



# Principles of Design

**Illinois CTE Endorsement Area:  
Arts & Communication**

***Teacher and Student Editions***

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Converted to Format by Karen Aldworth  
Current Phase of Lesson: Phase of 5



**Illinois  
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**Lesson Overview:**

In this lesson, students engage with important ideas relating to visual communication through the principles of design and composition. They will identify the principles of design as they examine and reflect on magazine covers, advertisements, posters, and other contemporary designs. Students will use the principles of design such as; balance, contrast, emphasis, pattern unity, movement and rhythm within the visual compositions to increase visual clarity and interest while creating an original design.

**Classes or Discipline:**

- Graphic Communications I
- Desktop Publishing
- Yearbook, newspaper or web design courses

**Career Cluster:**

- [Arts, A/V Technology & Communications](#)

**Illinois CTE Endorsement Area**

- [Arts, Audio/Visual Technology and Communications](#)

**Grade Level(s):**

- This topic is appropriate for grades 9-12.
- This lesson could be easily adjusted for grades 6-8.

**Suggested Days/Minutes:** 3-4 class periods of 90 minutes each.

**Learning Objectives:**

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the use of principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, pattern unity, movement and rhythm) in professional design work.
- Use principles of design in their own work to make effective compositions.

**Standards Addressed:**

- [National Core Arts Standards](#)
  - Creating Anchor Standard 2:
    - Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

**Enduring Understandings:**

- Design is making choices. Effective design comes from interesting and creative choices.
- The principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, pattern unity, movement and rhythm) are how the elements of art are used.

### Resources and References:

1. Computer with access to Internet
2. Design software (Adobe Illustrator, Boxy SVG, etc.)
3. Alternatively, this could be done without design software and with traditional art materials (markers, etc.)
4. Professional examples ([PDF](#))
5. Principles of Design cards ([PDF](#))

**Note:** There is some variation in the principles of design from organization to organization, teacher to teacher. Feel free to adjust as needed to align with your curriculum, department, and district's preferences.

### Essential Employability Skills:

There are four [essential employability skills](#)

- Personal Ethic: integrity, respect, perseverance, positive attitude
- Work Ethic: dependability, professionalism
- Teamwork: critical thinking, effective and cooperative work
- Communication: active listening, clear communication

The focus of this lesson is on perseverance, positive attitude, active listening, clear communication, dependability, professionalism, critical thinking and effective and cooperative work.

Skill	How it is addressed:
Perseverance and positive attitude	Present and engaged in work with perseverance and positive attitude. Explore section the student must display these skills to be fully engaged.
Active listening and clear communication	Presentations and discussions with active listening and clear communication. Engage section the students share their personal likes with the class, in addition to student's responses to why in the Explore and Explain sections.
Dependability and professionalism	Assignment completion and concept exploration with dependability and appropriate content as professionalism. Exploration section the student is required to complete a project and place in their portfolio.
Critical Thinking, effective and cooperative work	Cooperative work in groups with effective problem solving and critical thinking. Explore I and II the students work in groups to come up with group ideas to share with the class.

## **Suggested Differentiation Strategies:**

- Provide handout with examples and definitions
- Add definitions and examples to the back of the design name cards
- Peer/group pairing for diverse learners
- Adjust/limit technical tools used in the software (or provide traditional design materials)
- Assign principles of design that are more clearly understood by students instead of having students choose
- For advanced students, provide additional challenges in the design stage

Throughout this lesson suggested teacher notes and comments are in red.

### **1. Engage (10 minutes)**

1. Observe the posters or other artwork provided by your teacher  
Pick out a few covers of magazines, advertisements, popular posters, and other contemporary work online or in a medium that matches the course's curriculum.
2. For each, write down something you like about it on a sheet of paper or sticky note.  
Students should write large enough that it can be read by others in the room.
3. Tape your papers on the white board in front of the class. Your teacher will then help you classify them.  
Allow students to tape their sheets of paper on the board in any order. Then work with them to arrange the comments into groups of similar comments. Require students to provide a name for each category. The comments are not to be aligned to the artwork. Elements of design transcend the individual work. Alternate online tools with a whiteboard concept could be used also, such as; Jamboard, Google Slides, etc. The names for the categories are likely to be similar to the vocabulary introduced later in this lesson.

### **2. Explore ( 135 minutes):**

#### **Part I:**

1. Get into groups of 2 or 3.
2. As a group, look through these professional design [examples here](#) that have interesting uses of space and composition.  
The professional design examples are also placed at the end of the lesson for printing.
3. Inspired by those examples, brainstorm what decisions do designers make when they "design?" Write down the steps you think a designer takes while creating a new design.  
The categories discovered in the Engage activity should be helpful.
4. Support each answer with your group's reason(s).

Analyzing why they like or dislike something forces them to critically think about it.

5. Present your ideas to the class.

This step will prompt students to base their opinions on some substance, not simply “because I like it.”

## Part II:

1. In your groups, match the professional [design examples](#) with principles of design [vocabulary](#) based on your understandings of the words.

- Balance
- Contrast
- Emphasis
- Pattern
- Unity
- Movement
- Rhythm

Although students have been working with design elements and discussing them, they may not have been using the proper terms or the terms properly. It is likely the names for the categories discovered in the Engage activity will be similar to the vocabulary presented here.

The principle of design cards are at the link above and at the end of the lesson for printing.

2. Share your matches with your reasons for each match with your classmates and teacher.

*Teacher note:* Encourage the group’s independence on matching vocabulary with the design. Individual discovery is vital to exploring success. Check on each of the group's matchings, help clarify any misunderstandings or questions and only hint towards the direction of an answer. As each group shares their matches with the class, encourage discussions on the students reasonings, their thoughts and this process as more important than a correct or wrong answer. The reasons provided by the students will be their understanding of the definition of the vocabulary terms.

## Part III:

1. Search for a professional work of design in which you can identify several principles of design being used to create the composition.
2. In Google Slides, share your work and identify the main principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, pattern unity, movement and rhythm) that the designer has used.
3. Explain and describe the effect of that main principle of design has on the overall design of the professional work, using specific details of the work to support your ideas.

*Teacher note:* You may use any form or application to meet the needs of your students and classroom for this step instead of Google Slides. The medium of the professional work can be reflected in current topics in the curriculum or student interests.

### **3. Explain ( 15 minutes)**

1. What makes you say you “like” a piece of original design artwork? Describe your thought process of seeing a piece of a design and then into determinizing the fact “I like this!”  
The goal is for students to make the connection of when principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, pattern unity, movement and rhythm) appear in a piece of artwork or design students like that piece.
2. What does a piece of design work need to have to grab your attention? Explain how this response can be a positive or a negative response. Why do you specifically have a negative response to a piece of work?  
The goal is for students to make the connection that they possibly don't like an item because it does not follow the principles of design (balance, contrast, emphasis, pattern unity, movement and/or rhythm).
3. What makes a piece of work eye-catching or eye-pleasing?  
The goal is for the students to make the connection that an eye-pleasing (attractive or aesthetically pleasing) or eye-catching piece of work follows the design elements and a design that is not eye-pleasing does not follow those design elements.
4. Why did you choose each of the specific professional work/pieces during the Explore III section?  
This will be of the student's opinion, but they need to express their specific reason(s) to their opinion. Students also need to respect other student's opinions.
5. Do you always agree with another person's design or their opinion of a design? Why or why not?  
Answering this question will be helpful for the student to determine what original design they want to create and what they do not want to create.

### **4. Elaborate/Extend (90 minutes)**

Use the following steps to create an original design for a magazine cover, advertisements, posters, and other contemporary work.

- You are restricted to using only four colors. This will require that you understand specific principles of design. The limited use of colors lets you focus on the space, composition, and design.
- Work intentionally, with attention to detail and your project goals.

1. Plan your design with sketches, brainstorming, and research.
2. Keep each rendition.
  - a. Do not throw them away or scratch them out.
  - b. Put a few notes on each about what you like and dislike before moving to the next attempt.
  - c. This will become your project portfolio that shares your idea development and includes any iterations and reflections upon your work at each step.
  - d. This evidence (sketches, brainstorming, research, etc.) may include photos, notes, journal entries, and the actual work. It will be unique to each project.
3. Present your project portfolio to your instructor and share/present your work with your classmate.
4. As your classmate presents their project, record your classmate's use of the design principals within their projects and explain your reasonings if you agree or disagree with their application of the design principle.

*Teacher note:* The medium used for this project and the format of the presentation can be with or without technology depending on the fit for the course curriculum.

## **5. Evaluate:**

Your teacher may use the following rubric to evaluate your project.

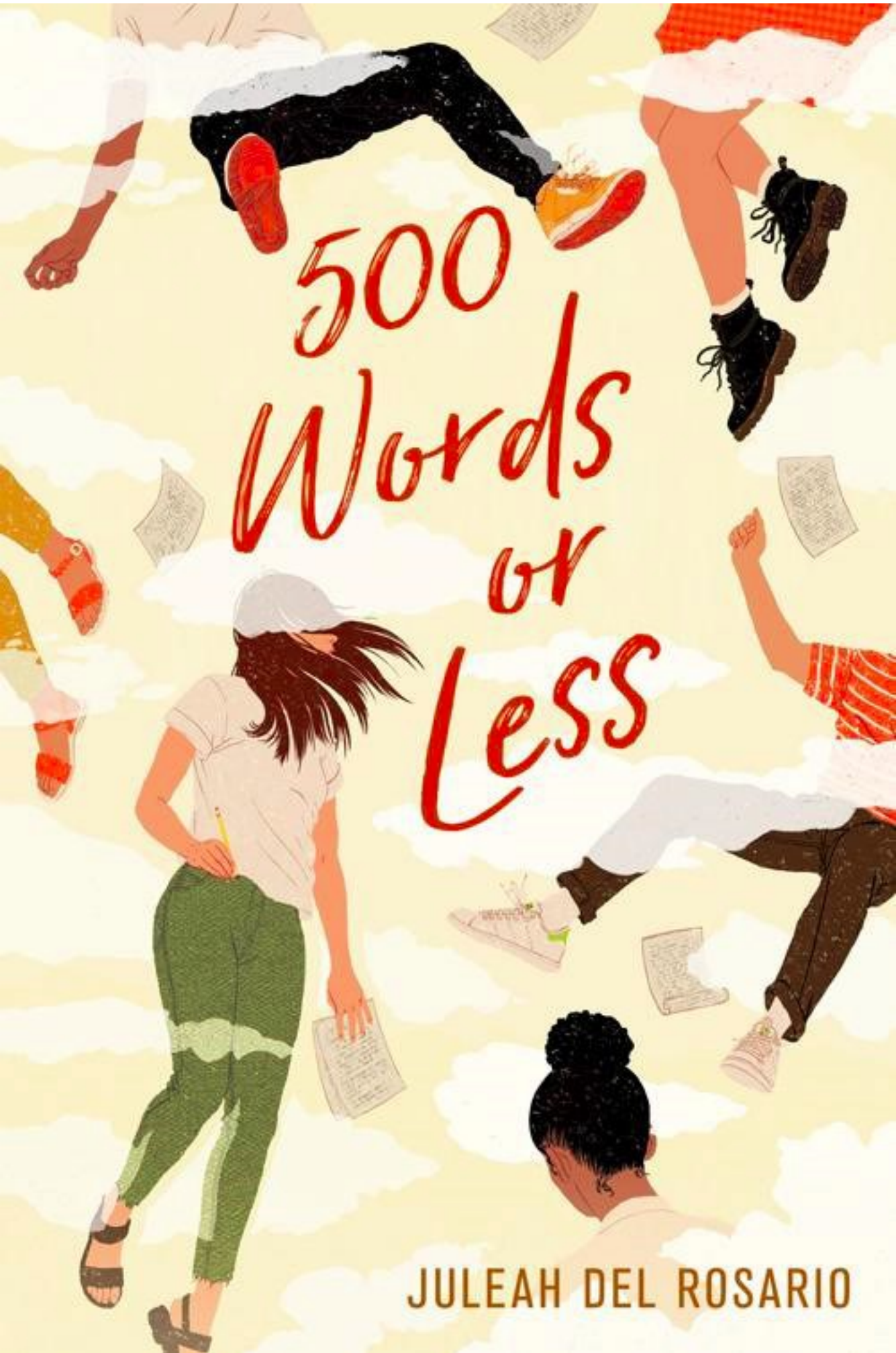
Student were engaged in the group discussions identifying design principles.	Student was somewhat involved within the discussions of design principles.	Student did not participate within the group discussions.
Student submitted a completed project portfolio on time which contained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sketches</li><li>• Brainstorming</li><li>• Research</li><li>• The product(design)</li><li>• Space</li><li>• Composition</li><li>• Adjustments</li><li>• Reflections</li></ul>	Student submitted the project portfolio but has a minor component of the project portfolio missing.	Student submitted an incomplete portfolio and after the deadline.
Original design within the portfolio show exploration of multiple design principles.	Original design within the portfolio shows exploration of one design principle.	Original design within the portfolio shows no exploration of design principles.
Student correctly identified and explained their use of the design principles within their project portfolio.	Student correctly identified and explained their use of the design principles within their project portfolio with minor errors.	Student did not correctly identify and/or explain their use of the design principles within their project portfolio.
Student identified and explained others' use of the design principles during the project portfolio in addition to politely agreeing or disagreeing with the other student's answers.	Student's identification and explanation of others' use of the design principles during the project portfolio was incomplete or did not politely agree or disagree with the other student's answers.	Student did not identify and explain others' use of the design principles during the project portfolio nor politely agreed or disagreed with the other student's answers.
INSTRUCTOR NOTES:		



**Handout of Professional Examples:**

The following pages are professional examples of design for students to examine for use of the principles of design.

Please print a set for each group.



# 500 Words or Less

JULEAH DEL ROSARIO





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ALFONSO CUARÓN



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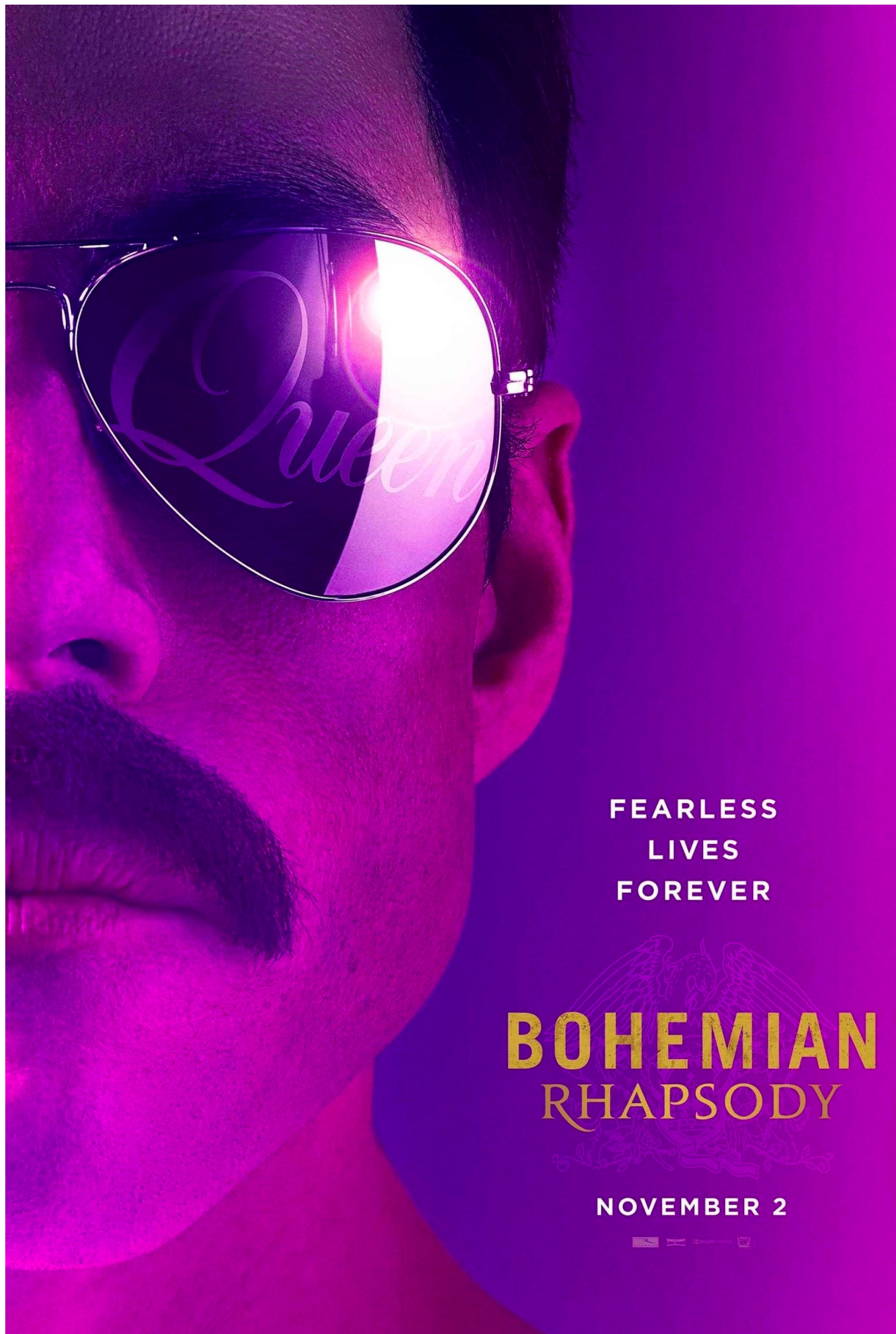
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**SHAUN DAVID HUTCHINSON**



MILTON GLAZER



Balance

Contrast

Emphasis

Pattern

Movement

Unity

Rhythm

Notes:

To see a review of this lesson by previous users, [click here](#).

We invite users of this lesson to [click here](#) to leave follow up information and rating.

We would like to publish pictures / videos of your students using this lesson. Please send to Rod McQuality at: [rdmcquality@ilstu.edu](mailto:rdmcquality@ilstu.edu). By sending pictures, you have met all the picture / video release for your school.

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*Student Edition*

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