



FOUNDATIONS IN VISUAL ARTS

CURRICULUM SUPPLEMENT

CREATING CHARACTERS

DIGITAL MEDIA ARTS

UNIT **5**

dma.edc.org



the James Irvine foundation



Education Development Center, Inc.

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Essential Activities

Students should complete these activities in order to experience the full breadth of the unit, develop essential skills, and gain knowledge of the art and design concepts addressed in the unit:

- *What Is a Character?* (Activity 1A): Students analyze the visual elements that define characters. They begin work on the unit project, for which they will develop, draw, and sculpt a character and then animate that character in a flipbook.
- *Preliminary Sketching / Feedback Session and Finalizing Sketches* (Activities 1B.1 and 1B.2): Students create sketches of their characters while learning relevant drawing techniques. These sketches will guide students as they create turnaround model sheets and character studies later in the unit.
- *Creating Turnaround Model Sheets* (Activity 1B.3): Students create drawings showing their character from different angles.
- *Looking at AME Careers* (Activity 1B.4): Students learn about careers related to their work in the unit and are introduced to the AME Career Research project, which they will work on throughout the semester. (See *Notes on Timing* later in this document for alternate suggestions on when to introduce this activity.)
- *Principles and Forms of Animation* (Activity 2A.1): Students learn about three forms of animation: two-dimensional (2-D) hand-drawn animation, three-dimensional (3-D) computer-generated animation, and stop-motion animation.
- *Action and Expression Character Studies* (Activity 2B): Students create sketches in which their animated characters are in various poses or show different facial expressions.
- *Animating the Character* (Activity 4A): Students create flipbooks that animate the characters they have created.
- *Sharing Characters* (Activity 4B): Students present their characters to the class.
- *Introducing the Art Exhibition* (Part 5): The class learns about the culminating activity for the course: curating, designing, and installing an exhibition of their own work. (See *Notes on Timing* later in this document for alternate suggestions on when to introduce this activity.)

Optional Activities

These activities may be omitted (or done at other points during the course) if students need to spend additional time developing their fundamental art skills and refining their drawing techniques:

- *Thinking About Style* (Activity 2A.2): Students research the style of an animator or animation studio.

- *Characters in Three Dimensions (Part 3)*: As part of the unit project, students learn about the use of maquettes in animation, analyze sculptures, learn sculpture techniques, and create maquettes of their own characters. However, depending on the focus of your particular class, you may choose not to introduce sculpture. If you omit this activity, you would also skip the *Character Sculpture* activity described in this supplement.

Notes on Timing

- You can shorten the time needed for *Activity 1A.1: Analyzing Characters* by having students analyze one animated character rather than two.
- As the course is structured, students are introduced to the AME Career Research project in Activity 1B.4 and work on the project throughout the semester. The project culminates in a career fair in Unit 7. Depending on your class and your students, it may be less disruptive to introduce the project and have students work on it in a more concentrated way at the beginning or end of a unit (either Unit 5 or another unit). However, keep in mind that students will need time outside of class to locate and interview an AME professional.
- You can introduce the art exhibition in Part 5 at another time during the course if you think that might be more appropriate for your students. For example, you may want to introduce the exhibition even earlier in the year so students have additional time to plan and think about it.
- You can use the *Character Sculpture* activity described in this supplement to support students' developing sculpture practice (if you choose to include the sculpture activities in this unit).
- As you consider how much time students need to complete each activity you choose to use from this supplement or from the unit, be sure to leave enough time for them to revise their artwork.

Additional Skill-Building Activity

Character Sculpture

Contributed by Naomi Kadinoff, Visual Arts Teacher, The School of Arts and Enterprise, Pomona, California

In this activity, students gain additional experience with character design and sculpture techniques by designing and creating sculptures of characters that are human-like (anthropomorphic), animal-like (zoomorphic), or plant-like. They can also create hybrid characters that combine human, animal, and/or plant characteristics. During the activity, students will learn basic sculpture techniques for creating figures.



Note: While this activity is similar to the sculpture activity that students complete in the unit, it is more constrained in that students must design a character with a humanoid form (though the character may have human, animal, or plant characteristics). This helps students develop basic sculpture skills before they sculpt their unit project characters, and allows them to sculpt multiple figures, which is good practice for beginners. However, you can adapt this activity to use it for the unit project by letting students know at the beginning of the unit that their animated characters must have a humanoid form.

Art Skills Taught and Practiced

- Character design
- Ceramic sculpture techniques

Materials

- Drawing paper
- Pencils
- Video from the Ceramic Arts Daily website demonstrating sculpture technique (see *Media and Resources*)
- Equipment to show the video
- Newspaper
- Toothpicks
- Small plastic containers filled with a few tablespoons of water
- Clay (a piece about the size of an orange for each student)
- Sealable plastic storage bags
- Optional: Acrylic paint for painting clay sculptures
- Optional: Paintbrushes

Vocabulary

Anthropomorphic sculpture: A sculpture that has human characteristics.

Form: A three-dimensional object (such as a sphere or cube) or the illusion of three dimensions.

Score: To make scratches in the surface of two clay pieces before adhering them to each other. Usually the scored surfaces are covered with *slip*, a thin clay slurry, before pressing them together.

Note: In this activity, students use water in place of slip.

Texture: The surface quality of materials, either actual (felt or tactile) or implied (visual).

Zoomorphic sculpture: A sculpture with animal-like characteristics.



Procedure

1. Tell students that in this activity they will design a character with human-like—anthropomorphic—animal-like—zoomorphic—or plant-like characteristics, or a combination of any or all of the three. Their characters should, however, have somewhat human-like bodies with two legs, a torso, two arms, and a head. The character doesn't need to be designed for a specific animated TV series or movie, although it can be. After designing the character, students will sketch it, determine a pose they would like to place the character in, and create a sculpture of their character in that pose.
2. Have students begin by working on character development. Ask them to list their character's personality traits, characteristics, talents, and abilities and to describe the character's physical appearance. (You may want to use *Handout 5: Character Description Worksheet* from Unit 5 to structure students' character development process.)
3. Have students draw several sketches of their character in different positions.

Note: You can have students create turnaround model sheets, but their drawings don't need to be as polished as the ones they create for their unit project, since the sculpture is the main focus of this activity.

4. Have students choose their character's pose for the sculpture (they can do some rough sketching as part of this process). You may want to encourage them to place their character in a seated pose, as seated sculptures are more stable and easier to work with than standing ones.
5. Have students work in pairs. One student should model the pose of the partner's character while the partner creates a quick three-minute gesture drawing of the pose. Have them trade places and repeat the process.
6. Staying in their pairs, have students draw the same pose from at least one other angle.
7. Tell students that they will now watch a video clip on basic figure sculpture techniques, which will give them an overview of the techniques they will use to create their characters. Show the clip from the Ceramics Arts Daily website.
8. Give each student some newspaper to protect the tabletop, a toothpick to use as a tool, a small container filled with a few tablespoons of water, and a ball of clay about the size of an orange. Tell students that they should use the water only to help them join pieces of clay together. They should not use the water to smooth out the clay surface, because this can break down the integrity of the clay.
9. Remind students how the demonstrator joined clay pieces in the video clip by scoring each piece of clay on the side to be joined, dabbing them with a tiny drop of water, squeezing the pieces of clay together, and

blending the edges of the pieces of clay together. Suggest that students use toothpicks to score their clay.

10. Guide students through the process of building character sculptures by demonstrating each step while students work. It may be helpful to group all the tables together into one large table group so students can easily see what you are demonstrating:
 - Ask students to put down their clay and toothpicks. It is important that students keep their hands off the clay while you are demonstrating. Tell students to avoid handling their clay too much because it will cause the clay to dry out.
 - Show students how to pinch out a simple seat to support a seated figure. If any students want to sculpt their characters in standing poses, show them how to make a temporary support out of a thick coil of clay to hold up their figures until the clay sets.
 - Ask students to pinch out a seat or roll out a thick coil support.
 - Demonstrate how to pinch out some clay, roll it into a coil, and fold it in half to create the legs and hips. Show them how to pinch out the feet.
 - Ask students to make the legs, hips, and feet.
 - Demonstrate how to model a torso shaped like a worn bar of soap that is rounded and thicker at the top and narrower at the base. Show students how to score the clay torso, dab it with a drop of water, and attach the torso to the hips.
 - Have students model a torso and then attach it by scoring it, dabbing it with water, and blending the edges of the torso and legs together with their fingers.
 - Demonstrate how to create a head that is proportionally about one-seventh the size of the entire figure. Show students how to pinch out a neck and form the skull, which is rounded in the back. Note that the heads that students sculpt might have somewhat different shapes and proportions, depending on their character design.
 - Have students continue to watch as you model how to pinch out the chin, score the base of the neck, dab it with water, and attach it to the torso. Show them how to use a pencil to blend together the edges of the neck and torso and to model the neck (using a pencil can be easier than using fingers in small or intricate areas).
 - Have students create their own heads and attach them to their sculptures' torsos.
 - Show students how to roll out a tapered coil for each arm and how to then attach the arms.

Note: Even though it may seem repetitive, it's important to reinforce the proper technique for joining clay. Students' first attempts at modeling clay sculptures often fail because they forget to use the correct joining technique.

- Show students how to gently position their figures so they are posed like their preliminary drawings. Show them how to use their toothpicks and pencils to fine-tune their characters and give them facial features and accessories.
 - Have students complete their sculptures. Students can remove any clay supports when the legs and bodies have firmed up; they don't need to be completely dry. In between class periods, unfinished clay figures can be carefully stored in sealable plastic bags.
11. Optional: Once students' sculptures are complete, students can paint the clay to add more detail.

Encourage students to do the following as they work:

- Handle the clay quickly and decisively so it won't dry out
- Use the correct technique for joining clay pieces: Score each piece where it will be joined, add only a small drop of water to the scored area, firmly press each part together, and blend the edges of the clay to meld the surfaces

Tell students that they shouldn't do the following:

- Handle the clay more than necessary, which will dry it out
- Overwork the clay, which will also cause it to get dry and break
- Try to join clay pieces without first scoring and dabbing them with water
- Use water to smooth out the clay

Assessment

This activity addresses the following California Visual and Performing Arts Content Standard:

- 2.1 (Advanced)** Create original works of art of increasing complexity and skill in a variety of media that reflect their feelings and points of view.



The following sample rubric includes criteria that can be used to assess students' character sculptures.

Character Sculpture Rubric

	4—Advanced	3—Meets the Standard	2—Approaches the Standard	1—Does Not Meet the Standard
Character Design	The character's concept and design are innovative and well thought out, and the character demonstrates a unique style and personality that are expressed through the visual design of the piece.	The character's concept and design are well thought out, and the character demonstrates a clear personality that is expressed through the visual design of the piece.	The artist has put some effort into the character's concept and design, but the overall design and the personality of the character are not yet clear or cohesive.	The character's concept and design are not well thought out, and the character does not demonstrate a distinct personality.
Use of Elements of Art (e.g., Form and Texture)	The sculpture uses several elements of art very effectively to express the personality of the character.	The sculpture demonstrates an effective use of one or more elements of art to express the personality of the character.	The sculpture attempts to use one or more elements of art to express the personality of the character, but the attempt is not entirely successful.	The sculpture doesn't use elements of art such as form and texture to effectively express the personality of the character.
Sculpture Craftsmanship and Structural Integrity	The sculpture demonstrates beautiful craftsmanship and pristine neatness.	The sculpture demonstrates good craftsmanship, neatness, and structural integrity.	The sculpture demonstrates some degree of craftsmanship and neatness, and it has some structural integrity.	The sculpture is lacking in craftsmanship, is sloppy, and lacks structural integrity (for example, it may not stand upright).
Student Self-Evaluation				
Teacher Evaluation				

Media and Resources

Ceramic Arts Daily: Neil Patterson's Clay Projects and Fundamentals

<http://ceramicartsdaily.org/pottery-making-techniques/handbuilding-techniques/video-of-the-week-a-great-lesson-plan-for-understanding-clay-and-the-human-figure/>

Other Video Demonstrations of Sculpting Techniques

Sculpting and Animating Slugs

<http://vimeo.com/28098366>

Sculpting Demo by Philippe Faraut

www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzBs3PM2W_4

Examples of Sculpture With Human, Animal, or Plant Characteristics

Jerry Norman's From Cave Paintings to the Internet: The Earliest Zoomorphic/Anthropomorphic Sculpture

www.historyofinformation.com/expanded.php?id=2490

Lives of Grass: Mathilde Roussel

www.mathilderoussel.com/index.php/works/lives-of-grass/

Making of Bagan (Movie Concept Version) Custom Figure Sculpture Godzilla

www.youtube.com/watch?v=_vcdyMafGhQ

Metropolitan Museum of Art Ceramic Moche Collection

www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/moch/hd_moch.htm

Sergei Isupov

<http://sergeiisupov.com/portfolio?album=5&gallery=32>

Unique Beaded Sculpture by Betsy Youngquist / Beads Magic

<http://beadsmagic.com/?p=2234>

Sample Rubrics

Developed by Tara Plachowski, Data and Instructional Coach, The School of Arts and Enterprise, Pomona, California

The following rubrics provide examples of how you might assess student work for some of the projects in *Unit 5: Creating Characters*. You can align the levels in the rubrics to whatever grade scale your school or district requires. You can also use half-steps (i.e., 1.5, 2.5, 3.5) when the student work includes qualities from two different levels.

Turnaround Model Sheet Rubric (Activity 1B.3)

	4—Advanced	3—Meets the Standard	2—Approaches the Standard	1—Does Not Meet the Standard
Expressive Content	In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the visual elements used convey a character with a distinct style and personality.	The character’s concept and design are well thought out, and the character demonstrates a clear, believable personality that is expressed through the drawings. The visual design of the character clearly connects it to the world of the TV show or movie.	The artist has put some effort into the character’s concept and design, but the overall design and the personality of the character are not yet clear or cohesive, and the character is not especially believable. The relationship between the character and the world of the TV show or movie is vague or unclear.	The character’s concept and design are not well thought out, and the character does not demonstrate a distinct or believable personality. There is no connection that visually or conceptually links the character with the world of the TV show or movie.
Technical Skills	In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the artist’s precise use of elements of art makes the character seem 3-D and lifelike.	The sheet includes four views: front, three-quarter profile, side, and back. The proportions of the character’s body are accurate and appropriate in all views. The artist has effectively used elements of art (e.g., line, shape, and space) and the conventions of animation to create the character.	The sheet includes at least three views. The proportions of the character’s body may be inaccurate or inappropriate for the character in one or two of the views. The artist attempted to use elements of art and/or the conventions of animation but did not do so effectively.	The sheet includes two or fewer views. The proportions of the character’s body are inaccurate or inappropriate for the character in some or all of the views. The use of elements of art or the conventions of animation is not evident or effective in all the drawings.
Craftsmanship	A great deal of time and effort went into the drawings. The artist went through multiple drafts or attempts to reach this level of skill.	An acceptable amount of time and effort went into the drawings. The artist went through at least one practice attempt or draft before producing the final product.	The drawings need more time and attention in order to meet the standard.	The drawings appear to be rushed and sloppy and/or are incomplete.

Turnaround Model Sheet Rubric (Activity 1B.3), continued

Student Self-Evaluation	
Teacher Evaluation	

Character Studies Rubric (Activity 2B)

	4—Advanced	3—Meets the Standard	2—Approaches the Standard	1—Does Not Meet the Standard
Expressive Content	In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the artist’s attention to detail in the facial features (e.g., the direction of the eyes, the level of the eyelid, the lines around the mouth and nose, the shape and size of the mouth) allows the character to convey subtle emotions.	<p>The artist’s attention to details such as adornments results in a character with a well-defined personality.</p> <p>The expression studies show a variety of expressions that demonstrate a believable character capable of conveying multiple emotions.</p> <p>The position of the character’s torso and limbs in the action studies indicates gestures and movement appropriate to the character.</p>	One or more of the character studies may have choices or details inconsistent with the traits of the character or with the character’s previously established visual design.	The drawings do not contain any expressive details, or the choices are so vague that the drawings could represent many different kinds of characters.

Character Studies Rubric (Activity 2B), continued

Technical Skills	<p>In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the artist’s precise use of elements of art makes the character seem lifelike. Line thickness, direction, and repetition are used to create a sense of the character’s movement in the action studies.</p>	<p>Studies include at least four different poses and four different expressions.</p> <p>The proportions of the character’s body are accurate and appropriate in all poses.</p> <p>The artist effectively used elements of art and the conventions of animation to create accurate and vivid studies of the character.</p> <p>The poses use shapes that balance the character in ways appropriate to his or her physical character traits (e.g., demonstrating heaviness in the stomach, chest, or rear; indicating specific postures).</p>	<p>Studies include three or fewer poses and/or expressions.</p> <p>The proportions of the character’s body may be inaccurate or inappropriate for the character in one or two poses.</p> <p>The artist attempted to use elements of art but did not do so effectively.</p> <p>The artist attempted to use shape and balance to create a believable character but did not do so effectively in all poses.</p> <p>The expression studies need more facial details to convey specific character traits.</p>	<p>Studies include two or fewer poses and/or expressions.</p> <p>The proportions of the character’s body are inaccurate or inappropriate for the character in some or all views.</p> <p>The use of elements of art is not evident or effective in all the drawings.</p> <p>The expression and/or action studies are so vague and general that they could represent many characters rather than a specific one.</p>
Craftsmanship	<p>A great deal of time and effort went into the drawings.</p> <p>The artist went through multiple drafts or attempts to reach this level of skill.</p>	<p>An acceptable amount of time and effort went into the drawings.</p> <p>The artist went through at least one practice attempt or draft before producing the final product.</p>	<p>The drawings need more time and attention in order to meet the standard.</p>	<p>The drawings appear to be rushed and sloppy and/or are incomplete.</p>
Student Self-Evaluation				
Teacher Evaluation				

Maquette Rubric (Activity 3B.3)

	4—Advanced	3—Meets the Standard	2—Approaches the Standard	1—Does Not Meet the Standard
Technical Skills	In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the artist’s attention to detail results in a character who seems lifelike and conveys subtle emotional traits.	The maquette is an accurate 3-D representation of the 2-D character. The proportions of the character’s body are accurate and appropriate from all directions.	The proportions of the character’s body may be inaccurate or inappropriate for the character in one or more ways.	The proportions of the character’s body are inaccurate or inappropriate in comparison to the 2-D drawings.
Craftsman-ship	A great deal of time and effort went into the sculpture. The artist went through multiple drafts or attempts to reach this level of skill.	An acceptable amount of time and effort went into the sculpture. The artist went through at least one practice attempt or draft before producing the final product.	The sculpture needs more time and attention in order to meet the standard.	The sculpture appears to be rushed and sloppy and/or is incomplete.
Student Self-Evaluation				
Teacher Evaluation				

Flipbook Rubric (Activity 4A.2)

	4—Advanced	3—Meets the Standard	2—Approaches the Standard	1—Does Not Meet the Standard
Expressive Content	In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the artist’s attention to detail results in a character who conveys a range of emotions.	The artist’s attention to detail results in a character with a well-defined personality that matches the established character design. The position of the character’s torso and limbs indicates gestures and movement appropriate to the character.	The movement or gestures of the character are so general or vague that they could represent many characters’ personalities.	The drawings in the flipbook do not indicate any traits specific to a particular character. It does not appear that an attempt was made to make the drawings representative of the established character design.
Technical Skills	In addition to the qualities of the “3” level, the artist’s precise use of elements of art makes the character seem especially believable. Line thickness, direction, and repetition are used to create a sense of the character’s subtle movements.	The flipbook clearly depicts a character completing an action. The flipbook contains enough accurate and well-sequenced drawings (closely related in terms of character gesture and position) so that the viewer experiences action that is clear and smooth.	The flipbook starts with the character taking an action, but the action is not completed or it is not clear what action the character is doing.	The drawings in the flipbook are not sequenced in a way that creates visible or logical movement.
Craftsmanship	A great deal of time and effort went into the flipbook. The artist went through multiple drafts or attempts to reach this level of skill.	An acceptable amount of time and effort went into the flipbook. The artist went through at least one practice attempt or draft before producing the final product.	The flipbook needs more time and attention in order to meet the standard.	The flipbook appears to be rushed and sloppy and/or is incomplete.
Student Self-Evaluation				
Teacher Evaluation				

Differentiation Strategies

If you are working with English language learners or students who have difficulty reading, you may need to spend additional time during the unit discussing and defining unfamiliar terms. These terms may include the vocabulary words defined in the unit and additional words or phrases used in the student handouts (see Words from Student Handouts, below). For additional differentiation strategies, see *Foundations in Visual Arts Supplement: English Language Learner Instructional Strategies*.

Word Walls

When thoughtfully used, Word Walls can be a powerful visual aid for all students trying to master new vocabulary. A Word Wall is simply a display of frequently used or content-specific vocabulary words on large cards attached to a designated location in the room where all students can see them. For more information about Word Walls, see the Curriculum Supplement for *Unit 1: Getting to Know You*.

Words from Student Handouts

The following words used on student handouts may need to be defined and their meanings reinforced for some students. (These words appear in addition to the vocabulary words defined in the unit.) You can use the Word Wall strategy or other literacy strategies (e.g., those suggested by specialists at your school or identified through research) to support students as necessary.

Handout 1: Unit 5 Overview

- Compelling
- Consistently
- Converting
- Crucial
- Cues
- Preliminary
- Sculpting

Handout 2: Character Trait Sheet

- Adornments
- Clumsily
- Withdrawn

Handout 3: Unit 5 Project Description

- Beloved
- Crucial
- Episode
- Pranks
- Preliminary
- Prim
- Reserved

Assessment Checklist 1: Unit 5 Project

- Conventions
- Exaggerated
- Gesture
- Incorporates
- Perseverance
- Poses
- Profile

Handout 4: Your Journal Assignments

- Sequel



Handout 5: Character Description Worksheet

- Humanoid
- Inanimate
- Inhabits

Handout 6: Unit 5 Career Information

- Alter
- Anatomy
- Certification
- Emerge
- Manipulated
- Palette
- Portraiture

Handout 7: AME Career Research Project

- Entry-level position
- Perspective
- Range

Handout 8: Interviewing Techniques

- Arranged
- Logical
- Timeframe

Handout 9: Forms of Animation

- Deliberately
- Illusion
- Meticulous
- Stray
- Variables

Handout 10: Researching Animation Styles

- Futuristic

Handout 11: Analyzing Sculpture

- Expressionistic
- Incorporated
- Posture

Handout 12: Art Show! Project Description

- Affiliated
- Alternative
- Auction
- Diagram
- Exhibition
- Fundraiser
- Install
- Interactive
- Negotiate
- Promotional
- Reception
- Scaled

Handout 14: Space Preparation Team

- Accessibility
- Allocate
- Equipment
- Pedestals

Handout 15: Promotional Materials Team

- Contribute

Handout 16: Public Relations Team

- Formal
- Submission

Handout 17: Money Management Team

- Expenditures

Handout 18: Exhibition Timeline

- Determine
- Initial

