CHAPTER 2

Inquiry Into Drawing

- *Of what basic elements are images comprised?*

- *How does someone become better at drawing?*

- *How can I engage learners in more complex literacy practices through knowledge about drawing?*

- *How is drawing important to the teaching of the English language arts?*

Self-Identity and Art: A Teacher's Story
by Allen Koshewa

Lumbering down the hallway, with his oversized head, freakish haircut, and black overcoat, Jonathan at first resembled Frankenstein. Upon closer look, he did not look so ghoulish, but both Jonathan and the tall gaunt mother at his side looked glum. They seemed lost, and since the school day had ended two hours earlier and few teachers were around, I approached them.

"May I help you?" I asked, and was informed that they had just moved into the neighborhood and were looking around the school. I showed the two of them around and ascertained that Jonathan wouldn't register until August, since it was the last week of the school year. During the tour, Jonathan spoke as little as possible and avoided eye contact. His mother, on the other hand, babbled nervously, and her anxious anticipation of hypothetical problems for the school year ahead did not augur well.

Over two months later, while preparing for the new school year, I noticed that a Jonathan was on my fifth-grade class list and wondered if it would be the same child. My answer came on the first day of school when I again spotted the trudging walk and big black overcoat, as out of season in September as it had been in June.

"Jonathan!" I yelled down the hall. "You're in my class!" Months later, I learned from Jonathan's mother that my indiscreet announcement had been a good thing, as Jonathan had told his mother that same day I'd remembered his name and, for the first time, he had responded positively to a teacher.

As the school year began, Jonathan's responses to me didn't seem positive, however. One-word grunts usually served as answers to questions, Jonathan's participation in group work was minimal, and he never volunteered to speak in front of the group. He did, however, follow directions and, for the most part, get his work done. For weeks I searched in vain for a spark of interest, a flash of talent, or a measure of accomplishment, but Jonathan was usually resistant or lethargic. I began to notice his classmates giving up after earnest efforts to include him in group activities, as well.

About a week after meeting with his parents—who displayed obvious tension while we discussed Jonathan's behavior—I noticed Jonathan's attempt to use a cross-hatching technique to shade in a drawing. I had already noticed Jonathan's engagement in our "blind drawing" activity, and his splendid

freehand drawing of a Picasso figure had earned him several compliments from classmates. Now I suddenly realized that Jonathan not only loved art, but was committed to exploring it. I vowed to introduce more art techniques during my weekly art lessons, despite my weak background in art. I researched books on drawing, composition, and color. I bought more art materials and began introducing media I hadn't used in teaching before, such as clay and pastels. I established an "artist of the week" bulletin board that students helped research and create. Art became a favorite subject of nearly all the students, and when Jonathan grudgingly gave me permission to use his artwork as examples, I could tell he was actually pleased I'd noticed his deft application of concepts I'd introduced.

Jonathan's success in art gradually brought him out of his shell. I'm sure that other factors influenced his emergence as a salient, contributing class member, but I am convinced that nurturing Jonathan's passion for art and my public recognition of his explorations provided the most significant boon to his success. Soon, many class members asked Jonathan to draw for them, or consulted him when encountering roadblocks in their own artwork. By the end of the school year, Jonathan had become more responsible, more interactive, and more confident.

A year after Jonathan left fifth grade for middle school, I became the co-editor of a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) professional journal. It occurred to me that I could perhaps commission Jonathan to design the first cover. I phoned to speak to Jonathan and his parents about my idea.

"Bert," I said when his father answered the phone. Our numerous conversations during Jonathan's fifth-grade school year had resulted in our first-name relationship. "I have a question for you: Is Jonathan still pursuing art?"

"Is he still pursuing art?" he answered. "You should see him! His drawings are fantastic and he's always doing extra art projects for school. His artwork is great!"

Jonathan's subsequent drawing for the NCTE journal, a tongue-in-cheek interpretation of literacy mandates (see Figure 2.1), was perfect and received kudos in its published form. More importantly, in his father's eyes, Jonathan was OK. In fact, he was even more than OK: He was an artist.
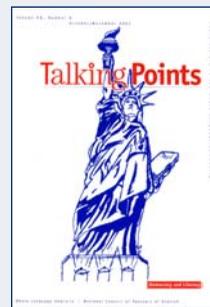
Figure 2.1 *Jonathan's drawing for journal cover. Copyright 2002, National Council of Teachers of English. Reprinted with permission.*
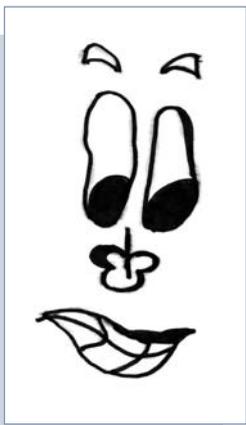
Like a magician, an artist uses tricks to convince us of the reality of his or her creations. Artists want the viewer to envision a world that may or may not have been seen before. In some ways, artists want us to reconsider what we already know as art and view it in new ways. Allen Koshewa's story tells us of his insight and diligence in searching for just the right connection that makes students like Jonathan engage in life and learning. Jonathan's life, at best, seemed challenging, yet his exploration into drawing, using techniques that he learned on his own and those which Allen introduced, enabled him to find that niché, that inquiry, that continues to drive his interest in school and life today. Inspired by students like Jonathan, Allen began to inquire into the arts more passionately because he knew they were important to his students. Rather than leave them with few or no strategies for making art, Allen brought in ideas, books, media, and techniques to support artistic growth in his students.

From childhood we have used pencils to scribble, make notes, and record our responses to things that we have seen, heard, and imagined. Pencils offer the most direct, and the most versatile, means of allowing our thoughts to flow from the mind through the fingertips to a sheet of paper. We often see our students doodle or create colorful and energetic images on their folders and notebooks.

Figure 2.2 *Sixth-grade student doodle.*

The student who doodled Figure 2.2 is playing with shape, eye position, and open forms for the nose, mouth, and ears. Such play demonstrates a student's interest in and desire to draw. However, as students get older, they hesitate to share their visual expressions in ELA classes often because their art knowledge is self-taught, and they are embarrassed by the visual meanings they are able to construct. But, when given short and quick art strategy lessons, students will be able to express the meanings they desire and share these meanings willingly.

For example, Yadira Gonzalez invited me in to present a lesson on drawing to her freshman reading class, then work with the students as they visually interpreted one of the main characters from a novel they were reading independently. José had chosen to draw Alice from *Go Ask Alice* (Anonymous, 1998), and I had to coax him into showing me his drawing. The facial and bodily features in José's initial drawing were out of proportion, from high placement of the eyes to the thin cylindrical arms. He told me that he wanted to show Alice during the time that she was using drugs and was hardened by street life. Seated next to José, I demonstrated a short five-minute strategy lesson on drawing curved and angled lines, especially with eyebrows and eyes. I asked him to tell me what he saw and how he interpreted these two line shapes. The angled lines, to José, seemed to show anger, while curved lines were softer. José now

wanted to edit his initial image to reflect these changes. He erased the facial features, and redrew Alice's eyes in a diamond shape, with pupils that looked directly at the viewer (see Figure 2.3). José then called Ms. Gonzalez over and proudly showed her his visual revision of Alice.

Many students (and adults) become frustrated at their lack of expertise in drawing. They hold up their artwork very briefly or hide it. As teachers, we want to encourage and support students as they create a range of expressions–drawn, written, or performed. Furthermore, we want to challenge students not only to respond to texts through art, but to think through and interpret through visual expressions. In this chapter, you will learn to read art elements and principles associated with drawing, a medium through which many ELA students share what

Figure 2.3 *Jose's drawing of Alice.*

they know or understand about a written text. Additionally, you will learn five basic drawing techniques to help you artistically represent meaning more realistically. You will learn to draw and practice techniques in the elements of shape, contour line drawings, basic shapes, 3-D drawing, and figure drawing–all in the context of the English language arts. While you read this chapter, I hope you will find the artist within you who can support students like José and Jonathan in their desire to visually represent their interpretations more accurately.

Paper and Drawing Materials

The materials that you will need for working through demonstrations in this chapter include different types of paper, pencils, charcoal, chalk, drawing paper, and colored markers. Various types of sketch paper can be found in art stores, office supply stores, and discount superstores. Different papers have different *grips* and allow various textures to emerge. All drawing materials are made of particles of color, or *pigment*, bound together with a different kind of gum, to perform different jobs. Graphite pencils are the basic drawing implement, and you can produce all sorts of marks with a few pencils. The pencil that you are most familiar is the HB #2, perhaps the most common tool in school. This pencil works great for most purposes, in particular in showing *gradation*, or the shades from black to near white. David Macaulay and Tom Feelings, Caldecott Award–winning artists, use gradation and line to create realistic depth and detail. *Cathedral* (1981), *Motel of the Mysteries* (1979), *City* (1983), and *Pyramid* (1982) provide wonderful examples of how Macaulay uses these techniques to illustrate buildings of the past, while *The Middle Passage* (1995) or *Jambo Means Hello* (1974) show the powerful, dream-like drawings Feelings creates.
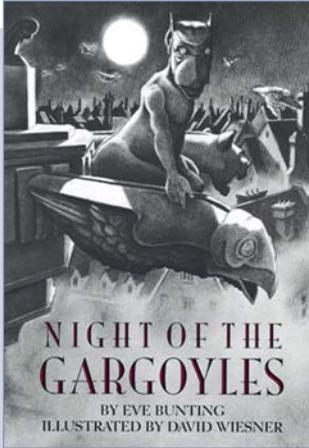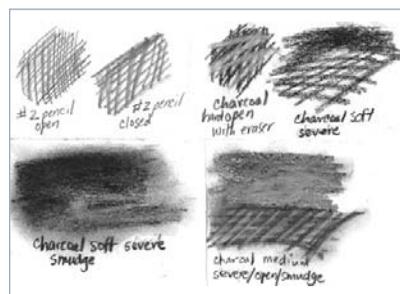
Figure 2.4 *Wiesner's charcoal illustration,* Night of the Gargoyles *cover. Copyright 1999, Clarion Books. Reprinted with permission.*

There are a variety of other drawing tools that will support your inquiry into art. Colored pencils are one of the most basic coloring tools. Artist Stephen Gammell, who was not formally trained in art, started out with lots of paper and pencils to develop his own talent at using color. *Song and Dance Man* (Ackerman, 1992) is illustrated using a combination of pencils and watercolor. Charcoal, another favorite drawing tool of many students and artists, comes in both black and white. It is available in sticks of varying thickness or in pencil form. David Wiesner's striking charcoal illustrations in *Night of the Gargoyles* (Bunting, 1999; see Figure 2.4) provide a wonderful example of this medium and capture the immense heaviness of the stone figures and their gloomy malevolence as they come to life during the night. Another important drawing tool, the eraser, comes in many different varieties and can be used to remove graphite as well as to add texture or create mood through smudging. Ordinary pencil erasers will work fine for the graphite pencils. For chalk or charcoal drawing, it is best to use a kneaded eraser, a soft gray eraser that you can squeeze like clay into any shape you want.

Practice Playing With Pencil

In your sketchbook, use several different pencils, graphite and/or colored, or charcoal, and play with gradation (see Figure 2.5 for an example). Notice what happens when you press and move the pencil firmly and then softly against the paper. Notice how the gradation, or shading of black to gray, changes. Now, explore line and pencil by cross-hatching, or criss-crossing lines to build pattern and texture. Hold the pencil at an open angle (pencil tip touches paper) and then at a severe angle (pencil close to paper). Notice how the intensity of shading changes with each decision you make. Now, with a tissue, soft cloth, or your finger, try smudging the graphite. Notice how much softer the effect becomes. Bang

Figure 2.5 *Drawing techniques, gradation.*

(2000) writes that lines invoke emotions: What emotions are invoked when thick lines are made? Thin lines? Tight lines and loose lines? Erased lines? Smudged lines? Jot these interpretations of line next to your own textures.

Figure 2.6 is a line drawing of a teapot drawn by Atlanta, Georgia, teacher Bill Buckner. Notice how the lines take shape, and how he draws two types of lines: tight and close together, and loose and far apart. Notice also how he cross-hatches in three distinct places: at the bottom, to define the foot of the teapot; at the base of the spout and up the side of spout; and at the top and bottom of the handle, where it is attached to the teapot. Cross-hatching is often used to separate one part from another and to give shape and depth.

Figure 2.6 *Teapot using lines, drawn by Bill Buckner.*

Hogrogian's picture book, *Always Room for One More* (Leodhas, 1965), provides a lovely example of using cross-hatching in black-and-white illustrations, and blending some color to create interest and emotion. Brian Selznick also effectively uses pencil to illustrate the stories of Amelia Earhart and Eleanor Roosevelt in *Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride* (Muñoz Ryan, 1999). ■

Building Knowledge of Composition and Line

Molly Bang (see www.mollybang.com/picture.html) explains the important relationship between disciplinary knowledge—how elements in a picture relate—and practice with the discipline's tools—the structural elements and how they inform interpretation and production of visual images:

> I tried to figure out what elements were making the pictures scarier or less scary, tried to figure out how all the elements related to each other. Gradually, I began to understand something about how the structural elements of pictures affect our emotions. (n.p.)

The study of how meaning is made across semiotic systems, like art and language, will help you and your students read and interpret, as well as create, messages from a number of media sources (political cartoons, advertisements, paintings, and drawings, and so on). In this section, you will learn to read, interpret, and create your own compositions.

Composition

Composition is basic to all productions of meaning whether they be in writing, speech-making, art, or music; people compose pieces. Composition in art and other semiotic systems is about rearranging elements and ordering them in a way that seems more balanced and harmonious. Holistic readings of art provide a foundation from which learners can apply ELA concepts of understanding narratives, writing process, and analysis.

Practice Creating and Reading Composition

Choose and arrange five small objects in your house or in your classroom that you feel might go well together in a picture. Add one or more to see how the composition changes. Take away one or two. How does the composition change?

Arrange them in different ways by height, space, color, and shape. Notice the differences in each of the arrangements. Figure 2.7 shows *still life* compositions, one by Paul Cezanne (left) and one formerly attributed to Vincent van Gogh (right). What is the "feel" that you get for each painting?

Figure 2.7 Still life paintings: Apples, Peaches, Pears, and Grapes *(Paul Cezanne, 1879-1880), State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia;* Still Life with Mackerels, Lemons and Tomatoes *(formerly attributed to Vincent van Gogh, 1886), The Oskar Reinhart Collection "Am Römerholz," Winterthur, Switzerland. Reprinted with permission.*

Which one do you like better? What qualities of one appeal to you more than the other? Think about what you like about the arrangement and the spacing. These are elements associated with one's *aesthetic*, or pleasure when viewing spaces, images, and objects. ■

Reading Line and Composition in Students' Visual Texts

Artists use various types of line to evoke emotions. Read Figure 2.8 (Cowan, 2001b): What feeling do you get when you read this composition? How does this young artist achieve this response? Now, look specifically at the types of lines he uses. What effects does he achieve? Is he successful at conveying the meaning of the word *militant*?

Figure 2.8 Fifth grader's pencil drawing of militant.

In Kay Cowan's ELA classes, students visually compose to support their study of descriptive language. Cowan teaches her students to read techniques that artists use to convey emotion and intention. Students learn that thick black lines direct viewers' attention, and the shape of the line informs interpretation. Thick straight or angular lines convey anger, tension, frustration, and fear, while curved lines are more organic and soft and evoke a friendlier emotion. Read Figure 2.8 again: Notice this student's use of thick, inwardly turned triangular lines for the eyebrows, and a curved, thick line on the right side of the face to represent a scar. Cross-hatched lines in the hair and explosion in the background add to the interest and reality to this image. The curved lines in the smile that end in a sharp angle and the curved lines at the top of composition and in the face indicate this student's use of visual

irony. At once, we understand that this figure is full of anger–but it is just this anger in which he finds some pleasure and comfort. This young artist uses art to convey an understanding of irony, both visually and linguistically, and offers insight on the complexity of such understanding. Knowledge of line enables learners to read images in picture books, anthologies, and popular culture texts. Furthermore, they can make deliberate and informed choices about the effects of line when creating their own representations, and how they want their viewers to interpret their characters or compositions.

Building Knowledge of Elements of Drawing

I have come to learn in my work with ELA students of all ages that nearly all of them want to know how to draw realistically. To do so, they must understand that, like language, art has a graphic cueing system, an "alphabet" of basic elements that compose all images (Albers, 2006c). When students recognize the alphabet of drawing and identify the elements in images, they will use this concept as they draw their own images.

There are five basic elements that make up all objects: dot, line, circle, curve, and angle (see Figure 2.9). Practice drawing these elements in your sketchbook to get a feel for them.
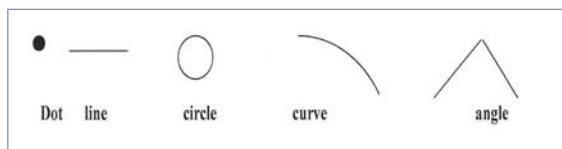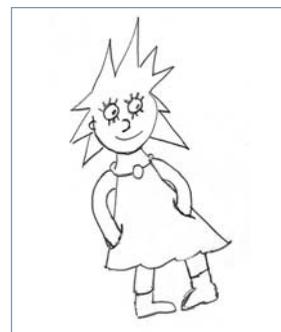

Figure 2.9 Basic elements of drawing.

Reading Elements of Drawing

Cartoon characters in comics or picture books offer wonderful examples of using basic elements of drawing to create characters. Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck, the popular television show *The Simpsons*, and Japanese anime cartoons often influence students' own cartoon stories. Review Figure P.1 in the preface (see page xiv): What basic elements of drawing do you notice? What do you think these elements say about this female character?

Let's look at a female character that a teacher created for a fictional narrative (see Figure 2.10). Notice how this teacher uses the basic elements of drawing–dots, circles, curves, angles, and lines–to create this character. Try drawing this character's portrait in your sketchbook. Get a good feel for each of the elements. What did you notice about your own ability to draw this figure? Now, using these basic elements create a portrait of your own original character. Reflect upon this exercise in your sketchbook next to your drawn figure.

Figure 2.10 Teacher's female cartoon character.

Illustrators of picture books offer strong examples for study when one is learning to read the basic elements of drawing. Bahti illustrated the deities known as Kokopellis and birds on the cover of *When Clay Sings* (Baylor, 1987) predominantly with curved lines that move upward and curl into a wave. Curves also appear on the tops of the birds' heads, they make the shape of the birds' bodies and beaks, and they shape the Kokopellis' bodies and hair. According to Bang (2000), curved lines embrace us and protect us. We associate curved surfaces with nature such as hills, waves in water, and the shape of mothers' bodies. Figure 2.11 shows a high school student's use of curved lines to express Romeo's extreme grief when he encounters whom he believes is his dead Juliet. Notice how these curved lines embrace readers and pull us into Romeo's grief.

Figure 2.11 *High school student's use of elements of drawing, Romeo.*

In *Anansi the Spider* (1986), McDermott uses the same elements in the cover design, but these elements operate quite differently. McDermott draws thick black diagonal lines. When artists use thick black lines, they often intend to create a sense of foreboding and gloom, and when drawn diagonally, these lines are dynamic because they imply movement (Bang, 2000). McDermott's spider could be menacing, but he uses bright yellow circles and bright blue angles for the eyes, as well as red angled lines for the lips, moving upward—all of which combine to make this spider inviting. Note Figure 2.12, drawn by a fifth-grade girl. Her spider could be frightening, but she chooses to draw curved lines for the arachnid's legs, swirls of lines for the body, and circular eyes to generate a friendlier image. Encouraging students to read the basic elements in illustrators' images supports prediction about the story. What does the illustrator intend with his or her lines? Shapes? Colors? Such discussions support students' choices when they draw their own illustrations, as well. Students begin to build knowledge about art as a discipline, and they begin to read and create visual texts with intention.

Figure 2.12 *Fifth grader's use of elements of drawing, spider.*

Practice Reading Basic Elements of Drawing

Gather several picture books, illustrations, textbooks, or other artworks that you have in your home or classroom. Look for and read the relationships among the elements of drawing. Reflect on the overall message that each artist conveys through these elements: Does the artist's interpretation relate to your own? To the author's? This practice will build your confidence in reading these basic elements. ∎

Practice Drawing Basic Elements of Drawing

In this exercise, you will practice drawing a cartoon of a lion in a setting, then generate ideas for a short narrative. Before you begin drawing, think about your image of lions: What do they look like? How are female lions physically different from males? Cubs? In what settings do you see them? Gather several photos or illustrations of lions. What basic elements can be seen in the figure of a lion? Its environment? If there is a mountain in the setting, what elements seem appropriate to represent it? Angles? Curves? These decisions will depend on your experience with mountains. What element would you use for the ground? A line? A curve? A combination of both? What you are doing by thinking about these images is creating a context for the lion; this will later become part of your *composition*, or what the image is about.

Figure 2.13a ELA teacher's lion in composition using elements of shape.

Now look at Figures 2.13a and 2.13b, cartoon lions drawn by ELA teachers in an arts-based literacy seminar. Notice the elements that make up each drawing, think about how you will draw your lion, and move it into a composition. Start with the eyes. Place two dots where you think the lion's eyes will be in this setting. Next, place circles around the eyes. Notice how these two elements in relation take on meaning. Now, draw a straight line downward between the eyes to create the bridge of the lion's nose. Next, make a triangle for the nose. Draw one more straight line down from the triangle, and add two curved lines that move upward to delineate the upper part of the mouth. Draw a big circle around all these elements to frame the lion's head. To add details, draw curved lines for the eyebrows.

Figure 2.13b Another ELA teacher's lion in composition using elements of shape.

Next, add the body by drawing a long rectangle and placing it along the right or left side of the head. Draw four shorter rectangles for the legs. Add two parallel, curved lines for the tail. Depending on the attitude of your lion, the tail can be up or down. To draw the tuft of hair for the tail and the lion's toes, draw curved lines. Now, draw curved lines that move around the lion's head for his mane, and add two curved lines for the ears (one is inside the other). Voilà! You have just drawn a lion! Using the elements of shape, draw the setting for your lion.

Read and study closely Figures 2.13a and 2.13b once more: How have these artists used elements of drawing to create a particular mood? Which is richer in detail? Which do you like more? Continue to work on your own lion drawing, and fill in as much white space as possible using the basic elements. Draft a story in

which this lion might exist. How does your illustration help you consider the elements of narrative writing: who, what, where, when, why, and how of this story? How does your story encourage you to consider adding more elements to your illustration? Writing and drawing are reciprocal in the composition process. Reflect upon this reciprocity and the composition process in your sketchbook. ■

Contour Drawing: Seeing Objects in Lines

Can you imagine what life would be like without textures, colors, and shapes? We would have a very different world, and our imaginations would likely be very
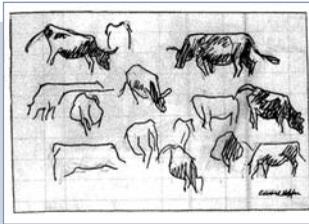
Figure 2.14 Edward Hopper, contour line drawings. Reprinted with permission, Whitney Museum of American Art.

strange! When a person begins to draw, one of the best ways to look at objects is to see nothing but the outside lines, the *contour* of the object. Paul Klee, a Swiss painter, once told his students, "Take a walk with a line" (MacMillan, 2000, p. 1361). He wanted them to explore what could be done with simple line drawings, with little attention to texture, depth, shadow, or other aspects that make a drawing come alive. Pablo Picasso did a number of *contour line drawings*, or simple, continuous line drawings, of animals, birds, and people. Edward Hopper (Lyons, 1997, p. 103) also did a series, or a *study*, of cows using contour lines (shown in Figure 2.14).

How does Hopper capture the essence of cows? Notice how he uses line sparingly, yet captures the essence of cows in different positions and perspectives.

   Contour drawing, or drawing in one continuous line, helps an artist *look* at the outside lines of an object and teaches the viewer to *see*. Every object in our world has an outline, so contour lines are all around us. This looking and seeing is part of what artists do when they work with contour lines. They look at the
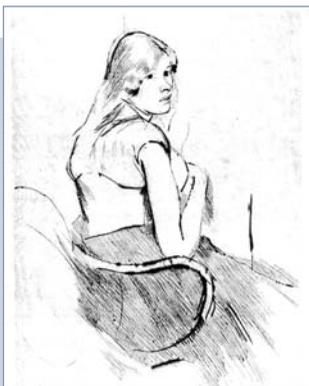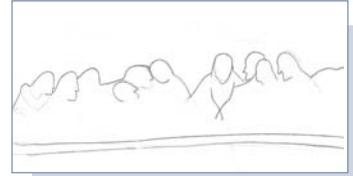

Figure 2.15 Mary Cassatt, line drawing. Reprinted with permission, Spencer Museum of Art.

outside lines and imagine the details—just like when we look up at clouds and see objects, or read a floor plan of a dream home, or develop outlines on the whiteboard or overhead transparency to explain ideas. Consider simple contour line drawings such as Charles Schulz's endearing characters of Snoopy, Charlie Brown, or Lucy, or more complicated contour line drawings such as Mary Cassatt's *Italian Girl* (see Figure 2.15). Contour drawing can help to reveal humor, moods, and ideas, especially with the use of *blind contour drawing* in which the artist does not look at her or his paper when drawing the outline of an object. Working with contour line drawings allows a learner to imagine possibilities through line and shape.

Reading Contour Lines

When you read the contour drawing in Figure 2.16, what do you see? You may have immediately recognized this as the outline of da Vinci's *The Last Supper*. When an outline is drawn, your brain always attempts to fill in details left out. Harste (1994) says that making meaning is just human nature. The reason that you are able to make sense of this

Figure 2.16 Contour drawing, The Last Supper.

line drawing is that you have experience with this painting, whether it be through the bestselling novel *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2003); your knowledge of art history; a visit to Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy, where this painting resides; or your knowledge of Christianity.

Pablo Picasso appreciated works that felt unfinished; for him, they were on fire: "Unfinished, a picture remains alive, dangerous. A finished work is a dead work, killed" (Picasso, cited in Ashton, 1972, p. 38). Picasso's sketchbook was filled with many contour line drawings of images that he wanted to recast in painting or clay (see www.picasso.com/gallery/index.html for examples). Like Picasso, our students often doodle using contour lines in their notebooks. As teachers, we may misinterpret these doodles as students' inattention to class discussions or as merely insignificant sketches. However, doodles often reveal students' visual imaginings and can be likened to contour line images drawn by Picasso or Hopper. Through their doodles, students visually brainstorm and capture the essence of a story, the imagined characters, and the flow of events. Sometimes, as Cowan (2001b) found in her study, writing was too slow for her students, and they often doodled or did *quick draws*, or short uninterrupted drawings, as part of the composing process. Figure 2.17 shows a student's simple but elegant contour drawing of a giraffe. This illustration accompanied a story that she wrote on African animals and the need to preserve grasslands.
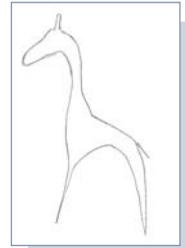
Figure 2.17 Student's contour drawing of giraffe.

Practice Blind Contour Drawing–Common Objects

In this exercise, you will create a blind contour drawing of a common object and focus only on the outline or the shape of the object. Blind contour drawing requires concentration and should be done quite slowly and deliberately as you observe and draw. Look at the blind contour drawings of a banana and a pear in Figure 2.18. These drawings are not realistic, but outlines that suggest these objects. The goal of this exercise is to look closely at the outline of an object–really study it–and without looking

Figure 2.18 Blind contour drawings of a banana and a pear.

down at your paper, draw it. You are learning to see the essence of objects. Before you draw, place an object on a table in front of you. Open up your sketchbook and place your pencil on the paper, but do not look down at your paper as you draw the object's contour lines; focus only on the outside lines of the object. Let your brain guide your eye and hand. ■

Practice Blind Contour Drawing—People

As I mentioned earlier, blind contour drawings can be humorous, especially when the drawing is representative of people you know and care about! In this exercise,

Figure 2.19 Blind contour drawings of friends in a photograph.

create a blind contour of your friends (this is a favorite art engagement of students). You can use a photograph, unless you want to use your friends as models on the sly. Place your pencil on your paper, and without looking down, force your eyes and brain to help you draw the outlines of your friends. (See Figure 2.19 for an example.) When you are finished, reflect upon your drawing. Notice how the blind contour drawing often looks more like the composition of the photo or group of friends than you anticipated. Your brain fills in many of the details, and you recognize the people in the drawing. ■

Practice Contour Line Drawing

Now do contour line drawings of the same objects and people. Study the outlines of the objects or people in your blind contour drawings, look down at your paper, and draw, transferring your gaze between the objects or people and your drawing. Did you notice a difference in how you drew your lines? Was this technique more comfortable than blind contour drawing? Which was more humorous? Contour line drawing encourages attention to the line of an object, which often transfers into other work. When you see contour line drawings, you learn to fill in details that may not be apparent, and learn to infer aspects of a text that are not visibly noticeable.

Figure 2.20 Contour line drawings: Self-portrait, John Lennon, student.

Once you are comfortable with contour line drawing, draw contour line sketches of famous images and faces, or faces of your students. Figure 2.20 shows three contour

line drawings, one a self-portrait and the second of John Lennon (which later became a study for a vase that I made and painted), and one drawn by Bill Buckner of one of his students.

Many books covers, such as Creech's *Love That Dog* (2003), Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1999), and Silverstein's *The Giving Tree* (1964) and *Where the Sidewalk Ends* (2004), are illustrated with contour line drawings. Line drawings immediately invite readers and viewers to imagine and wonder about the characters, people, animals, and objects and ask, "What do these line drawings suggest about this text?" "Why a line drawing on the cover of *Love That Dog* instead of a painting or a photograph?" Line drawings may suggest simplicity, whether it be in the theme, moral, or in the events in a character's life. In *The Glass Menagerie*, the contour line drawings on the cover position the reader of this play to consider the frailty of both the glass figurines, the glass menagerie, and the emotional lives of the characters. Engaging students in conversations about the type of illustrations, such as contour line drawings, can be likened to a discussion of the significance of the title of a literary work and may add to the depth of the overall analysis of the work. ■

Basic Shapes and Forms

Shapes and forms are all around us. Although the terms are often used interchangeably, shapes and forms are quite different. A triangle is an example of a *shape*; it is flat and two-dimensional (2-D). It has height and width, but not depth. A prism is an example of a *form*; it has height, width, and depth, which makes it three-dimensional (3-D).
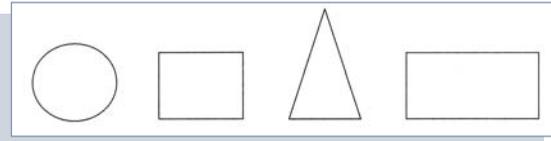
Compare the images in Figure 2.21: The left-hand image shows a stylized shape, a 2-D autobiographical representation created by Carolyn, an elementary teacher; the right-hand image shows a 3-D form, a papier-mâché representation of Carolyn, complete with accessories. The 3-D image allows Carolyn to work more completely with details. Consider how shapes and forms are metaphors for such ELA instruction concepts as summary and interpretation. Shapes contain basic information, equivalent to summaries of stories, while forms contain

Figure 2.21 *Shape and form in autobiographical artworks.*

more details and encourage rich interpretation. The writing adage "Show, don't tell" may become more comprehensible for students when they learn about the distinction between shape and form.

Four Basic Shapes

There are four basic shapes that make up nearly all things that we see in world: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle (see Figure 2.22). Look around the room in which you are sitting and notice that the common objects that surround you are indeed made up of these shapes. Basic shapes are not often true shapes. That is, sometimes the circle becomes an oval, or the triangle is rounded, or the square and rectangle do not have sides that are equal. An object may comprise several shapes. For instance, look at your couch. What shapes do you see? Rectangular seats? Arms in the shape of circles?

**Figure 2.22** *Four basic shapes: circle, square, triangle, and rectangle.*

Similar to contour line drawings, basic shapes are outlines of an object viewed.

Shapes inform and mold our thinking. Angular shapes like squares, rectangles, and triangles are the foundations of our everyday objects: buildings, flat-screen monitors, picture frames, students' desks, etc. The sense and spirit of the clean lines of angular shapes are associated with logic, science, religion, and progress, as well as honesty, straightness, and order. We relate angularity with inorganic objects and technology. Values attached to angled images can imply technology in a positive way, as in progress, or negatively, as a source of oppression, as in clichés like "feeling boxed in."

On the other hand, basic shapes that are curved, such as circles and ovals, indicate warmth, protection, and endlessness; traditionally, circles also symbolize eternity and the heavens. We tend to see relationships in circles, as in Venn diagrams, and collaboration, as represented by expressions and symbols such as the Circle of Life, Olympic rings, or wedding rings. Look again at the objects around the rooms in your home or your classroom: What basic shapes do you see? Do these shapes represent order and logic or warmth and endlessness? Or, do you see an equal representation of both?

Reading Basic Shapes in Building Structures

Architects, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, design buildings with the intent to evoke particular feelings. Wright's design of The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, for example, has wide sweeping curves that move upward, while a house he designed in Florence, Alabama, USA, has a wide flat roof and strong angular shapes. Figure 2.23 contains images of well-known buildings from around the world. How do you read the basic shapes in these buildings? Which one(s) seem more logical, scientific, or ordered? Which one(s) feel more inviting? How do these shapes influence our interpretation of these designs? How do the rectangular shapes
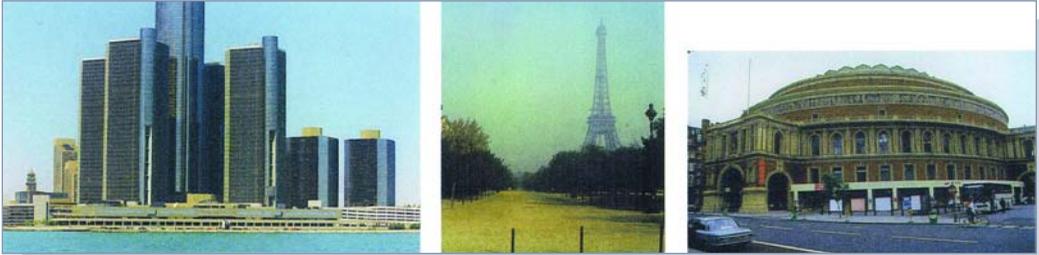
Figure 2.23 *Well-known buildings: New York City skyline; Eiffel Tower, Paris; Royal Albert Hall of Arts and Sciences, London.*

of the New York City skyline (shown in the far left photograph in Figure 2.23) represent logic, progress, and centrality? How does the triangular shape of the Eiffel Tower in Paris (shown in the center photograph in Figure 2.23) suggest logic and science? How does the circular and curved shape of the Royal Albert Hall of Arts and Sciences (shown in the far right photograph in Figure 2.23), a music venue in London, represent the organic warmth of classical music? Record your thoughts about these buildings in your sketchbook. Then, in your sketchbook, record the design of your own classroom, your school, or your campus. What shapes are the buildings? How are your desks organized? How does building design and arrangement of your classroom shape the perception we have about schooling? In his photo-picture book *Alphabet City*, Johnson (1999) invites young and old readers to consider the shapes in everyday objects. Consider introducing this book in your classroom and inviting students to study the shapes that Johnson presents, and ask them to speculate as to what these shapes or objects connote. Such an exercise invites readers to learn how shapes inform our perceptions of objects.

Reading Basic Shapes in Artworks and Illustrations

Like architects, artists also use basic shapes to draw or paint images and characters. Figure 2.24 shows three different artists' images created with basic shapes. How do these artworks make you feel? Are some more inviting than others? If so, why do you think so? Record these notes into your sketchbook.

Let's now practice reading and thinking about basic shapes in illustrations. Wiesner's cover illustration in *Night of the Gargoyles* (Bunting, 1999; see Figure 2.4 on page 24) appears to be complex, but when we look for basic shapes in the gargoyle, the image is less daunting and more achievable (see Figure 2.25).
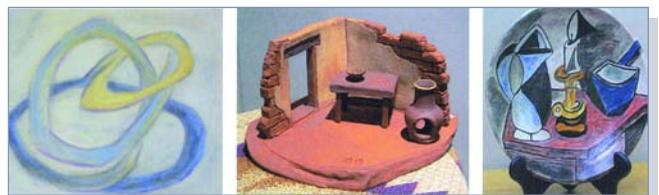

Figure 2.24 *Artists' work with basic shapes: David Robinson, Earl Baum, and Peggy Albers.*

35

Figure 2.25 *Wiesner's gargoyle sketched in basic shapes.*

Notice Wiesner's use of shapes to create interest and intrigue. For example, the bright white circular moon against the gradated shadows of the clouds, the round white penetrating eyes of the gargoyle against the dark shadows of the face, and the strong triangular shapes of the bird work together to create mood, or atmosphere. Bang (2000) suggests that various shapes, like triangles, make an image "feel scary" (p. 24), especially in conjunction with sharp lines as seen in the gargoyle's ears, nose, and buildings. Yet the strong round and curved shapes of the gargoyle's and bird's bodies and the upturned mouth work against this scariness, adding intrigue and inviting the viewer and reader into this story.

Students enjoy drawing animals and likenesses of their favorite characters; by drawing such likenesses, they bring their own interpretation to the image. When we draw from an illustration, it is helpful to first read the illustration for basic shapes, then retranslate these shapes onto the page.
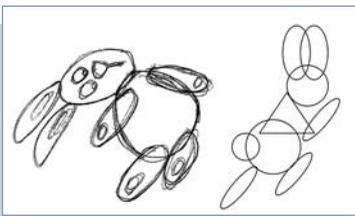
**Figure 2.26** *Two versions of a rabbit sketched in basic shapes.*

Figure 2.26 shows two drawings of well-known characters focusing on basic shapes: On the left is a hand-drawn likeness of Willems's (2004) *Knuffle Bunny* and on the right is a computer-generated version of Potter's Peter Rabbit. How do the basic shapes in the rabbit based on Willems's illustrations look and feel different than those of Potter's? The left-hand rabbit flops backwards, looks like it is carried around by a child, and is comfortable. The shapes of the right-hand rabbit are upright and appear prim and proper. Both of the characters contain ovals, yet both convey quite different meanings. In the first rabbit, the softness of the ovals, the overall curve of the rabbit, and the movement of the eye from left to right create a narrative, a story. The viewer senses that this rabbit has been carried around like a good friend for a long time. From the shapes, it is a passive object, while the second rabbit, which walks upright, is active and shows a sense of intention and purpose. What types of stories can you imagine with rabbits who have these two postures?

Practice Drawing Basic Shapes in Animals

Let's practice drawing animals—perhaps your own pet or an animal in the wild. Before you start your drawing, look for basic shapes in the two photographs of a dog and a cat presented in Figure 2.27, and convert these images to loose and free basic shapes, as in the drawings in the figure. Challenge yourself to draw these

shapes several times, exploring size. Draw these shapes small (quarter page), midsize (half page), and large (whole page). How do your drawings take on different meanings when size of the basic shapes is altered?

Now find a photo or illustration of your favorite animal and, in your sketchbook, draw it in basic shapes only; remember to draw light, loose lines at first. Reflect on your drawings: Was it difficult to see and draw the various shapes, or did you surprise yourself by drawing a likeness of this animal? Did you notice how the size of your shapes varied? This is your initial impulse to put your sense of proportion to work! ■
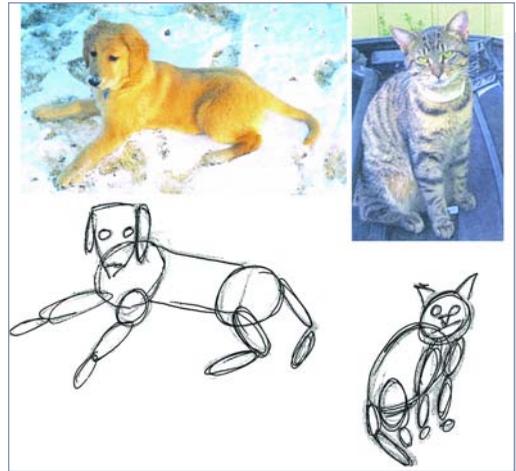
Figure 2.27 *Looking for basic shapes in photographs of animals.*

Practice Drawing a Favorite Character From a Picture Book

Picture book illustrations provide wonderful resources when working with basic shapes. One of my favorites is the Caldecott award-winning book *Olivia* (Falconer, 2000). When I draw the character of Olivia (see Figure 2.28), I first study the basic shapes that make her full image. I draw these shapes in a variety of sizes and organize them according to how I read her image. Once I draw my basic shapes, I use my knowledge of contour lines to connect the shapes and create Olivia's outline. I then use curved lines, or basic elements of drawing, to give Olivia's dress some sense of movement, and I use gradation to define the pattern in her tights. When I combine the knowledge from all three techniques, I am more able to draw a realistic image of this delightful character.

Figure 2.28 *Olivia sketched in basic shapes and contour lines, then shading and gradation.*

Find a picture book character that you really like and draw it using what you have learned about the basic elements, contour line drawing, and basic shapes. Work with a simple image at first, and once you have practiced and are satisfied with your drawing, choose one that is a bit more complicated. What are you learning about these art techniques? Is art as mystifying as you might have once thought? Record your thoughts in your sketchbook. ■

Value Scale: A Study of Light and Dark

In the last three sections, you have learned how to develop techniques for drawing more realistically. Yet our drawings remain two dimensional in their appearance. In order to create more realism in our drawings, it is necessary to know something about *value*, or the study of light and dark. Knowledge about techniques that show value will help you create the illusion of depth and move 2-D shapes into 3-D forms.

Light and dark are not merely black and white. There are countless shades or values in between. Artists use gradation to make basic shapes appear 3-D–to have

Figure 2.29 *Effects of light on value.*

height, width, and depth. The part of an object closest to the light source has the lightest value and the part furthest away has the darkest values. Notice in Figure 2.29 that the light comes from the right side of the objects pictured. Therefore, the closer a side of an object is to the light, the lighter that side will be; the further away from the light source, the darker the side is. In the figure, the right sides of the objects receive the greatest amount of light while the left sides receive little or no light, so the value graduates from light to dark and casts a black shadow behind the objects pictured.

Reading Illusion and 3-D Created With Value and Line

Artists depend on their knowledge of value and line to capture depth, and curved lines give the illusion of depth to 2-D artworks. Da Vinci was a master in creating the illusion of depth and used value to study *highlights*, or where the

Figure 2.30 *David Robinson,* Closet.

light hits strongest, and *lowlights*, or where the light hits least (for examples, visit www.visi.com/~reuteler/leonardo.html). In the piece shown in Figure 2.30, *Closet*, artist David Robinson takes an everyday scene and gives depth to his shirts, pants, and leather jacket using gradual changes in shade, or *value*. If he did not incorporate value, these clothes would appear flat and unrealistic, much like a contour line drawing. Look again at David Wiesner's cover illustration on *Night of the Gargoyles* (Bunting, 1999; see Figure 2.4 on page 24). Notice where the light source is and how Wiesner uses gradation to create highlights and lowlights to define and accent various features of the gargoyles.
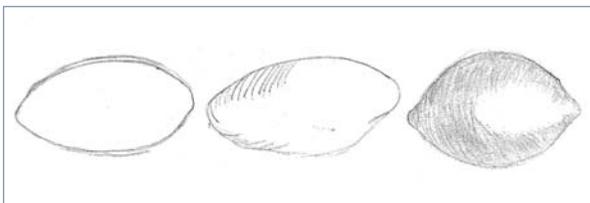
Practice Working With Value and Line

Let's practice working with value and line by drawing a common, simple object: a lemon. When you read the images of a lemon seen in Figure 2.31, consider how the light value affects interpretation. Which of these lemons is most appealing to you?

Now you will practice changing a 2-D shape to a 3-D by working with curved lines. Draw loose contour lines of a basic oval shape to create an outline of a lemon. Remove, or erase, the lines you do

Figure 2.31 *Creating the illusion of 3-D with curved lines and light source.*

not want. Let's say the light source comes from the front of the lemon. Draw short lines curved inwardly and close together towards the center on both the top and bottom of the lemon. Continue until you reach the nub on the right side of the lemon. Then layer more inwardly curved lines onto existing lines. Move these lines across the top and bottom of the fruit until the lines are less visible individually, always mindful of the light source. Now, cross-hatch lines over your curved lines to create even more depth. If you want, you can smudge or blend the lines to create a soft and warm impression. ■

Practice Creating a Still-Life Composition

Using curved lines and cross-hatching, create a still-life composition with several objects. Place a small lamp where you want the light source to be, and turn out any overhead lights so the major light comes from the lamp. Now, look at the still life, draw basic shapes, and create 3-D with curved lines and cross-hatching. As you fill in the light value, if there are areas that you want blurred or softened in your image, smudge the pencil with a tissue, your finger, or a soft cloth. After you are finished with drawing, practice other basic forms. How does practice enable you to draw more realistically? What difference do you see between your contour line drawings, and the drawings with additional curved and cross-hatched lines? Which do you prefer? ■

Practice: Revision of Favorite Character

Like writing, artworks can be revisited and revised. Return to the drawing you made of your favorite picture book character in the previous section. Look at your

character—it is probably more two-dimensional than you want it to be. Try to make it three-dimensional by adding curved lines, cross-hatched lines, and smudging. Study my drawing of Olivia again (see Figure 2.28 on page 37). Do you notice the light source? The smudging? These are aspects of the drawing that may have gone unnoticed earlier. To create an illusion of depth in Olivia's chin and underside of her dress, I used light, curved, and cross-hatched inward lines. I then smudged these lines to create a gradation that moves from light to middle gray. To create depth in Olivia's ears, I again used curved and cross-hatched lines, but I did not go to the edge of the ear, just the inside. Again, I smudged these lines together to show the distinction between the inner ear and the outer ear (which receives more light). Next, I used curved lines to create the tights and dark lines to make her legs and stomach area distinct. I then used a dark value and a light value to show Olivia's striped tights.

Take your own character drawing and play with it, and give it life and three-dimensionality as shown in my sketch of Olivia. Once you are finished, think about how both versions of your character drawing have distinct differences and inspire quite different responses. What details in your second rendition did you add that were not present in your first attempt? ■

Figure Drawing

Students and teachers with whom I have worked have a strong desire to draw the human figure more realistically—to create figures that have depth, shape, and interest. You can support this interest as you learn how to work with visual details in your own

artistic inquiry. In Figure 2.32, Vickie, a teacher of English-language learners (ELLs), draws two autobiographical images, one stylized and the other more realistic. When you read these two images, how does each reveal details about Vickie that the other does not? How do you interpret Vickie's two perceptions of herself? Students often play with exaggeration in image, yet many want to know how to draw more

Figure 2.32 *Stylized and more realistic autobiographical drawings.*

realistically. This requires knowledge of proportion, perspective, and movement.

Reading Proportion

Study Figure 2.33. The left-side image is ninth-grader Miguel's drawing of a character from a novel; the right-side image is a proportionate representation of a human form. You can immediately appreciate the creativity and the complexity of

Miquel's interpretation. However, you can also notice that something about the actual figure itself is not quite right. When compared to the proportionate image, Miguel's figure's arms appear too short, the legs too long, and the head too big. Because many ELA teachers and their students have little experience with art principles such as proportion, we are willing to accept this image and our brain recasts this image as acceptable. However, teaching students how to create more realistic drawings of human figures offers them confidence in their ability to interpret and represent characters or figures in their writing as they imagine them.
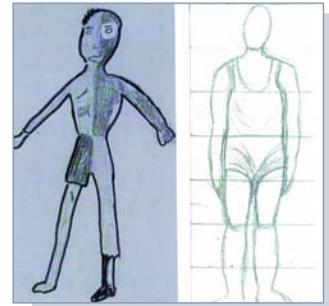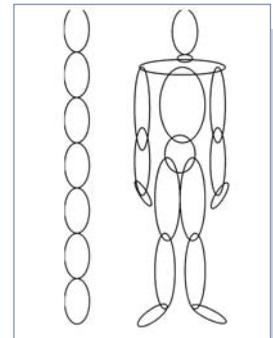

*Figure 2.33* Student's figure drawing and a figure in proportion.

One of the important aspects of drawing realistic figures is understanding *proportion*. To many artists, proportion revolves around comparing the size of one thing to another and showing different sizes as accurately as possible on any media. To support students' more accurate representation of the human figure, you need to teach them about proportion, perspective, size, and shape. Let's return to Miguel's self-portrait for a moment (see Figure 2.33). The human form is approximately seven head-lengths high, and the grid in the right-side image marks equal approximations of one head size. A common element in drawings that is often out of proportion is the length of a figure's arms. Miguel's character's arms are too short; they fall around his waist when, realistically, hands fall at the thighs. Second, realistically, shoulders are about three heads wide, but Miguel's head is slightly too large, and his shoulders are about one head wide. Interestingly, many students across ages (even adults) represent the human figure in much the same way as Miguel, so students welcome information about proportion, incorporate it into their final artworks, and develop confidence about their ability to represent the human form.

To help you conceptualize key relationships among parts of the human form, Figure 2.34 shows a proportionate drawing of a standing human figure. It's simplest to measure body parts in relation to the head. Here are some interesting relationships to keep in mind when drawing human figures:

Figure 2.34 Human proportion.

- The average adult human is seven and a half heads tall.
- Shoulders are three heads wide.
- When arms are outstretched, the distance from fingertip to fingertip equals the figure's height.
- Arms and hands at the side fall halfway between knees and hips.
- Arms and legs bend at the halfway point.
- Hips are halfway down the body; a person can fold in half.
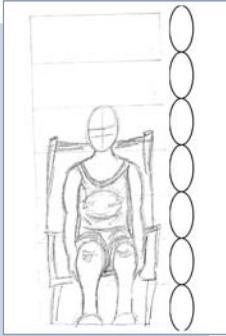
Figure 2.35
Foreshortening.

Of course, not all of the human figures are drawn as standing. Many actions require that humans sit, lie down, or move around. This is where drawing becomes a bit complicated. Proportions seem to change as humans move around. Parts of the body appear larger or smaller, depending on whether they are near or far from the person looking at them. For instance, if your figure's arm or leg is pointing directly at you, part of its length will be hidden. This is known as *foreshortening*. Notice that in the form pictured in Figure 2.35, two head lengths have been lost because the figure is in the sitting position. The space from the hips to the knees has become foreshortened and the figure's thighs are hidden from view.

## Practice Reading and Drawing Basic Shapes in Human Figure Drawing

This set of exercises will shed light on the process of drawing the human figure. Stand in front of a full-length mirror (or look at a photo in which you are standing) and study the proportions of your own figure. Is your head one-seventh the size of the rest of your body? Is your torso three heads in length? Look at where your arms fall. Where does the upper arm fall in relation to the body? The lower arms? The hands? Now, to study foreshortening, sit in a chair in front of the mirror. Notice the spaces that are foreshortened and parts of the body slightly hidden. Let your hands fall to the side. Where do the hands fall? Point a finger at the mirror. Does the finger appear larger?

Now, in your sketchbook, draw a proportionate human figure by sketching a series of ovals as shown in Figure 2.34 on page 41. (I suggest that you draw grid lines of one inch in thickness or stacked ovals at first to help you gauge proportion.) As you practice, study where the parts of the figure fall. Also, use what you've learned about basic shapes to think about and sketch the various parts of the body: What shape is the head? Is it a circle or an oval? If it is an oval, is it a thin and long oval or a short and rounder oval? What shapes form the arms? The legs? The torso? After you have done one drawing, reflect upon the process: What did you learn about proportion and foreshortening? Practice drawing your students as they read, or stand, or write, people moving in the mall, or in other places. ◼

Practice Gesture Drawing

Humans are rarely still; we are always moving. Now that you have practiced studying and drawing the human form standing, try to free your mind and draw the human figure in motion. *Gesture drawings* are loose line drawings of basic shapes

(see, for example, Figure 2.36) meant to convey movement, not necessarily proportion. Practicing gesture drawings will help you to loosen up and will give life to your figures. Although your aesthetic may tell you that humans must be represented realistically, gesture drawings, like studies, help you conceive the many positions that the human figure can take in final drawings.
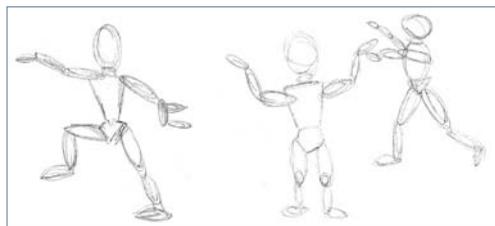
Figure 2.36 *Teacher's gesture drawings.*

To practice gesture drawings, you will need someone to be your model—a child, parents, spouse, partner, or your students. Or, if this is not possible, sit at table in your cafeteria, on a bench at the mall, or at a coffee shop, and capture people as they move across your space. To do gesture drawing, call upon what you learned about basic shapes, and your knowledge of proportion and foreshortening. If you have a live model, let her or him know that you are going to ask her or him to take on a pose for no more than one minute. During that time, you will make quick short and loose drawings in your sketchbook that are composed of basic shapes. The model should have at least five poses in mind before you start so this exercise is continuous. If you are in another place, like a mall or a cafeteria, draw the figure in motion and imagine how your model might look when he or she stops.

Now you need to visually define the human figure by connecting the ovals with contour lines as you did with your favorite character drawing. Figure 2.37 shows a sixth-grade student's gesture drawing. After about ten different sketches, she chooses one and connects the basic shapes with contour lines to indicate clothing. She then plays with the figure's personality with multiple loosely curved lines. Choose one of your gesture drawings; add contour lines to give the figure a more realistic look, and erase the lines of the ovals that are no longer necessary to visually represent the human form. Record your insights on this process in your journal. ■


Figure 2.37 *Gesture drawing, basic shapes connected.*

Drawing Faces

Nearly all students with whom I have worked want to know how to draw the human face accurately. If you think about your own students' renditions of characters' faces, nearly all have eyes placed near the top of the head with the mouth near the bottom of the chin. Although no two faces are the same, the same proportions and basic shapes make up a face. Read and study the facial features of family and friends in your photo albums or your students' faces, or look at facial features of characters in

some of your favorite picture books. How are the eyes shaped? Oval? Almond? Also note where the eyes are in relation to other facial features.

There are a number of different head shapes (square, oval, triangular, pear); however, you will work with only the oval for now. Our heads, like our bodies, are symmetrical; the basic proportions for the head are as follows:
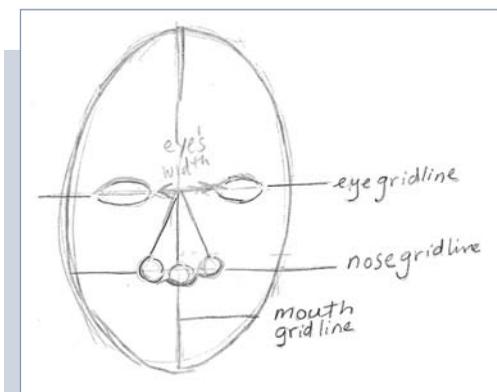
Figure 2.38 *Head and face proportions.*

- The eyes are halfway between the top of the head and the bottom of the chin.
- The nose is halfway between the eyes and the chin.
- The mouth is halfway between the nose and the chin.
- The ears are the length of the space between the eyes and the nose.

After reading the proportions in Figure 2.38, practice drawing heads using grid marks and basic shapes to help you internalize these proportions.

Practice Drawing Eyes

It has been said that the eyes are the windows to the soul. They express a range of emotions and expressions. On the face, the distance between the eyes measures one eye length. Eyes have many different shapes, but an easy shape to draw is an almond shape. Look at how artists and illustrators paint or draw eyes to connect

Figure 2.39 *Drawing eyes.*

with the viewer or others in the image. Where are the pupils? How wide are the eyes? How do such decisions inform interpretation? In your sketchbook, play with this shape and place the pupils in various positions. (See Figure 2.39 for examples.) How does each eye placement, and the shape of the eyebrows, convey a different expression? ■
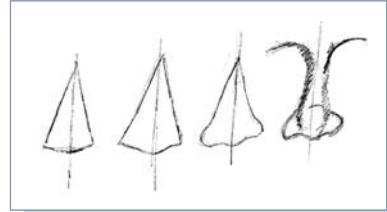
Practice Drawing Noses

Like eyes, noses inform viewers about a character's personality and emotions. Consider how Cyrano de Bergerac outwitted his critics, especially when he responded to a fan who insulted the size of his nose: "A great nose is the banner of

a great man, a generous heart, a towering spirit..." (Rostand, 1950, Act I, p. 34). Noses are basically rounded triangles. To practice learning to draw a realistic nose, start with a triangle with a *symmetrical guideline*, or a line the divides the nose into two equal parts. Round the bottom of the triangle, and then round the point at the middle. On the right and left sides of the bottom triangles, add curved lines to give

Figure 2.40 *Drawing noses.*

shape to the nostrils. Lightly draw in a circle to give depth to the rounded part of the nose. Draw in curved lines at the top of the bridge of the nose to indicate eyebrows. With your experience with lines, gradation, and lowlights and highlights, add more depth with shading to give the illusion of three dimensions. (See Figure 2.40 for examples.) ■

Practice Drawing Mouths

Mouths convey a range of emotions with simple upward or downward curved lines. Examine various mouths of characters in paintings, illustrated books, or your literature anthology. How do these painters and illustrators use curved lines to help us interpret the characters' happiness, sadness, suspicion, and fear? Consider which emotion you want your face to convey before you draw. To practice drawing mouths, you need only remember that mouths are simply three curved lines. To start, draw a flattened *m*-shaped line to define the upper part of the mouth. Below that, draw the

lower line of the bottom lip with an upside-down but flatter *m* shape. To complete the mouth, draw a third flattened *m*- line; this line separates the upper from the lower lip and indicates the emotion you want to create with its upward or downward sweep. Figure 2.41 presents a basic sketch of a mouth. ■
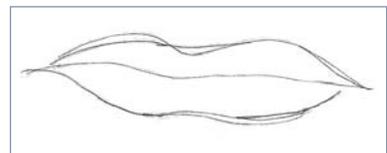
Figure 2.41 *Simple curved lines for mouth.*

Practice Drawing Ears

Ears are quite easy to draw, especially when you consider them in basic shapes. Ears can create a humorous element to a character, such as Pinocchio, whose ears change from human to donkey, or Hirshfeld's caricatures of famous people, who are drawn with exaggerated facial features, including the now famous ears of Prince Charles (for examples of his work, see www.alhirschfeld.com/artwork/originals.html). Ears consist of two ovals—a larger oval for the top part of the ear, or
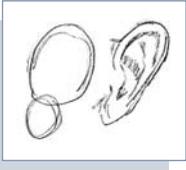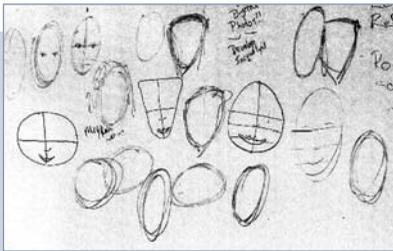
Figure 2.42
Drawing ears.

the outer ear flap, and a smaller one for the lobe (see Figure 2.42). Erase the line between the lobe and upper ear. Add an inside curved line that moves alongside the larger oval to about halfway. Draw in another curved line from the middle of the last line that extends to where the lobe starts. Finally, add a small curve to define the small protrusion, and some shadowing to give the ear depth. ▪

Practice Drawing Self-Portraits

Now, to put it all together, practice drawing your self-portrait. Look in the mirror and notice the basic shape of your head. Practice drawing your head shape, others' head shapes, and then head shapes with the grid lines. Draw your own head shape using a gridline to guide proportion.

Figure 2.43 *Practice drawing head shapes with grid lines.*

Figure 2.44 *Initial and revised autobiographical drawing.*

Now you are ready to add the basic shapes that make up your facial features. While looking in the mirror, study your eyes, ears, and nose, and think about the basic shapes and loose lines of your features. Use gridlines to guide your proportions, as in Figure 2.43. Think about the pupils of the eyes. Where do you want them to focus? Draw them onto the eye lines of the grid. Now draw a triangle on the dividing line in the middle. Add the pointed oval for the mouth, the curved *m*-lines to define the lips. Add a few contour lines to smooth out your facial features. Add lines to represent your hairstyle image. How does knowledge of proportion and basic shapes help to create a more realistic self-portrait? Figure 2.44 shows fourth-grader Nancy's initial (left) and revised (right) self-portrait after practicing these same techniques. ▪

Reflection on Inquiry Into Drawing

I have found that when students and teachers learn basic art techniques, they realize that art is not so daunting:

Ellen: I like drawing, now.

Peggy: You do?

Ellen: I do, I really do. I really did tell my students, "Don't laugh at me when I draw on the blackboard because I can't draw." And they

would laugh and say, "What's that's supposed to be?" I would laugh with them, and it was fun. But now that I'm aware about basic shapes and proportion, I know that images are nothing but a line, a dot, a curve, a circle, and an angle. That's it.

By studying drawing as a language, Ellen has now learned that images, like written language, are comprised of conventions and structures. Like language, art has cueing systems, and Ellen begins to notice graphic information in basic elements, "a line, a dot, a curve, a circle, and an angle," which helps her to read and produce a range of visual texts. Art is demystified for her, and her fear of working with art diminished.

When teachers like Ellen are given opportunities to study the visual arts, they see many possibilities for its use in their ELA classes. English-language learner teacher Vickie states in an interview, "I want to include an art workshop into the literacy learning of my English learners. Art allows them to show me what they know, and they will not struggle with written language. Art will become for them their mother tongue, initially, in school." For Ellen and Vickie, the visual arts are in dialogue with written and spoken language, rather than in opposition or alongside. Together, they become integrally related in the semiotic expression.

Eisner (2002a) argues that art helps to build students' imagination and encourages symbolic and metaphorical thinking. Art pushes learners to become problem-solvers. They learn about value to create an illusion of 3-D. They study proportion and are able to draw more realistic figures. They notice relationships among and between details in an image, and apply this conceptual understanding to texts written in various language systems.

When given opportunities to explore drawing with technique and with study and knowledge of line, shape, and form, as artists do, students can and do apply this knowledge across language systems. Figure 2.45 shows ninth-grade student Larry's drawing of Verona, based upon his reading of *Romeo and Juliet*. Notice how Larry used contour lines, shading, and shape, and consciously showed relationships among these elements. The sharp angular lines and perspective suggest orderliness, yet the arc in the background suggests warmth and unity. His

Figure 2.45 *Student's drawing of Verona, based on a reading of Romeo and Juliet.*

use of shape artistically demonstrates strong interpretation of themes that run through *Romeo and Juliet.*

Learning the basics of drawing will help you support your students' drawings. Your ability to read lines and shapes gives you two languages through which you can talk with your students about their visual and written texts. Rather than say, "That's a lovely drawing," you may say instead, "Tell me why you chose to draw a curved line or arc in the background?" By asking such questions, you teach your students to look at and see their representations with new eyes, and you will encourage them to see relationships among and between the texts they read and the texts they produce.