LINE

A line can be described as the path of a point moving through space. In an artwork, there are many types of line. We can look for the direction of the line, the feeling of the line, the quality of the line, and how the lines move our eye through artworks.

**Lines can be described in many, many ways:**
- active — passive
- flowing — light
- thick — thin
- broken — continuous
- implied — actual
- contour — outline
- perpendicular — parallel
- bold — delicate
- straight — curved
- long — short
- geometric — organic
- precise — irregular
- vertical — horizontal
- zig-zag — direct

TEXTURE

Texture refers to the tactile qualities of a surface — the way objects actually feel or the way they look like they would feel.

Sculptures, ceramics, mixed-media collages, fiber art, etc., may have bumpy or varied surfaces — **actual textures** you can feel. A painting, drawing, print, or other two-dimensional work can be made to look like a textured surface — **implied texture**.

**LOOK AT TEXTURE**

**THINK + TALK ABOUT IT**

- Describe the lines in this artwork.
- How do the lines in this artwork create connections?
- How do the lines move our eye around this artwork?
Elements of Art

SHAPE

A shape is an enclosed area of space created through lines and other elements of the composition. Shapes can be geometric or free-form.

Geometric shapes are precise – like squares, triangles, rectangles, polygons, etc.

Organic shapes are free-formed and curved, like people, animals, trees, and other natural elements.

FORM

Form is an element of art closely related to shape, but form is always three-dimensional. A form is measurable by length, width, and height, and encloses volume. Forms can be actual 3-D forms created with sculpture or architecture, or they can be implied forms where the artist creates the illusion of the form onto a flat surface.

While a two-dimensional shape can be seen from only one side, a three-dimensional form can be viewed from any side.

Three-dimensional forms of sculpture and architecture not only occupy space but also contain space.

LOOK AT SHAPE

Pablo Picasso
Three Musicians, 1911

LOOK AT FORM

Moshe Sadie, Habitat 67, Montreal, 1967

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

• Identify and draw three different geometric shapes and three different organic shapes.
• Why did the artist depict this artwork using shape rather than form?
• How do the shapes relate to music?

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

• How did this artist use both shape and form in her art?
• What do the forms in this artwork remind you of?
• How does the form create mood, or emotion, in this artwork?
The elements of art and principles of design are the fundamental parts of an artwork. Identifying these elements is one way to understand an artwork.

**COLOR**

Color is produced by the way an object reflects or emits light. By placing colors next to each other in different ways, artists can create a variety of effects.

Each color has three properties: hue, value, and intensity.

- **HUE** is the name of the color.
- **VALUE** is a color’s lightness or darkness.
- **INTENSITY** refers to the brightness of a color, often measured by boldness or dullness.

There are three primary colors (blue, yellow, and red) from which all other colors are made. Colors can be evaluated as complementary, analogous, and warm or cool.

**VALUE**

Value in art refers to the lightness and darkness of colors and is often described in varying levels of contrast.

A **value scale** shows the range of tones from white, which is the lightest, to black, which is the darkest. The closer together the values are on a scale, the less contrast we see.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Light Values</th>
<th>Middle Values</th>
<th>Dark Values</th>
<th>Black</th>
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Artists utilize a range of techniques to show value, including use of lines and intensity of color.

**LOOK AT VALUE**

**LOOK AT COLOR**

Frederic Church  
*Cotopaxi*, 1862

Henry Ossawa Tanner  
*The Banjo Lesson*, 1893

**THINK + TALK ABOUT IT**

- Describe the colors in this artwork.
- How do the colors in this artwork make you feel?
- What color schemes did the artist use: complementary, analogous, warm, cool, etc.?
The elements of art and principles of design are the fundamental parts of an artwork. Identifying these elements is one way to understand an artwork.

**SPACE**

Space is how an artwork uses or depicts depth or distance. Sculptors and architects work with all three dimensions of space – height, width, and depth. Artists who work on a flat surface can make a two-dimensional surface appear three-dimensional. Space can give the illusion of objects in an artwork being close or far away. **Positive space** is the areas of the artwork filled with the content, and **negative space** is the space in between.

Depth or distance can be perceived because of the size differences, the placement, and the value of the birds.

Several birds overlap, with those in front appearing to be closer to the viewer than those that are partially covered.

**LOOK AT SPACE**

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**COMPOSITION**

Composition refers to the placement or arrangement of the elements of art in a work of art. A **formal analysis** of a work of art involves looking at the artist’s use of the elements and principles of art and how they work together to create meaning.

**LOOK AT COMPOSITION**

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**THINK + TALK ABOUT IT**

- Find 5 ways the artist shows space in this artwork.
- How do we know that the people at the front are closer to us than the people in the background?
- Find the positive space and the negative space. Draw some of the shapes made by the negative space.

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**John Sloan**

South Beach Bathers

1907-1908

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**Hilma af Klint**

Untitled #1 (from Altar Paintings series), 1915

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**THINK + TALK ABOUT IT**

- See how the elements work together to create a bold composition. Analyze the artwork by studying each element to determine how the artist did or did not use that element:
  - Color, Shape, Value, Form, Line, Space, Texture
- How do each of these elements contribute to the meaning or the emotion in the artwork?
CONTRAST

Contrast refers to the arrangement of opposite elements and effects. For example: light and dark colors, smooth and rough textures, large and small shapes. Contrast can be used to create variety, visual interest, and drama in an artwork.

Caravaggio created a scene of action and energy by contrasting both light/dark and directional lines.

Käthe Kollwitz
Misery, 1897

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

• How did this artist show contrast in line and color?
• How did this artist create contrast through the meaning or story of the artwork?
• How does the contrast create mood, or emotion, in the artwork?

EMPHASIS

Emphasis refers to the area of an artwork that dominates attention or draws interest. It is often the place a viewer looks first. Artists can create emphasis by contrasting the elements of art, such as:

Francisco Goya
Third of May 1808, 1814

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

• What part of the composition is being emphasized?
• What choices did the artist make to create emphasis?
• How does the emphasis create mood, or emotion, in the artwork?
MOVEMENT

Movement can be thought of in two ways – the first refers to how an artist depicts movement using the elements and principles of art. The second way refers to the visual flow of an artwork, indicated by the path a viewer’s eyes take as they look at the artwork.

Lines, edges, shapes, and colors can be utilized by the artist to point the way through an artwork as a map for our eyes to follow:

- diagonal
- vertical
- horizontal
- curving
- flowing
- progressive

LOOK AT MOVEMENT

Katsushika Hokusai

Ejiri in Suruga Province

1830

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

- How did this artist show movement?
- Name two or more elements of art the artist utilized to create movement.
- How does movement create mood, or emotion, in the artwork?

RHYTHM

Rhythm is a principle of art that refers to the movement or action of a composition, usually achieved through repetition of lines, shapes, colors, and more. It creates a visual tempo in artworks and provides a path for the viewer’s eye to follow.

LOOK AT RHYTHM

Tughra of Sultan Süleiman the Magnificent

ca. 1555-60

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

- What elements and principles did this artist use to create rhythm?
- If this painting were a song, what would it sound like? How do the lines, color, and rhythm create the song?
- How does rhythm create mood, or emotion, in the artwork?
The elements of art and principles of design are the fundamental parts of an artwork. Identifying these elements is one way to understand an artwork.

**PROPORTION**

Proportion is the *size relationship* between the various parts of an artwork. Artists can use scale and proportion to create sensations such as depth, realism, disorientation, and drama.

The human figure is scaled to appear larger than the city skyline. The proportions could indicate depth of perspective or could symbolize the relationship of laborers in building a city.

**LOOK AT PROPORTION**

Maria Izquierdo
The Indifferent Child, 1947

**BALANCE**

Balance refers to the distribution of *visual weight* in a composition. Each part of the composition works with other parts of the composition to *appear equal* and harmonious in balance.

- symmetrical balance
- asymmetrical balance
- radial symmetry

**LOOK AT BALANCE**

James Abbott McNeill Whistler
Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter’s Mother (Whistler’s Mother), 1871

**THINK + TALK ABOUT IT**

- How did this artist manipulate (change) proportion?
- Why do you think the artist chose to not show realistic proportion?
- How does proportion create meaning in the artwork?

**THINK + TALK ABOUT IT**

- What type of balance did this artist use (symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial)?
- How would this artwork look different if the black curtain were a different size or color?
- Why did the artist title the artwork “Arrangement in Grey and Black”?
UNITY

Unity, also known as *harmony*, refers to the *cohesiveness* of an artwork—how whole, consistent, and complete it appears. Unity is the pleasing combination of elements to create a *harmonious composition*. 

Unity is achieved through:
- repetition
- simplicity
- harmony
- contrast
- theme and variation
- proximity
- continuity

LOOK AT UNITY

**Gustav Klimt**

*Die Kiss, 1907-1908*

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

- Which elements of art did this artist use to create unity?
- How does unity create mood, or emotion, in the artwork?
- How would this artwork be different if the artist did not use unity?

VARIETY

Variety refers to the elements of a composition that differ from one another. Variety creates visual interest and energy.

- variety of color
- variety of shapes
- variety of lines
- variety of size
- variety of perspective
- variety of textures

LOOK AT VARIETY

**Wassily Kandinsky**

*Der Sturm, Volume 10, Number 7, 1919*

THINK + TALK ABOUT IT

- How did this artist show variety using color, shape, and line?
- How did the artist create unity within the composition?
- How does the variety create mood, or emotion, in the artwork?