

Title: From Rules to Drama: Creating a Focal Point with Light and Shadow

Materials Needed:

- The finished Rule of Thirds artwork from the previous lesson
- Several sheets of sketch paper
- One sheet of black construction paper
- One sheet of white paper
- Scissors and a glue stick
- A large sheet of medium-toned paper (gray, tan, or light blue)
- Drawing tools that can create a range of values: charcoal sticks (vine and compressed), a black charcoal pencil, and a white charcoal pencil
- Kneaded eraser
- A simple, single-colored object (e.g., an apple, a mug, a small sculpture)
- A single, direct light source (like a desk lamp or a strong flashlight)

1. Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, the learner will be able to:

- Define "value" and "contrast" and explain their role in creating a focal point and establishing mood.
- Analyze an image to identify its underlying value structure using the concept of Notan (the balance of light and dark).
- Create a two-value Notan study to plan a composition based on shape and contrast, rather than lines.
- Apply the principles of Chiaroscuro (strong contrast between light and dark) to create a dramatic still-life drawing with a clear focal point.

2. Alignment with Standards and Curriculum

- **National Core Arts Standards (VA:Cr2.1.6a):** Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, materials, and approaches in making art. This lesson introduces value structure as a primary compositional tool, moving beyond the line-based approaches of previous lessons.
- **Sequential Progression:** This lesson is the next logical step after mastering compositional placement (Fibonacci Spiral, Rule of Thirds). While the previous lessons answered the question, "Where should I put my subject?", this lesson answers, "How do I make my subject the most important thing on the page?" It shifts the focus from structural lines to the "weight" of light and shadow, adding depth, drama, and a new layer of artistic intention.

3. Instructional Strategies & Lesson Activities (Approx. 90 minutes)

Part 1: The Hook - Beyond the Grid (15 minutes)

- **Review and Connect:** Place the learner's Rule of Thirds artwork on display. "Your last piece has fantastic balance because you placed the subject perfectly on the grid. But what if we wanted to make it more dramatic, like a scene in a movie? How do we guide the viewer's eye not just with lines, but with light itself?"
- **Introducing Value and Notan:** Draw a simple value scale from white to black with 5 steps. "This is 'value'—how light or dark something is. Artists control value to create a mood and to tell you what to look at first." Introduce Notan. "In Japan, there's a design concept called Notan, which is all about the beautiful balance between light and dark shapes." Show examples of simple,

powerful Notan designs or artworks with strong light/dark balance. "A strong artwork should look interesting even if you squint your eyes and only see big shapes of light and dark."

- **Guided Analysis:** Show a famous painting with strong Chiaroscuro (e.g., a work by Caravaggio or Georges de La Tour). Ask the learner to squint at it. "What are the biggest, simplest shapes of light you see? What are the biggest shapes of dark? Where is the brightest bright right next to the darkest dark? That's the artist shouting, 'Look here!'"

Part 2: Planning with Shapes, Not Lines (20 minutes)

- **The Notan Study:** "Before we draw with shadows, let's plan with them." The learner will create a quick Notan study. They will take the sheet of black paper and cut out simple shapes that represent the 'light' parts of a potential composition (e.g., a circle for a moon, a rectangle for a window). They will then glue these white-paper-representing shapes onto the black paper.
- **Focus on Composition:** Encourage them to use their knowledge of the Rule of Thirds. "Try placing your main light shape on one of the 'power points' from our last lesson. See how it creates balance even with just two colors?" The goal is to create a simple, balanced, and visually interesting design using only the relationship between light and dark shapes. This is a planning sketch made with scissors and glue instead of a pencil.

Part 3: Main Activity - Drawing with Light (45 minutes)

- **Setting the Stage:** Place the simple object on a table. In a slightly darkened room, shine the single light source on it from the side to create dramatic, clear shadows. "This is Chiaroscuro—using light and shadow to model a form and create drama. Your job isn't to draw the apple; your job is to draw the light on the apple and the shadow it casts."
- **Toned Paper Technique:** Hand the learner the medium-toned paper. "This gray paper is your 'middle value.' This means you don't have to fill in everything. You will only add the darkest darks with your black charcoal and the brightest highlights with your white charcoal. Your mind will fill in the rest."
- **Creating the Artwork:** The learner will create a drawing of the still life. They should focus on capturing the intense highlights, the deep shadows, and the soft edges where they meet. Encourage them to be bold with their contrast. Remind them to use their Notan study as a guide for creating a pleasing arrangement of light and dark shapes.

Part 4: Curator's Corner - A Trio of Tools (10 minutes)

- **Reflection and Synthesis:** Display all three artworks side-by-side: the Fibonacci Spiral, the Rule of Thirds, and the new Chiaroscuro piece.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - "We've now used three different tools to make a strong composition: a spiral, a grid, and now, light itself. How does each tool change the final 'feeling' of the art?"
 - "In your latest piece, how did using toned paper help you think about light and shadow differently than using white paper?"
 - "Which method felt the most powerful for creating a specific mood? Why?"
 - "Look at your Chiaroscuro piece. Did you also use the Rule of Thirds? How can these different 'rules' work together?"

4. Differentiation and Inclusivity

- **Support:** Instead of a 3D object, provide a high-contrast black and white photo to work from. This removes the challenge of translating 3D form and light into a 2D drawing, allowing the learner to focus solely on replicating the values they see.

- **Challenge Extension:** Ask the learner to create a narrative self-portrait using the Chiaroscuro technique. They must use a single light source (from below for a scary mood, from the side for a dramatic one) to tell a story or convey an emotion about themselves through the use of light and shadow alone.

5. Assessment Methods

- **Formative (During the Lesson):** The Notan paper-cut study serves as a check for understanding. Does the learner successfully simplify a scene into a balanced composition of light and dark shapes? Their ability to identify areas of high contrast in the example artworks also demonstrates comprehension.
- **Summative (End of Lesson):** The final Chiaroscuro drawing is the primary assessment. Success is evaluated based on: 1) The successful creation of a clear focal point using high value contrast. 2) The effective use of toned paper to represent mid-tones, highlights, and shadows. 3) The learner's ability during the final discussion to articulate how value can be used as a compositional tool, distinct from but complementary to the structural rules learned previously.