

The Tasty Shape of Contours

Exploring Basic Principles of Shape and Contour in Art

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Published by *K20 Center*

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Grade Level	6th – 8th Grade	**Time Frame**	50 min.
Subject	Visual Arts	**Duration**	4-5 class periods
Course	Visual Arts		

Essential Question

Why is good contour important in visual art?

Summary

Students will explore the aspects of visual contour, applying their findings by crafting a custom-designed "cookie cutter" using flexible metal materials. Students then create unique contour cookie designs. Subsequently, students plan and design how to effectively decorate their cookies using a range of colored icings. Finally, students will evaluate the project results and self-reflect on their learning.

Snapshot

Engage:

Students are asked to recognize different characters based only on their silhouettes and explain how they were able to do so.

Explore:

Students select a favorite character and create an outline of that character. They experiment with an art concept to make their character easier to recognize.

Explain:

The class discusses the definition and application of what "contour" is. Students create another outline of the character they created in the previous exercise, using flexible metal material.

Extend:

Students use the metal contours they have created as a cutter for a large cookie they will cut out themselves. Students then design how their cookie will be decorated after they are baked.

Evaluate:

The class participates in a Gallery Walk, looking over all the character cookies, and reflects on their learning by using a 3-2-1 learning strategy.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Fine Arts: Visual Art (7th Grade))

VA.CP.1 : Learn and use vocabulary and concepts related to visual arts.
6.VA.CP.2.2 : Demonstrate care and safe handling through the storage and use of materials, tools, and equipment.
6.VA.P.1.1 : Explore and develop art making techniques and approaches.
VA.P.2 : Use different media, supplies, and tools in an appropriate and safe manner in the creation of original visual artworks.
6.VA.P.2.1 : Show consistent use of the elements of art and principles of design in the creative process.

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Fine Arts: Visual Art (7th Grade))

7.ARCM.1.2 : Make connections between visual art and other domains of learning.

Oklahoma Academic Standards (Fine Arts: Visual Art (7th Grade))

8.VA.CP.1.1 : Apply knowledge of elements of art and principles of design throughout the creative process and completion of works of art.

Attachments

- 3-2-1 Strategy—The Tasty Shape of Contours.docx
- 3-2-1 Strategy—The Tasty Shape of Contours.pdf
- Lesson Slides—A Tasty Shape of Contours.pptx

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Numbered index cards, or a deck of playing cards
- 3-2-1 handout (attached; one per student)
- Student Chromebooks or Laptops
- Drawing Materials- Plain Paper, Pencils, Colored Pencils, Black Markers

Cookie Cutter Materials:

- ¾" Galvanized Hanger Strap or Aluminum Strip. Each student will need about 12.
- Tin Snips for cutting the hanger strap to length.
- Needle-Nosed Pliers to share among groups difficult changes in direction.
- Glue Gun (used by teacher) to be used to glue the ends of the cutter shape together.

Cookie Materials:

Remember that once students have decorated their cookies, you must have a plan in place for baking the cookies before they return for the next class with you.

- Cookie Sheets—One for each student to keep and transport their individual cookie projects on.
- Cookie Dough—Each student will make a large cookie approximately the same size as 6 regular sized cookies. Judge the amount of dough needed accordingly.
- Wax Paper—For students to work the cookie dough on.
- Flour—To keep things from getting sticky.
- Dowel Rods (cut in 1' lengths)—Use as rolling pins for each student.
- Zip-lock Bags—For pre-measured amounts of flour and cookie dough.

Icing Materials:

- White Icing—Premade (store-bought or from scratch).
- Food Coloring—In small doses for individual designs.
- Small Bowls/Containers w/lids—To mix color into icing.

- Disposable Piping Bags—Plastic bags to hold small amounts of icing.
- Extra Fine Piping Tips—Use to create thin lines of icing.
- Spray Bottles—Fill with fresh water to thin the icing when needed.
- Icing Utensils—Butter knives, spoons, rubber spatulas, toothpicks, and a few art brushes to mix and adjust icing colors.

15 minutes

Engage

Ask students to take out a sheet of paper and number 1-5 for a “Surprise Quiz.”

- Inform students that this is a no-talking quiz.
- Use **Slides 4-8** to show students each silhouette for a few seconds. Instruct them to write down whom they think the character is based on.
- Once they have finished, reveal each silhouette and have the class collectively name each character.
- Finally, ask the students: "How were you able to recognize who or what each image was?" Encourage answers related to "shadow" or "outline."

40 minutes

Explore

Using **Slides 9 and 10**, introduce the essential question and learning objectives for this lesson.

Teacher's Note

Teacher Note: It's fun to keep the students guessing about what will happen next in the lesson, so keeping a little suspense helps them stay engaged. So don't tell them about the cookies yet!

Encourage students to use their time wisely and not spend too much time choosing a character. It is beneficial for preparation purposes, if they have their designs completed by the end of the class period.

Next, have students choose a character, such as a superhero, movie character, or a famous athlete, and create an image of that character. Below are the student guidelines for their outline drawing:

- Draw only the outline of your character.
- Use your Chromebook or laptop to look up any required visual reference.
- Draw the character outline 7-8" tall, taking up most of a standard sheet of paper.
- Pose the character dramatically. A figure just standing around is more difficult to recognize.
- Side profiles are typically easier to "read" than front-facing profiles.
- Include something 'iconic' about the character that can be seen in the outline: Thor's hammer, Harry Potter's messy hair, scarf, and wand, or Michael Jordan with a basketball in his hand.
- Simplify the outline as much as possible. Fine details like clothing wrinkles or shoelaces will be impossible to create in the later part of this lesson.

50 minutes

Explain

Supplemental Information:

Professional character designers often use an exercise like the one in the Explore phase to determine if their ideas for a character are visually strong enough to be recognized by just their outlines.

- A contour line defines the outline of a form and hints at structure without using internal details. It is a fundamental basis of drawing.

Show **Slide 11**. Begin this section by reviewing the guidelines for the drawing assignment.

Have students turn to their Elbow Partner and share the most challenging part of creating their image and why. Using the Airplane Landing strategy, ask for volunteers to share out. First distribute numbered index cards to the volunteers. Use the numbers in order (landing pattern). If the first volunteer gives an excellent answer, acknowledge the response and continue through the numbers. This enables other students to go more in-depth about their responses.

Once students have discussed their drawing challenges, ask the class to collaboratively define the term "contour." Use **Slide 12** to show the definition and some sample pictures. Add the word "contour" to your vocabulary chart. Next ask students how contour relates to the outline assignment they just completed. Then, inform the students that they will be using their contours for a new assignment.

Tell students they will use a new material—a ¾" galvanized hanger strap or aluminum strip—to create an outline of their character.

1. Hand out portions of the metal strap material (approximately 12-30" lengths) to each student.
2. Students place their image in front of them and use the metal strap to outline the contour of their character. *This metal strap is very malleable, so students should have little trouble manipulating the material into most curved shapes.*
3. Needle-nose pliers can be used to help create sharper angles, if needed.
4. Once the contour is finished, the two ends of the hanger strap can be hot glued together. (Have one or two glue stations for students to use under supervision)

Students should aim to have their strap contours finished by the end of class. The contours will be collected for use in the following day's activities.

50 minutes

Extend

Lesson Prep

Prepare ahead of time the following **for each student** and have them laid out for when the class returns:

- Cookie sheet or tray with a sheet of wax paper
- Small Ziplock bag of flour (1/4 cup)
- 1 wooden dowel (1" dia.) for rolling pin
- Ziplock bag of cookie dough

Have a plan in place for baking the cookies before the students return for their next class with you.

Display **Slide 13** and have students complete the following:

1. Remove the cookie dough from the bag and press it on the wax paper in the cookie sheet.
2. Next, take some of the flour and rub the dowel rod with it. Then sprinkle a little flour on the dough and roll it out using the dowel.
3. Once they have rolled out the dough into a large even sheet, pass out the metal strap contours created the day before.
4. Students will use the strap contour as a cutter for the cookie dough, creating a large cookie shape.

After they have cut their cookies, give them permission to design how their cookie will be decorated. Instruct them to use their paper design from Day 1. Give them the option to trace copies of their design so they can try different color combinations.

Display **Slide 14**. Ask students to consider the following concepts:

1. Important shapes should you include in the decoration. Consider using character symbols or specific details that help with identification (Superman's "S", LeBron James' jersey number, etc.).
2. What colors should you use based on the shapes of the different details. (*Advise them to limit their color choices to 3 at the most to make the icing process more feasible given the time constraints.)*
3. Use your original designs (Day 1) and trace a few copies.
4. Use colored pencils to try different color combinations.

To finish up the class hour, you can show the video on **Slide 15** that describes procedures for icing a cookie.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=otpOZP7o23w

The video should help students understand how to color the icing, how to use the piping bags, and techniques to thin the icing for flood filling. It also explains why the color choices need to be limited to 3 and helps them strategize how to approach their decoration procedure. Should they use **piping lines** to color their cookies, or would **flood filling** be more ideal?

50 minutes

Extend: Part II

Lesson Prep:

- White Icing (premade from scratch or store-bought).
- Food Coloring-In small amounts for individual designs.
- Small Bowls/Containers w/lids-Use to mix color into icing.
- Disposable Piping Bags or small plastic bags with one corner cut out, to hold small amounts of icing.
- Extra Fine Piping Tips-Use to create thin lines of icing.
- Spray Bottles-Fill with fresh water to thin the icing when needed.
- Icing Utensils- butter knives, spoons, rubber spatulas, toothpicks, and a few art brushes to mix and adjust icing colors.

During the next day of class, review the procedures for icing cookies and distribute the cookies to each student. Leave cookies on the cookie sheets along with small portions of icing for them to modify using the food coloring. They will spend this class time CAREFULLY decorating their cookie creations using the piping bags to outline the areas to color first, then filling in the different areas with icing.

While you circulate through the class, watch to see if students are progressing through the decorating process. Check as they mix the colors appropriately. Ensure that they use the piping bags correctly. Observe their line technique.

Ask students to reflect on how this process differs from "standard" drawing projects. Help them to see that similar skills are used. Art and design can appear in many unexpected places. Students should aim to complete decorating their cookies by the end of class. Those who finish early can assist classmates who may be behind schedule. They could help stir color mixes or thin the icing for flood filling.

It's important to store the cookies carefully to allow the icing to dry properly for the next day's closing lesson.

50 minutes

Evaluate

Gallery Walk & Reflections

Instruct students to display their cookie creations at their desks. Each student takes 5 sticky notes and a pencil with them as they walk around the classroom, observing their classmates' Character Contour Cookies. Using the sticky notes students should leave a positive and constructive comment for 5 different Character Contour Cookies (excluding their own). **Slide 16**

After the Gallery Walk, students gather their sticky notes and discuss their feedback orally with a partner. Then, divide students into small groups and have them discuss their overall experience with the lesson, sharing highlights, challenges faced, and what they learned about contour, shape, and artistic application.

To complete the lesson, display **slide 17**. Pass out a copy of the attached **3-2-1 handout** to each student and introduce them to the 3-2-1 strategy. Have students reflect on their own learning by identifying things they have learned and any questions they still have using the 3-2-1.

3- What are three ways good contour is important in visual art?

2- What are two things you learned about how the term "contour" relates to the element of shape. How did you apply this knowledge of art in designing and decorating your character cookies?

1- What is one thing you found interesting or surprised you?

Opportunities for Advanced Learners and Looking at Careers

Have students select a piece of artwork and identify the contour lines in a famous painting and explain their significance in the piece. They then describe how contour contributes to the overall quality of a piece of artwork?

Careers: Students research and present to the class careers where art is used but not necessarily explicitly seen.

Sample Inquiries and Responses

- **How are Contour lines used in Cartography**? *Cartographers (map makers) use contour lines on maps to represent elevation and terrain features, helping hikers and travelers plan their routes effectively.*
- **How are Contour lines used in Fashion Design?** *Fashion designers use contour lines to create clothing patterns that fit the shape of the body, enhancing the overall design and style of the garment.*

Resources

- Good Housekeeping. (n.d.). How to decorate cookies for beginners. Video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otpOZP7o23w&t=11s
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Airplane landing. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/78
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Gallery walk. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/118
- K20 Center. (n.d.). 3-2-1. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/117