

Semiotics

[meaning through signs + symbols]

ART301

WITHOUT LANGUAGE, THOUGHT IS A VAGUE,
UNCHARTED NEBULA.
-FERDINAND DE SAUSSURE



Semiotics

The study of signs and how these signs are used in everyday communication.

A *sign* represents something which is not present.

SEMIOTICS

The study of signs and symbols especially the relations between written and spoken signs and their referents to the physical world or peoples' interpretations

Ferdinand
de Saussure
(1857 - 1913)

Saussure was a linguist not only of language but also of what is now more loosely referred to as semiotics. He wrote 'Course in General Linguistics' in 1916 which is one of his most famous works.



The Fathers of Semiotics



Charles
Sanders Peirce
(1839 - 1914)

Peirce was an American philosopher who came up with the Theory of Signs. He also was a founder of the idea of symbolic thinking. Today he is appreciated for his contributions to semiotics.

D E N O T A T I O N
What you see

Signs

When a signifier evokes a signified concept in someone's mind a sign has occurred. The relationship between a signifier and the signified is arbitrary. For example the word 'dog' has no relation to the concept of a dog. It's learned through language.

C O N N O T A T I O N
What you think

DOG

Signifier

A physical entity that evokes sounds, images or letters and carries or means. For example the written word 'dog' is a signifier but the concept it refers to is not.



Icon

An object that has a natural resemblance to the object it represents. It is recognizable and often described in its natural state.



Symbol

A signifier that has no physical resemblance to the object it refers to. It is learned through language.



Index

A signifier that has a physical resemblance to the object it refers to. It is learned through language.



Signified

A personal interpretation of a signifier. The idea or concept that exists in the mind. For example the concept of a dog is the signified when hearing the word 'dog'.

Paradigm

A group of words that are interchangeable and can all refer to the same signified.

Syntagm

A sequence of words that are learned through language and can all refer to the same signified.



Icon

direct resemblance



Index

points to; learned

tree

Word
as symbol

abstract representation



Symbol
of tree

Purpose

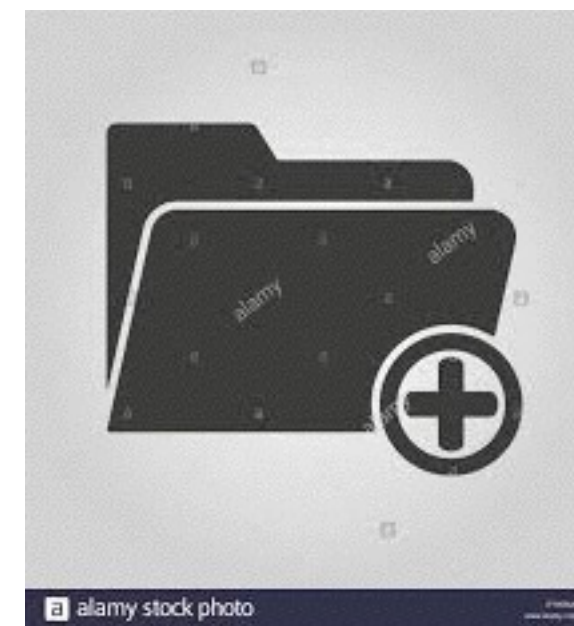
Warnings

Labels + Identification

Advertise/Sell

Information

Navigations (wayfinding)



Example:

1



Starbucks

Now try these

2



?

3



?

4



?

Starbucks



Cocacola



Oreo



McDonalds



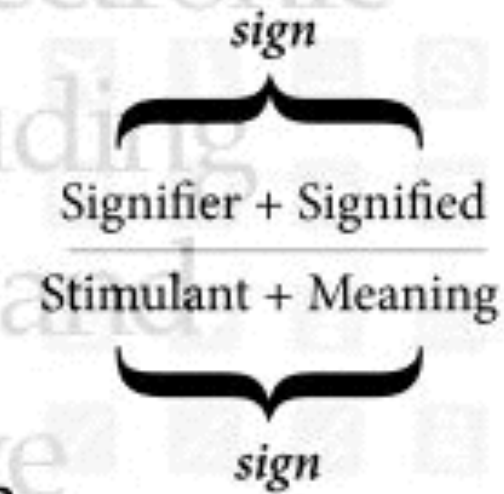
The Medium is the Message

A statement by Marshall

Signifier & Signified

Signifier: a symbol, sound, or image
(as a word) that represents an
underlying concept or meaning

Signified: a concept or meaning as
distinguished from the sign through
which it is communicated



Semiotics

In its simplest form, Semiotics can be described as the study of signs. Not signs as we normally think of signs, but signs in a much broader context that includes anything capable of standing for or representing a separate meaning.

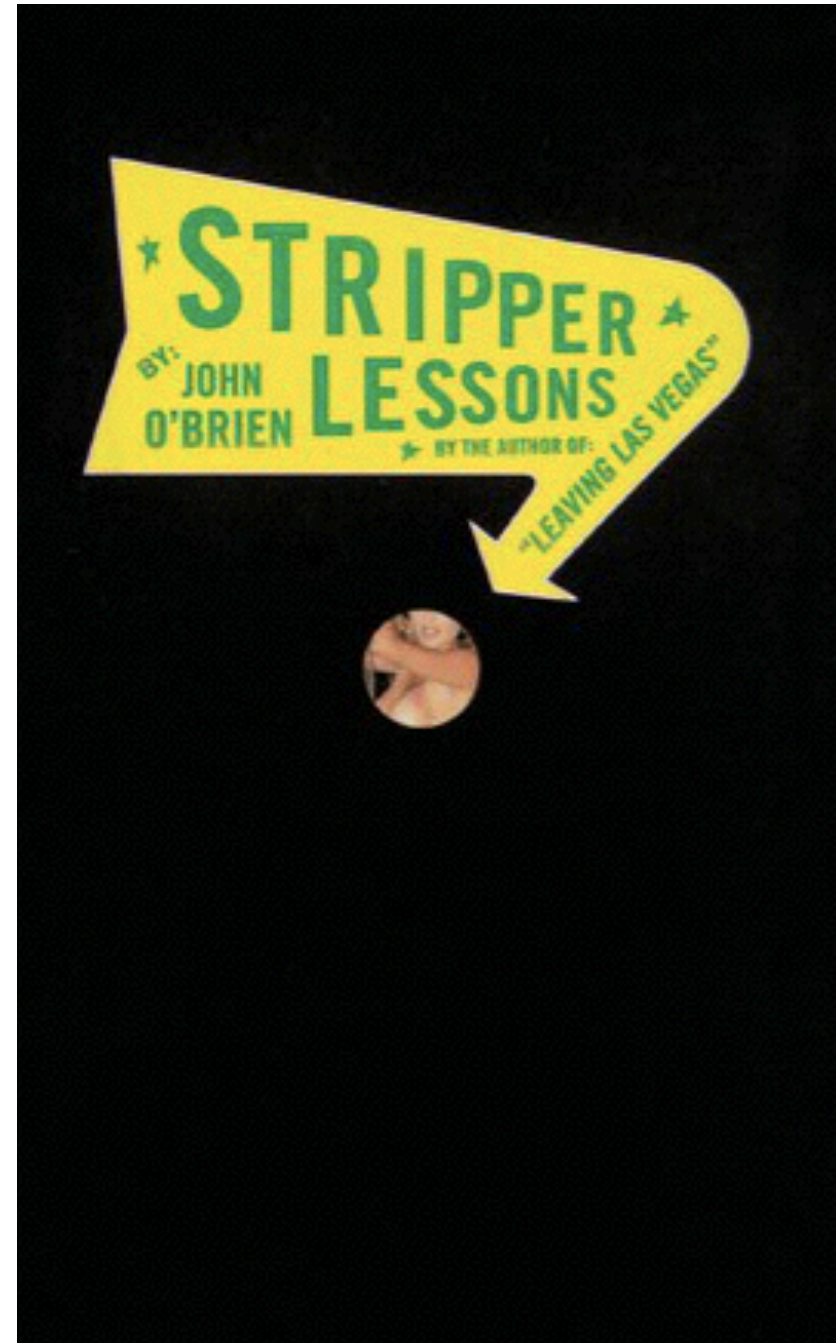
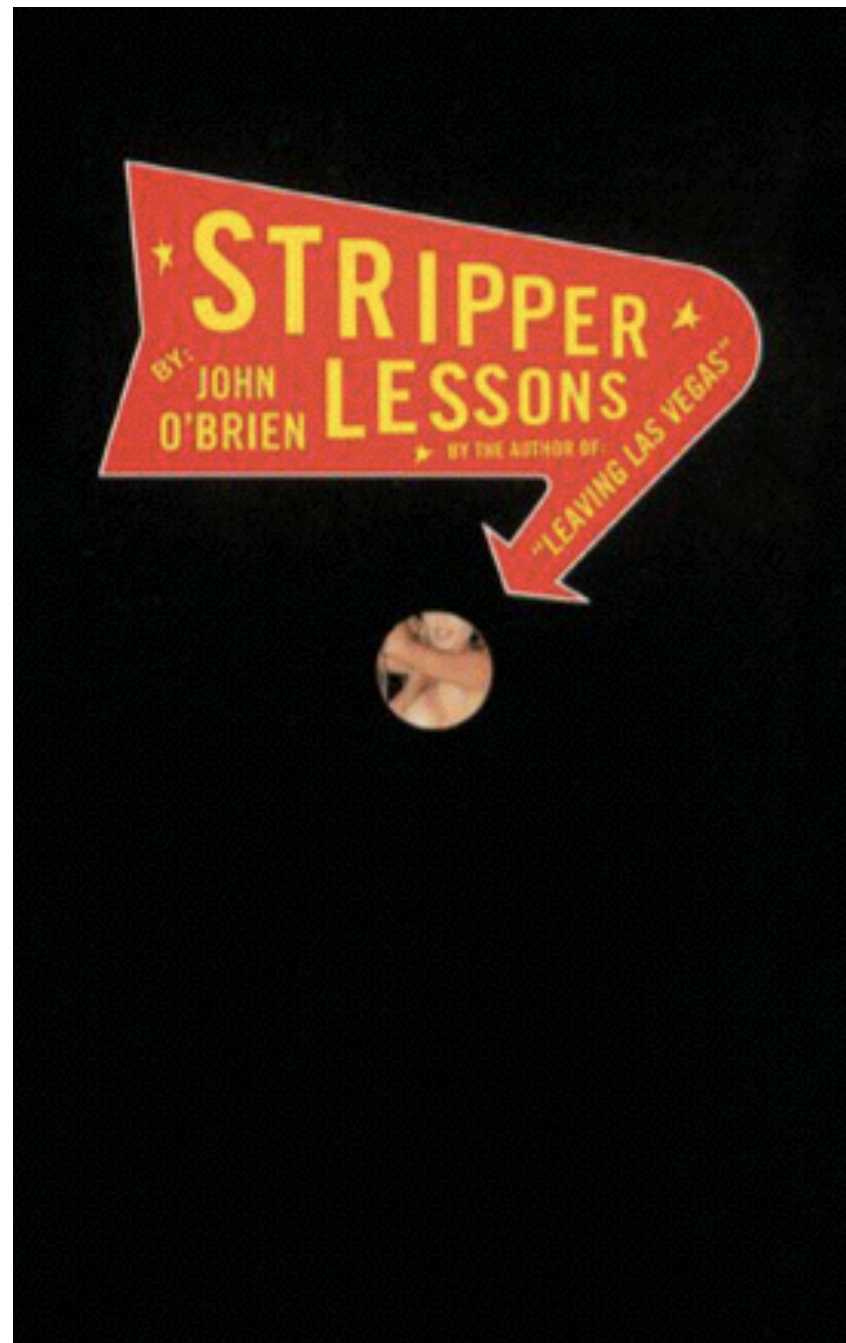
Visual Code

A nonverbal message that:

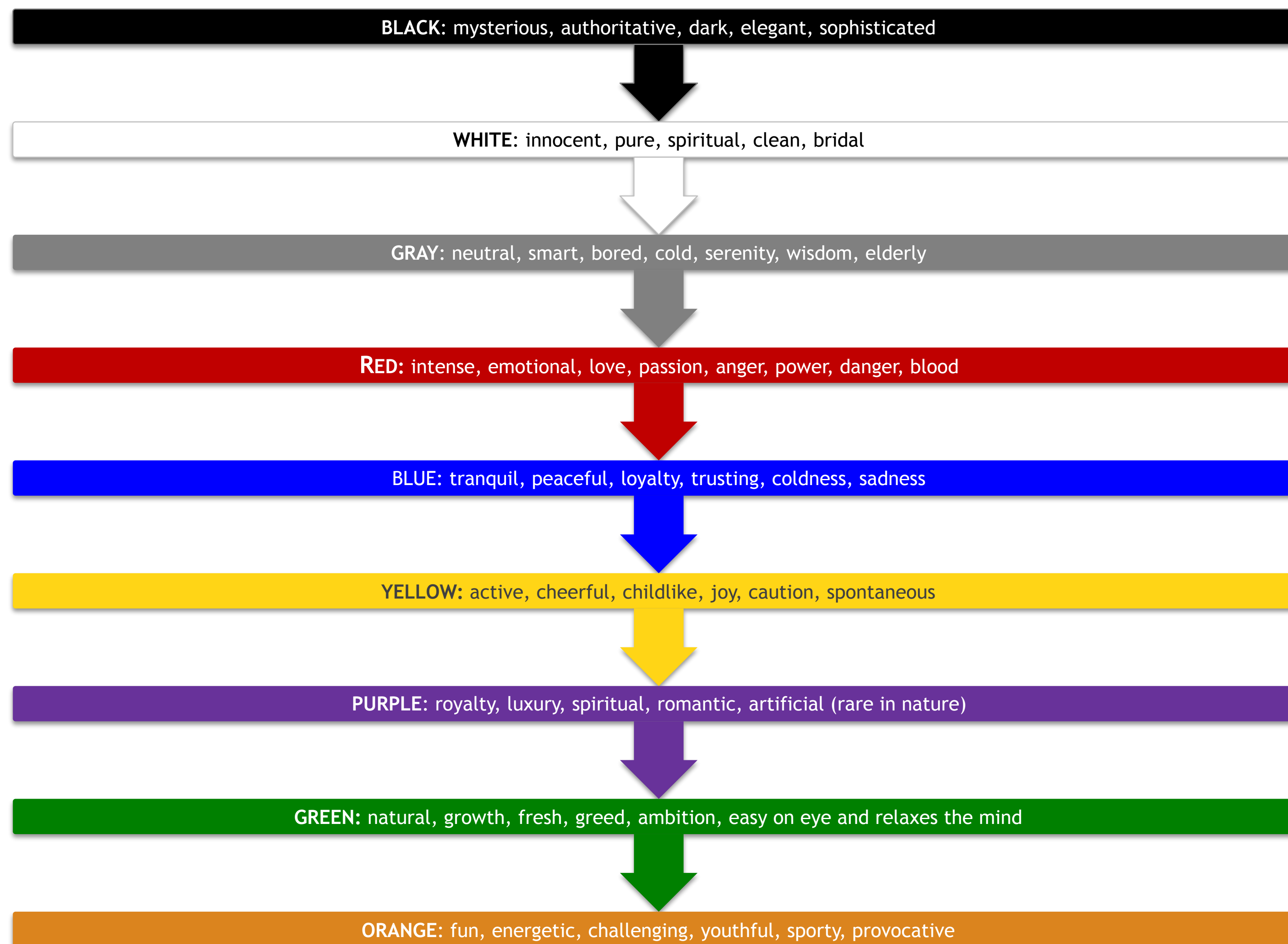
- sets the tone or mood
- creates meaning through contextual clues
- a “visual voice” to communicate a message



color can be a code that supports the content of the message



*Which book cover, by Paul Sahre,
has the most impact in conveying
passion, taboo & excitement?
Why?*



color can convey objective, subjective,
and emotional meaning in a powerful way



> YELLOW

> OPTIMISTIC AND YOUTHFUL
OFTEN USED TO GRAB
ATTENTION OF WINDOW
SHOPPERS



> RED

> ENERGY
INCREASES HEART RATE
CREATES URGENCY
OFTEN SEEN IN CLEARANCE
SALES



> BLUE

> CREATES THE SENSATION OF
TRUST AND SECURITY
OFTEN SEEN WITH BANKS AND
BUSINESSES



> GREEN

> ASSOCIATED WITH WEALTHY
THE EASIEST COLOR FOR THE
EYES TO PROCESS
USED TO RELAX IN STORES



> ORANGE

> AGGRESSIVE
CREATES A CALL TO ACTION:
SUBSCRIBE, BUY, OR SELL



> PINK

> ROMANTIC AND FEMININE
USED TO MARKET PRODUCTS
TO WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS



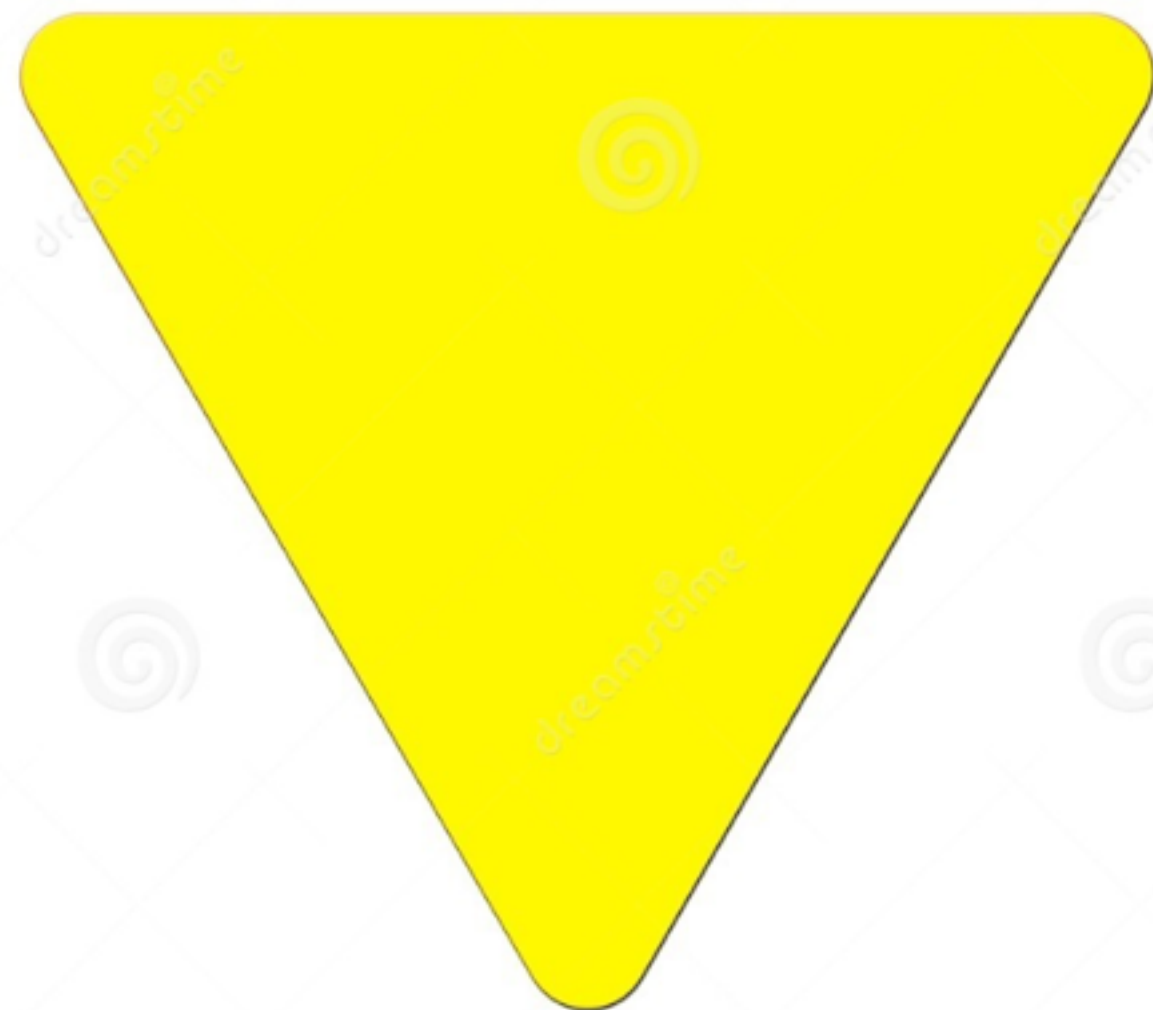
> BLACK

> POWERFUL AND SLEEK
USED TO MARKET LUXURY
PRODUCTS



> PURPLE

> IS USED TO SOOTHE & CALM
OFTEN SEEN IN BEAUTY OR
ANTI-AGING PRODUCTS



repeated encounters with
colors combined with shape
can embed meaning



© 2000 The McGraw-Hill Companies



BIOHAZARD

color can strengthen a message



can color make your hungry for fast food?



what code is this logo transmitting?

Gestalt Principles

suggest that the human brain will naturally group together elements of a similar size, shape, color and location.

designers can use these principles to effectively communicate content with form.

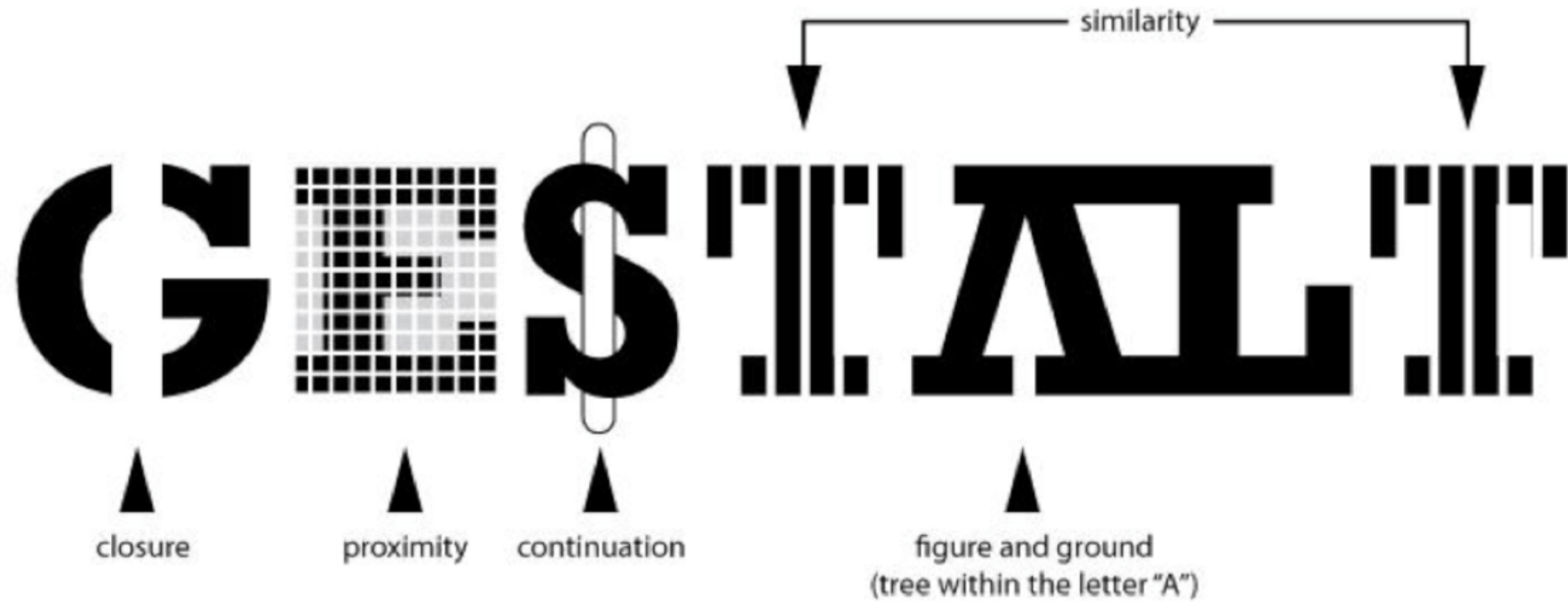
gestalt principles are especially effective in the design of logos and iconography.



G = STALT

noun \ gə•'stält

**understanding the whole,
not merely the sum of
its parts.**



the gestalt principles of visual
perception are powerful tools
for graphic designers



10.16 Law of Grouping by Similarity. These dots are associated because they share a common characteristic in the form of a line, which becomes an associative link.



10.17 Law of Simplicity. The process of elimination or reduction. The one block is simpler than the many, but in that perception, the functionality of the many is also removed.



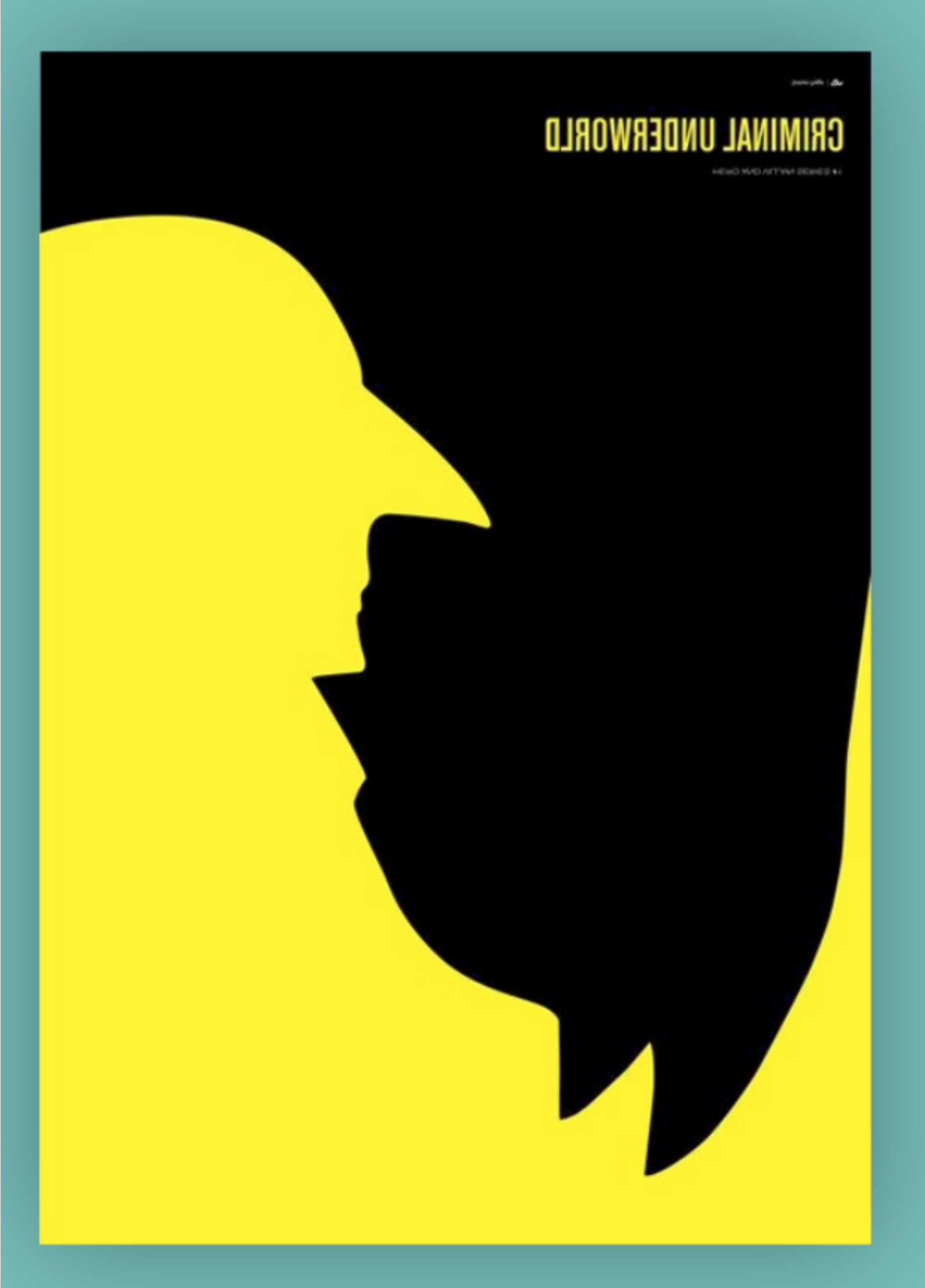
10.18 Law of Constancy. Because the square is a simpler shape, the viewer will still read the distorted perspective as a square.



10.19 Law of Closure. The eye tends to complete a contour and ignore gaps. The triangle can be perceived here, even though there are large gaps in its contour.



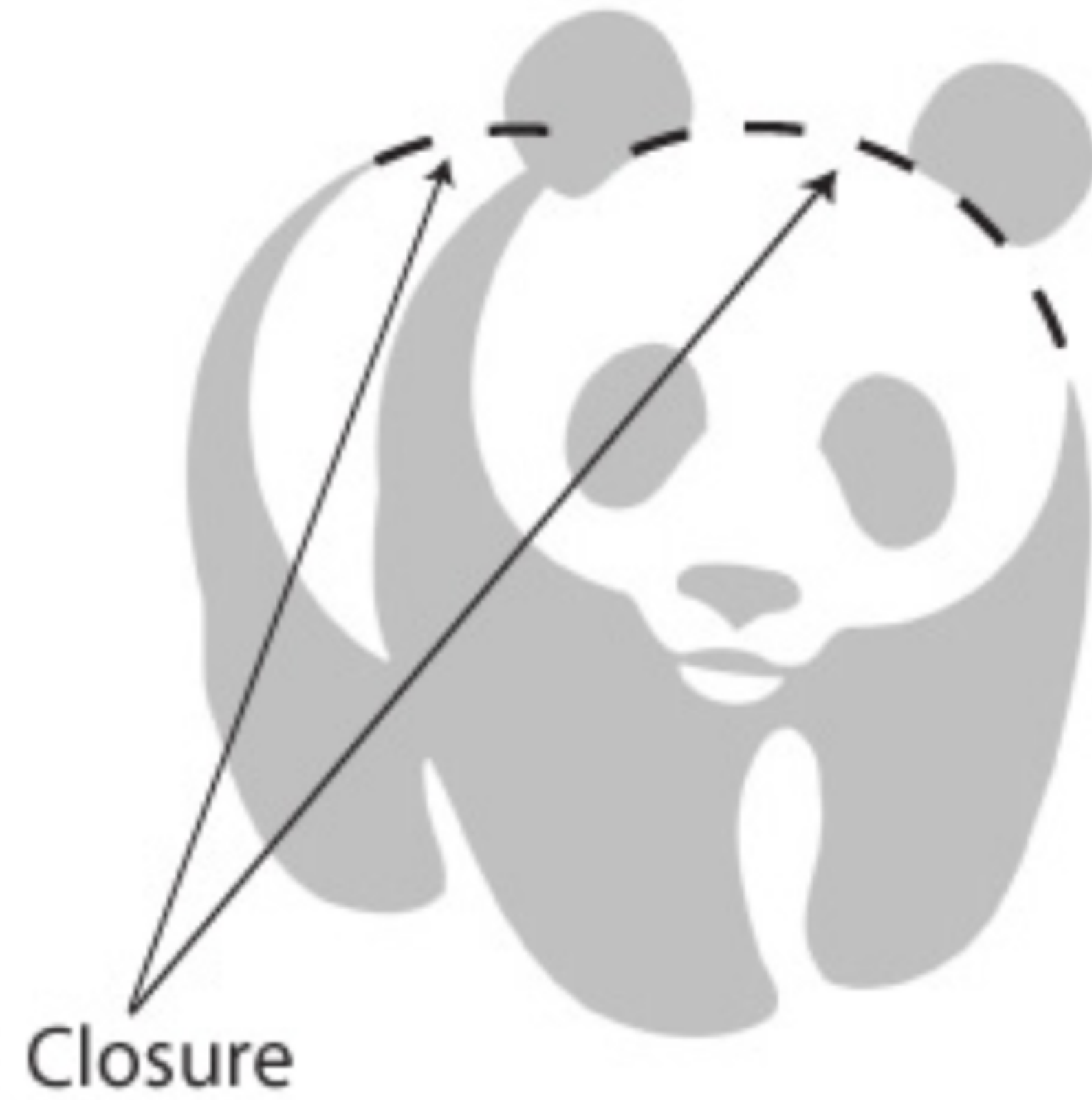


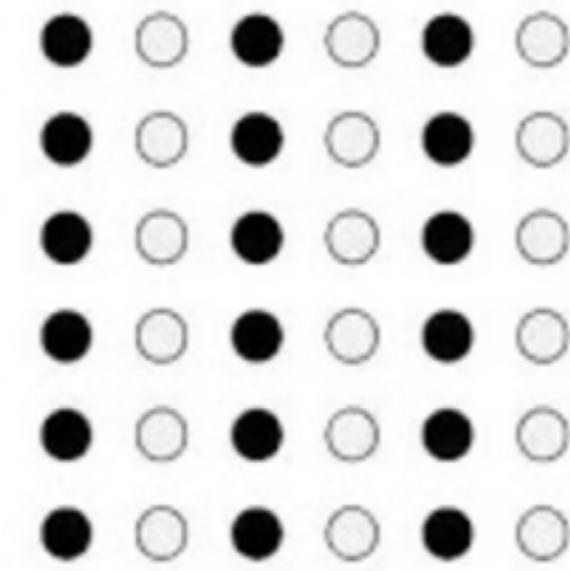
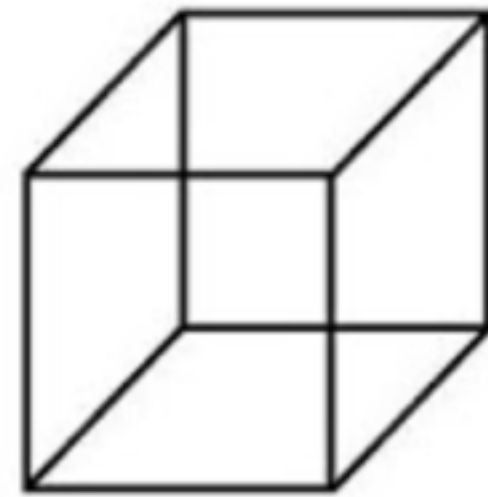
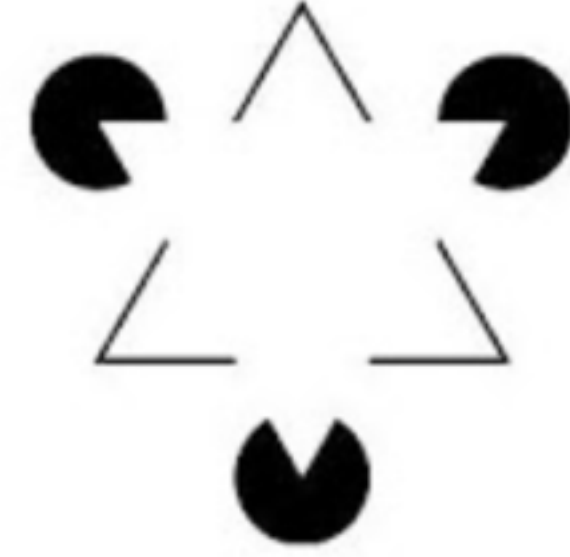
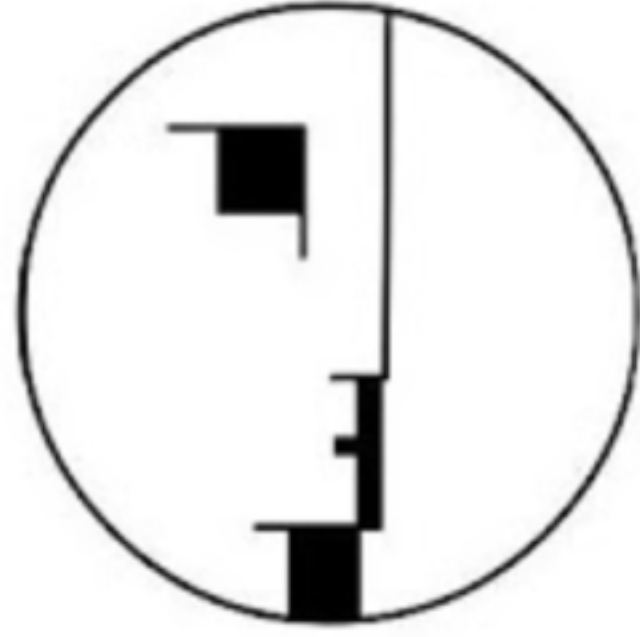


FedEx

IK

VISITING ARTIST PROGRAM
JULIA STRAUSS SEP 17-SEPT 18
JAMES STEVENHARTER 6 OCT
JONATHAN MILTON GILASER 3 NOV
JOVANA RALLI LECTURE 5 BE
GIN AT 630 PM KATE MURPHY
YAMPHI THEATER FASHION
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY





Gestalt: Law of Similarity



Similarity based on
Shape



Similarity based on
Size



Similarity based on
Color

Gestalt: Laws of Proximity, Uniform Connectedness & Continuation

Proximity



Related

Unrelated

Uniform Connectedness



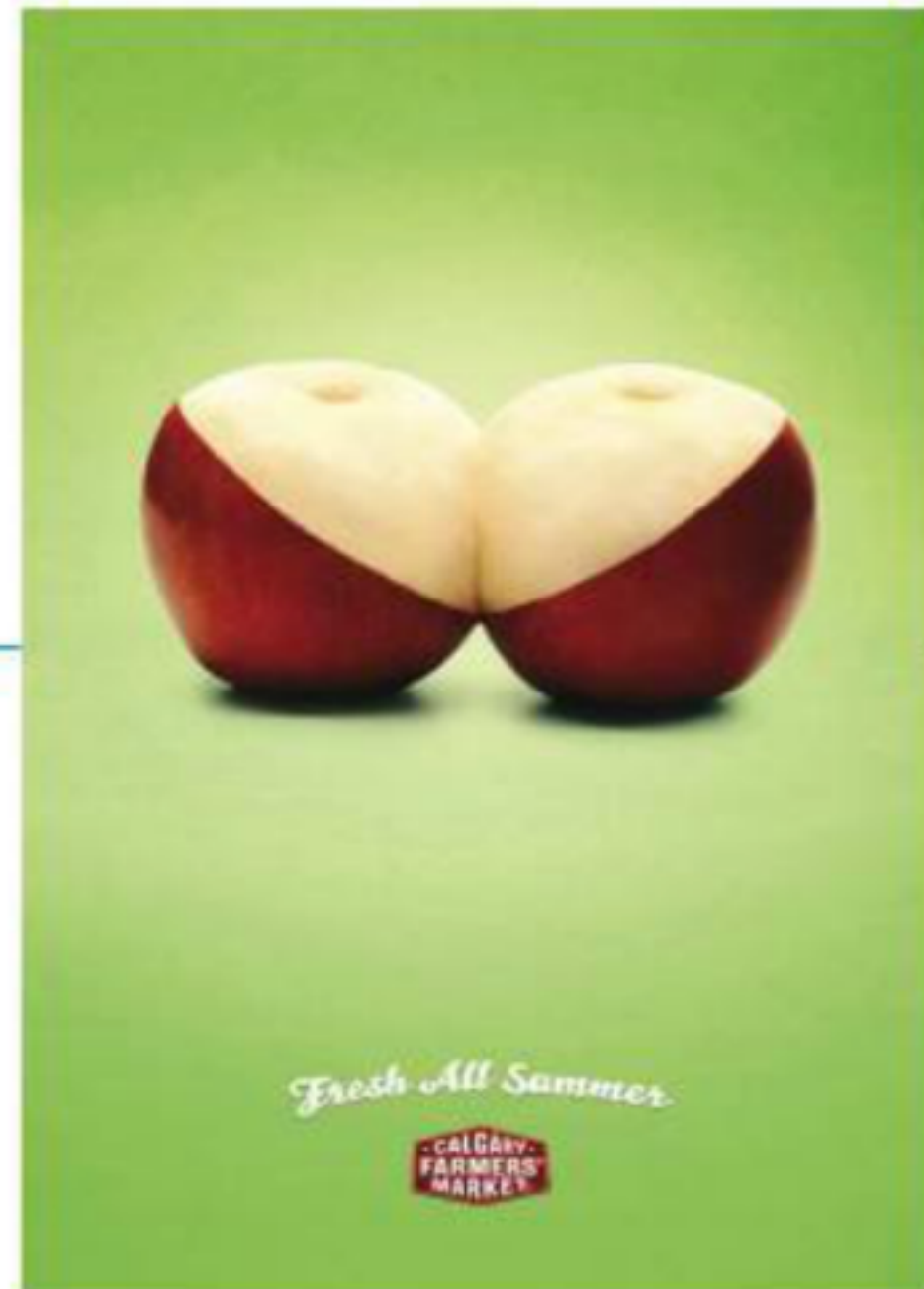
No relation set

Relation set

Continuation



The eye perceives the path behind the structure.





10.14 TURNER DUCKWORTH,
LONDON + SAN FRANCISCO.
Royal mail stamps celebrating
British airplane designers.



Icons, Symbols, and Logos

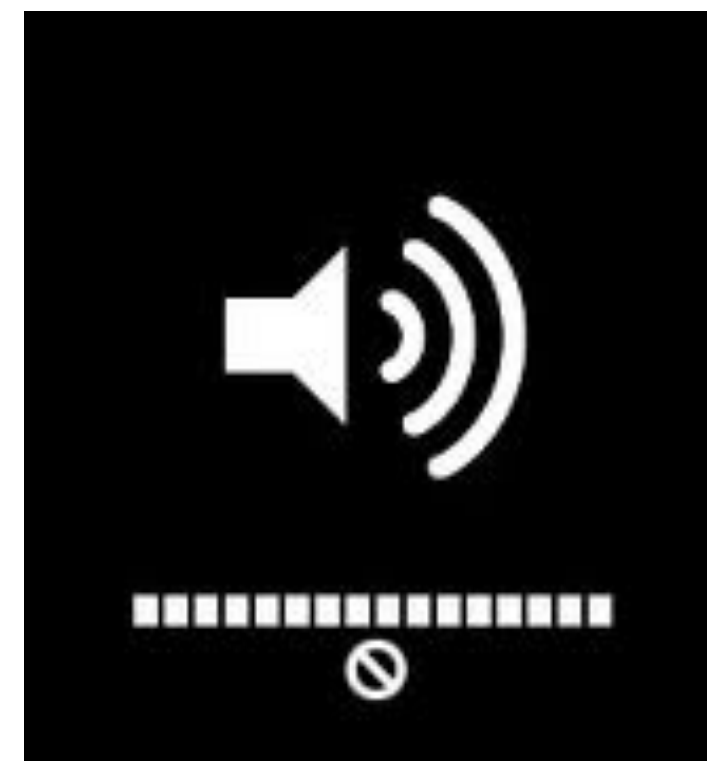
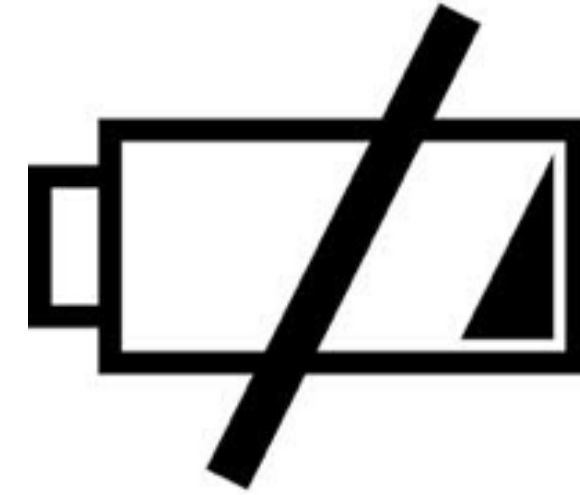
Icons

A sign that has a direct resemblance to the thing it represents.

An **icon** is a generally accepted visual, pictorial or symbolic, to represent objects, actions, or concepts.



an icon is a simplified
representation of a subject and a
symbol of the thing it represents





A PHOTOGRAPH



PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION



ELEMENTAL VISUAL



ARBITRARY/RANDOM



SYMBOLIC

icons can be representational
or abstract



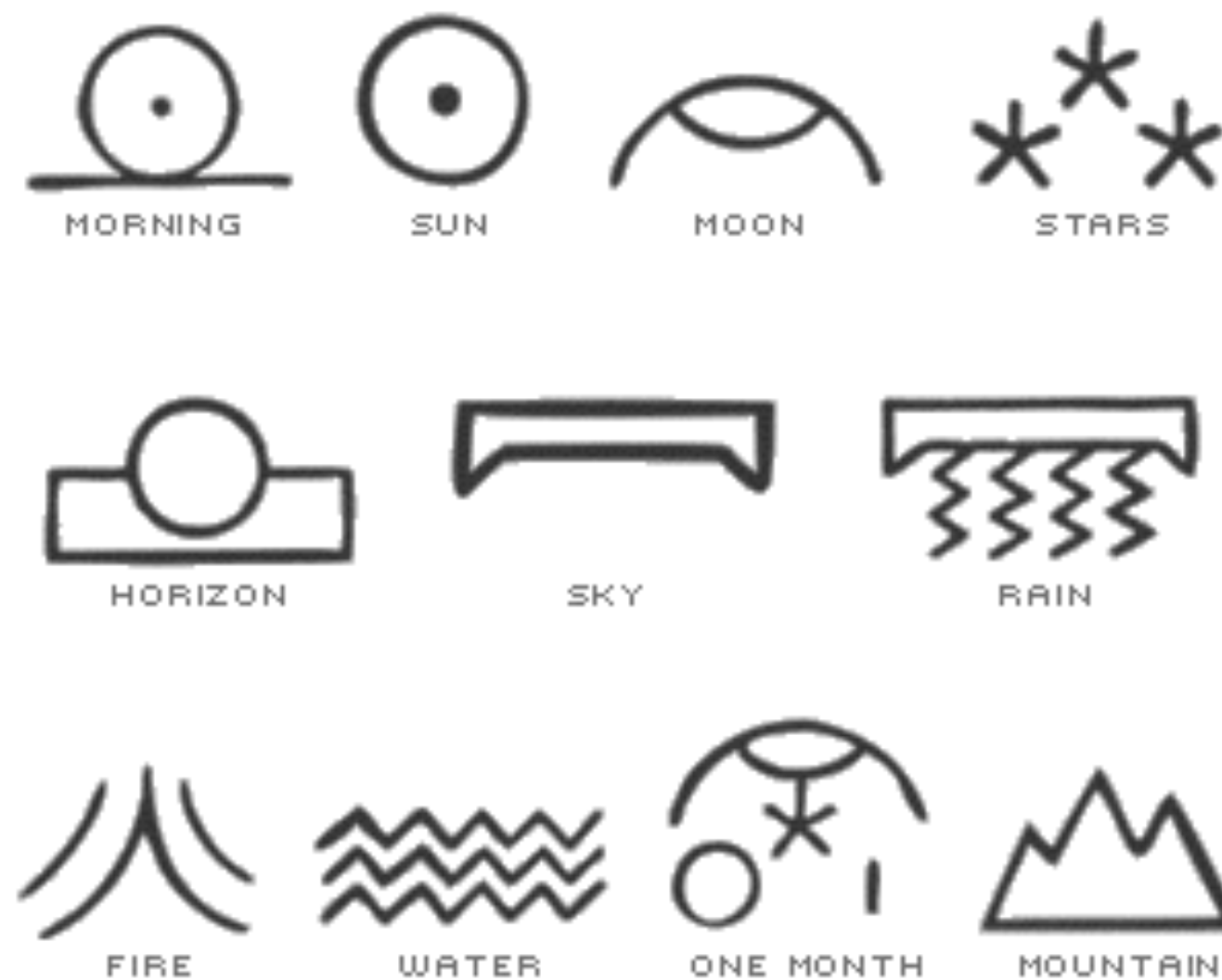
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Tip	 
Log In/Out	  

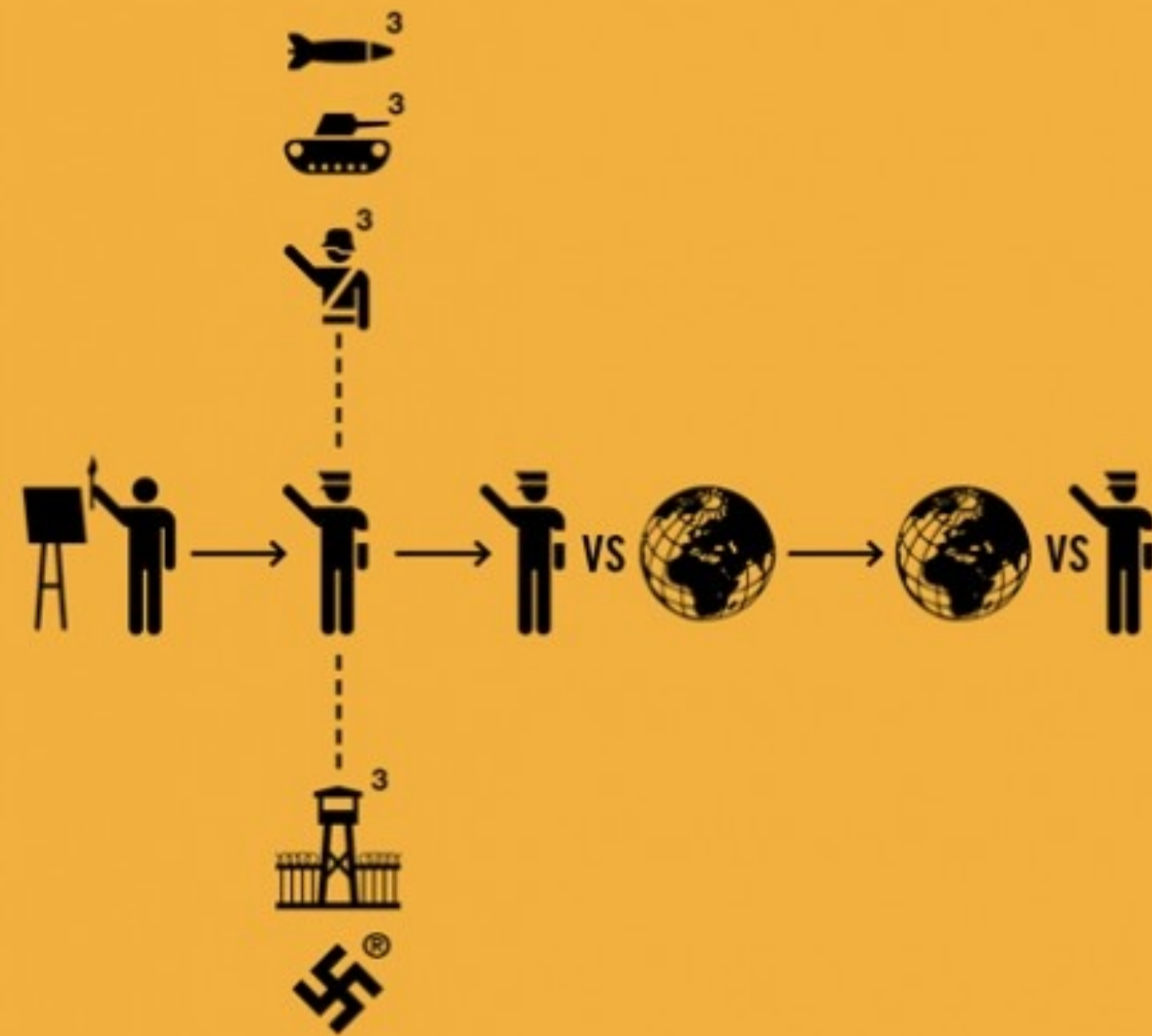
common icons



Ideogram

a graphic symbol that represents an idea or concept, distilled to its most simple form.



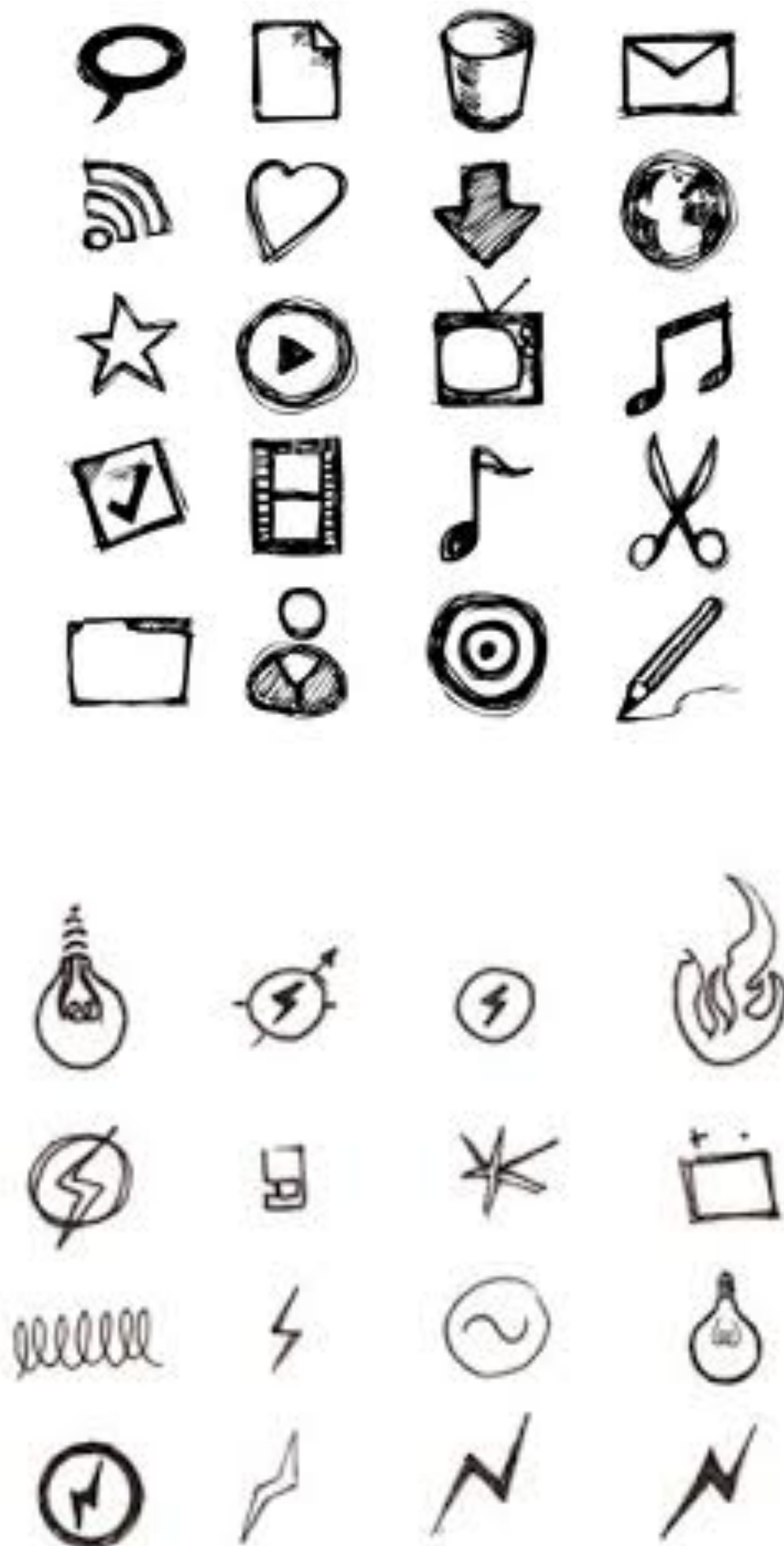


[The History of Adolf Hitler]

Pictograms

An ideogram that conveys its meaning through its **pictorial resemblance** to a physical object.

Purely visual,
nonverbal meaning.

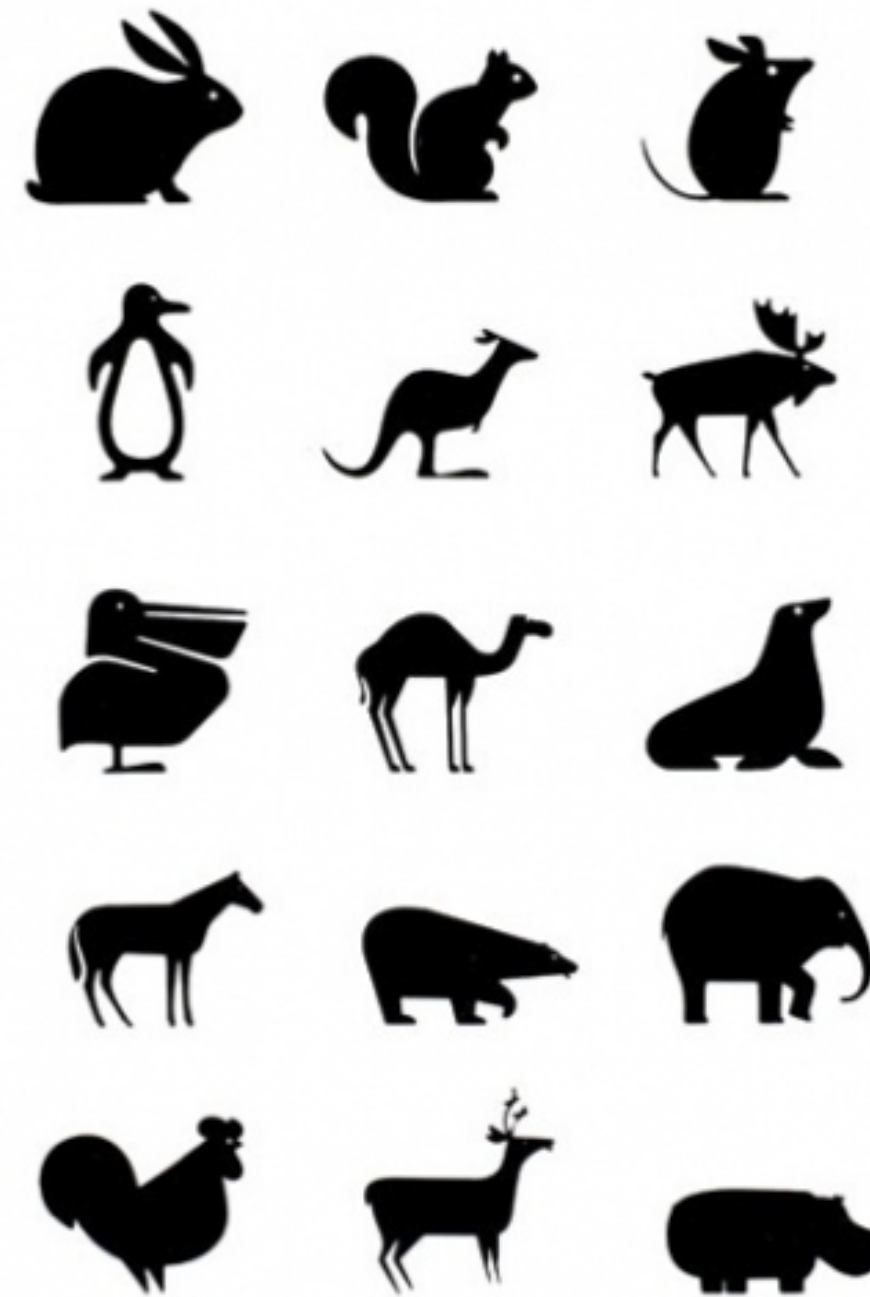


What do these sketches have in common?

How to Create an Icon Sketch



1. distill an object or idea down to its basic elements or qualities.
2. ask yourself whether something is necessary to communicate your concept.
3. remove any unnecessary details.
4. simplify. simplify. simplify.



How to Create Unity

Consider using similarity of:

shape

color

line quality

style

medium

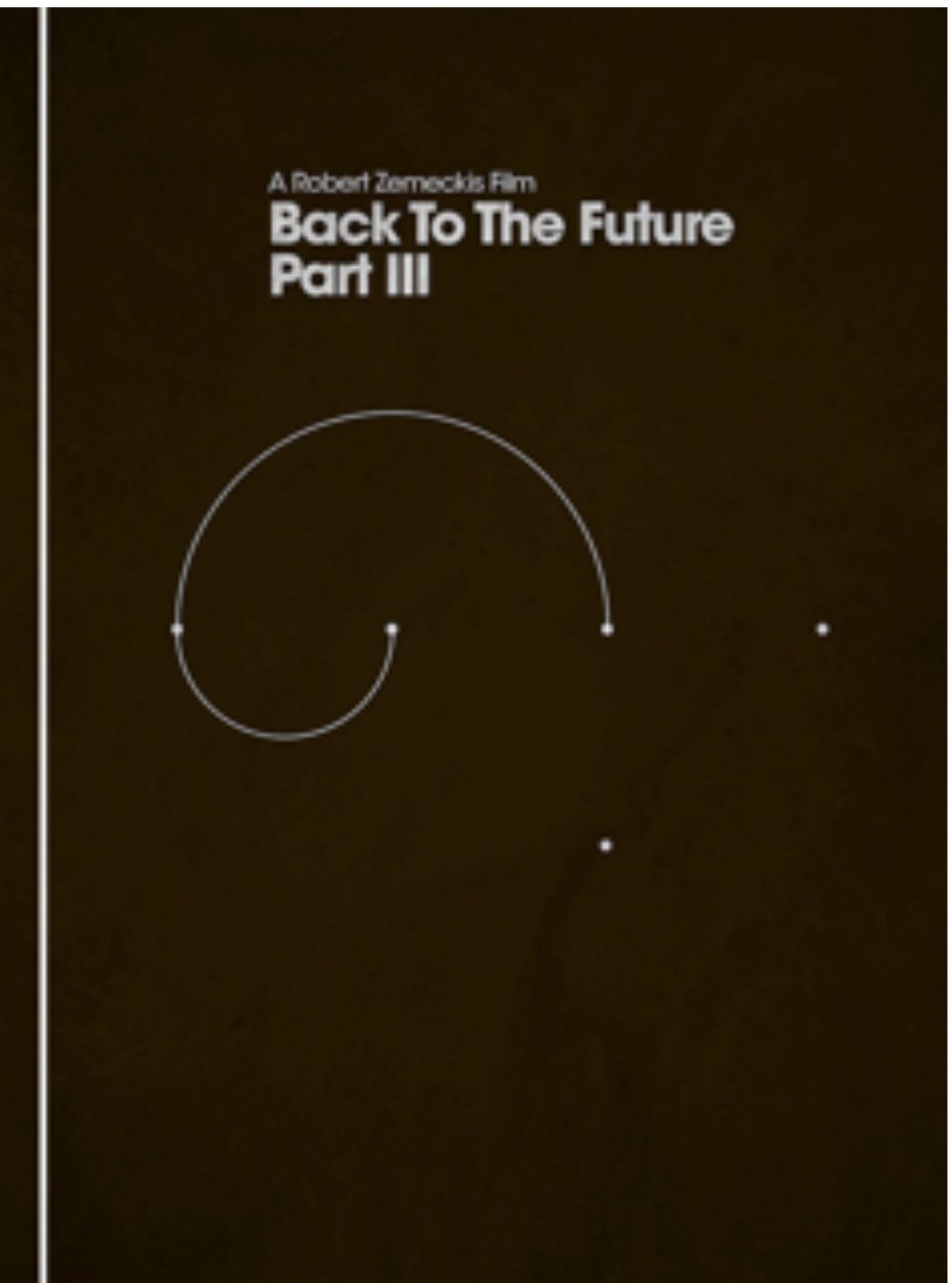
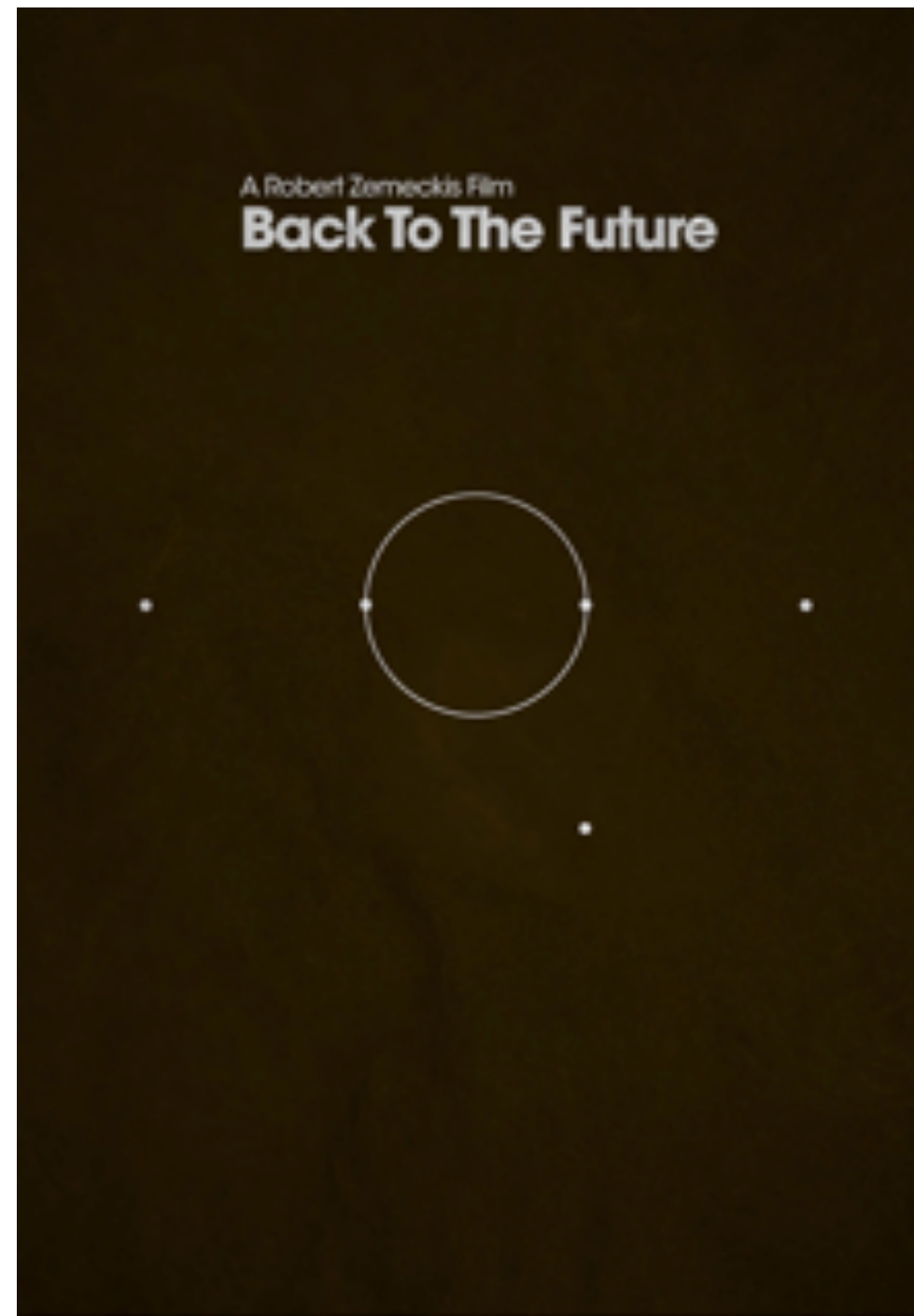
texture

figure/ground relationships

balance

scale

Underlying concept should also help to unify.



gestalt principles
used to create
relationships



similar shapes and color can
be used to construct an icon



although the shapes differ, the
two share similarity of line quality
and repetition of elements



icons are often used in games





icons can be enclosed with a simple shape









What characteristic creates the relationship in this icon set?



What elements create the relationship in this set?

Student Examples





Greek Mythology Icon Set



THE SONGS OF THE RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS ICON SET



Horror Movie Characters





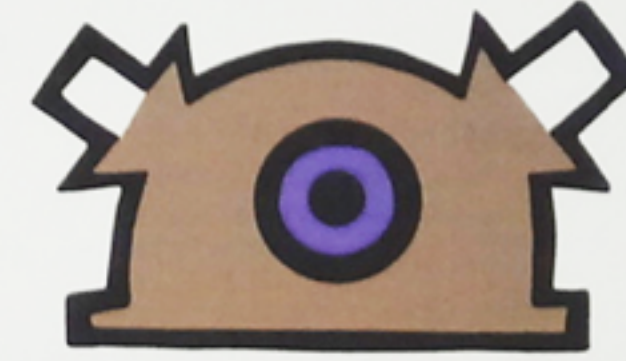
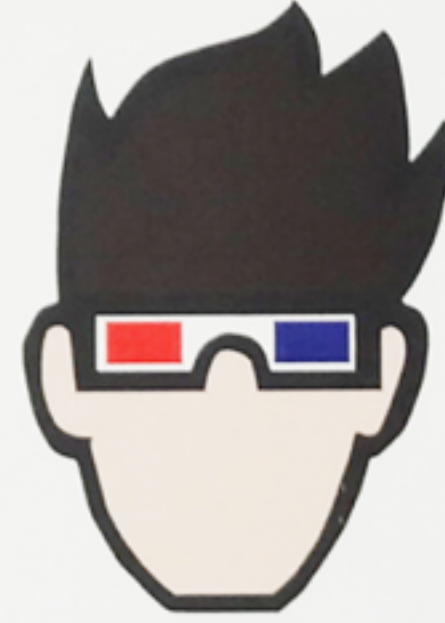
ARTHROPODS



Monty Python Icon Set



Xena: Warrior Princess Icon Set

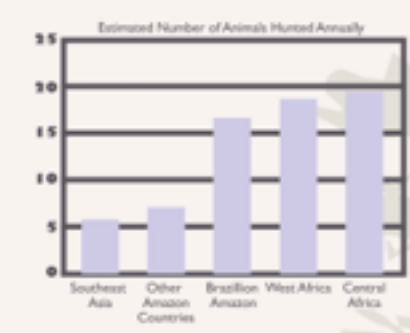


Doctor Who Icons

Infographic Poster

PRIMATES IN PERIL

Monkeys and apes are the closest living ancestors humans have; yet these creatures face grave dangers every day. It is our job to become better educated about all of the reasons for our fellow land-dwellers suffering. We must collect this knowledge and apply it to solutions. We have to understand the magnitude of these creatures' intelligence. They are truly astounding and have such a magnificent capacity for emotion that they should never be made to endure the hardships that they have faced at our hands. We must create a better future not only for ourselves but also for all of Earth's magnificent creatures.



Gibbon

Gibbons are without a doubt the most endangered ape species in the world. Like all of the other primates, one of the main contributions to their extinction is habitat loss. A factor that is specific to the plight of the Gibbon is that their body parts are traded on the black market in order to be used in Chinese medicine.

Silverback Gorilla

There are more 700 of these creatures left on earth. Of the remaining nearly half of them live in our ravaged forests in Central Africa. The anarchy and lack of organized government has left the door wide open for black-market bush-meat hunting in the area and the gorillas have suffered tremendously.

Bonobo

Little is known about the bonobo population since the majority of their populations are found in areas with extreme civil unrest. However we are certain that bonobo numbers have been steadily declining for the last 30 years and will likely continue declining for the next 45 to 55 due to their low reproductive rates and growing threats due to non-natural habitats.

Anubis "Olive" Baboon

Baboons' major predators are humans. These animals are being killed for black market trade of their skins and their use in laboratories and medical research. However as their habitats become more heavily populated the number of baboons killed because they are being seen as "high cultural prey" is increasing rapidly.

Chimpanzee

These primates who are the closest living human relatives. They share 98% of our genetic blueprint. Because of this they are susceptible to most human diseases. Chimpanzees die by the hundreds each year due to diseases they contract through close contact with farmers, poachers, and tourists. Because of this and other factors these animals are now critically endangered.

Chocolate:

A global Goodness

The average American eats about eleven pounds of Chocolate per year. Myself, I must consume at least three times that amount. This mouth-watering sweet is not only an obsession of my own, but all over the world. Chocolate can be made into many unique candies and treats, and traveling the world would be the perfect opportunity to get that sugar rush you've always wanted.



❶ The **Hedgehog Slice** from Australia is an uncooked flat, square or bar-shaped chocolate snack/ dessert, similar to a fudgey chocolate brownie.

❷ The **Krembanan**, a German chocolate filled with a banana creme is a popular treat in Germany that is shaped like a banana.

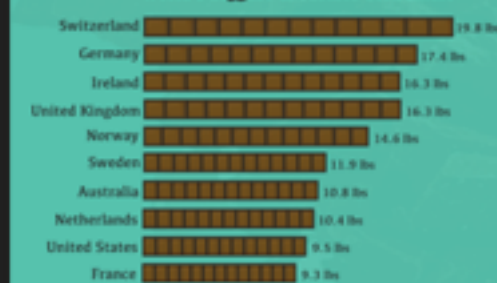
❸ The **Baton**, from Brazil, is a lipstick shaped chocolate. It comes in white and milk chocolate and is the best selling candy product for children in the country.

❹ The **Freia**, a Norwegian milk chocolate, is commonly known for its marabou stork logo. This creamy chocolate bar is unlike any other of its kind and is Norway's leading chocolate manufacturer.

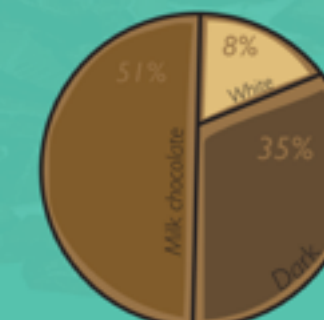
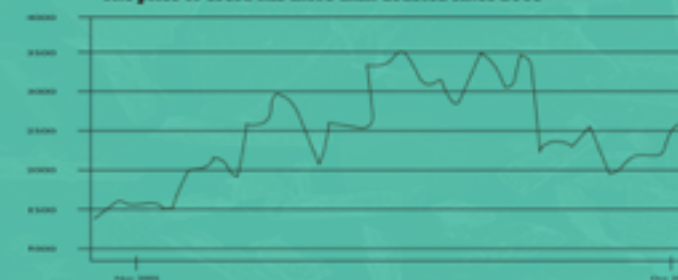
❺ The **Kinder Bar** from the United Kingdom is a chocolate wafer bar containing a hazelnut creme. Kinder is also well known for its Kinder Joy Bar and Kinder Surprise Egg.

❻ **Aero** chocolate, also from the UK, is known for its bubbly "melt in your mouth" texture and minty flavor. It also comes in strawberry and vanilla as well as different bars and balls.

World's Biggest Chocolate Consumers



The price of cocoa has more than doubled since 2005



THE CITY THAT NEVER SLEEPS

TOP 5 MONUMENTS
VISITED IN NEW YORK CITY



THE SNACKERS GUIDE TO CHOCOLATE

