

Make Something Out of a Dot, Line, or Shape

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Literacy Draws Upon Art



Introduction

Stories can be inspired by any visual, even a tiny dot, simple shape, or squiggly line. This project explores simple marks, sometimes made by accident, that take an imaginary journey and develop into a story with characters and an adventurous plot.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Children will:

- sketch and identify simple marks such as dots, lines, and shapes;
- assign personality traits to one or more of the marks;
- take these tiny characters on an adventure and outline their experiences in a story map; and
- write, illustrate, and present the story.

Vocabulary

random
doodle
personality
characteristics

adventure
journey
story map
author

illustrator
imaginary

Essential Questions

- How can carefully observing little marks, dots, and shapes help to create a story and illustrations?
- Why does assigning personality characteristics to inanimate images help to create story characters?
- What attributes would help imaginary story characters radiate a personality, for example assigning them with a unique style and specific sounds, motions, and food preferences?
- How does drawing imaginary characters help to inform a new story?

Guiding Questions

- How can a doodle be composed using a variety of dots, lines, and shapes?
- Where could similar dots, lines, and shapes be seen around the house?
- What dots, lines, and shapes would make interesting characters? How could you combine some of the marks to create characters?
- How can personality traits be applied to simple marks or combinations of marks?

Supplies

- Crayola® Colored Pencils
- Crayola® Markers
- Paper (plain or scrap)

Prepare

The ability to observe small parts of images are important in this project. Provide children with a work area where they can be shape sleuths who look for small dots, lines, and shapes. This area could be in the kitchen, another room of the house, or the back yard.

Applying SEEK to this Project

SEEK™

SEE: What dots, lines, and shapes do you see here? Can you see additional dots, lines, and shapes when you look more closely at a specific area? Describe them.

EVIDENCE: What evidence from your observations will you use when you draw dots, lines, and shapes? What new designs can be formed using the marks that you observed?

EXPLAIN: What decisions are you as an illustrator making as you turn marks into story characters? Explain the features and details that you added to the marks to give each character a unique personality.

KNOW: What do others know about the characters' personalities and adventures based on what you drew and wrote?

SEE
EVIDENCE
EXPLAIN
KNOW

What do you see?
Why do you say that?
What is the evidence?
What decisions did the artist make? Why?
What do you know?
What else do you want to know?

Make Something Out of a Dot, Line, or Shape



- Have the children look around for different sized dots; lines that are vertical, horizontal, diagonal, short or long; and shapes, such as a square, rectangle, triangle, circle, hexagon, and so on. Look around again to find other examples.
- Each child will create a doodle drawing which uses some of the dots, lines, and shapes observed in the environment. Urge them to fill the paper, repeating and varying some of the marks.

- Ask children to select a few of the marks that will become the characters and to decide what features to add to the marks to give each character personal traits.

- Next, each child will outline a story map, which is a plan for the story's three parts: beginning (introduces the characters), middle (where the characters interact with each other and identify problems), and end (where the characters solve the problems).

- Illustrate and then write the story in the characters' voices.



- Children will plan ways to present their story maps and show how these compare to the illustrated and written stories.
- Select the audience for this presentation, perhaps family members, toy animals and action figures, or the children themselves in a mirror.

- Each child will read or tell his or her story using adjectives to describe the characters, obstacles or problems, and solutions.



- Encourage children to use SEEK™ to ask and respond to questions that help them gather feedback on their work.

- In response to feedback, encourage children to add more imaginative details to their stories and perhaps additional characters, problems, and solutions that take the adventure in new directions.



- Ask children to recall the steps they used in this project, from observation and sketching, to developing characters and a story map, and then creating a three-part story. Connect this to other creative experiences that have several steps from start to finish, whether that be cooking, learning new dance steps, or writing a new song.

- Connect the story map to other maps they could draw that show an adventure's beginning, middle, and end.
- Ask children to present their story map as a board game they design on cardboard or an obstacle course they journey through using boxes, blankets and pillows.

For Younger Children

- Explore book illustrations and look for how dots, lines, and shapes are used to show feelings or personality traits in the characters. For example, illustrators make decisions about how to use dots and lines when they create eyes. What does a wide-eyed face convey? How can a slant of the characters' eyebrows make the expression go from curious to furious? Lines can be used to show hair standing on end or calmly lying on the head. How can shapes and lines show shoulders that either slouch, shrug, or extend down and back to project confidence?

- Use the illustration observations to inspire some dramatic role play. Ask young children to change their facial expressions and posture to communicate a range of feelings from friendly to angry or from frightened to ferocious.
- Extend the project by asking children to make paper masks to represent the characters they drew. Help them develop new storylines for these characters and perform a play.

For Older Children

- Help them explore dots, lines, and shapes on a digital design platform or app. Digitally recreate the characters and story map. Then create new pages that extend the story in different directions or use a story creator app and form a multi-page digital book.

- Develop these characters into a chapter book or a graphic novel where they encounter new challenges and solve more complex problems.



Melissa M.



Sierra F.



Hannah R.

Child Reflections

- How do dots, lines, and shapes become visual elements that help shape characters with personalities?
- What part of the story-building process did you find most interesting?
- How did the steps build upon each other from observation, sketching, character design, story mapping, and then story writing and illustrating?
- What additional ways could your artwork be shared?

Adult Reflections

- How did this project connect with other real-world experiences and become personally relevant to children?
- What benefits did you find in the open-ended approach to having children develop their own characters and stories?
- How else could you modify this project to meet the needs of children?
- What are other opportunities to have children create something big out of a small mark or tiny seed of an idea?

Standards and Skill Development

Standards provide a map of what students should know and be able to do. Standards help educators plan projects that meet children's needs and that align with school districts' expectations. This project addresses the following standards:

LANGUAGE ARTS

- Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information and represent it in print and digital texts.
- Describe several ways that text can present information, such as sequentially or comparatively.
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
- Write routinely over extended periods of time (revisit the assignment to do research, reflection, and revision) and shorter periods of time (a single sitting) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

MATHEMATICS

- Classify objects and count the number of objects in each category.
- Distinguish between defining attributes (e.g., triangles are closed and three-sided) and non-defining attributes (e.g., color, orientation, overall size); build and draw shapes that portray defining attributes.
- Draw, construct, and describe geometrical figures and describe the relationships between them.

SCIENCE

- Ask questions, define problems, then plan and carry out investigations.
- Construct explanations and design solutions.
- Develop a simple sketch, drawing, or physical model to illustrate how the shape of an object helps its function or solves a given problem.
- Design representations that are useful in communicating ideas.

VISUAL ARTS

- Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art making.
- Repurpose objects to make something new.
- Use art vocabulary to describe choices while creating art.
- Recognize art in one's environment.
- Determine messages communicated by an image.