

Get Some Perspective:

Representing Three-dimensional Depth in a Two-dimensional Art Work



Grades 6–12

Using AIT Product

■ *Successful Art Techniques*, program 4, “Perspective”

Overview

For centuries, artists have used specific techniques to represent three-dimensional depth on a two-dimensional surface. We call these collective techniques “perspective.” This lesson introduces art students to the techniques of perspective and helps them both to use these techniques and to identify the techniques in a finished art work.

Objectives

- Recognize different types of perspective techniques.
- Explore the processes for creating one-, two-, and three-point perspective as well as aerial perspective.
- Implement perspective techniques in an original work of art.
- Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different perspective techniques.

Learning Standards

National Visual Art Standards; (Kennedy Center ArtsEdge <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/teach/standards.cfm>)

For grades 5–12

1. Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes
2. Using knowledge of structures and functions
3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
4. Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures
5. Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others

Vocabulary

atmospheric perspective, also referred to as
aerial perspective

horizon line

linear perspective

overlap

parallel lines

perpendicular lines

plane

scale

three-dimensional

two-dimensional

vanishing point

Preparation

Materials Needed

AIT video *Successful Art Techniques*,
“Perspectives”—CUE to the beginning of the
tape, right after the opening title sequence

Planning Notes

Gather a collection of photographs or magazine
clippings of architecture, street scenes, land-
scapes, enough for at least one per student
group.

Have a projection system available and the fol-
lowing images:

- pre-Renaissance two-dimensional art that shows little use of perspective—such as Byzantine mosaics, Egyptian tomb paintings, or an illuminated manuscript
- post-Renaissance works that utilize linear perspective and atmospheric perspective
- three or more Cubist paintings (Picasso, Braque)
- Da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*

Time

This project will take about two 40-minute class-
room periods.

Procedure—Day 1

Introduce Topic: Tell students that they will be learning some of the techniques that artists use to represent three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface.

Pre-Viewing Activity

Distribute photographs/clippings to student groups and ask them to identify the objects in the foreground, middle ground, and back-ground. Circulate the photographs to new groups so that groups can compare their observations. As a class, discuss the images and the observations of each group. Then, pose this question: “How does the artist communicate the relative position of objects within a two-dimensional frame? What is the language that the artist uses to communicate this information to us, visually?” Direct the discussion to include the scale of similar objects, overlap, the placement on the frame—pointing out that objects near the bottom tend to be interpreted as closer.

Introduce other concepts as appropriate: contrast and color or linear perspective. The purpose of this discussion is to focus learners’ attention on what they already know and to heighten their visual awareness so that they are prepared for the discussion about the techniques which will be demonstrated in the video.

Finally, ask students to record in their journals what they already know about how artists use techniques to represent distance—a collection of techniques we call “perspective.” Keep journals handy, so students can jot down new information that they glean from watching the video.

Video

Tell students to jot down new information about perspective as they are viewing the video. After Brent discusses the landscape painting, PAUSE

the video. REWIND to find a spot where the painting is full screen. Review the atmospheric perspective techniques that this artist uses. Show the pre-Renaissance works on a projector. Compare the techniques in the California landscape to the techniques to pre-Renaissance works such as Byzantine mosaics, illuminated manuscripts, or Egyptian tomb paintings. Let students discover that many of the techniques in the California landscape were not used by early artists. Speculate on why artists did not use these techniques that seem so obvious to us today. Explain that the purpose of the work and the approach of the artist could be different, as Medieval and Egyptian artists were really artisans and that the works show objects as a group of symbols or a narrative, not as a realistic representation or any personal expression of the artist. The use of scale in Egyptian tomb paintings often denotes the importance of an individual rather than his or her actual size or how near individuals are in the composition. Overlap is one technique that you will find even in ancient works, though the contrast, scale, and color techniques of atmospheric perspective are often not used. Perhaps the artisans were not skilled in these techniques, or perhaps they had different objectives in their art.

Next, show some examples of Cubist works and consider how in these works we see the result of the artist's intentional rejection of the principles of perspective. Point out that the artist chooses to display several planes of an object side-by-side, but the planes are depicted as flat forms intersecting, incomplete, perhaps even confusing. Leave one of Picasso's Cubist works on the screen and invite students to discuss the work in groups, keeping in mind this quote:

“I paint objects as I think them,
not as I see them.”
—Pablo Picasso

Finally, reassure students that Picasso's choice to paint abstract planes rather than to represent his

subjects more realistically is not due to any lack of technical expertise as a painter. In fact, he was recognized as a child prodigy. His mother reports that his first word was “Piz! Piz!”—the shortened form of the Spanish word for pencil, indicating his early interest in art.

Group Work or Homework

Reference Picasso's works prior to 1902 at the The State Hermitage Museum (www.hermitagemuseum.org) in St. Petersburg, Russia, or The National Gallery of Art (www.nga.gov) in Washington, D.C., for examples. Either visit these sites in advance to find appropriate works to show the class, or assign student groups or individuals to explore more as a homework assignment.

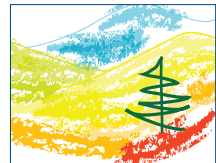
Procedure—Day 2

Review/Reflection

Discuss Picasso's technical abilities as evidenced by his early works and whether knowing about the artist's abilities and his attitudes about perspective as part of his exploration of cubism changes the way students feel about his more modernist works.

Introduce New Topic

Focus students' attention once more on the video, explaining that the final section deals with the techniques of linear perspective.



“We don't see things as they are, we see them as we are.”

—Anaïs Nin

Pre-Viewing Activity

As they are viewing, assign students to take notes about each type of linear perspective. Some learners may prefer to sketch out notes, and this should be encouraged by both suggesting they consider sketching their notes and pausing early into the next suggestion and allowing students to share notes so they can learn from each other's style of recording information.

Video

Pause after one-point, two-point, and three-point linear perspective are explained. Allow students to make notes, ask questions or examine the images used earlier to consider the particular technique used by the artist to render the perspective.

Group Work

Allow students to view historic works of art to analyze the type of perspective techniques used by the artist. Use the discussion questions below for group discussion. Distribute the atmospheric, one-point, two-point, and three-point perspective handouts as a visual reference to enhance recall of the techniques presented in the video.

The Last Supper (Leonardo Da Vinci) is, perhaps, the greatest example of one-point perspective. If you can find a good quality image of this work, it makes an excellent example to begin the discussion.

1. Why did the artist choose this technique?
2. How does this technique engage the viewer and enhance the message of the work?
3. What other techniques of atmospheric perspective can be identified in this famous work?

Homework

Use the worksheets to assign students to draw a cube in one-point, two-point, and three-point perspective, and to choose a linear perspective technique and compose a work of any subject and/or medium they choose. Ask them to write a short statement explaining why they chose the linear perspective technique, specifically how the technique helps them to convey the image, set a mood, or symbolize something within the work.

Assessment

Individual Assessment

Use the rubric at the end of this chapter to score the worksheets.

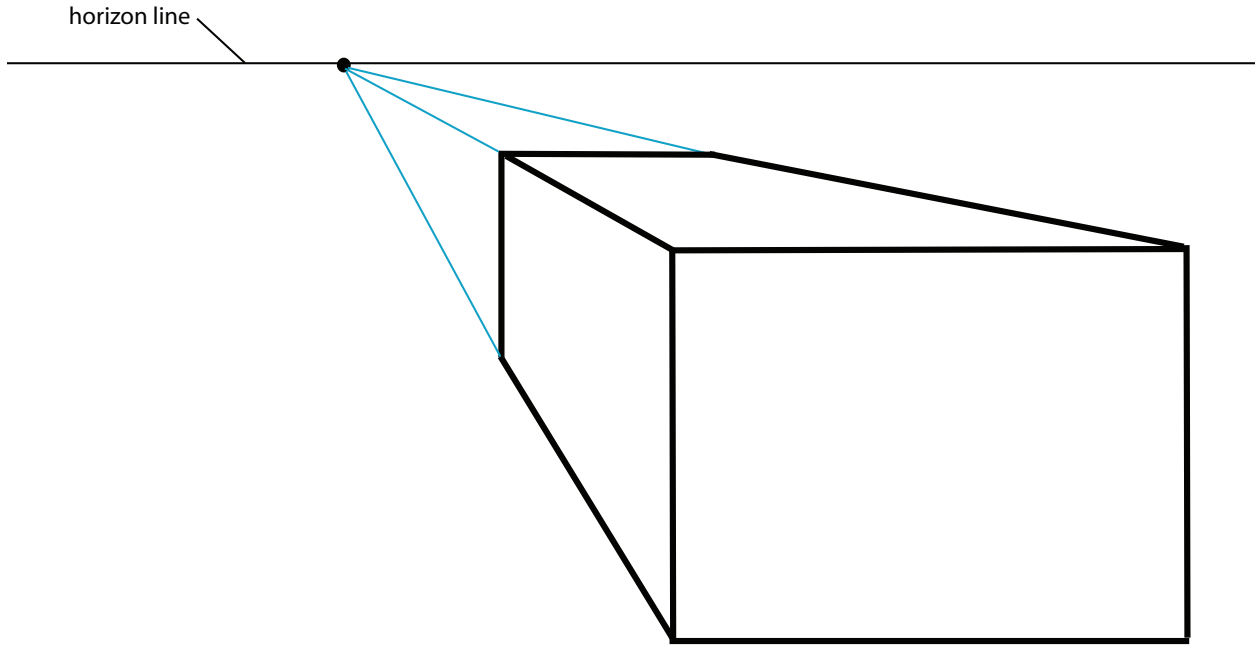
Group Assessment

Have groups report their answers to the three discussion questions and give one-third credit for each question answered rationally.

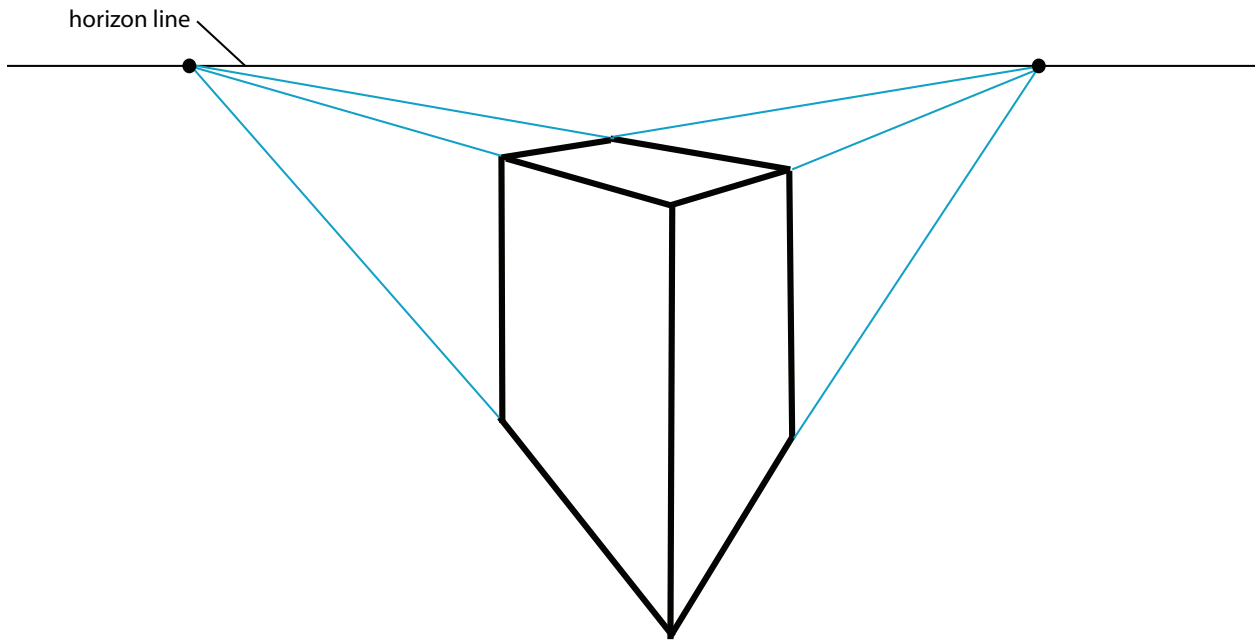
You may choose either an individual assessment or group assessment or both. Include at least two different types of assessments if one is a quiz or test. Assessments in addition to tests can include review of student journals, a rubric for assessing projects, observations noted by the instructor, interviews with students, presentations, written reports, and/or student demonstrations. Encourage students to critique their work and to revise.

Perspective Handout A

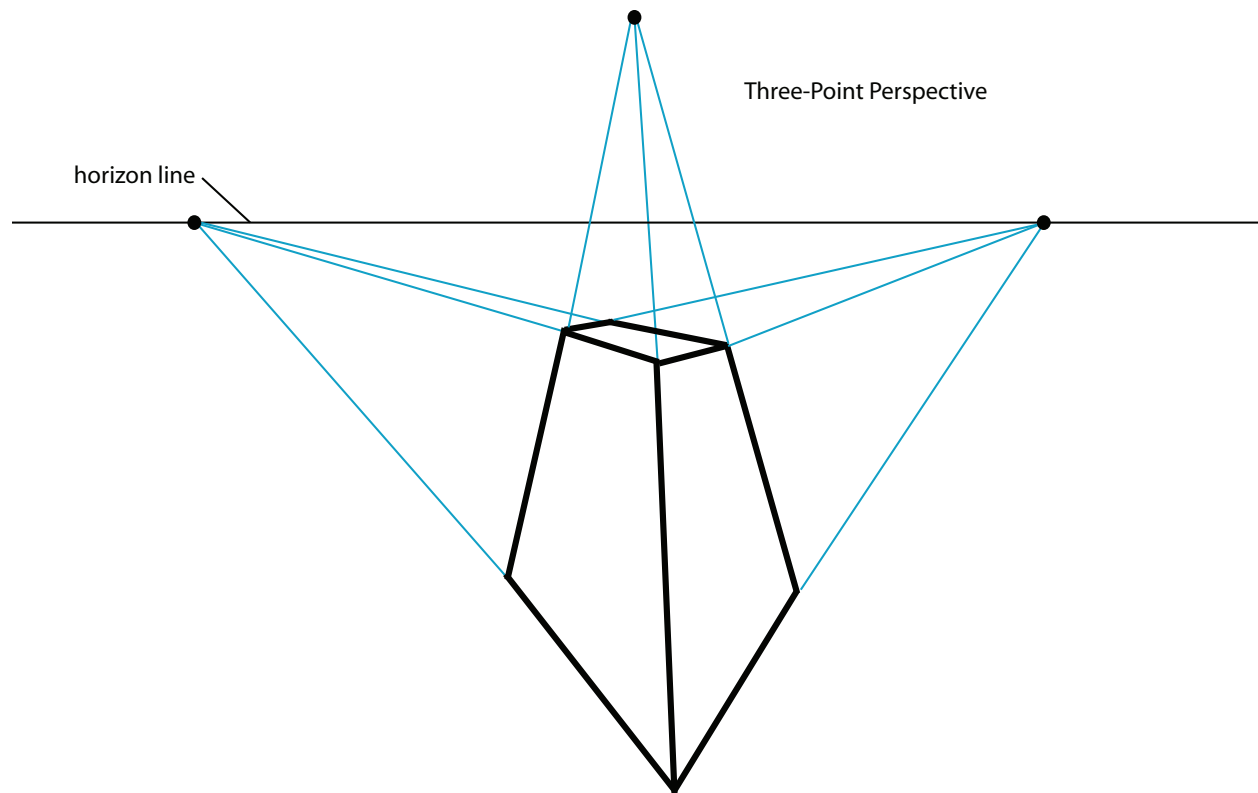
One-Point Perspective



Two-Point Perspective

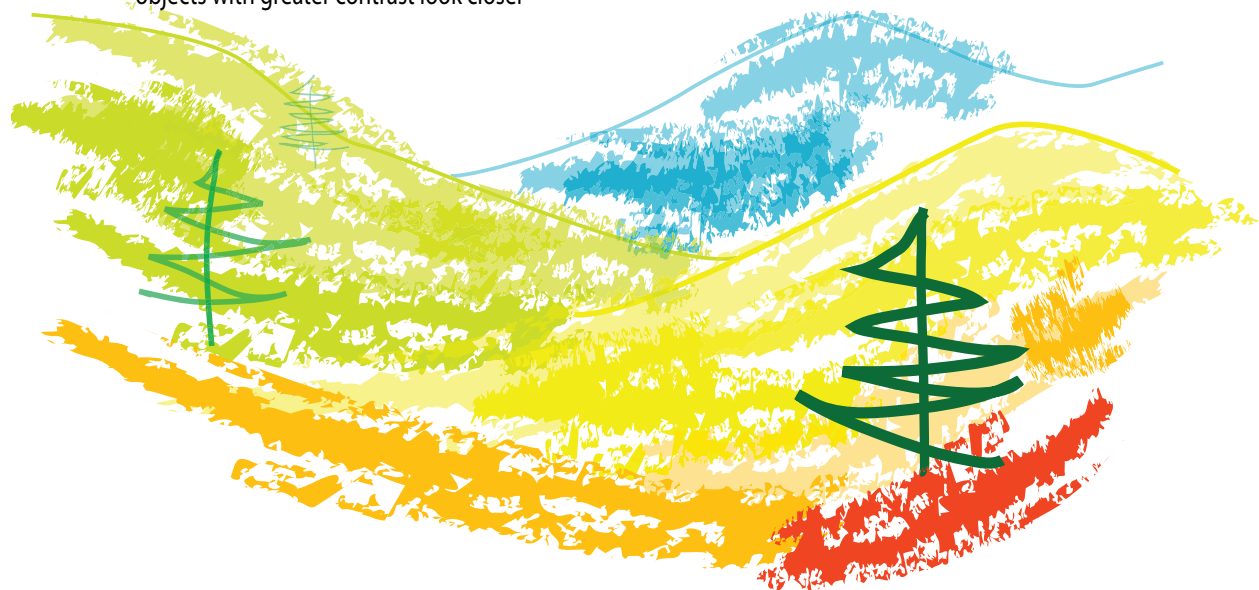


Perspective Handout B



Aerial or Atmospheric Perspective:

- objects lower on the surface appear closer
- overlapped objects indicate position
- cooler colors tend to recede; warmer colors tend to come forward
- objects with greater contrast look closer

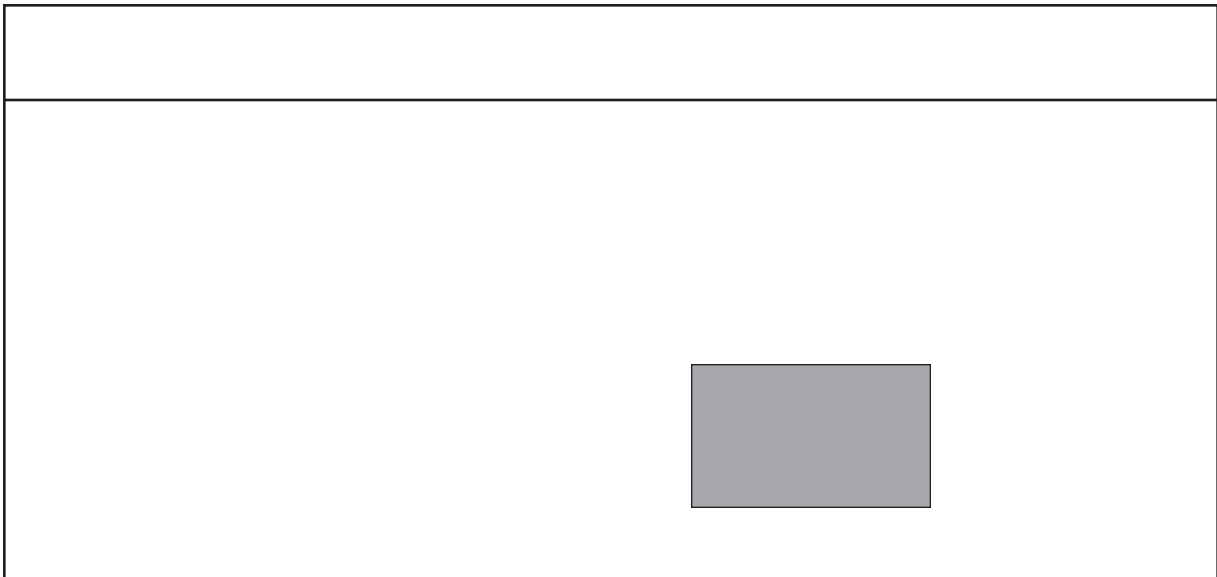


Worksheet A: Perspective

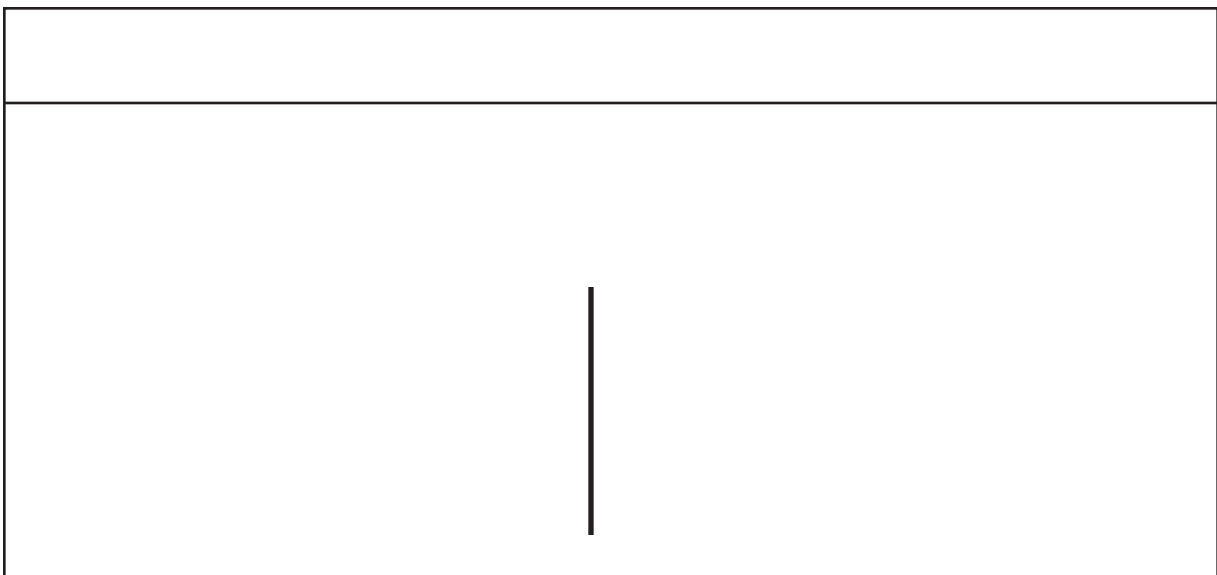
Student Name: _____

Use the hand-outs on perspective as guides and examples while you practice using perspective techniques.

1. Make a point along the horizon line below; then use one-point perspective to draw the side and top of the grey rectangle to make a box.



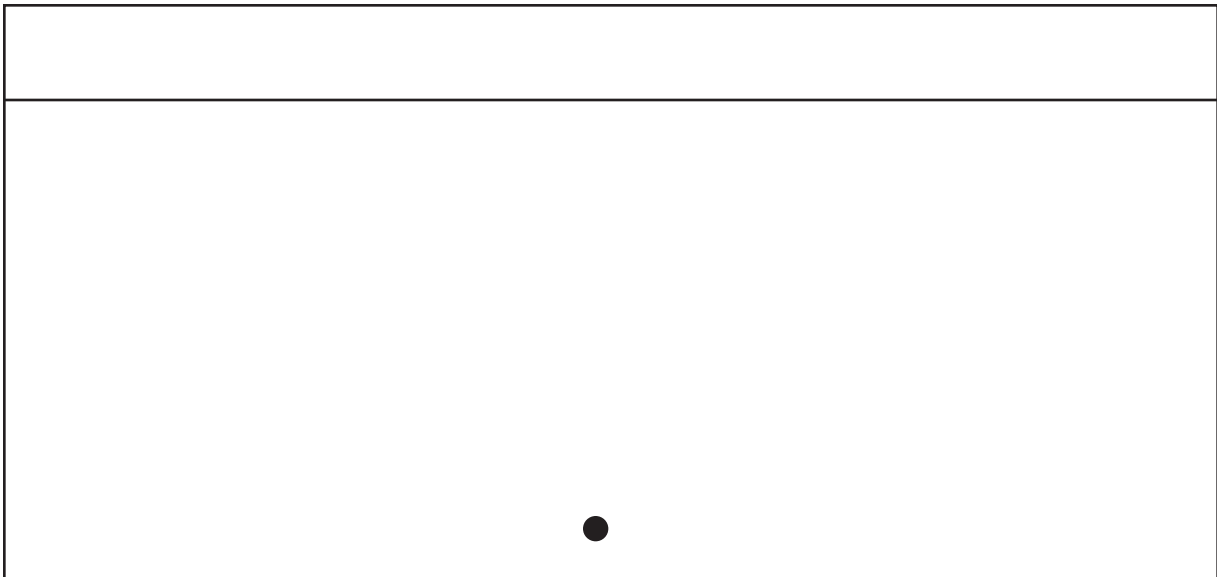
2. Make two points along the horizon line below (make sure one point is left of the vertical line, and the other one is right of it); then use two-point perspective to draw both sides and the top of a box so that the vertical line becomes the front edge of the box.



Worksheet B: Perspective

Student Name: _____

3. Make two points on the horizon line spread wide apart and a third point at the top of the page. Starting at the point shown—draw three lines: one to each point; then determine where the ends for the sides of the box will be and draw two lines from the base lines up to the third point at the top of the page. Finally, decide how tall you want to make the box, and draw four lines for the top of the box, two each to the two opposite points on the horizon line.



4. Choosing one of the linear perspective techniques above, compose an original composition on a separate piece of paper using pencil. On the lines below, give your work a title, indicate the perspective technique you decided to use and an explanation of how and why you chose to use this technique.

TITLE: _____

Perspective technique used: One-point Two-point Three-point

Worksheet Scoring Rubric

	Satisfactory 15 pts	Good 16–18 pts	Excellent 19–20 pts
1. One-point perspective	Student draws either the side walls or the top of the box, but not both. AND, student realizes that something does not look quite right, with or without prompting.	Student draws side walls and top of the box correctly.	Student draws the box well, and indicates he or she understands that the placement of the point impacts how the perspective looks.
2. Two-point perspective	Student draws sides or top correctly but not both; or student fails to make parallel vertical lines, but draws perspective lines correctly. Most importantly, student is aware that the mistakes are there even if he or she cannot correct them without help.	Student draws perspective lines and parallel vertical lines correctly.	Student draws the box well, and indicates that he or she understands that the placement of the points impacts the drawing. The student may do this intuitively, or by self-correcting.
3. Three-point perspective	Student completes some of the lines correctly and is aware that the drawing is not correct. He or she may seek help from the teacher or a peer.	Student completes a technically correct drawing with all lines drawn to the proper point.	Student draws the box well and indicates that he or she understands how the placement of the points impacts the overall look of the object.
4.1. Student composition	Student uses one- or two-point perspective to represent buildings, roads, fences adequately.	Student uses a technique along with organic shapes/lines or shading that create an interesting composition.	Student chooses a challenging subject or three-point perspective and draws the subject with technical skill, shading, texture, or organic forms and good composition.
4.2. Student explanation	Student correctly identifies the technique used and provides a reasonable explanation for using that technique in his or her work.	Student explanation and title show creativity, and the explanation demonstrates that he or she considered all techniques before choosing one.	Student explanation and title show creativity. The explanation demonstrates that the student selected a technique and subject that were challenging and that he or she clearly linked the choice of technique to the subject or the presentation of that subject.

Student score is calculated by adding points for each grading section with the resulting score being a percentage of 100. Best possible score is 100.