

# Perspective Lesson 1:

## Zero-Point Perspective: How to show depth and recreate it on paper

### Tools needed:

- One background of “Hills” per student
- One set of trees of different sizes, cut out and ready for gluing
- Gluesticks or glue
- Pencils, Colored Pencils, Crayons, ect. (optional)

**Goal:** For the students to understand depth: how to see it in real life, and how to re-create it in paintings. Vocabulary includes Perspective, Height, Width, Depth, Overlap, and Picture Plane

**Tutor:** Ever look out the window and see how some things which are closer to the window look bigger than similar things which are farther away? If a tree is near a window, it is very tall, but another tree, far away, can look smaller, or even tiny?

*<If you have access to a window, use it to illustrate>*

**Tutor:** Why is that?

*<because things look smaller the farther away they are from the “window” and the window’s viewer-you!>*

**Tutor:** This sense of distance you can see every day, or out of the window, is called “**DEPTH**”.

“**Height**” is how tall things are from the bottom to the top.

“**Width**” is how broad things are from side to side

But “**Depth**” is how far something is from the “window” you look through. And the farther away something is from your “window”, the smaller and thinner it will look.

*<You can show the height-width-depth chart if you like>*

But when we draw, we have a problem. Paper is mostly flat, isn’t it? But then again, so is a window...

In fact, if you think of a painting as a “window” you look through to see something outside, you’ll be thinking like an artist. In art, artists think of their paper or canvas as a “window” they call “**the picture plane**.” Now all they have to do is draw things the way they’d see it through the “window” of the paper.

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So, how can we make things on paper look like what we see out a window?

*<We can make things smaller, like the trees. You can show the diagram on page 5 here but it's not necessary to expound on at this time. >*

Making things smaller is one way. If things are far away from your paper, in the background, they should be smaller.

How about this? How can you tell which of these are in front of the other?

*<Hold two pieces of paper, or two books up, and hold one slightly in front of the other. (See sketch at right) They should overlap slightly from the students' perspectives. See what the students say. >*



That's right, the one in front covers part of the back one. This is called "**overlapping.**" Overlapping happens when something closer to you and the picture plane covers up a part, or most, of the items farther behind. In fact, both of these things are overlapping part of me, aren't they?

So that's two ways to show how some things are in front of other things in the picture plane "window" of the artist's paper. Let's see if we can try that.

*<Pass out the hills paper, pages 6-7, and the cut out the trees, page 8, four of different sizes.>*

Can we see which of these hills is in front?

Now, if I put the same size of tree on each of these hills, does that look like the trees are far away? It kind of makes them look like they are all close to us, right?

What if I put the small trees on the front hill, and the big trees in back, does that look right?

No. Artists try to copy reality by making things in front bigger, and things in back smaller. This goes for trees, buildings, and even people in a painting!

Do you know what this, making a painting look like it has real-life depth, is called in art?

It's called "**Perspective**". There's lots of types of "Perspective" but this concept, that things get smaller the farther away they are,

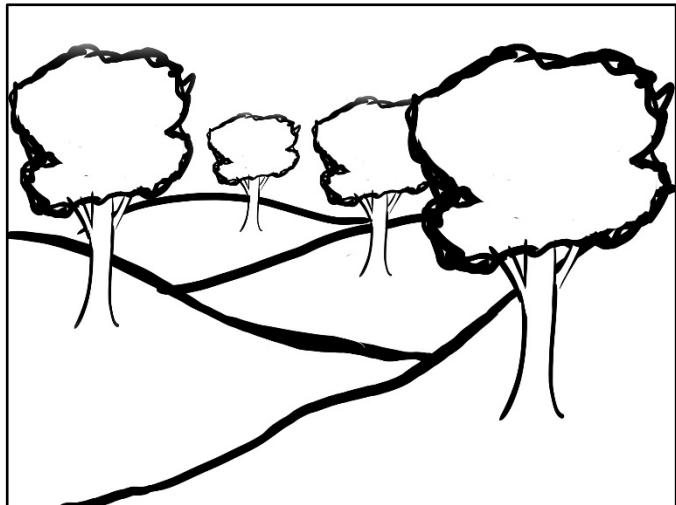


Figure 1: A sample of how this exercise could look upon completion

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and that closer things overlap and can hide parts of the farther things, is the first lesson!<sup>1</sup>

So let's glue our trees down, first the small one in the very far hill, then the next biggest, and see if they overlap!

**OPTION:** Encourage the students to draw a couple of objects on the picture, and make sure they adjust the size accordingly. If they need suggestions, try flowers or plants, houses, people, or animals.

### **Review:**

*(Feel free to show the vocabulary sheets or diagrams at this time.)*

Today, we learned about "Depth" and how it can work in a drawing. What is Depth?

*<The distance an object is from the viewer/window>*

What is the Picture Plane, and what is it like?

*<It's the surface of the paper, and it's like a window>*

Are far away objects look bigger, smaller, or the same size as close-up objects?

*<Smaller!>*

When something that's closer to us covers a part of something that's farther behind, what do we call that?

*<Overlap/Overlapping>*

All of these techniques is part of what artistic technique?

*<Perspective>*

Above all, what do we remember about drawing?

*<It's about the process and the progress, not the product!>*

### **At Home:**

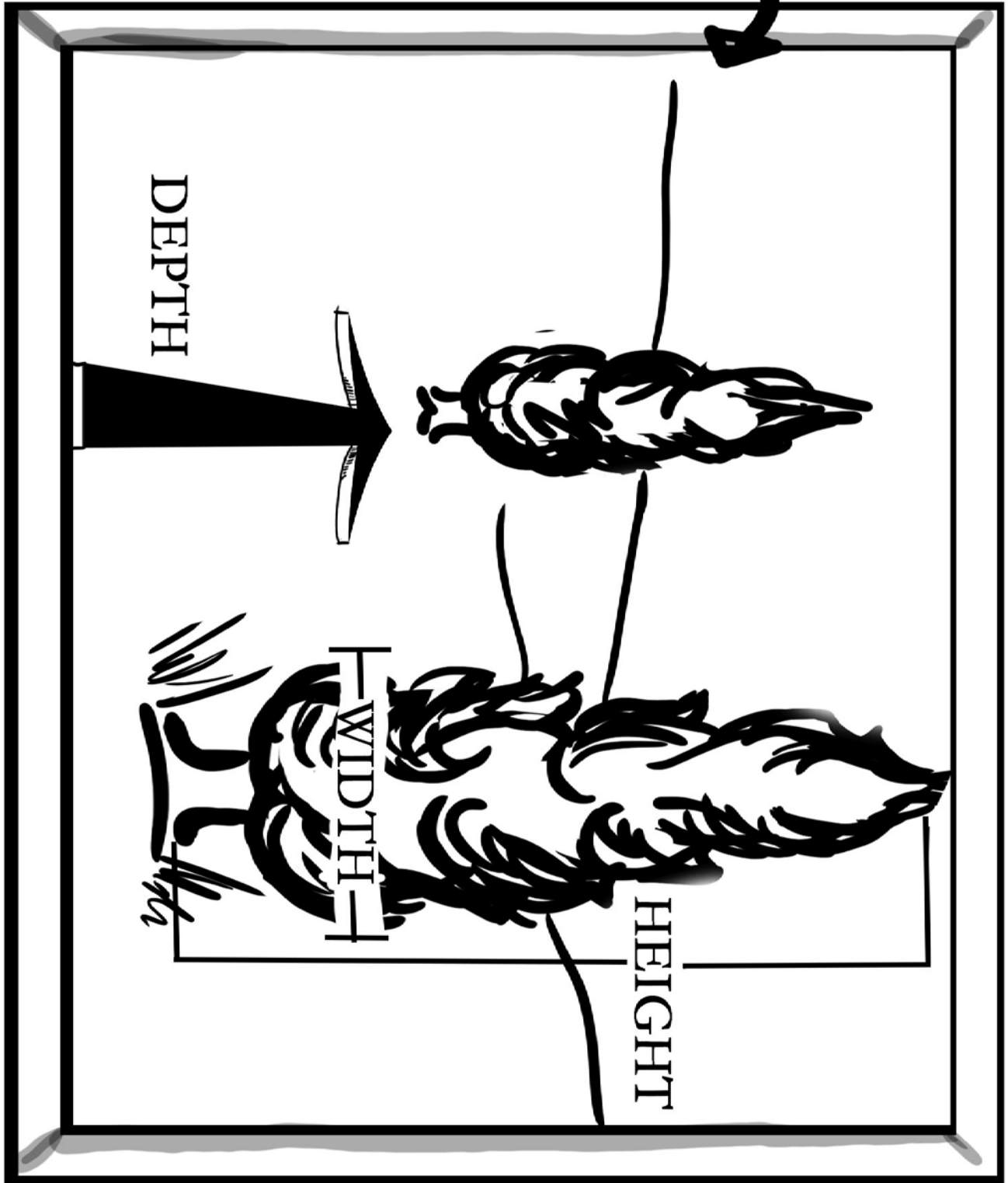
Consider looking at art to see examples of overlap and smaller background objects. Point out overlapping or how large items, like trees, buildings, mountains (if you're lucky enough to live near one), machinery, or other things can appear to be smaller because they are far away. When walking, or traveling in a car or train, or plane, see how things overlap and grow, then shrink, as they get closer and farther away from you.

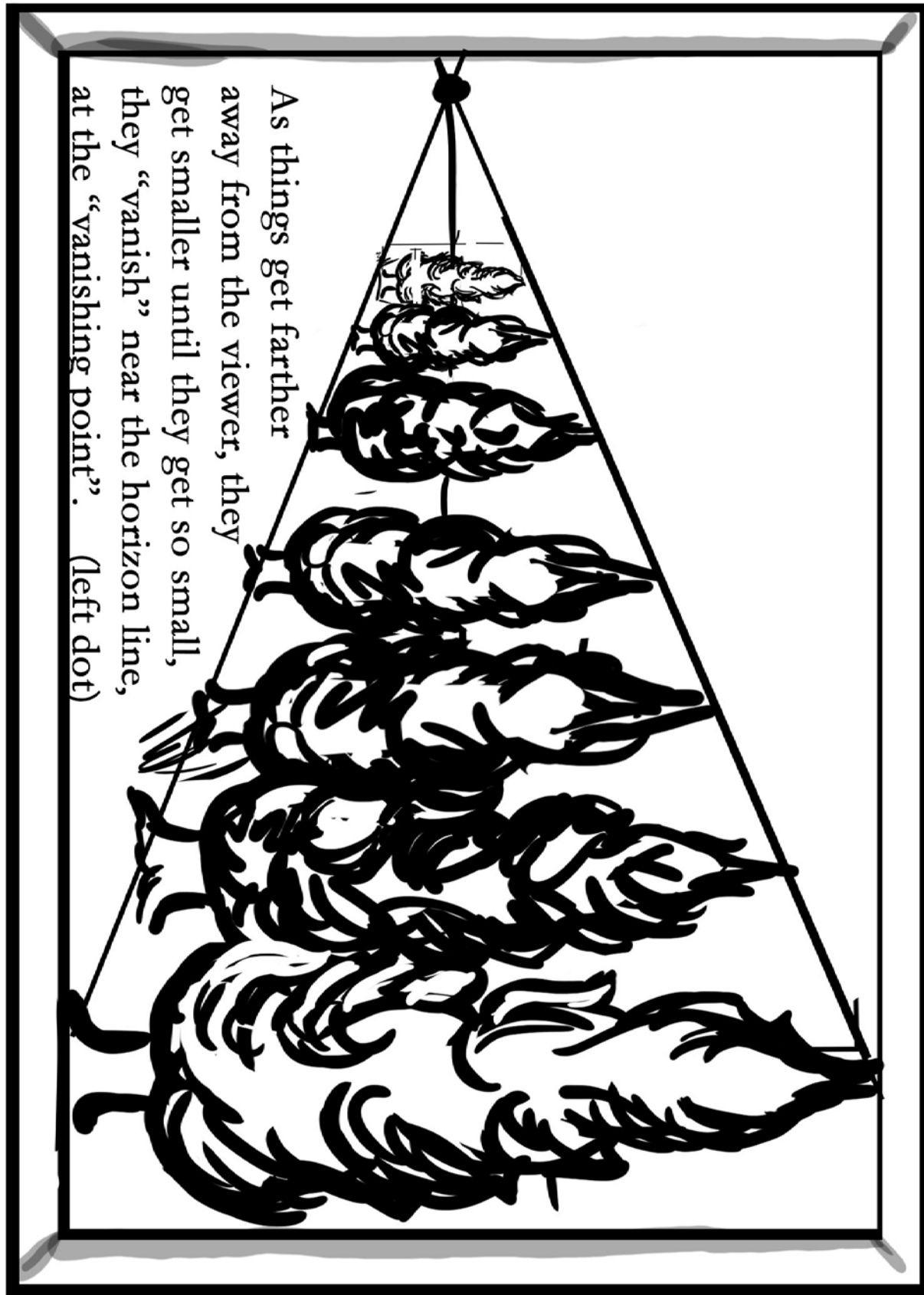
Open up the conversation: how big is Jupiter, relative to Earth? Why does it look like a star when we can see it in the sky? How big is the moon?

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<sup>1</sup> This specific type of perspective can be called "zero-point perspective" because the artist is not anchoring things to a specific vanishing point. Most landscapes are done like this, with background objects smaller than foreground objects.

The edge of the paper is like the edge of a window-- it's called: "The Picture Plane" (Like a "window pane")



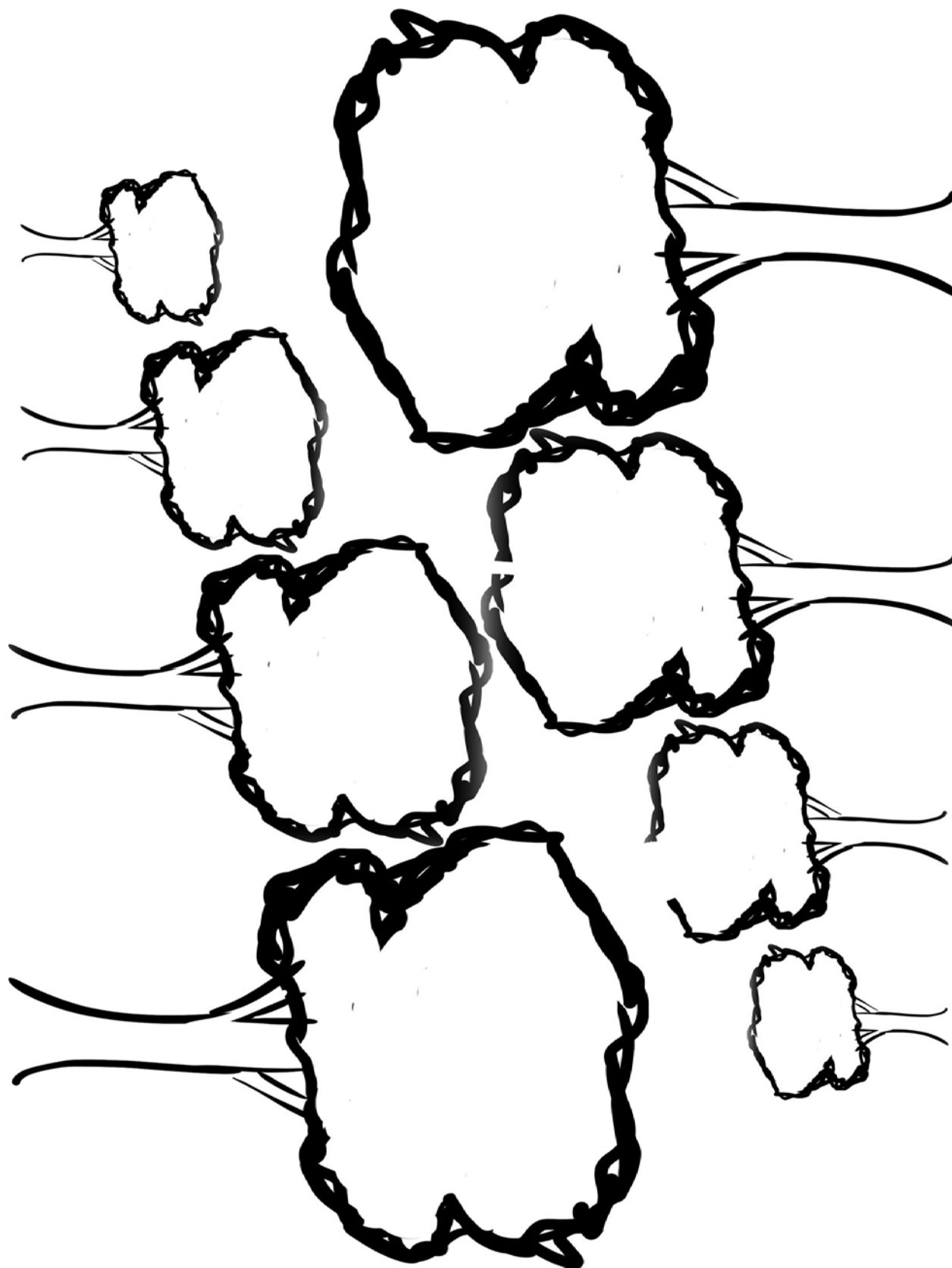


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# Perspective

(n) An art technique which helps artists create the look of real space on a flat sheet of paper.

One way to do this is make things smaller as they get farther away, and make closer things overlap far-away things.

## Picture Plane

The surface of the paper or canvas the artist draws or paints on. It's similar to a window, and the artist creates a world the viewer can look into.



# Overlap

(v.) To extend over something, and cover a part of that object in the process. In art, things which are in front of something else overlap the background objects.



*"Ancient Ruins of Pompeii, Italy" (altered) photographed by Svetlana Tikhonova  
publicdomainpictures.net*

These pillars in Pompeii overlap the plants behind them.