

MONSTER STORIES

A Guide for
Understanding
the Exhibition



GALLERY

The Gallery at TCA
700 W. Rio Salado Parkway
Tempe, AZ 85281
480-350-2867

tempecenterforthearts.com/Gallery



MONSTER STORIES: Sept. 14, 2018—Jan. 5, 2019

“I busied myself to think of a story ... one which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror. One to make the reader dread to look around, to curdle the blood and quicken the beatings of the heart.”
(Mary Shelley)

This year, 2018, marks the 200th anniversary of the novel, *Frankenstein (or The Modern Prometheus)* by Mary Shelley. Her groundbreaking work has been called the first science fiction novel and continues to spark relevant discussions about science, technology and humanity. Frankenstein’s creature is seen as sinister and grotesque, but, Shelley also reveals him to be vulnerable and sympathetic. Her tale asks a time-less question: “who is the real monster?”

The monster genre is a worldwide pop culture phenomenon. Flip the channels on TV and you can often find an old horror movie. Walk down the street and chances are good that you’ll see someone with a monster t-shirt. Joke around with friends and you may hear monster movie quotes like “It’s Alive” from classic 1931 *Frankenstein* film or “Walk this way” from Mel Brook’s 1974 spoof *Young Frankenstein*. However, the monster genre isn’t anything new. Monster stories have ancient roots and helped our ancestors make sense of the unknown. Early people sitting around an evening fire spoke to one another about what laid beyond the darkness. Old maps labeled uncharted territories with “here be dragons” symbols and maritime sailors explained sightings of strange animals as proof of the existence of mermaids and sea serpents. Grimm’s Fairy Tales featured terrible creatures and gruesome disfigurements that taught children about the dangers of being naughty. There are even scholarly theories about how the finding of dinosaur bones contributed to the origin of mythological beasts in ancient Greek art and literature.

For Educators: The Gallery at TCA offers a wide variety of FREE educational resources including admission, tours, artist workshops and online curriculum. Learn more at: tempecenterforthearts.com/Gallery

Dear Reader:

We hope this guide will provide you with some easy-to-use tools to enhance your experiences with visual art. Over the years, we’ve noticed that people can be both attracted to and intimidated by art at the same time. We’ve found that asking questions that start “informal conversations” is one of the best ways to put people at ease.

Sure, some art is beautiful and easy to approach, while other art can be challenging and not so easy to digest. Just like a book, visual art can be appealing, serious and yes, even ugly. Some art confirms, celebrates and expands how we understand ourselves. Other art opens pathways through which we can explore other viewpoints. You as a viewer (reader) also bring a variety of thoughts and personal preferences into the experience. With practice and some new tools on your belt, you’ll find that those seemingly complicated layers of meaning and context can be peeled back and explored. It’s just knowing where to look and why.

We would also like to thank artist Manny Burruel for letting us utilize some of his artworks for this workbook.

Sincerely,

Mary Erickson, Ph.D. (TCA Docent) & Michelle Nichols Dock (Visual Arts Curator)

Inquiry Strategy with Tactical Questions

The following 4-question strategy is an easy to use tool for investigating the layers of context and meaning in visual art.

What Can I See? Facts about the artwork.

- Subject Matter
- Design Elements & Principles
- Technical Features
- Function
- Reproduction versus Original
- Care/Condition



What Else Can I Learn? Contextual facts.

Contextual facts.

- Artists' Lives
- Physical Environments
- Cultural Context
- Artworlds (Art Experience)



What Does It Mean? Conclusions about meanings.

Conclusions about meanings.

- Personal & Cultural Viewpoints
- Artists' Intentions
- Art Specialists' Understandings



How Does It Compare? Conclusions about connections among artworks.

Conclusions about connections among artworks.

- Style
- Art Influence (From Other Art)
- Themes



Hints for Asking Good Questions

Hints for a well-rounded conversation: You'll often learn more from open-ended questions than close-ended questions.

A **closed-ended question** is answered with a one-word response such as yes or no or another single word. *Example:* Is this an oil or acrylic painting?

Closed-ended questions start with verbs like “Is? Do? and Can?”

An **open-ended question** requires more explanation.

Example: How is painting in oil different from painting with acrylics?

Open-ended questions start with “Why? and How?”

Some words can be used for **both types of questions** such as:

What?

Who?

Where?

When?

Both open and close-ended questions are valuable. The construction and phrasing of a question shapes the kind of information you can expect to receive.

For Practice: Write down 3 open-ended questions. Pretend you are meeting someone for the first time. You need to ask questions to get to know that person better.

a _____

b _____

c _____

What Can I See?

Tips for looking carefully at an Artwork



Subject Matter: Some artworks have subject matter and others do not. Subject matter refers to anything real or imaginary that is shown in an artwork (such as people, places and things).

Elements of Design: Traditional elements in Western art include: (“D” represents “dimensional.”)

2D Elements

- line
- shape
- value (light and dark)
- color

3D Elements

- form or mass
- space
- texture

4D Elements/Time

- sequence
- duration

Design Principles: Ways artists organize elements of design to create interesting and unified compositions. Some Traditional Principles include:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Balance | Variation | Focal Point | Pattern |
| Harmony | Repetition | Movement | Transition |
| Emphasis/Focal Point | Rhythm | Direction | Proportion |
| Contrast | | | |

Technical Features: Careful viewing of an artwork usually reveals evidence of how it was made. (Indicators might include art making tools, materials and processes.)

Function: Artists make artworks that serve a great many functions such as:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Capturing the beauty of nature | Memorializing an important event |
| Celebrating or criticizing a person, event or group | Exploring visual possibilities |
| Sharing a vision | Promoting a belief or cause |
| Celebrating the artist's heritage | Making the ordinary extraordinary |
| Stimulating action | Many more |

What Can I See?

Practice looking carefully at an Artwork



Manny Burrue
He Looks Sad
mono silkscreen
print, 20"x28"

Reproduction Vs Original: Some reproductions can look pretty different from the originals. Common differences between originals and reproductions are:

- | | | | |
|---------------|----------|-----------------|------------|
| Size | Colors | Surface Texture | Luminosity |
| Angle of View | Lighting | Other | |

Care/Condition: The condition of artworks can deteriorate over time for many reasons, among them:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Perishable or fragile materials | Damage in storage |
| Matting, mounting, or framing | Temperature and humidity |
| Accidents | Vandalism |

Sample Questions: See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about "what you see."

1. How is the creature's face like a human face? How is it different? [SUBJECT MATTER]
2. How has the artist made the lettering complement the other lines and colors in the piece? [DESIGN]
3. How do the lines and shapes suggest movement? [DESIGN]
4. Burrue applied the thick printer's ink to a smooth flat surface, which he then transferred to paper to make this monoprint. Where does it look as if he applied the ink in different ways? (drip, brush, mix, etc.) [TECHNIQUE]
5. How do you think this artwork could be used? Explain. (Halloween decoration? make-up instructions? souvenir? movie poster? another function? [FUNCTION])

Now You Try! *What Can I See?*



Manny Burrel
Forbidden Planet, monotype print, 28" x 20"



Look at this next piece by Burrel. List 3 quick descriptions about what you see:

(Example: "large sculpture, depicts a woman and is made of bronze.")

a _____

b _____

c _____

Now, based on your observations, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork.

a _____

b _____

c _____

What Can I Learn?

Tips for investigating an Artist's Background



Artist's Life: The personal lives of artists can affect their work, including such factors as:

Family

Work

Education

Travel

Personal life experiences

Other

Physical Environment: The physical world, both natural and human made) can inspire their work:

Natural environment (plants, animals, climate, landforms, etc.)

Constructed environment (buildings, roads, bridges, vehicles, furniture, consumer goods, etc.)

Culture: Artists can draw ideas for their work from their cultures:

Values and beliefs

Hobbies and entertainment

Politics

Economic situation

Language

Heritage and/or ethnicity

Other

Art Experience (Artworld): Artists get ideas and support from other people involved in art, through:

Art education/Apprenticeships

Insights from specialists in the art form (ceramics , painting, etc.)

Representation by art galleries

Contact with art patrons and collectors

Acknowledgement through art awards, prizes, grants, commissions.

Art included in museum collections

What Can I Learn?

Practice investigating an Artist's Background



Manny Burrueel, *Summer Invasion*
mono silkscreen collage on wood

Sample Questions: See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “what I can learn.”

1. Where did Burrueel grow up?
[LIFE AND ENVIRONMENT]
2. What two cultures did Burrueel experience in his childhood?
[CULTURE]
3. What popular media made a big impression on Burrueel as a child?
[CULTURE]
4. What are some of the roles Burrueel plays in the artworld?
[ART EXPERIENCE]

Manuel (Manny) Burrueel was born in Mexico and was adopted by Mexican-American parents at the age of one week. He was surrounded by both Mexican and American cultures in his childhood growing up in West Phoenix. His artwork subject matter is often autobiographical and he uses familiar imagery to represent his experiences and memories to make connections with viewers.

Burrueel recalls that his fascination with the monster genre stems from growing up watching science fiction, horror and classic monster movies. He says, “*My mom loved scary movies and we would watch them together. Many of the old monsters like Frankenstein, The Creature, and King Kong were tragic characters. My mom would teach me to understand the monsters' points of view. These early movies always added a sympathetic note to the depiction of the monster and became my early lessons in empathy... This is especially true in my piece, ‘A little humanity.’ It portrays the scene with the little girl, Maria, who gives Frankenstein a flower and invites him to play. They both throw flowers into the lake. When he runs out, he looks at Maria, smiles and throws her into the lake where she drowns. I always knew that Frankenstein thought she was like a flower and would float. I felt so sad for the monster.*”

Like many kids who grew up watching movies and TV shows about action and adventure, Burrueel was especially captivated by stories that involved heroism. His imagination flourished with dreams of becoming a hero like Sinbad the Sailor or the Greek hero Jason battling monsters like Cyclopes or Hydra. Burrueel says, “*The scariest monsters were the aliens in ‘War of the Worlds.’ I remember in one scene, a priest is approaching the alien spaceship holding a Bible, and as he is reciting the Psalm, ‘The Lord is my shepherd...’ then, blammo! He is disintegrated! Even if I was a good Catholic boy, I was afraid they were going to kill me.*”

Today, Burrueel is a full-time artist and arts advocate. He is an artist member of Xico Inc., a Chicano/Native American arts organization in Phoenix. Over the past twenty years he has exhibited his work in Phoenix arts spaces such as Five 15 Gallery, Shemer Art Center and Museum and Sky Harbor Airport Museum. In 2002 his work was included in the book *Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Art* published by the Arizona State University Hispanic Research Center.

mannysartgallery.com

Now You Try! **What Else I Can Learn?**



Brainstorm and list 5 interesting facts about Manny Burruel's background.

**You may want to consult pg. 9 and/or a media article and/or Internet references about the artist.)*

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

Now, based on your research, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork/artist.

a _____

b _____

c _____

What Does It Mean?

Tips for interpreting an Artwork



Artist's Intention: Artists decide how they want their artworks to look. Their intentions may be:

| | | | |
|--|-------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Personal or private | Traditional | Practical | Boundary breaking |
| Unconventional | Evolving | Emotional | Spontaneous |
| Experimental | Deliberate | | |
| Focused on collector, patron, funder or other viewer | | | Other |

Art Specialists' Understandings: The considered opinions of art specialists (experts) direct viewers' attention to aspects of artworks that they judge to be worthy of that attention. Art specialists may include:

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Artists | Art Teachers | Museum Curators | Art Critics |
| Art Historians | Master Craftspeople | Ceremonial Leaders | Guild Members |
| Tribal elders | Others | | |

Cultural Understandings: A viewer's cultural understanding draws upon a set of ideas, beliefs and standards shared broadly within a culture. These are learned, not by special effort and instruction, but simply through growing up as a member of a culture. Unexamined expectations might include:

| | | | |
|------------|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| High price | Obvious meaning | Difficult to make | Easily recognizable |
| Familiar | Other | | |

Your Own Viewpoint: Your responses to artworks are affected by:

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| conscious thoughts | unconscious reactions | personal preferences |
| careful viewing | thoughtful reflection | relevant information |
| free association | previous art experience | and more |

What Does It Mean?

Practice interpreting an Artwork



Manny Burrel, *A Little Humanity*, mono silkscreen print

Sample Questions: See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “what it means.”

1. How does Burrel's choice of subject matter help him achieve what he wants to do in his work?
[ARTIST INTENTION]
2. How have art experts interpreted Burrel's monster monoprints? [ART SPECIALIST'S UNDERSTANDING]



3. How do you think classic and contemporary movies and TV monsters might affect how people interpret Burrel's monsters?
[CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING]

Manuel Burrel grew up in a Mexican-American family in West Phoenix. At times, he felt himself to be an “outsider.” He was both a part of, and sometimes outside of Mexican traditions, American norms and popular culture. In an interview Burrel said “*I create art that has dual meaning.*” Gary Keller Cardenas from ASU quoted Burrel in the book, *Contemporary Chicana and Chicano Art, Vol. I*, as stating that he also wants to make his art accessible to “*people who are not necessarily comfortable in an art gallery.*”

Burrel has also said “*I am a printmaker and painter. My subject matter is often autobiographical. I like objects and images depicted in bright vibrant colors. My art can trigger a personal nostalgia for the viewer. I hope that my art will bring a smile to your face and perhaps a happy memory.*”

Michelle Nichols Dock, Visual Arts Curator at the Gallery at the Tempe Center for the Arts, interprets monsters as “*misunderstood creatures, or outsiders, responding to experiences and situations beyond their control.*” She goes on to say that “*Burrel’s piece, A Little Humanity, and his own identification as a sometimes ‘outsider’ also fits into a broader context. Today, the very name, Frankenstein, conjures an endless variety of images including the wild-eyed mad scientist in his secret lab and the visual interpretation of the creature’s appearance as a strange and lumbering green giant (made famous by the 1931 film).*”

“*For modern innovators, scientists and philosophers across the globe, the characters and themes behind the story also tap into ethical questions about science, technology, nature and probably most importantly, empathy for others.*”

“*Shelley’s thoughts on these subjects are just as relevant today as they were for her more than 200 years ago.*”

Now You Try! What Does It Mean?



Manny Burrel
Jason VS The Skeletons
mono silkscreen print

Look at this work by Manny Burrel. Brainstorm and list 5 ideas about what the artwork is about.

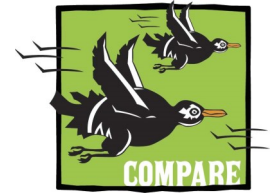
- a _____
- b _____
- c _____
- d _____
- e _____

Now, based on your interpretation, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about this artwork.

- a _____
- b _____
- c _____

How Do They Compare?

Tips for gathering insights by comparing Artworks



Style: Style is a set of distinctive qualities ("family resemblance") that are shared by more than one artwork. Artists develop their own style and incorporate aspects of the styles of artists from their own or other times and cultures.

Artist's style

Style of art movement or period

Cultural style

Art Influence: Most artists are influenced by artists who worked before them, though some self-taught artists, called "outsider artists," work in isolation, largely unaware of the work of other artists. Art influences can include:

Technical and aesthetic achievements by other artists

Other artists' ideas, innovations, commitments

Traditional or historical art ideas to follow, extend or break away from

Theme: Some broad, cross-cultural themes have been the focus of many artists throughout history and across the globe:

People and nature

Cultural pride

Conquest

Overcoming obstacles

Strength of family

Love

Fantasy

Social order

Harmony

Chaos

Revisiting history

Heroic adventure

Religious devotion

Status

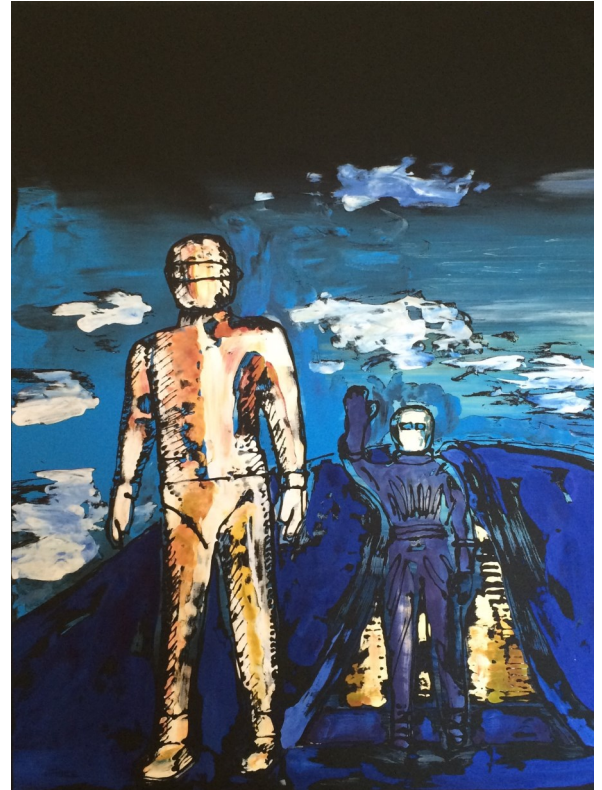
Many more

How Do They Compare?

Practice gathering insights by comparing Artworks by Manny Burrel



Manny Burrel
Jason vs Hydra
mono silkscreen print

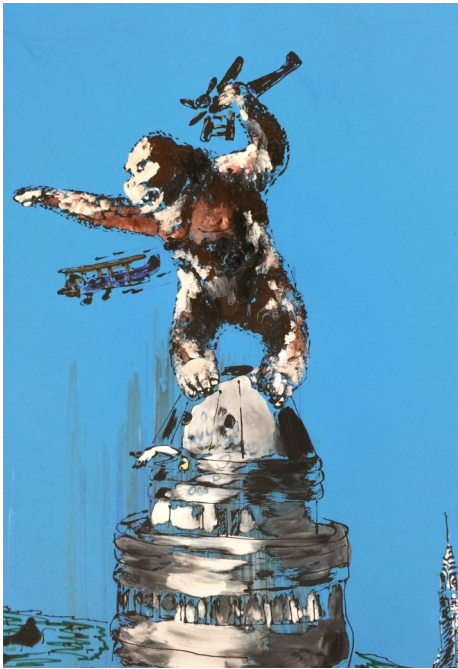


Manny Burrel
Gort Barringa
mono silkscreen print

Sample Questions: See below how an easy conversation about an art piece can begin just by asking and answering questions about “how they compare.”

1. How would you describe the describe the style of Manuel Burrel's monoprints? [STYLE]
2. How have images from popular culture influenced Burrel's work? [ART INFLUENCE]
3. How do Burrel's pieces reflect the theme of the *Monster Stories* exhibition (refer to pg. 2).

Now You Try! How Do They Compare?



Manny Burrue
It wasn't the Airplanes
mono silkscreen print



KING KONG film posters from
1933 production, RKO Radio Pictures

List 3 highlights (your favorite visual features and/or information) about the artwork and film posters.

Now, compare these highlights with other images in this guide.

List 2 similarities among the artworks:

List 2 differences among the artworks:

Now, based on your comparisons, write 3 questions you could ask a friend about the artwork and film posters.

a

b

c

Follow Up Activity

The Monster Inside

This secondary level mixed media activity is introduced with artworks reproduced in this guide.

OBJECTIVES: Students will be able to explain how images from popular culture express a variety of emotions.

VA. RE.7.6b: Analyze ways that visual characteristics and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions and actions.

Students will be able to effectively exploit the qualities of two different media (collage and drawing) to create an expressive artwork.

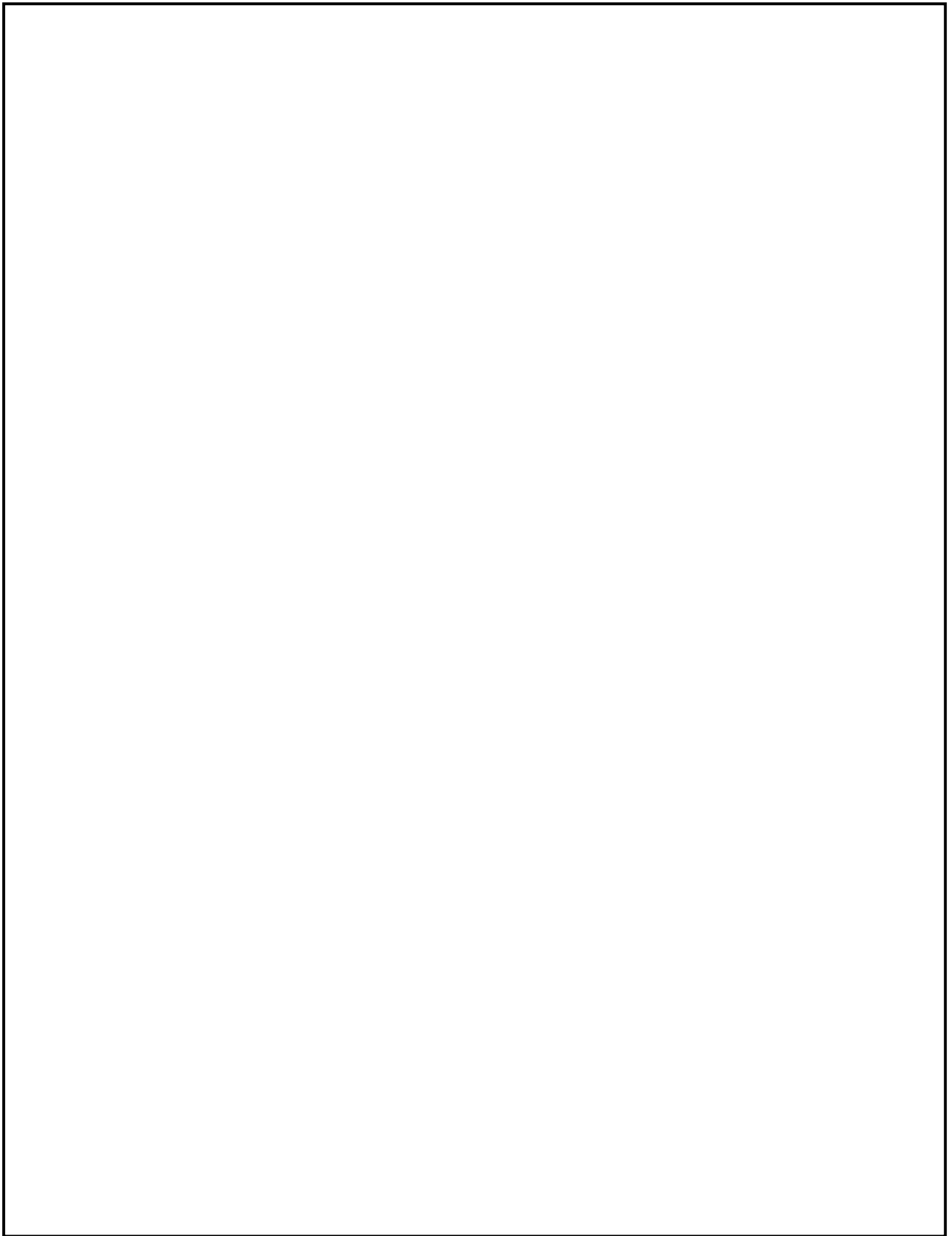
VA.CR.2.6a: Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, methods, and approaches in making works of art and design.

VIEWING ACTIVITIES: Assign particular images to small groups and ask each group to identify an emotion expressed in their assigned work and analyze how the subject matter, design elements or principles, and/or techniques reinforce that expression. Finally, ask each group to share their conclusions with the class.

MAKING ACTIVITIES: Review the monsters in the guide. Lead students in a discussion considering how the monster might feel. You might ask them to imagine what happened before the event depicted in the poster or artwork took place, or what might happen next. Ask students to imagine that there is a creature (friendly, curious, angry, afraid, etc.) inside them, or inside someone else or something else that wants to get out.

Distribute markers, colored pencils, scissors, and glue. Provide a variety of magazines or printouts from the Internet that students can cut up. Ask students to choose an image of a person or thing to cut out, paste on page 18 and transform with drawing materials to express an emotion.





My Monster Inside (title):