

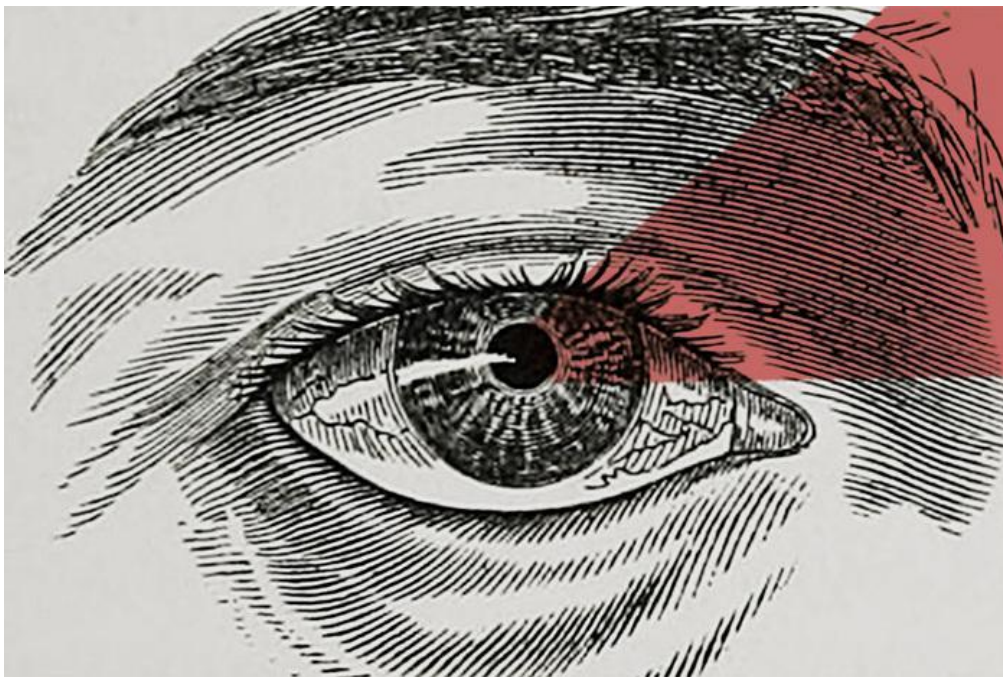


JSTOR

LESSON PLAN:

Connecting Elements of Art to Principles of Composition

From [Learning to Look](#)



In her visual literacy column "[Learning to Look](#)," Virginia Seymour takes readers progressively deeper into the skills essential to being a visually literate person. You can follow the "[Learning to Look](#)" column via [RSS Feed](#).

Time: 20 minutes

Level: 6th grade and up

Preparation: Select an image related to your class topic. Try browsing or searching within [JSTOR Open Collections](#) for ideas.

- *Tip:* you can save the images you choose to JSTOR [Workspace](#) for easy access.

Materials: For Option 1, you need an overhead display for images and a whiteboard. You will also need an image selected to use in your class discussion. For Option 2, students will each need a copy of their image (either selected by the instructor or the student) and a worksheet.

- *Tip:* You can [download individual images](#) directly from search results or item pages, or [download groups of images from Workspace](#).

Directions

Prior to introducing the activity below, it is necessary to introduce the elements and principles of art and design to your students. Refer to the resources below for information and teaching resources about the elements and principles:

- [Smarthistory: Elements of Art](#)
- [Smarthistory: Principles of Composition](#)
- [Getty: The Elements of Art](#)

Option 1: In-Class Activity

1. Display an image on an overhead display in full-screen mode on JSTOR.
2. Give students a few minutes on their own to look closely at the image while you prepare your whiteboard. Write the elements and principles of composition in two large columns, as shown below:

Shape	Balance
Value	Movement
Space	Rhythm
Form	Emphasis
Line	Contrast
Texture	Repetition
Color	Proportion

3. If necessary, briefly recap these terms and their meaning with students.
4. Students will be working to connect the elements (left column) they identify in the image with the principles (right column) they support in the overall composition. Model this by drawing a line from one element to one principle and describing how the element creates the principle effect. For example, if you were using [Untitled \(Five Figures\)](#) by Keith Haring as your image, you might start by connecting “line” to “movement” on the board and describing how the black lines around the figures create a sense of movement in the figures’ limbs.



5. Prompt students to suggest and describe their own connections, drawing a line between the columns for each connection. Encourage discussion here: do multiple elements work together towards a common principle? Do any principles rely on multiple elements?

Option 2: Out-of-class assignment (worksheet)

1. Provide students with a copy of the worksheet associated with this lesson plan.
2. Either a) provide students with an image or several images to choose from, or b) instruct students on how to explore JSTOR to find an image of their choice. Here are some resources for finding images on JSTOR:
 - [Searching and saving images on JSTOR \(demo video\)](#)
 - [Searching: Images on JSTOR \(support article\)](#)

3. Walk students through the worksheet instructions: they should examine their image and make four connections, explaining one connection per box and drawing a line between that box and the relevant element(s) and principle. For example, if a student was using *Untitled (Five Figures)* by Keith Herring as their image, their connections might look like this:

