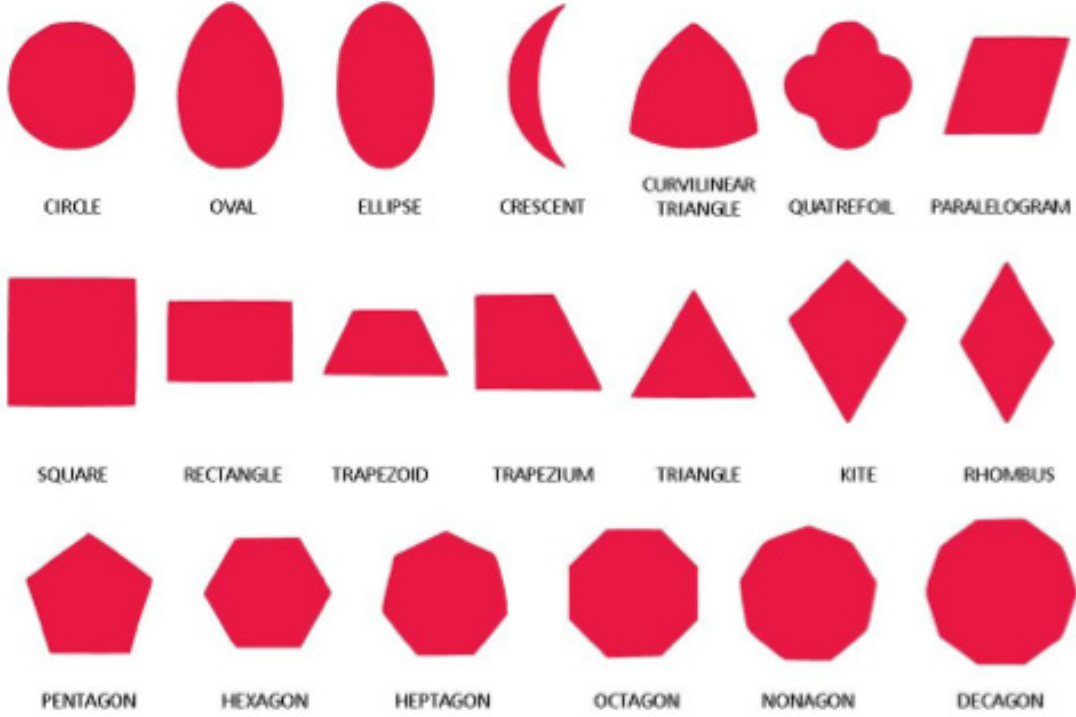
- Color Wheel
- Primary Colors
- Secondary
- Neutrals
- Complementary
- Monochromatic
- Achromatic

Color Wheel

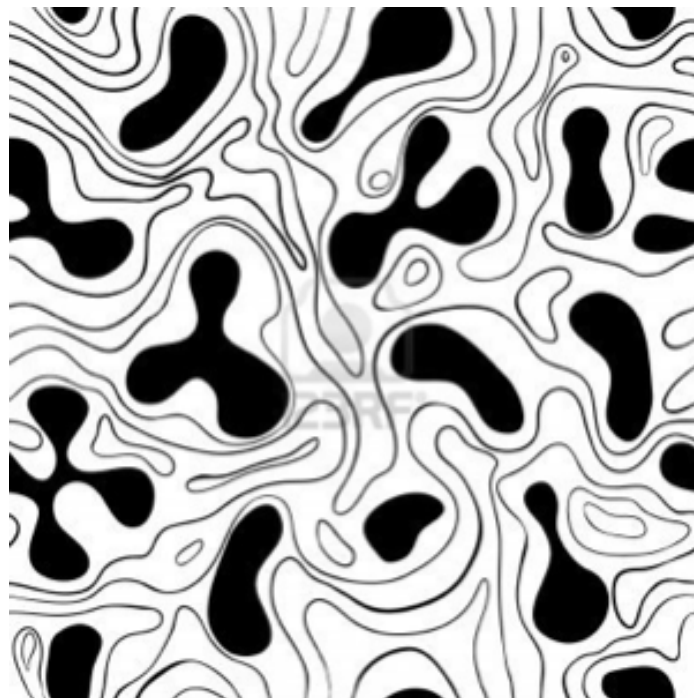


GEOMETRIC SHAPES

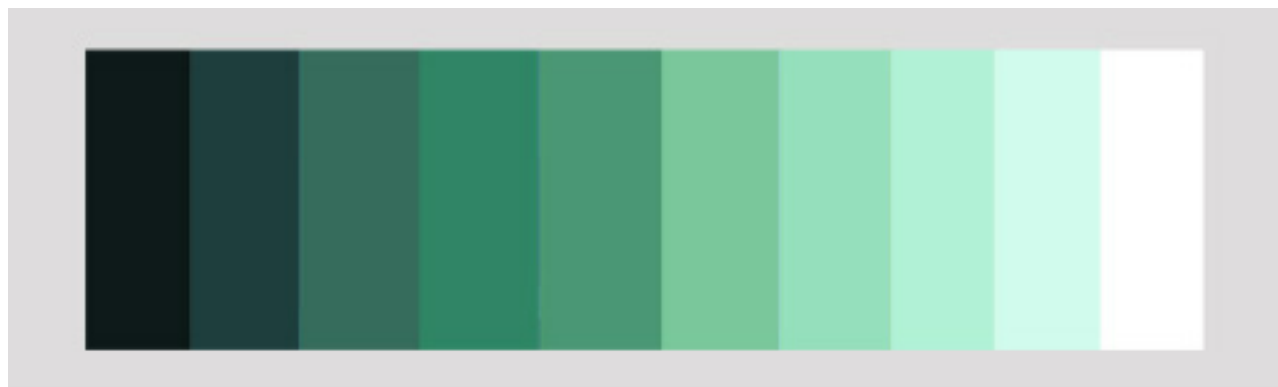
NAMES OF BASIC SHAPES



WWW.FUNSTUFF4.COM



Organic Shapes and Lines



Color Value Scale – Green



Monochromatic Image: Purple