

Art in the Shadows

Create silhouettes with any age level, and prepare for an eeriness that's only revealed in the dark

(art + science)

Prior to photography, one of the few ways a person might have of retaining a loved one's likeness was to trace the shadow of their profile. Cut from black paper or filled with ink, these shadow portraits became known as "silhouettes," named for a French treasurer known for penny-pinching. They were a very popular and inexpensive alternative in the 18th and 19th centuries for those who couldn't afford to have an artist paint a portrait. Even when photography became widespread, the silhouette illustration continued to be a popular technique for books, especially children's literature, because it was easy and inexpensive to print.

In the early 20th century, silhouette animation became one of the first forms of animated short features, a type of stop motion film incorporating jointed cut-outs filmed frame by frame. It continues to be internationally popular to this day, with many different stylizations and computer-aided approaches.

The stark contrast and the half-hidden mystery of a silhouette is a natural attraction for students. As a lesson illustrating positive and negative spatial relationships or to set the mood for Halloween and Dia de los Muertos, here's an idea for silhouettes with a built-in surprise ... they glow in the dark.

GRADES 3-12 Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.



Materials (for prepping surface)

Speedball Night Glo Acrylic Screenprinting Ink, 8 oz jar (44263-1005); share one jar across class

Elmer's White Foamboard, 3/16" thick, 16" x 20" sheet, package of 3 (13228-1028); share 2 packages across class

Blick Premier Snap-Off Knife (57537-1001); one knife for cutting foamboard

Blick Aluminum Non-Stick Ruler, 24" (56014-1024); one for cutting foamboard



For Paper Cut-Out Silhouettes:

Blick Construction Paper, Black, package of 50 sheets, 9" x 12" (11409-2003); need one sheet per student

Elmer's Glue-All, 4 oz, (23887-1004); need one per student

Maped Zenoa Fit Kids Scissors, 5" pointed (57657-1015)

Optional:

Jolly Superstick Colored Pencils, assorted sets (20349-)

Sargent Art Construction Paper Crayons, 16-color set (67824-1016)

Creativity Street Sequin Mix, 4 oz (60718-1004)

For Painted Silhouettes:

Blick Premium Grade Tempera, Black, pint (00011-2006)

Blick Matte Acrylic, Black, 8 oz (00727-2025)

DaVinci Fit for School and Hobby Brushes, Size 4 Round (06275-1004)

For Drawn Silhouettes:

Alvin Penstix Marking Pens, assorted sizes, Black (20710-)

Blick Studio Drawing Pencils, 6B (22220-2061)

Derwent Charcoal Pencils, Dark (20313-1003)

Preparation

1. Cut foamboard into 8" x 10" pieces using a utility knife and metal ruler.

Process

1. Apply Night Glo to foamboard pieces. Foamboard is coated on either side so it is less absorbent than paper, or canvas. Ink will stay on the surface and produce a strong, bright glow.
2. Silhouettes can be created in a variety of ways:



Paper Cut-out Silhouettes

Cut shapes from black construction paper and glue them to the foamboard. In the example above, sugar skull shapes were cut from a template (see page 3) and decorated with colored pencils and sequins. The scrap paper was used to create patterns in the background.

When the lights are on, it's colorful and bright. In the dark, it's a spooky silhouette!



Painted Silhouettes

Create a painting on the foamboard surface using a strongly opaque paint, such as Blick Matte Acrylic or Blick Premium Tempera. Use black paint only to create a silhouette in the dark or light. As an option, create the painting with multiple colors so that it's bright and colorful in the light. Opaque paint will create a silhouette when the lights are out, no matter what the color.

Remember to leave plenty of white (negative) space so the image will glow.



Drawing Media

With this method, varying levels of shading can be achieved by stippling, hatching and cross-hatching. Use just about any drawing media: markers, dip pens, soft graphite, oil pastels, or charcoal.

Remember to leave plenty of white (negative) space so the image will glow.

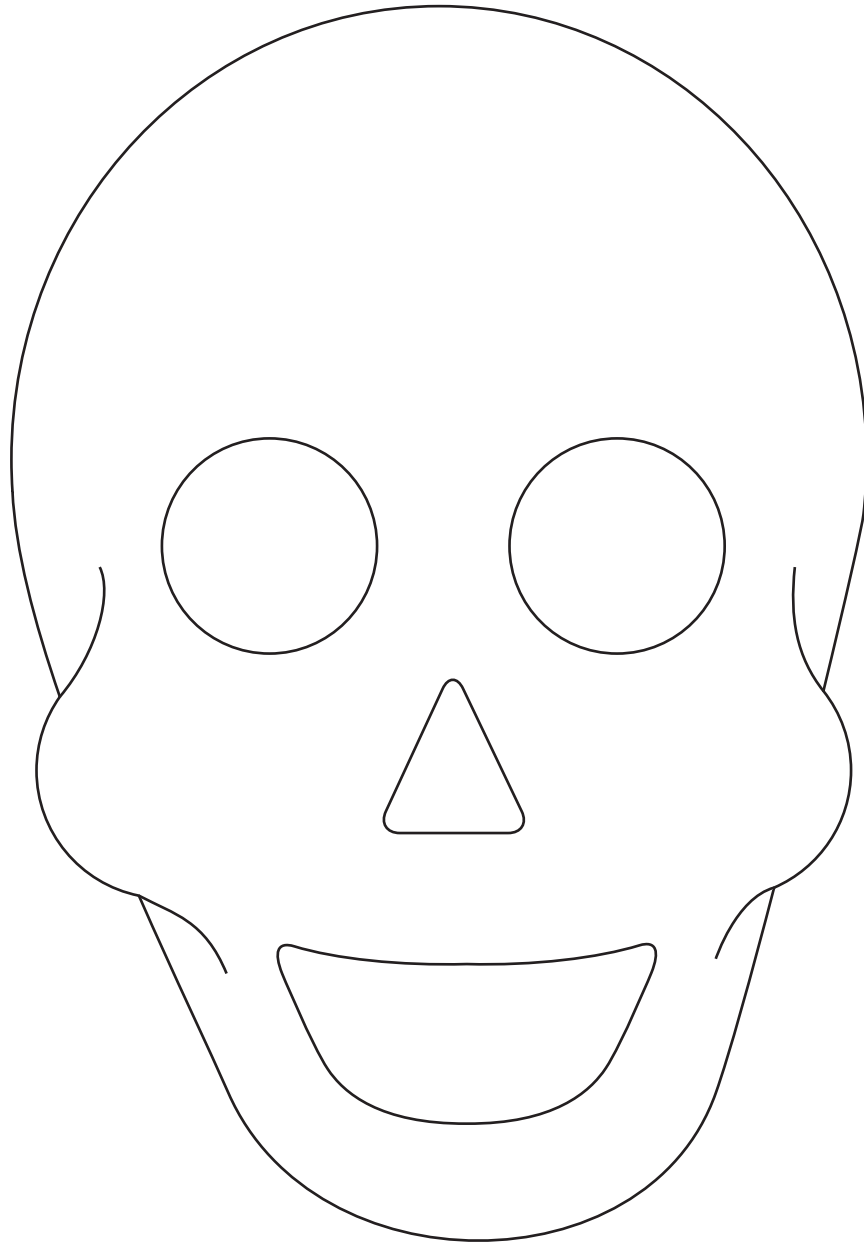
National Core Arts Standards - Visual Arts

Creating

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Connecting

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



Reproducible "sugar skull" template for paper cut-out