



“OPTICAL VS SYMBOLIC SEEING”

Lesson Plan designed for DVI by Camilla S. Haneberg



Durer, Side , Front and Back View of a Helmet

SUMMARY

These introductory activities to the concept of Optical vs Symbolic seeing focus mainly on sharpening observation skills. Any time an artist draws from real life subjects/objects, she/he is looking at the subject and is trying to replicate what is there in three dimensions onto a two dimensional surface using marks of some sort.

Learning to see seems easy enough, yet it is more of a challenge than most people think. The challenge has to do with how we think about what we see. We’ve been looking at things around us since the day we were born. The brain has taken upon itself (thank goodness!) to organize this information into “categories” which are “symbols” for what is actually observed in real life with live eyeballs looking at and collecting information from a subject. For example, everyone knows what the street sign for men at work looks like.



It is a stylized symbol for the actual thing.



An artist somewhere simplified the idea for the signage. That is similar to what our brains do for us, otherwise we would be constantly bogged down by information overload. Overall this is a necessary

function for our day to day existence. However, when we decide to draw something realistically, we are trying to override the temptation to allow our brain to symbolize (simplify, categorize) what we are seeing so that it will be accurately represented. This practice takes lots of practice! We as artists are observers and the following activities are a few beginning steps to become accustomed to looking closely at things.

OBJECTIVES

- practice careful observation
- seeking out described detail within a complex art image
- describing observation orally/verbally
- writing about observation in a personal way
- practicing careful drawing by tracing
- drawing an ordinary object with careful observation

STANDARDS

NATIONAL ART STANDARDS:

- VA:Re8.1.K
- VA:Re8.1.1
- VA:Re8.1.2
- VA:Re8.1.3
- VA:Re8.1.4
- VA:Re8.1.5

LITERACY COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.K.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.1.3
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.2.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1

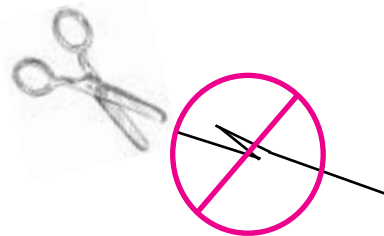
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1

ACTIVITY 1

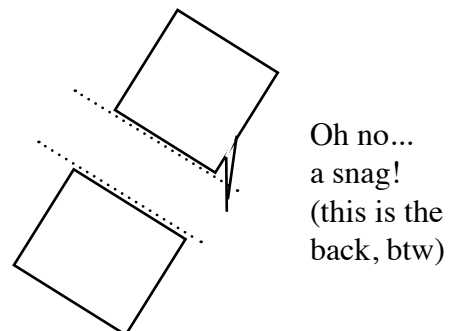
I SPY WITH MY EYE

This first activity should bring back some memories, although the phrase I grew up with was, “I see something that you don’t see and the color of it is...”. For this activity you can use the attached handouts labeled A1. After making enough copies of each handout for one per two students, use a very sharp x-acto knife on a protected surface to cut through several copies at the same time along the slider (dotted lines) after the sentence, “I spy with my eye, something...”. This will save oodles of time, as it is difficult to cut those types of slits using school scissors (and it will take students forever to do it).

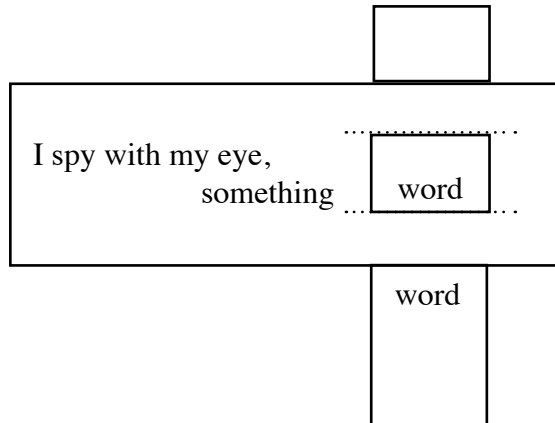
Pair up students and ask them to each take one of the papers and cut out the game pieces as carefully as possible, avoiding barbs on the edges of the shapes.



The barbs will get caught in the slider on the sentence portion of the game pieces.



Once student pairs have all the game pieces cut out, show them by example how to feed the word list through the pre-cut slits on the sentence portion of the game pieces. Its important to feed the lists through so that the words show through on the sentence.



Next, handout copies of one of the artworks marked A1 in the upper right hand corner. you will need one per two partner students. Students take turns in whatever way they see fit to slide new words into the “I spy...” sentence. Both students look for something in the image that applies to the description and points to it. The other variation is for one student to slide the word in place, look for what they think applies to the sentence without pointing it out. The other student has to guess the “correct” answer. Remind students that this is an observation game and they should look for detail and see if they can stump their partner. Switch out word lists and art images as you see the need arise.

MATERIALS:

- copies, one per every two students of the game piece handouts A1
- x-acto knife for you to cut the slits in bulk

- scissors, one pair per student
- copies of artworks A1, one per every two students

ACTIVITY 2

FIND THE CLUE

This teacher directed activity again asks students to carefully search an art image for a specific detail that fits a specific description. These are not right and wrong answers, but one of various possible answers. Students may find more than one answer that works...encourage them to do so!

Make copies of the artwork image marked A2 in the upper right hand corner, enough for one per every three students. Cut black construction paper into 1/2” squares (easiest on a paper cutter), making sure you have 5-10 per student. These are reusable. If you happen to have poker chips, coins, or oyster crackers (or something that you thought of that will work), you could use them in place of the paper squares.

Distribute the art images to groups of three that will all place the image in a mutually agreed position where they can all see it clearly. Distribute up to 30 paper squares to each group.

Explain that the students will be listening to one clue at a time and then looking for an appropriate area of the artwork that fits the clue. When they find what they feel is the best answer, the teacher facilitates everyone counting together, “One, Two, Three” and then students place a paper square on the image covering the area they found. Sometimes students will be covering the same space which will make it fun and competitive. They can stack them on top of one another in this case.

Using the attached A2 handout called “Clues”, read one clue, wait a minute,

reminding students to hold their paper square until everyone in unison says, “One, Two, Three...”. Lead the students saying, “Everyone ready?”, “Here goes,” “Say it with me...”, “One...Two...Three!” Walk around observing and seeing that all are participating and have relevant responses to the clue. Some can share out if you choose to do that, or you can ask the group members to do a silent cheer if all of their responses are relevant, or do a silent boo if they are not. Demonstrate what each looks like so they know what to do. (A silent cheer is flailing your arms around enthusiastically with no sound....and a silent boo is putting a sad or miserable face on and drooping shoulders.)

MATERIALS:

- copies, one per three students of art image A2
- 5-10 1/2” black construction paper squares per student
- copy of A2 Clues for yourself to read

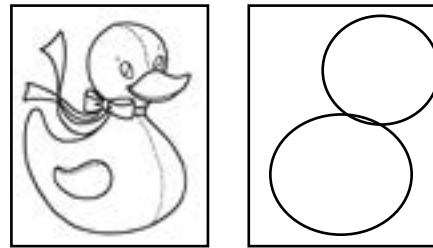
ACTIVITY 3

CAN YOU DRAW WHAT I SEE?

Prepare students by explaining (reverse psychology) that you are pretty sure they will not be able to do the activity you are about to ask them to do. Lie and tell them that you used to teach high school students that couldn’t do it, but that you would like to try it and see how they do with it. The challenge for them is to pair up with a partner, one of which will be the describer and the other will be the artist. Using the attached handouts A3, print enough of all the choices for half of your students to have one in hand at a time.

Explain the idea by example choosing a volunteer to be the artist and having them sit with a blank scrap paper taped onto a surface that the class can see, making sure that the class can also see the picture you are describing to the artist.

Start by describing the shapes and sizes of what you see for the artist to draw. Demonstrate watching the artist and telling where changes need to happen to make the picture and the drawing as similar as possible. For example:



Your directions could be: “Draw one medium circle on the top right corner of your paper, then a larger circle on the bottom left side of the paper.” Look at what they’ve drawn and make corrections, “The circle on top needs to be smaller and the one on the bottom needs to be bigger...yea, that’s it.”

This back and forth continues until the image begins to take the shape of the picture being described. It is not easy, “Erase that line and make it curvier”, and “Center that shape within the bigger one”, “Add a rectangle to the end of that shape”, etc. You can time these sessions making half of your class time for one partner to be the describer and the other the artist, and then switch places, or if your students have a shorter attention span make the sessions shorter times.

These are fun to critique in groups showing all of the drawings of one picture together with the original image they are trying to imitate. Keep it light, the

important learning for this activity is in the description, the listening, the close observation. The act of describing how a drawing is made out loud is important for realizing the many steps in the process.

MATERIALS:

- enough copies of each A3 attached handout that pairs of students have a choice of which one they want to use
- plain 8 1/2 X 11” paper to draw on
- pencils
- erasers
- tape (for demo)

ACTIVITY 4

ANT VIEW

This is a writing activity which will work best for grades 2-5. You can do it verbally with K-1 and write what the students say in a place that they can all see.

To introduce the idea, explain that in a few minutes, the students will be changing from human beings into ants. Reading the book, “Two Bad Ants” (ISBN# 0395486688/9780395486689) will start them on the imaginative path we are looking for.

Next take the time to explain that one minute is a long time when you are carefully examining what you are seeing and feeling. Ask that everyone do their best to stay completely still and silent, except for breathing and blinking, for the timed one minute. This will give them a concept of one minute.

Next ask them to take the position of ants on all fours on the classroom floor. When they settle into the roll, ask them to think about how the classroom is different and how it physically feels to crawl around like an ant. Tell them when the one

silent minute starts and ends. Share out experiences verbally. Encourage the use of adjectives.

Using the two handouts labeled A4, you can copy them front and back of a single page to save paper.

The writing prompt is, “I am an ant crawling on the surface of helmet ____ (letter A, B or C). This is what I see and what it feels like to walk around on this helmet...”, “My favorite part is....because...”, “The things I see seem to be made of...”, “I wish I could be a human and wear this helmet because...”

Give the students an appropriate writing time for their ability level, and then ask for volunteers to share out what they have read. In between readings, ask other students to indicate if they had a similar experience as an ant crawling on the helmet they chose, to keep them more engaged.

It would be fun to have plastic ants for the students to use on the copies if you can find them at a dollar store, or you can copy the attached A3x handout with ants and cut it into small squares on a paper cutter to enhance student imaginations.

A4y is a rubric you can use to assess student work.

MATERIALS:

- time piece for one minute
- front and back copies of A4 handouts
- one copy of A4x (Ants) handout to be cut into single ants for students to use during the activity
- OR, small plastic ants if you are able to find them
- one copy of the rubric per class for you to assess
- book, Two Bad Ants (ISBN# 0395486688/9780395486689)

ACTIVITY 5

DETAIL TRACING

This very simple activity promotes attention to detail not only visually, but especially kinesthetically.

Tracing has been shunned in general where art is concerned, but it can be a valuable exercise to help with recognition of method through action, as well as exactness and handling of materials for good craftsmanship.

The idea in this activity is for students to choose one of the geometric design A5 handouts to trace as accurately as possible. Demonstrate and encourage keeping a very sharp pencil and starting on the right side of the tracing if you are left handed and vice versa, so that you are not dragging your hand through your own drawing. Students use a half sheet from the geometric design A5 handouts, so print enough for one per every two students, then cut them in half on a paper cutter. Pre-cut pieces of tracing paper to 5 1/2 X 8 1/2” and provide tape to attach the two papers together. Make sure there is a good pencil sharpener at the ready and white plastic erasers for students to use.

Demonstrate how to tape the two sheets exactly matched together, then how to trace the design slowly and carefully. Stress the slowly for the speedy students and stress a balance between slow and too slow to the slower students.

One way to critique these is to open them up and lie them onto a white surface and see how just the traced side looks, taking into consideration accuracy and craftsmanship.

MATERIALS:

- copies of A5 handout, enough for one

per every two students

- tracing paper cut to 5 1/2 X 8 1/2”, one per each student
- tape
- pencils
- white plastic erasers

ACTIVITY 6

STILL LIFE FLOWER DRAWING

All the activities have led up to this point. Now that your students have learned to see the things that they are looking at with “new” eyes and have practiced careful drawing, they are ready to try observing and drawing a still life.

Keep the still life simple using single flower vases that you can find at most dollar stores, or ask parents to save very thin and tall jars. Some olive jars or things like capers come in these shapes.

Use a single flower per jar/vase and form small groups of students around each.

They can surround the jar/vase if your table sizes allow, but make sure that they are close enough to the still life to clearly see that detail. Buying or picking the same flower for all the vases seems to be the cheapest way.

Demonstrate for the students how you may have drawn a flower before close observation of detail.



Then impress upon them how many times your eyes switch between the paper and the flower as you draw realistically since you are constantly looking at and representing the detail on your drawing that makes the flower look like “that” flower.

Also talk about what you are seeing and how you are approaching drawing it, as well as talking about corrections you see

that you need to make and how you go about it.
 When finished demonstrating distribute flower still lifes, paper, pencils and erasers and mingle to help with specifics.
 There is a rubric below that you can use to assess the results from this activity.

MATERIALS:

- vases/jars, enough for one per four students
- single flowers, enough for one per four students
- drawing paper, one per student
- pencils
- erasers

A NOTE ABOUT MAKING CORRECTIONS

A helpful hint for correcting mistakes

(bear with me through this) and inaccuracies in drawing is to first redraw where you think the line should go next to the line you have decided is a mistake. Then erase the line that is the mistake. This way you will avoid the tendency to erase a mistake and the redraw the same mistake over again. You will also have your mistake line visible (which sometimes you will discover is not really a mistake) as you draw your new line and then you can observe the two against the still life and determine what is accurate. Sometimes both are incorrect and you can draw a third to find the accurate one.

Remember, “close enough is not close enough.”

Be patient and you will be glad for it when you have a beautifully proportioned and realistic drawing.

ACTIVITY 5 RUBRIC

OBJECTIVE	CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
practice careful observation	Student’s drawing shows evidence of careful observation by way of there being details that are exclusive to the actual flower that she/he observed.					
drawing an ordinary object with careful observation	Student’s drawing shows detail that makes it look more like a real flower than like a symbolic flower.					
craftsmanship	Student’s drawing shows care in the way that the marks are made with a sharp pencil, in a deliberate way.					
	Student’s drawing shows care in the way that and there are little or no smudge marks on the paper.					

I spy with my eye,

 something



really
 big

round

light
 gray

teeny
 tiny

pointy

white

weird

soft

shiny

alive

dark

light

de-
tailed

close

far

away

flat



cut on
dotted lines,
as carefully
as possible

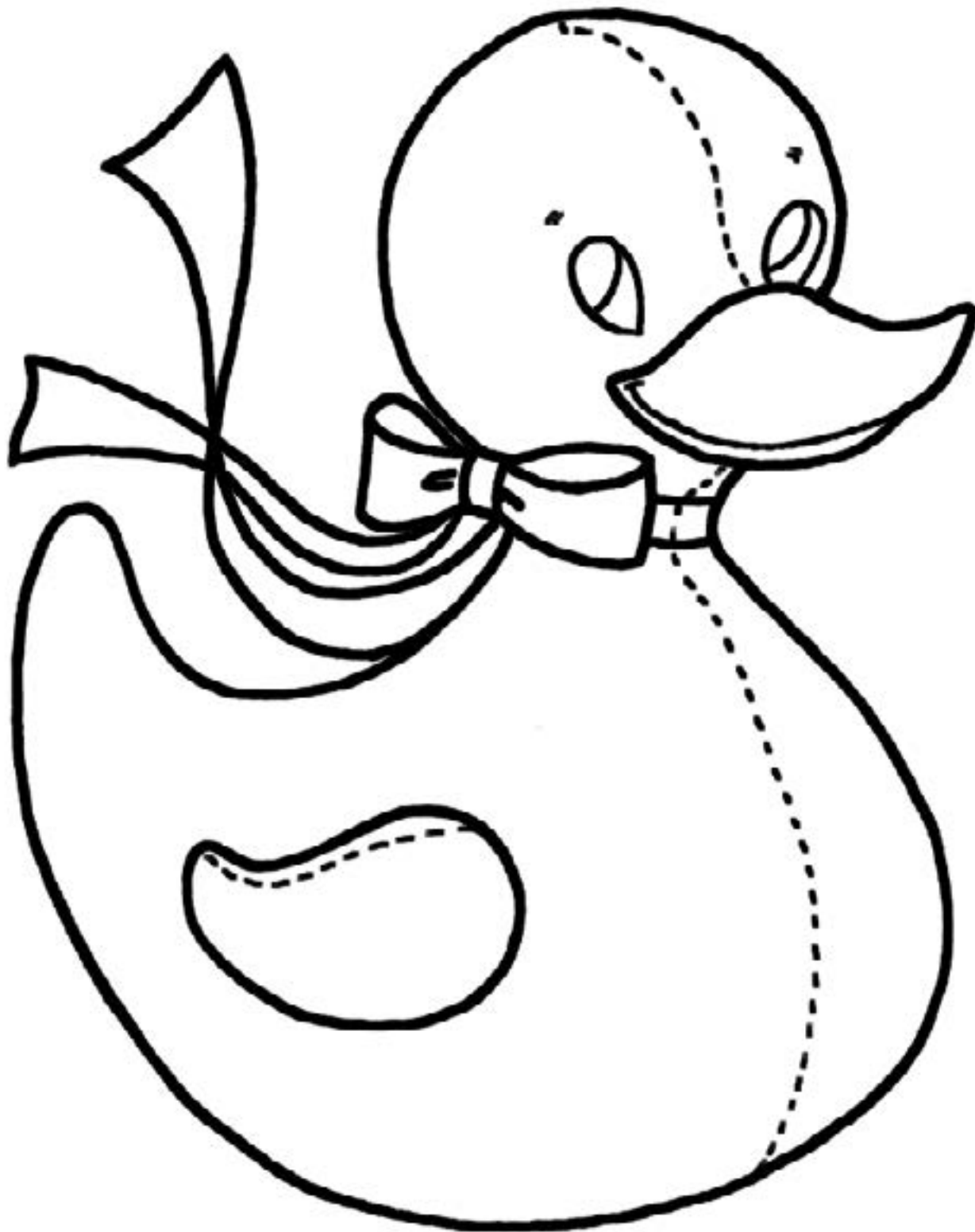
CLUES:

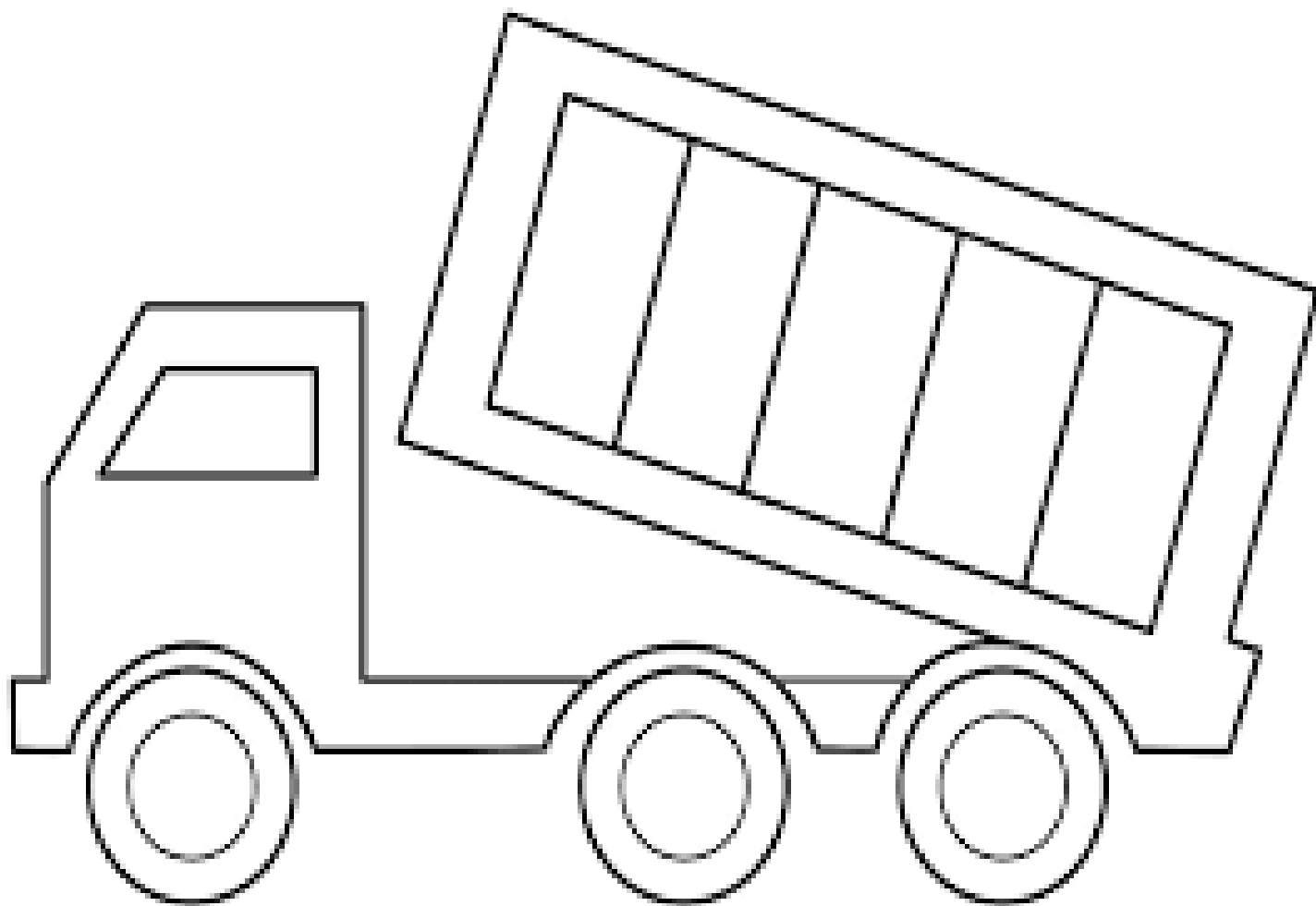
Look for and cover....

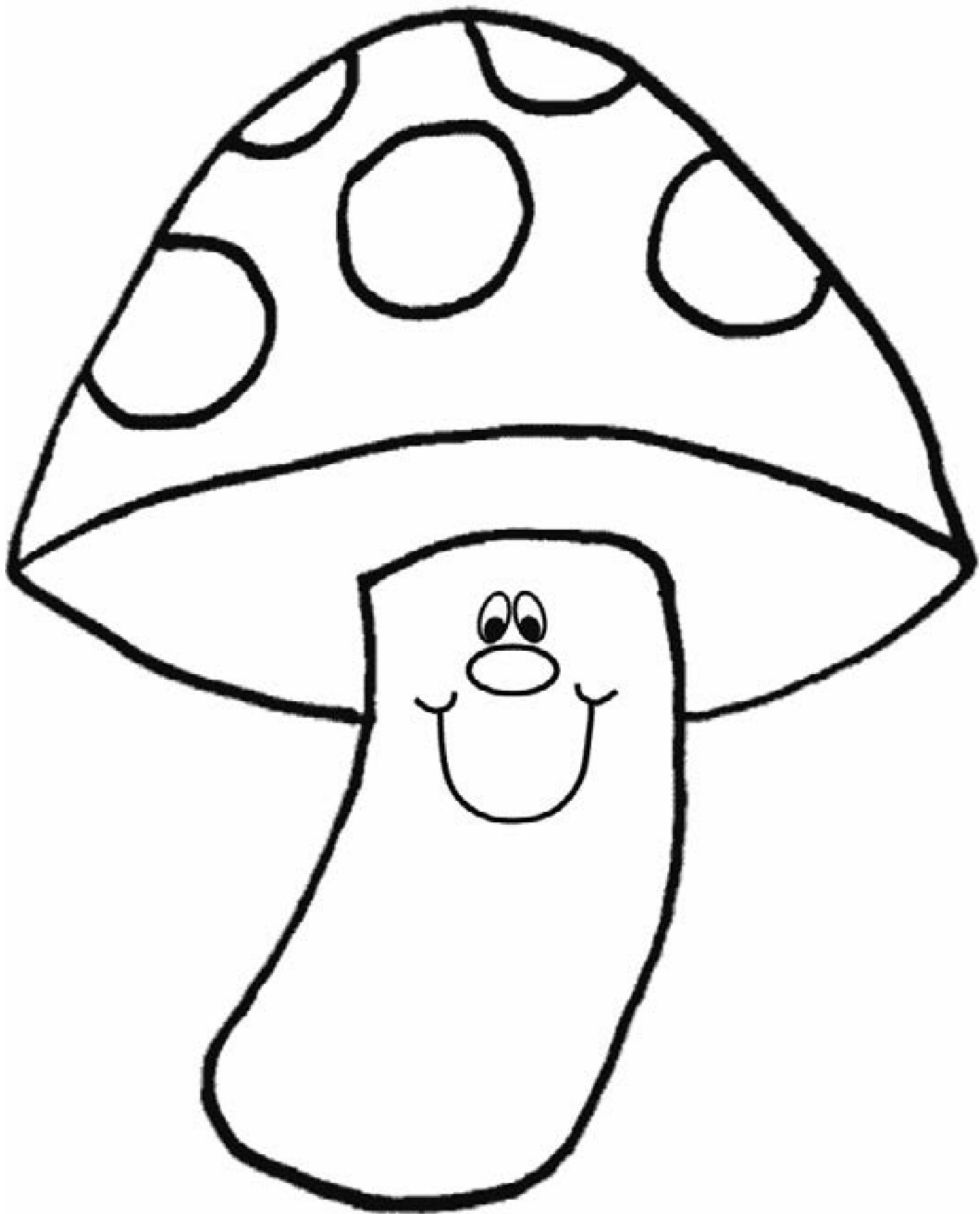
- someone that looks angry
- a rainbow
- a resting dog
- the darkest area of the artwork
- a sphere
- some nails
- wrinkled clothes
- a bell
- an angel's wing
- a scale
- curly hair
- an hourglass
- a window with symbols on it
- flowers in a girl's hair
- a sword
- a hammer
- a boat
- a banner in the sky
- the shore line
- the lightest part of the drawing
- a jar with a fancy lid
- a shield
- the ocean

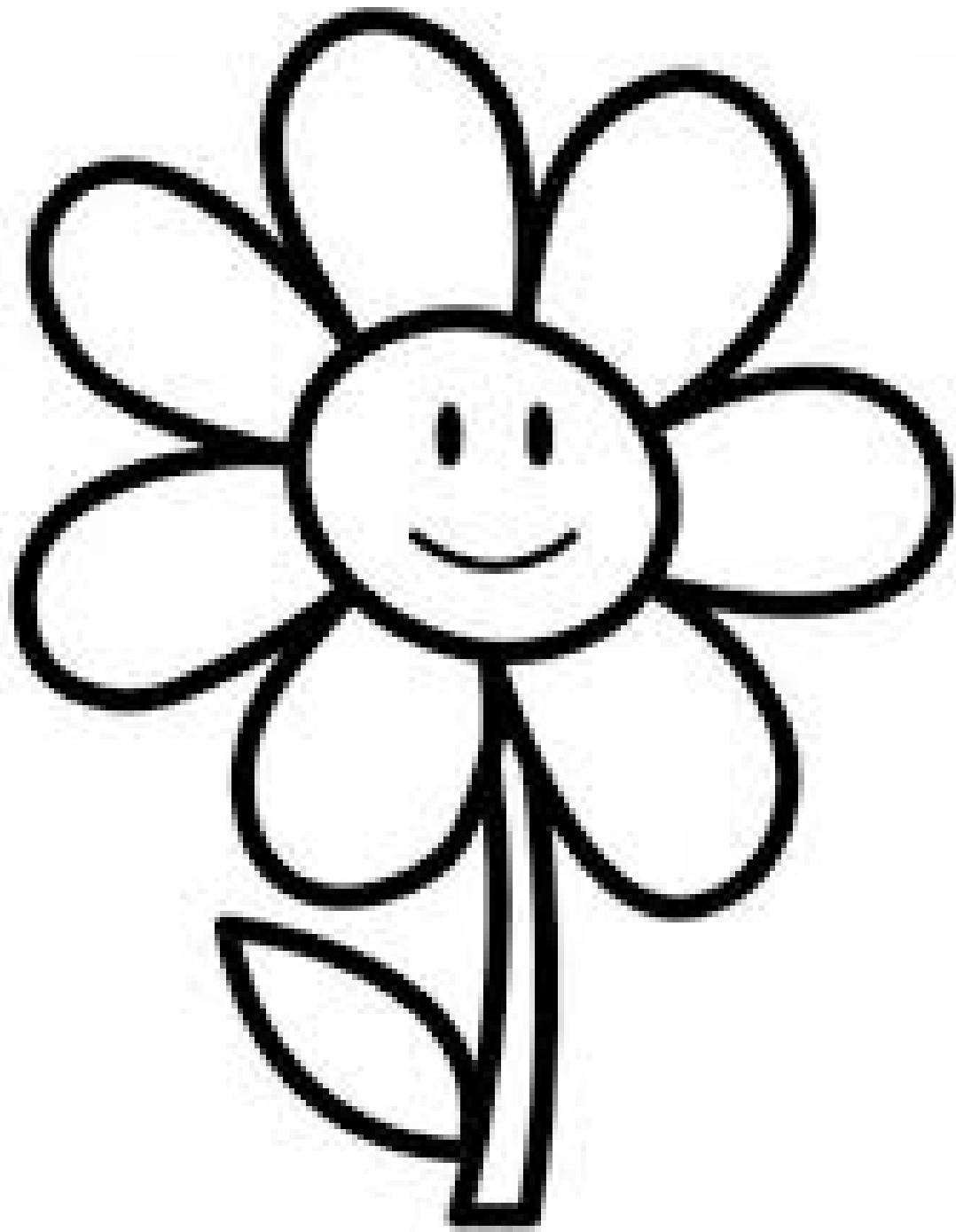


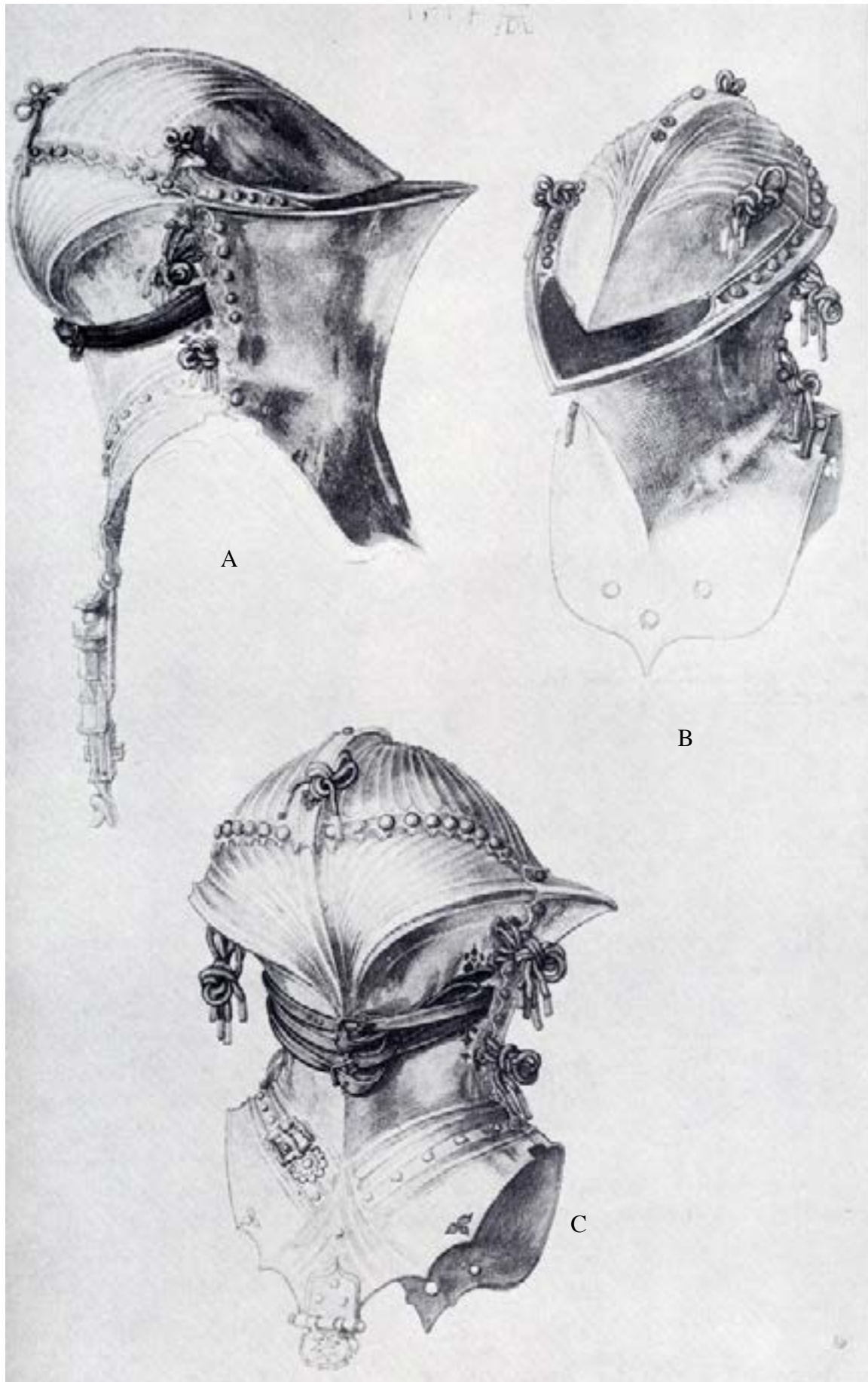
Durer, *Melancholia*











Durer, Side , Front and Back View of a Helmut

Name _____ Period _____

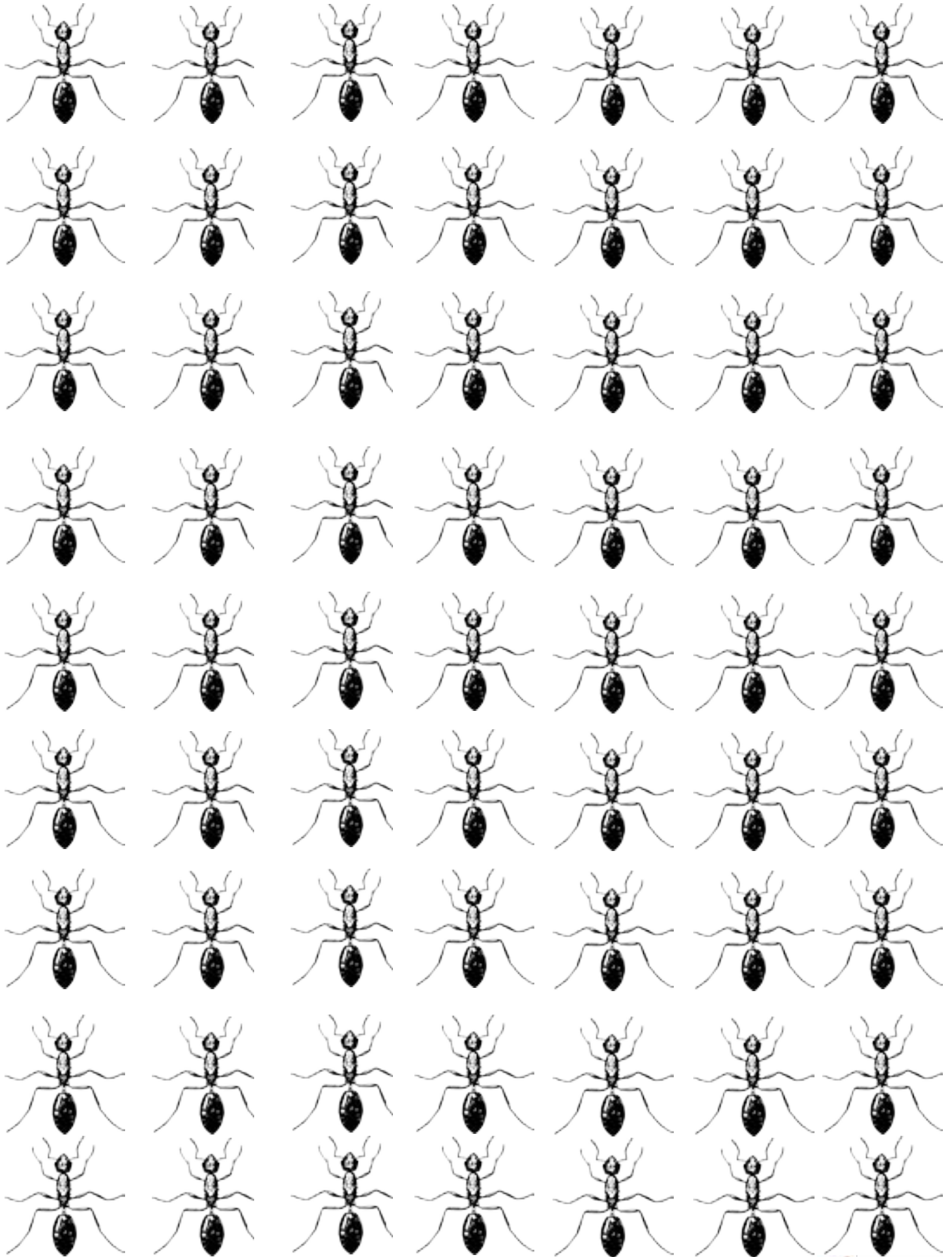
Looking at the picture of Durer's, *Side, Front and Back View of a Helmet*, choose one of the helmets and circle it. Now imagine you are an ant that happens to be crawling on that helmet you circled for the first time. Tell about that experience below by reading and finishing the following writing prompts.

"I am an ant crawling on the surface of helmet ____ (letter A, B or C). This is what I see and what it feels like to walk around on this helmet..."

"My favorite part is....because..."

"The things I see seem to be made of..."

"I wish I could be a human and wear this helmet because..."



VERBAL ASSESSMENT RUBRIC Grades K-1

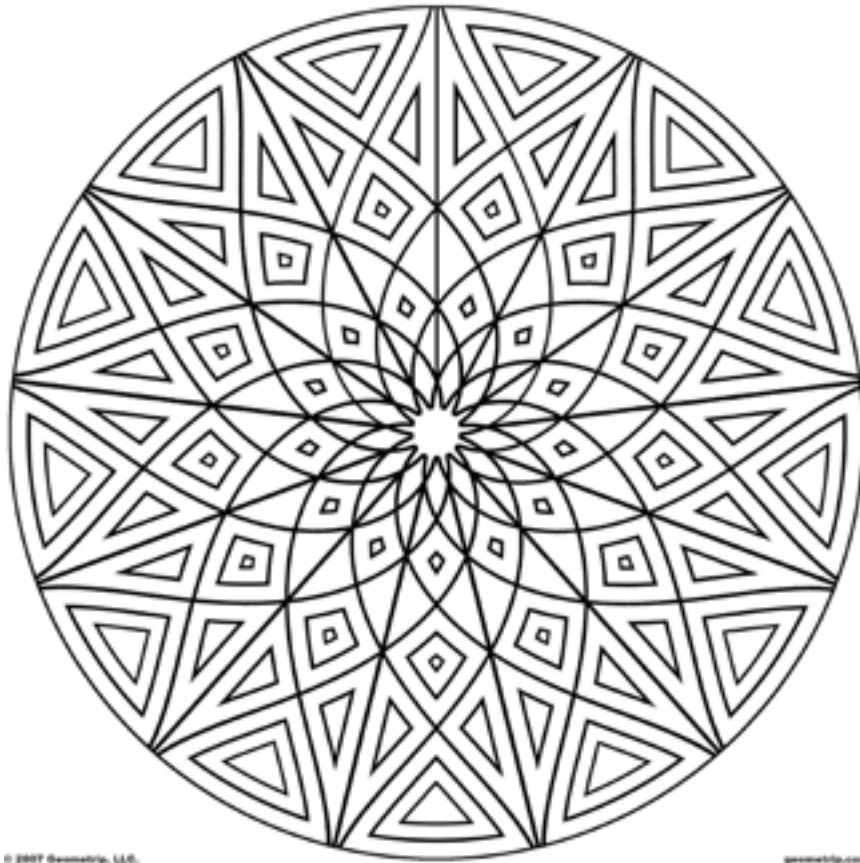
Student name _____ Period _____

OBJECTIVE	CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
Practice careful observation	Student verbally shows evidence through description of one of the helmets that she/he has thoughtfully observed and described what she/he is seeing.					
Seeking out described detail within a complex art image	Student shows evidence of imagining being an ant and crawling on the surface of the helmet.					
Describing observation orally/verbally	Student has verbally described the experience of what an ant would see, feel and possibly think about while crawling on one of the helmets in the drawings.					

WRITING ASSESSMENT RUBRIC Grades 2-5

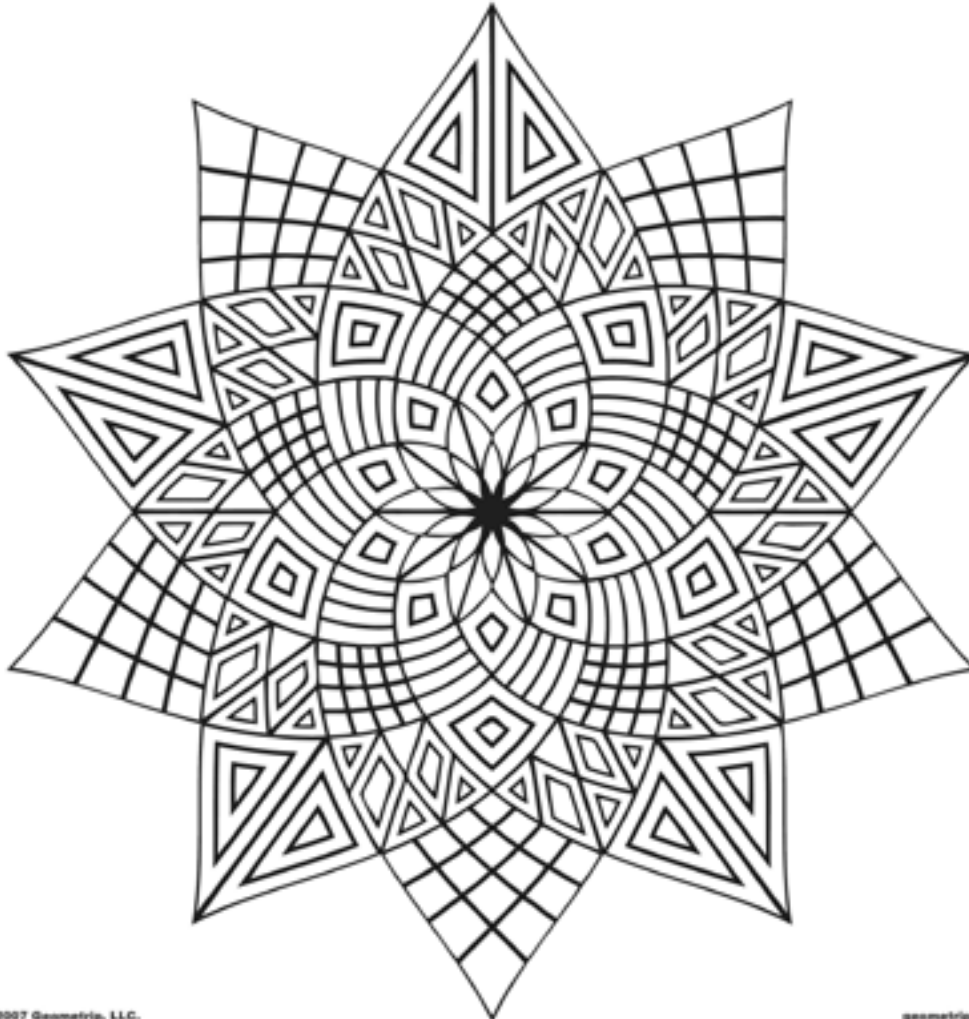
Student name _____ Period _____

OBJECTIVE	CRITERIA	1	2	3	4	5
Practice careful observation	Student writing shows evidence through description of one of the helmets that she/he has thoughtfully observed and written about what she/he is seeing.					
Seeking out described detail within a complex art image	Student shows evidence of addressing each of the writing prompts and applying her/himself to the process of imagining and writing about it.					
Describing observation orally/verbally	Student has either verbally described and/or read aloud the experience described in the prompts .					
Writing about observation in a personal way	Writing is written from an ants point of view.					



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