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Creative Costume Design

Best for: grades 4-6

Description: explore the foundations of fashion design through exercises in shape, line, color, pattern and texture.
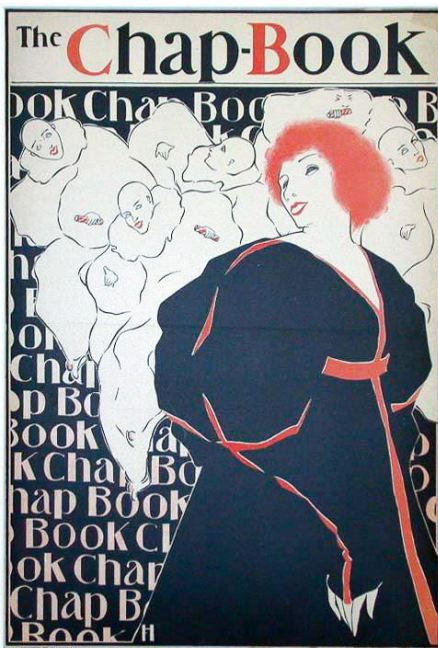

Vocabulary: silhouette, pattern, template, texture, fitted, exaggerated, color family, complementary, analogous

Required materials

- two: 9 x 12" construction paper or cardstock, black and color
- three: 8 x 10" drawing papers
- scissors
- pencil
- glue sticks
- colored pencils

Optional materials

- stapler or straight pins
- magazine
- 1 x 3" fabric scraps
- paper doll for pattern

Images:
Frank Hazenplug (American, 1873/74—1931), *The Chap Book,* 1896, lithograph in colors on paper. Museum purchase. 1982.35
Abraham Bosse (French, 1602–1676), *Costume Portrait,* 17th century, engraving on paper. Museum purchase with funds provided by Mrs. Virginia W. Kettering, 1976.109
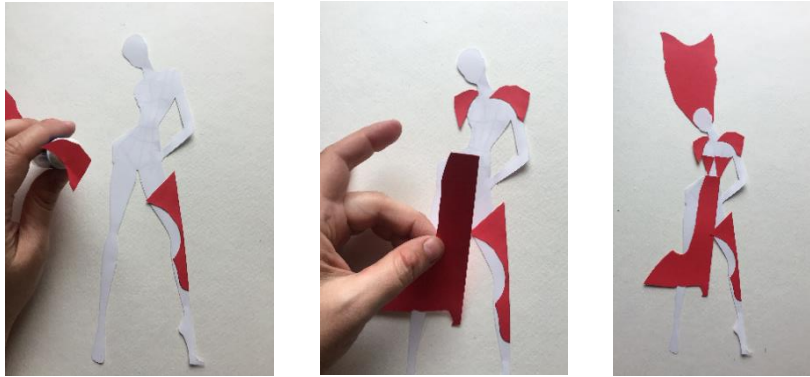
Instructions

1. Begin by making a figure **template,** or reusable copy. Try tracing a paper doll or cutting out a figure from a magazine or comic book and tracing it on paper. Or, find a template online, print and cut out. You can also draw your own.
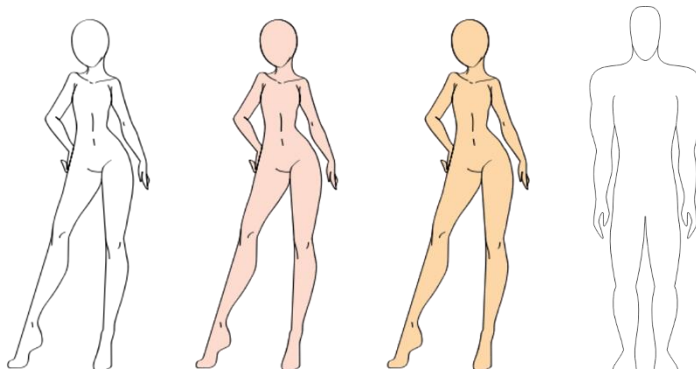

2. Cut out figure **template** and use dab of glue to hold in place on cardstock. Examine the **silhouettes** (figure outline) of earlier time periods below and consider: what does your character need to be able to do in this costume? Which areas of the figure should be **fitted** (worn close to the shape of the body) or **exaggerated?** Sketch a costume silhouette onto the cardstock around the figure template. Carefully remove template from cardstock and cut design along lines of silhouette only. Set aside.

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3. Arrange paper scrap pieces on figure **template** and attach with glue stick to create a second **silhouette**.

4. Choose which **silhouette** to compose into a line drawing. Trace the outline of the silhouette on two separate pieces of drawing paper. Glue silhouettes down onto black construction paper and set aside.
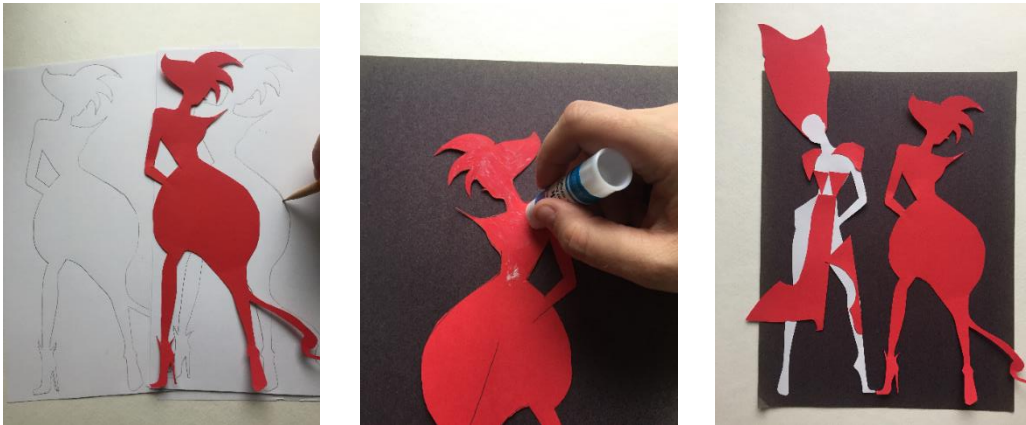
5. This next exercise explores **line**. Line can express areas needing to be sewn and can also break the costume up in different ways, drawing the eye to certain areas.

   Draw one section at a time. For example, create a line for the length of sleeves. What will the waistline look like? Continue drawing until all areas of the costume are added. Set aside and repeat process with other outline making different creative choices

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6. We are ready to explore **color**, **pattern** (a design that repeats) and **texture** (how the fabric might feel). Determine a **color family** for each line drawing, such as **complementary** colors (those that are opposite from one another on the color wheel) for the first and **analogous** colors (those that are next to one another on the color wheel) for the second drawing.

7. Find your chosen colors in fabric swatches or images from magazines. Pin or staple these into a corner of your paper.

   (No fabric swatches? Sketch a rectangle and color it with colored pencils, showing the colors you intend to use.)

8. Add color, **pattern** and **texture** to each drawing based on the swatches you chose.

   Helpful Hint: areas of color can be suggested by outlining the area and then shading lightly within. Apply less or more pressure whether you want lighter or darker shades.

9. Repeat coloring and process of adding **patterns** with second line drawing.

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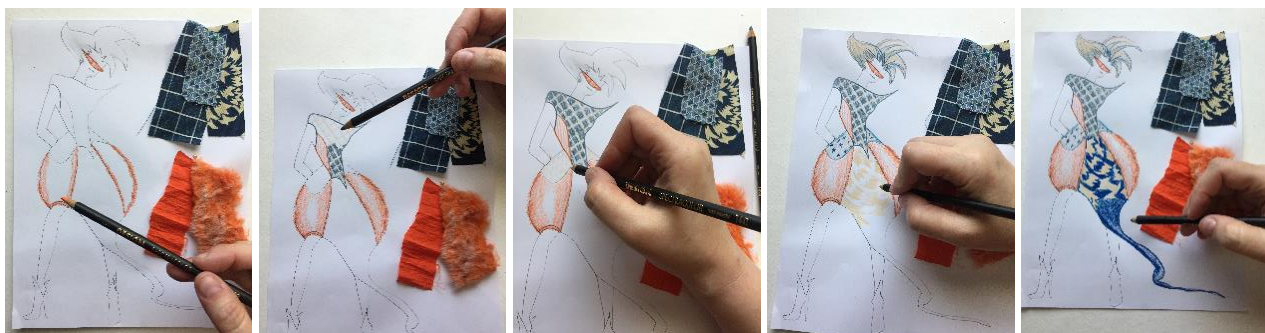
Extensions

For extra challenge:
1. Create a fashion line of various costumes, all with similar design elements. Use a singular silhouette or reuse a specific color family throughout the entire line.

For a creative spin:
1. Write a backstory for your character based on final drawings.

Web Resources

How to draw different fabric textures
Drawing fabric folds
More about costume design
Online fashion collection at the Phoenix Art Museum
The Costume Institute's online collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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