

# AP Art Creative Process Steps: Concept vs. Reality

## AP Art Course Goals:

### Students are to:

- 1) Conduct an in-depth, sustained investigation through practice, experimentation, and revision, guided by an essential question(s);
- 2) Skillfully synthesize materials, processes, and ideas; and
- 3) Articulate, in writing, information about one's work.

### The most successful portfolio submissions will demonstrate:

- 1) Visual evidence of advanced 2-D, 3-D, or drawing skills
- 2) Visual evidence of synthesis of materials, processes, and ideas
- 3) Visual evidence of the written idea in all five works of art. This includes notes and writings about all sections of the creative process.

## What are Sustained Investigations and Essential Questions? Let's start with the Sustained Investigations

A Sustained Investigation is a deep dive into information, concepts, ideas, and questions surrounding a central focus called an Essential Question. The Sustained Investigation leads to a series of personally creative artworks. This investigation process helps demonstrate improved thought processes, decision making in creativity and composition, critical thinking skills, and constructive improvements. This process also connects to the overall structure of the College Board portfolio by focusing on the artistic process of developing and improving ideas over time and synthesis of final works to the Essential Question.

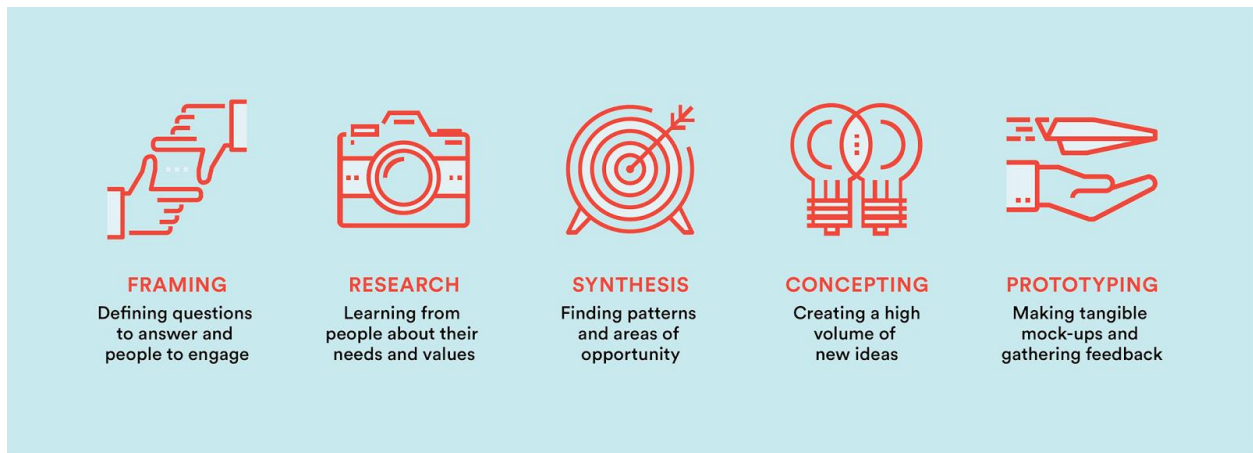
## What are the steps to a Sustained Investigation and the Creative Process?

As shown on the following page, most people see the process as a linear, straight-line process. These steps align with the following basic order:

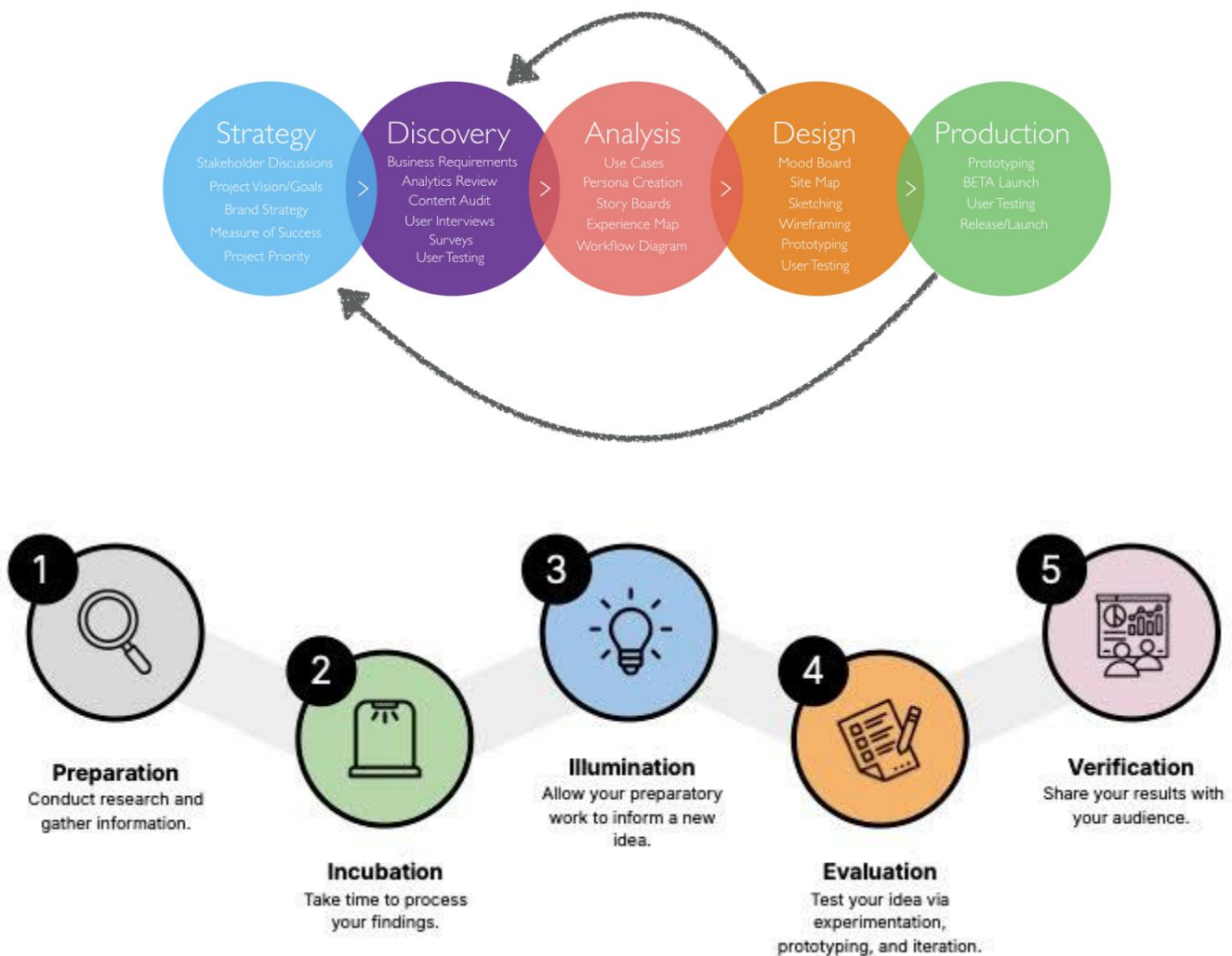
1. Defining a question or problem (Essential Question)
2. Research
3. Analysis of patterns, connections, and areas of possibility
4. Conceptualization/Prototyping (Brainstorming)
5. Clarification/Refinement (Planning Sketches)
6. Prototyping/Production (Final Project)
7. Critique product for problems and improvements

This basic process is used in any creative system to solve problems, improve concepts, and produce final products. Examples of this linear process are below and on the following page.





## PRODUCT DESIGN LIFECYCLE



### Reality of the Creative Process:

These examples are realistically too basic, but they are helpful to get started. For our summer project we will follow this more basic concept as explained on the next page, however, the more realistic and complex creative process will be used on our future AP Art projects in class next year. The more complex version is explained next and connected to the College Board expectations for projects.

# THE BEGINNING ARTIST THOUGHT PROCESS: LINEAR THINKING ORGANIZATION

PINK SHAPES = EACH  
SECTIONS OF THE PRO-  
CESS

DARK LINE = THE PATH  
AND DIRECTION OF THE  
MIND BECOMING MOR FO-  
CUSED.

**1. PROJECT BEGINS:**  
DEFINING PROJECT  
VISION, GOALS, AND  
EXPECTATIONS. DEFIN-  
ING QUESTIONS AND IN-  
FORMATION TO LEARN.  
LOTS OF POSSIBILITIES  
AND DIRECTIONS.

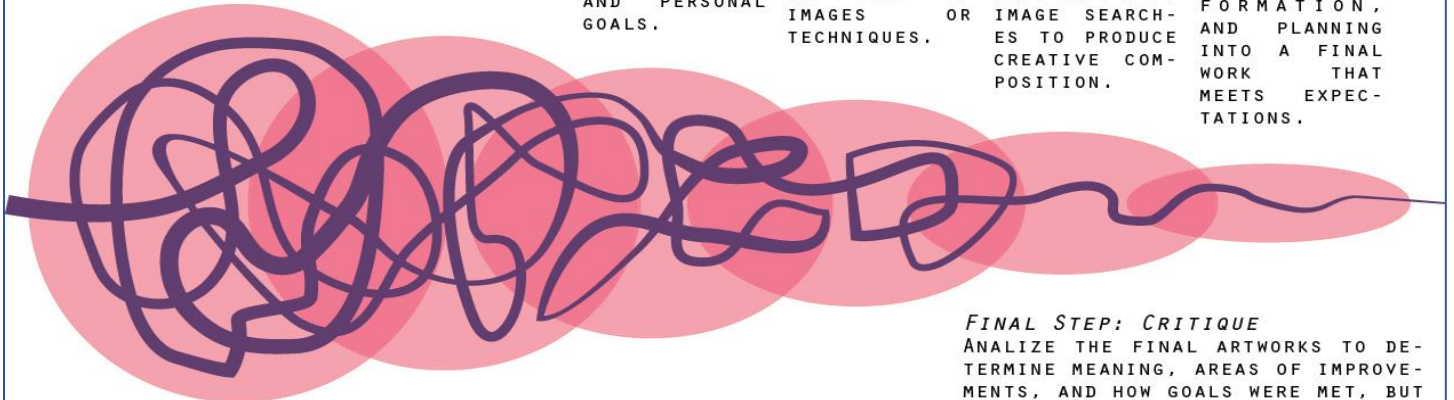
**2. RESEARCH &  
DISCOVERY:**  
FINDING NEW  
INFORMATION  
THAT FOCUSES  
POSSIBILITIES  
AND IMPROVES  
PROJECT UN-  
DERSTANDING.

**3. ANALYZE &  
SYNTHESIZE:**  
DETERMINE HOW  
THE NEW INFOR-  
MATION WILL  
AFFECT THE  
PROJECT GOALS  
AND PERSONAL  
GOALS.

**4. CREATIVE  
BRAINSTORMS:**  
PROCESSES TO  
FIND NEW IDEAS  
OR AVENUES TO  
IN USES OF  
IMAGES OR  
TECHNIQUES.

**5. PROTOTYPE  
AND/OR PLAN:**  
THUMBNAIL  
SKETCHES AND  
REFERENCE  
IMAGE SEARCH-  
ES TO PRODUCE  
CREATIVE COM-  
POSITION.

**6. FINAL PRO-  
DUCTION:**  
COMBINE ALL  
THE GOALS, IN-  
FORMATION,  
AND PLANNING  
INTO A FINAL  
WORK THAT  
MEETS EXPEC-  
TATIONS.



## FINAL STEP: CRITIQUE

ANALYZE THE FINAL ARTWORKS TO DE-  
TERMINE MEANING, AREAS OF IMPROVE-  
MENTS, AND HOW GOALS WERE MET, BUT  
FEW CHANGES MADE AT THIS STAGE.

# THE TRUE ARTIST THOUGHT PROCESS

START OF IDEATION AND THE  
DIVERGENT THINKING PATHWAY

NOTE: EACH BUBBLE IS THE SAME  
SIZE BUT IN REALITY THE TIME  
SPENT IN EACH SECTION OF THE  
PROCESS IS UP TO THE

## ARTIST IDEATION STEPS: THE LIGHT BLUE CIRCLES

**1. BIG IDEAS, ESSENTIAL  
QUESTIONS, AND ZERO DRAFT:**  
WHAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN  
AND WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW  
ABOUT THIS SUBJECT.

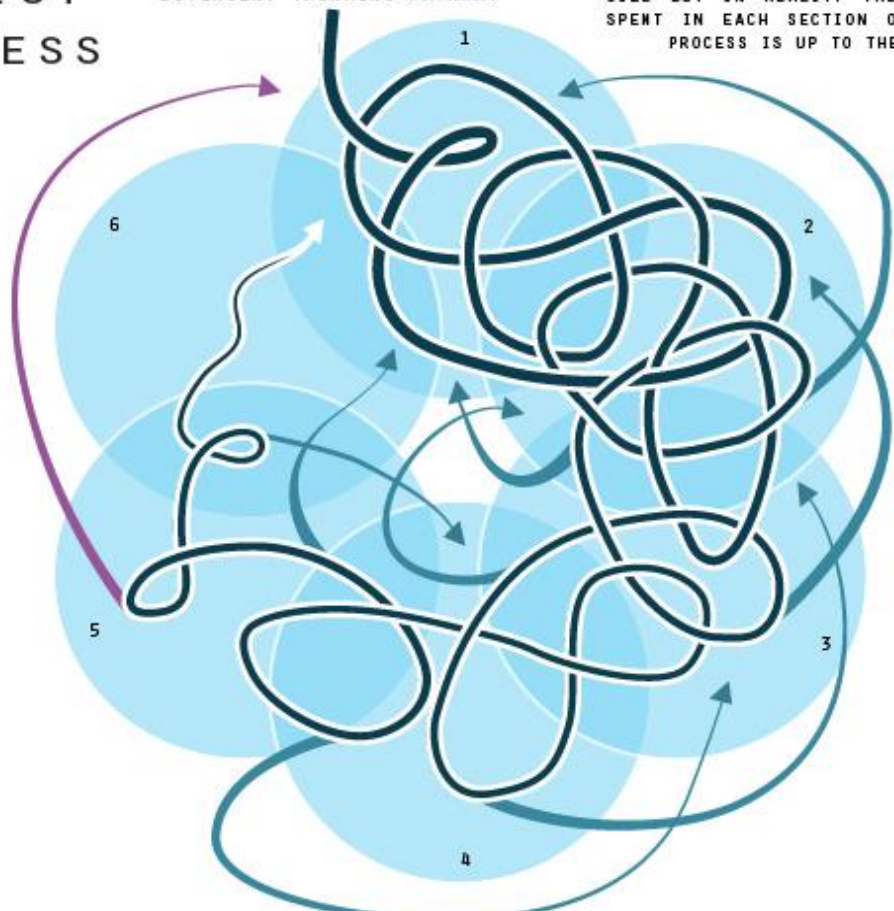
**2. RESEARCH:** VISUAL,  
INFORMATION, AND TECHNIQUE  
RESEARCH. ANY NEW INFOR-  
MATION IS GOOD INFORMATION  
TO BROADEN IDEAS AND POS-  
SIBILITIES.

**3. BRAINSTORMING ACTIVI-  
TIES:** CONNECTING CROSS  
CURRICULAR INFORMATION AND  
TO PRODUCE AS MANY DIFFER-  
ENT IDEAS AS POSSIBLE.

**4. EXPERIMENTATION:** EXPER-  
IMENTING WITH MATERIALS  
AND/OR TECHNIQUES THAT  
WILL BEST EXPRESS THE  
CHOSEN ARTISTIC IDEA.

**5. PLANNING:** PRODUCING A  
BASIC PLAN FOR FINAL ART-  
WORKS BY EXPERIMENTING  
WITH COMPOSITION THROUGH  
SMALL SKETCHES.

**6. FINAL ARTWORK PRODUC-  
TION:** PRODUCTION OF ONE OR  
MORE ARTWORKS RELATED TO  
ARTIST ESSENTIAL QUESTION  
AND INTENDED PURPOSE.



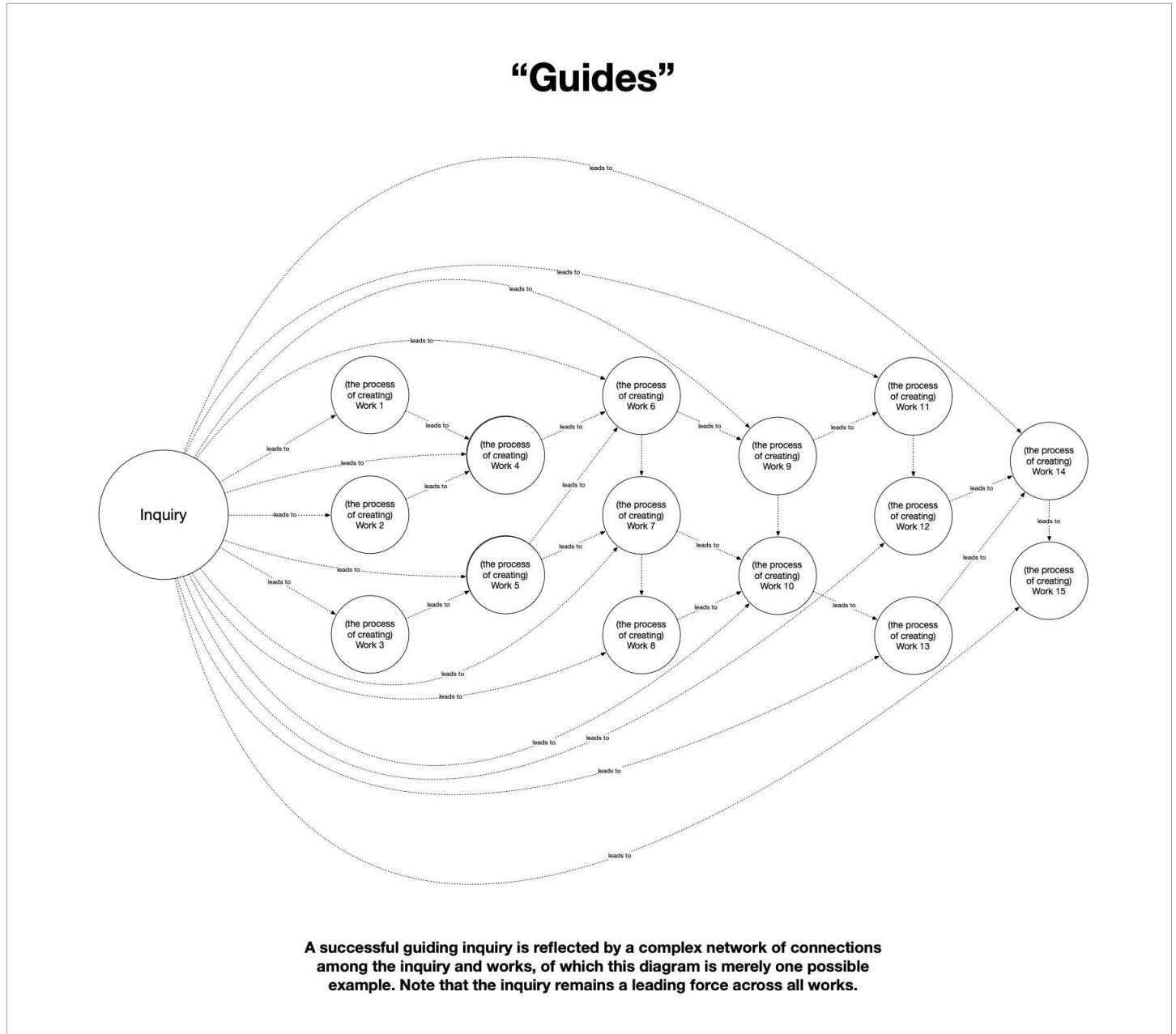
BLUE ARROWS SHOW THAT THE MIND WILL BOUNCE BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN DIFFERENT SEG-  
MENTS OF THE BRAINSTORMING PROCESS AS NEW INFORMATION IS ACQUIRED.

THE PURPLE ARROW DEMONSTRATES THE FACT THAT SOMETIMES WE GET TO A POINT WHERE WE  
DON'T LIKE THE DIRECTION OF THE PROJECT AND WE MAY START OVER COMPLETELY.



## Connecting Final Works and the Creative Process:

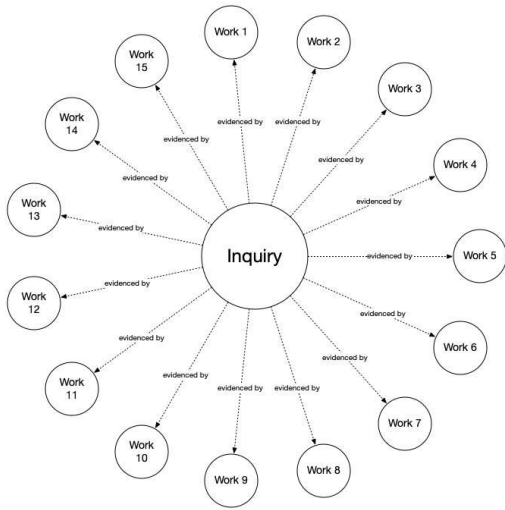
As shown in the true creative process with its interwoven events of information finding, concepts, production, and improvements that can go forever, so are the expectations for your final products as shown in the College Board image below. This image shows how your products should all be connected, influence each other, and all guided by a inquiry, a question or problem. This is the Sustained Investigation that can go on for eternity, or until you find a more intriguing and provocative question to delve into.



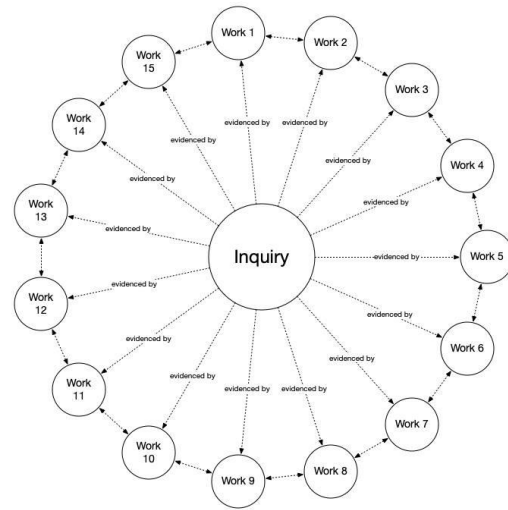
As shown above, each project or product may influence and change any number of the other projects. Ideas may change and your Essential question may evolve, but they are all interconnected and guided by that Essential Question. We will define and find Essential Questions shortly.

The following two examples are examples of less mature or sophisticated ways of producing artworks. These often lead to clichéd works, works that are not connected, or that did not have a purpose when started, and tend to not connect to an Essential Question or goal.

## “Relates”

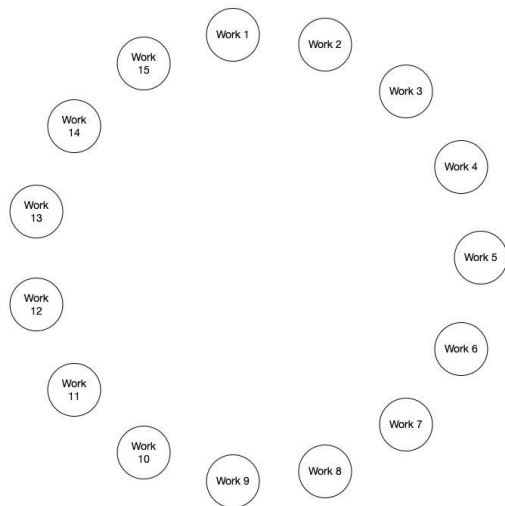


Here, each work serves as an individual instance of the inquiry.

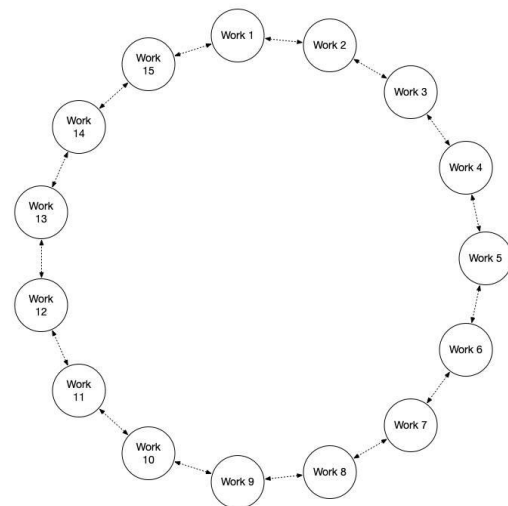


In some (if not many) cases, the works themselves may relate to one another, but they typically all relate to one another in the same way.

## No inquiry



The portfolio may be a collection of works with no apparent relationship (and no attempt to define / describe one).



An inquiry may still be missing even if the works appear to have a relationship to one another; either the written evidence stating an inquiry is missing entirely, or the stated “inquiry” is actually only a theme / topic.

# The First Step: Finding Essential Questions!

## Big Ideas and Essential Questions: What are they and what are expectations?

**What is a Big Idea?** Modified from Grant Wiggins and Sydney Walker

Big ideas -- broad, important human issues -- are characterized by complexity, ambiguity, contradiction, and multiplicity. Whether stated as single terms, phrases, or complete statements, big ideas do not completely explicate (explain or illuminate) an idea, but represent a host of concepts that form the idea. For example, the term conflict may represent a number of concepts, such as power, personal and social values, justice and injustice, and winners and losers. – Sydney Walker

**A Big Idea's answer starts questions like, "So what? Why is this relevant to me?"**

A Quality Big Idea...

- *is a topic that people care about,*
- *resides at the heart of a discipline, vocation, belief, or problem,*
- *can generate a lot of thinking, exploring, and discovering,*
- *matters and is useful beyond the classroom right now,*
- *will matter, be useful, and still be important 20 years from now,*
- *opens connections to individual and shared experiences, both in and out of the classroom,*
- *gets YOU and others excited thinking about it,*
- *has the potential to grab the imagination and engage people,*
- *challenges misconceptions and misunderstandings.*

**Some Big Idea topics, but not all of them...**

Advertising	Culture	Freedom	Measurement	Sadness and
Alienation	Cycles	Globalization	Metaphor	Happiness
Balance and	Death	Heroism	Models	Satire
Imbalance	Democracy	Honor	Myth	Scale/Structures
Bureaucracy	Duty	Human Rights	Nationalism	Slavery
Cause/Effect	Education	Humor	Order	Social Mobility
Ceremonies	Energy	Hunger	Patterns	Status
Change	Environment	Identity	Peace	Survival
Civil Liberties	Equality	Individualism	Pollution	Systems
Civilization	Equilibrium	Industrialization	Population	Technology
Class	Ethics	Interaction	Power	Terrorism
Commitment	Evolution	Interdependence	Punishment	War
Community	Exploration	Justice	Race	Work
Cooperation	Fate	Languages	Revolution	Love
Courage	Fear	Liberty	Rights of Passage	Hate
Crime	Force	Matter	Rights of Women	Religion

This is a short list. There are many more which you can find online in many resources. These ideas are so large that they would take multiple lifetimes to research all the information and the changes within the topics throughout history. They are also interconnected, overlapping, and influential towards each other. We do not have the time to research, let alone make art on all that is involved in one Big Idea. However, these are topics to get you started on a path to find an Essential Question that you would love to work on for the coming year, or possibly a lifetime.

So here we go, let's start by finding Big Ideas we are truly interested in researching.

1. Brainstorm/Research a list of Big Ideas and list interesting Big Ideas below.

2. Speed Date:

Choose multiple (3-4) that you are interested in and are connected to in your life. These should be things you would be interested in without the requirements of school and art.

Spend ten minutes brainstorming questions and writing down bulleted information you know about each of the subjects. These might be the most important things you know and not everything you know about the Big Ideas.

3. Choose one or two that truly interest you and are influenced by, discuss, read about, and/or interact with on a regular basis because you are passionate about it. List multiple options below.

**Big Ideas are not enough** to get us going though. Big Ideas are too large and encompassing for one person to comprehend all possible areas and facets. We need to something to focus our ideas, research, and thought processes. This is where Essential Questions come into play. These are to help you get started on the path to an deeply important Essential Question.

### Now to focus our passion into a researchable idea with Essential Questions.

#### Essential Questions: What are they?

Essential questions allow individuals or groups to focus on sections of the Big Idea that grab attention and matter most. Essential questions should have...

- many answers or viewpoints,
- may contradict each other.

Essential questions should be...

- provocative,
- have multiple answers,
- answers that change over time,
- provoke debate or disagreement.

Examples of Essential Questions connected to the Big Idea of Values and Beliefs:

- How do individuals develop values and beliefs?
- What factors shape our values and beliefs?
- How do values and beliefs change over time?
- List of essential question examples if you need more insight/examples: <https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/100-awesome-essential-questions>

There are an immense number of possible Essential questions for Values and Beliefs, but everyone is going to answer these questions differently and people argue over the ways in which people should obtain values and which beliefs are “right”. **For artist these essential questions are followed by another question, “How can I represent (insert essential question) through visual forms, images, techniques, and/or materials?** Think about this question once you have chosen an essential question to explore.

**Step 1: Defining Your Essential Question**

**IMPORTANT:** The source of your Essential Questions is of utmost importance. What are things you do, talk about, make, read, think about, and are extremely important to you and you are passionate about? What materials are you most familiar with and would like to improve your skills? What subjects (images) do you enjoy making the most? These types of ideas and questions will help you find an essential question that can lead to an entire year worth of ideas and artworks without getting bored.

**Assignment 1:** Answer the following questions and complete the connected tasks for our next meeting.

- a. Write down three topics that matter deeply to you or that you love researching, reading, and practicing on, and answer the following question, what Big Idea(s) do each of these three topics fall into?
- b. Brainstorm a minimum of three essential questions that you think would be fun to explore and research for each topic/Big Idea? There should be a total of nine essential questions minimum.
- c. Choose one of the Big Ideas and connected Essential Questions.

Big Idea with Topic	Essential Questions

**Materials and Technique Choices:**

What materials, styles, techniques, and/or visuals are you most comfortable producing?

What would you like to improve in your production throughout the year?



# Turning Question into Production:

## College Board Portfolio Required Steps

### Sustained Investigation and Documentation:

The College Board rubric requires, as stated in the course goals, that you demonstrate a Sustained Investigation of your Essential Question and that you have evidence of this investigation. The investigation must include practice, experimentation, and revision of ideas, techniques, compositions, visuals, and elements, among many other options. This evidence must be in visual art form and in written form for each practice, experimentation, and revision.

To demonstrate those requirements, we are going to have assignments for each practice, experimentation, and revision. We will also have steps for investigation new information and brainstorming to analyze our project information, find connections, and determine interesting visuals that connect to our ideas and Essential Question. Planning sketches will also be required to show planning along with revisions made from the original composition to the final product's composition. Class time will be devoted to experimenting with materials to find new techniques as well as practicing new and interesting techniques to apply to final projects.

Each one of the above steps needs to be documented through written and visual means as required by the College Board rubric. For our class, the written portions of research, planning sketches, brainstorming, and revisions are required to be documented in a sketchbook. Your sketchbook needs to 8.5" by 11" or 9" by 12" in size. This allows for a more objective grading process when all have approximately the same size pages and assignment requirements. Even more important is that by producing a sketchbook you can be more organic with connections, ideas, and information compared to digital media, and you are six to eight times more likely to remember information when producing a physical book compared to a digital collection.

### Overall Sustained Investigation and Project Goal = Synthesis:

When developing your ideas and information you are looking to demonstrate the Synthesis of your ideas, visuals, information, techniques, composition, and/or elements with their connections to your final project. What is Synthesis you ask? Synthesis is the idea that all your choices connect to your Essential Question and improve the expression of your idea in your artwork. For example, your color choices strengthen emotional expression, images connect and improve meaning, and composition changes improve the viewers reading of intended ideas. Even the research and brainstorming you conducted was guided by your Essential Question and those documents help demonstrate the connection of ideas and final works.

### Now that your Essential Question is Defined:

With your essential question defined, and a direction to head in, now we start the Sustained Investigation portion of the creative process. As a reminder, these steps are as follows:

1. Research
2. Analysis of patterns, connections, and areas of possibility (Brainstorming)
3. Conceptualization/Prototyping (Brainstorming and Thumbnail Sketches)
4. Clarification/Refinement (Continues throughout project steps)
5. Prototyping/Production (Planning Rough Sketches)
6. Final Project
7. Critique product for problems and improvements (Critique)

As discussed before, these steps are used as needed and repeatedly throughout the creative process as problems arise without a set order. However, for the first project we will go through these chronologically to acquaint ourselves with the processes and possible techniques involved with each step. We are also going to add one more step, but this step is only done once. This is called the Zero Draft and will be explained in the next section. This Zero Draft will help us avoid

unnecessary research. After the Zero Draft and first project each artist will begin the more realistic process of bouncing back and forth between steps as needed for each project.

## **Step 2: Zero Draft** (Graded Assignment)

With the first step of our Essential Question done, we are onto step two, the Zero Draft. The Zero Draft is our first analytical technique to improve our possible projects. A Zero Draft is a written list of all the information a person knows about a topic or set of topics. In any brand-new creative endeavor, a Zero Draft can be used to begin the analysis of patterns, connections, and more importantly, areas of possibility. By taking a serious look at already acquired information it is easier to see where one is lacking information, which in turn shows information and ideas to explore.

When writing a Zero Draft the document can be bullet pointed, summarized, organized, or unorganized. It is more important to write as much information out as possible and quickly. This is because most likely the amount of information already known is substantial, especially when you think cross curricular. Cross curricular is the idea that your Essential Question connects in all aspects of life. Think about possible connections past fine art. Look at connections in math, science, history, language, writing, music, TV, movies, graphics, games, culture, social media, family, your personal life, and so many other options.

### **Assignment 2: Zero Draft**

With your Essential Question in mind, write out a Zero Draft. Complete the following parts on a two-page, facing layout in your sketchbook.

1. Summarizing everything you know about your Essential Question (EQ). Forget full sentences and paragraphs. Use bullet points, lists, and webs.
2. When your information begins to pour out more slowly start to connect your EQ to cross curricular aspects of life as discussed above.
3. Highlight with different colors the parts that first, one needs more research. Second, parts that are interesting for you to pursue as art projects, and third, mark any new and interesting connections of images, ideas, and/or information that grab your attention. Arrows, lines, circles, or any other way to make connections clear is acceptable.
4. Write quick notes explaining any areas of information or research needed and explaining interesting connections with possible directions for future projects. Again, summarize ideas and connections.

This Zero Draft step is our first analysis step where we are looking for areas of possibility to make interesting and meaningful artworks. Make this assignment work for you. Make it organized and graphical, flowing and organic, or anything in between. You may sketch out ideas or information if you want as well.

This analysis of ideas, information, and visuals for areas of opportunity and need will be ongoing throughout the year as we complete projects, add new information, and make new connections. Hopefully this process will continue throughout your life too, as this ability to critically look at information for holes and connections is not just important for life but important for anyone who wants to make their life better and/or improve career opportunities.

## **Step 3: Research** (Graded Assignment)

Research personal and cultural history including art and events, important readings, and historical articles related to your Essential Questions and Big Ideas. The research should be conducted before beginning the brainstorming for the first project but will need to be conducted any time you feel you are missing information to produce a better project. Often this is done throughout a project and the course.

Research is a required part of the Sustained Investigation (SI) for two main reasons. One, without a base knowledge of the information, art, and ideas already produced, how do we know if we are producing creative and interesting possibilities or just copying cliched ideas. Two, one of the best ways to come up with new and creative ideas is to have new and interesting information. Without new information it is often difficult to come up with new ideas. You must be open to and allow new information to influence ideas and possibilities. Be open to changing your mind and thinking critically about your ideas and opinions. This openness is beneficial for your mental maturity as well as your future projects. Below are some places to start your research but you should find your many different sources through your search.

a. Art, Artist, and Art History:

- Art 21: Contemporary art site with searches by idea, process and artist.  
[www.art21.org](http://www.art21.org)
- Contemporary Art: Art examples, movements, and artists.  
<http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/contemporary-art.htm>
- Search The Interwebs: Artists who deal with \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in your BI or EQ).
- Search: Artworks that deal with \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank for BI or EQ).

b. Material Techniques:

- Online tutorials: Basics of techniques. We must know the basics to produce techniques that go beyond what we should already know.  
<https://finearttutorials.com/guide/art-mediums/>  
<https://www.artistsnetwork.com/free-art-instruction/>
- Search YouTube: Beginner techniques for \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank for chosen material).
- Search for information about techniques pioneered by masters of your chosen medium.

c. Cultural History:

- Making History: History by themes and categories  
[Themes - Making History](#)
- Search The Interwebs: Cultural History of \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in your Big Ideas or Essential Question).
- Search for information previously thought to be true. Search your subject using terms such as the 1950's or 19<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Search how an artwork connected to your ideas influenced history.

d. Newspapers:

- Read Newspaper Articles: Find articles from multiple newspapers/sites. Find articles with contradicting points of view. How does this information influence your ideas or beliefs?
- Random Article Generator: How can you force the random article information into your art?  
<https://longform.org/random>  
<http://articlegenerator.org/>

e. Interviews:

- Interview people with information that would be impossible to find through other means of research. Document the interview just as the other research types. Name the source and bullet point the important statements for each interview.
- Things to also consider are photographs, letters, or objects that are important that the interviewee may have that would help with an interesting idea.

f. Research Journals and Higher Education:

- Research journal options: [JSTOR Home](#), [Google Scholar](#), [Journals | Oxford Academic](#),
- Academia and Higher Education: [Index of departments, schools, and affiliates - Harvard University](#), [Libraries - Harvard University](#), [Research Centers – Stanford University](#), [Stanford Libraries](#),  
Of course there are other universities as well. Looking up which universities are atop the rankings in a specific area may help you narrow down to more pertinent information.

g. **FIND BOOKS!**

- Go to a library! Ask a librarian about possible books of interest. They read a lot.
- Books have deeper and more substantial knowledge compared to most information found online.
- Books also help with knowledge retention as well as decompression, relaxation, and thought organization.
- You do not have to read the whole book.

### **Assignment 3: Research**

Research information AND visual topics related to your Big Idea and Essential Questions. Research what artworks are already produced that involve your Big Idea and Essential Questions. How do we know if we have a new idea or if it is cliched if we don't know what has already been produced on the topic? Find information not expressed in your Zero Draft and complete the following steps:

1. Research and cite a minimum of five resources.
2. Bullet point the new and interesting information from each source. Include any and all important information from your reference material. It may not be important now but could be later.
3. Cut and paste visual information such as paintings, photographs, statistical charts, etc. into your journal.
4. Highlight, connect with lines, and explain interesting connections with your EQ. This is important to show synthesis of ideas. Also, the College Board grader won't read all your writing, so make the important stuff stand out and easily read.

Lastly, be organized with your information. That does not mean it has to be in columns and gridded, but use colors intentionally, make a balanced page, have images that are interesting and important, and this is to show them your compositional and design skills go beyond just a final artwork.

### **Step 3: Brainstorms and Ideation (Graded Assignment)**

**Brainstorming and Ideation** is part of the idea creation process using different written and visual techniques. After thinking about and researching your chosen Big Idea and/or Essential Questions comes the brainstorming stage. This is a Divergent Thinking process to come up with as many different possibilities as imaginable. Use information from every aspect of your life and education to make connections and produce new creative ideas. There are four parts that are important aspects of the Divergent thinking process. The different parts happen all at the same time and each part is important to the process, but of the four parts the first two are the challenging parts and take the most guts.

**IMPORTANT:** The goal of the brainstorming stage is to develop and determine ideas that are new, creative, and limit cliched imagery and ideas as much as possible.

#### **Part 1: Go Wild and Weird with Ideas**

To paraphrase Einstein, "if the idea isn't absurd then there is no hope for it." We can always make an idea less weird, but it is extremely difficult to make the mundane idea interesting. Every goofy or crazy idea is a chance to make an interesting and creative artwork.

## Part 2: Defer Judgement

Be open to new ideas and thoughts. Do not edit or judge any of your thoughts no matter how weird, goofy, or strange you think they are. It's that one out-there idea that sparks the interesting concept and draws people into something new. Write everything down that comes to mind. EVERYTHING!

## Part 3: Quantity Over Quality

We do not need a thousand amazingly creative ideas. We just need one good idea. By brainstorming as many wide-ranging ideas as possible we are more likely to come up with that one interesting idea. Statistically we only like, really like, one out of one hundred ideas.

## Part 4: Combine and Build

Often one idea grabs our attention and pushes us in a new direction. That one idea might be awesome but allow that idea to grow and change by combining new ideas, information, viewpoints and images. Our first is not our best idea. It made lead to our best idea, but there are always improvements to be made, new information, or new ideas to consider.

How are you going to represent your Big Idea and Essential Questions in a new, creative way? What images are you going to use that are imaginative instead of cliched, overused, or trite? Brainstorming will help! Brainstorming will allow for divergent thinking. Divergent thinking is a way of finding multiple possible answers or directions and is not what people are used to. Most people are conditioned for convergent thinking such as math functions. Think  $A + B = C$ , and there is only one way to get the answer or the idea is to get to the idea in the most efficient way possible. That is not the best for art. That only gives us cliched artworks and ideas in most cases.

<http://www.creativeeducationfoundation.org/creative-problem-solving/divergent-thinking/>

## **Brainstorming Techniques:**

Here are a wide range of brainstorming techniques. These different strategies use written and visual strategies to improve Divergent Thinking and to help avoid cliched elements. Visual examples of these are produced on each page.

- a. Lists: Quick way to get information out. This will be used in multiple other brainstorm types. THIS IS NOT A BRAINSTORM on its own, but a starting point.
  - Bullet point a list of 20 or more objects, items, people, places, or things that you associate with your Big Idea and Essential Questions. Which ones are visually different then the norm? Which ones are overused? Can you combine any in new or interesting ways that you haven't seen before?
  - Try this exercise multiple times and put a time limit on your next list. Sometimes the time limit allows you to defer judgement on your ideas because time and the number of words are more important than the idea.
- b. Mind Map: My most used concept. Pushes ideas in all sorts of crazy directions if you let it.



A technique used to get away from the obvious and clichéd. Refer to the visual example connected below. Start with your Big Idea or concept from your Essential Questions in the center of your page.

Around that central idea write all the words, objects, or visuals that come to mind immediately. These very quick visuals are ones that you have seen many times and that's why we think of them quickly. These are overused and should not be in your final work in most cases.

Next write words and objects related to the words in newly written set of ideas. Here is the challenge though, and that is to forget about your Big Idea or Essential Question and purposely try to think of things not obviously related to your Big Idea. We want to get away from the one idea and come up with as many images or ideas as possible. So, for each of the new words you need to come up with multiple objects, ideas, or images related to just that word.

Often it helps to bounce around from word to word, and it's ok to continue this process until you find an image or idea that you can connect back to your Big Idea that is different and interesting. This might mean you do three or more layers of concepts around the Big Idea.

- c. Opposites: Juxtaposed contrasting ideas are often compelling and interesting in the same artwork.

Brainstorm a list of things related to your Big Idea in one column in the center of your page. To the right of each word right another related word. To the left right the item or word that is the opposite, or furthest from that you can think of. You can continue this process for all your new words as well until you find an idea or image that is new and creative.

Often it helps to combine this idea with the Mind Map idea to push yourself away from the original idea to develop more original visuals.

- d. Metaphors: Finding connections through shared characteristics.

Describe your Big Idea, emotion, or subjects with as many descriptive words and statements as you can produce. You can also describe your reaction, mentally and physically, to the Big Idea. Choose three descriptive words you really like. Now try to think of other things, people, or objects that can be described using those same words. Repeat with three other words, and maybe all three words have a positive or negative connotation to them.

- e. Time Travel: Imagining your Big Idea's importance and changes in a different time.

Imagine you are in the Wild West, Roaring 20's, or the Great Depression. Think about other cultures like the Mayans, imperial Japan, ancient Greeks or as far back as Neanderthals. Dream about what the future might look like and how the society will change. What would change about your Big Idea or your Essential Questions from this time travel standpoint? Think about the information and scientific changes depending on time and place. How would people react? What were the styles?

- f. Context: Putting your subject in different places.

How are people going to react to a balloon animal? How are people going to react to a 20-foot balloon animal in a museum, or Central Park, or on top of the World's Fair Sun Sphere? Where is your idea or subject going to have the most impact? Where is it expected and or overused? Brainstorm places that

change your ideas importance or reaction of the viewer. Combine this with other brainstorms to heighten the visual interest.

- g. Alter Ego: You are a different person and have a different personality. How would that person think?

Imagine a person, and try not to be stereotypical, but be as realistic as you can. Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine you are this person. What are specific challenges and accomplishments of their life that influence their personality? Imagine their backstory and major events of their life. How does this person see the world? What would they think about the most and be interested in making for art? From this point of view brainstorm ideas and combine brainstorm techniques while thinking like this different person.

*Video Artist Example*

[https://www.ted.com/talks/shea\\_hembrey\\_how\\_i\\_became\\_100\\_artists?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/shea_hembrey_how_i_became_100_artists?language=en)

- h. Assumptions and Biases: How do assumptions and personal biases influence you?

What assumptions are you making about your Big Idea and Essential Questions? What personal biases do you have about the topic? Do you know these assumptions are true or false? How can you remove these assumptions? Can you use assumptions or biases other people make to influence your idea or change the visuals to influence others? How could you change these?

- i. Wishing: Exactly how it sounds.

What are your wishes in this world connected to your Big Idea? What do you wish you could do or change about your Big Idea or Essential Questions? Giant, huge, out of this world changes. Some might be feasible and others that are completely impossible. What images, events, or ideas come to mind. Write down as many as possible and how you could represent them visually.

- j. Disc of Destiny: Random statement maker for artistic ideas.

You will need to come up with three lists of words related to your Big Idea or Essential Questions. The first list is descriptive words such as handsome, lazy, or smart. The second list is of action verbs such as crying, talking, or cleaning. The third list is of people, places, or things. Each list will occupy one of the concentric circles on your Disc of Destiny. The three concentric circles spin on the central point to rearrange combinations of words. There is an example below and circles to print off. The outer circle will use the descriptive. The middle disc will use objects and things. The inner disc will contain the action verbs.

*Helpful Websites:*

Character Traits List <https://www.vocabulary.com/lists/33665>

Word Lists: <https://www.vocabulary.com/lists/>

Personal Qualities: <https://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/adjectivesforpeople.shtml>

Action Verbs: Add ing at the end instead of ed

<http://medicine.emory.edu/documents/research/research-actionverbs.pdf>

<https://resumegenius.com/longest-action-verb-list-universe>

<https://thesaurus.com> Put your words into the thesaurus to see synonyms. Different synonyms will elicit different visual images.

- k. Star Gazing: Think like a famous person.

Imagine yourself as a famous person from pop culture or history. Thinking with the personality of your chosen star brainstorm images related to your big idea. What images would they think of depending on when they lived? Use one of the other brainstorming techniques while trying to stay in character or think about your Big Idea and Essential Questions from multiple stars' points of view.

- l. What if?: Interchanging parts, places, or people then predicting an outcome.

The beginning of many fictional story lines, political plannings, and research. What if our reality was all artificial in a virtual reality? What if machines took over the world? Both questions explored in The Matrix. What if Russia invades Poland? What if we don't stop global warming? All these what ifs start a chain reaction of possibilities in a person's mind. Some thoughts are possible and maybe even likely, while others are outlandish, improbable, or completely absurd, but all are starting points for the creative thinker.

- m. Random Words Generator: Book or Printed Material

Using a book or printed material point randomly and without looking at words inside your chosen resource. This resource could be related to your Big Idea or Essential Question for stronger relationships. Using these random words makes connections back to your topic through mental or visual relationships. What creative and unique connections do you come up with? This may take a lot of words and you may even be able to make connections from multiple random words that connect well to your idea.

- n. Word Vomit: Word chain options.

Option 1: Start with a word related to your Big Idea or Essential question then write down the first word that comes to mind that starts with that last letter of that first word. Now continue this process with each new word starting with the previous word's last letter. Continue until you have multiple interesting and unique idea options.

**Assignment 3:** Try a minimum of two different brainstorming activities and find/take 5 related photographs or images for each brainstorm activity.

The GOAL of these brainstorms is to help you get away from the cliched images and connections that have been overused. Continue working on a brainstorm until you have concrete imagery that is interesting in connections, juxtaposition, and/or proportions. DO NOT stop with large general statements as these tend to be ambiguous or large nebulous ideas that are too broad to nail down a realistic idea or composition.

In your sketchbook, produce different brainstorm techniques, one technique on two facing pages. The two pages give you space for the next step. On the space around the brainstorm and/or the page facing it sketch, collage, or attach a minimum of five images related to your brainstorms that you found interesting. Work on each brainstorm sporadically through the week. It often takes multiple days of thinking to let information set in and new ideas to form. Each brainstorm should have a minimum of 25 statements. Add visuals while taking a break between brainstorms or after you have completed the brainstorms. You might even stumble into good images while watching TV, reading magazines, or flipping through social media.

Sketchbook Examples: [How to Make a Mind Map: Creative Examples for High School Art Students](#)

## Part 4: Meaning Making in Sustained Investigations (Graded Assignment)

**Determining your direction(s) and materials.** This is the most important part of your summer work. You must decide the most interesting ideas that you would like to investigate throughout the school year. What are the most interesting essential questions and artistic ideas that you have come up with in the previous steps of the process? What materials, images, and elements best express these ideas? Think about how to get an emotional response from the viewer of your art. All your choices should be in consideration of expressing your idea.

### **1. Meaning Making, Technique and Material Decisions:**

- a. Meaning Making: What ideas have the most impact or express an idea the best?

Only after going through the brainstorming process should you start to decide on the message or story your artwork is going to express. Think about multiple ideas that you developed through the process critically thinking about which idea or ideas is the most original and could be the most visually interesting.

- b. Materials: New and different mediums.

What materials will help you get your visual idea or beliefs across to the viewer the best? Attempt to restrain yourself from only thinking about familiar materials. Be open to trying something new, whether that means your work is two-dimensional or three-dimensional, or maybe more than one material.

- c. Elements of Art: How does each affect the meaning or emotional response?

Line	Form	Color	Texture
Shape	Space	Value	

Think about how changes to each one of these elements would affect the meaning of your work. Does your outline need to be clean, smooth, and realistic, or would a jagged line express your emotion better? Choose elemental choices that you can defend in your explanations.

- d. Techniques: What techniques re-enforce your message?

What techniques have you used in the past or scene that strengthen your image and idea? Explore new ideas on technique that you have never tried before. Below are lists of many techniques to try.

Britannica Encyclopedia Painting Techniques: By paint medium.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-painting-techniques-2000995>

Wikipedia List: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Artistic\\_techniques](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Artistic_techniques)

Home School: List by material.

<https://www.design-your-homeschool.com/Art-Techniques.html>

Artist Network: Extensive list of techniques.

<https://www.artistsnetwork.com/art-techniques/>

**Assignment 4:** Use a 2-page spread in your sketchbook and create a list of at least 10 solid project ideas for your Sustained Investigation projects. This may take you much of the summer. The more you think about your Essential Question and find information about it, the more ideas you will produce. Explain in writing what you are interested in producing, the materials and techniques you might use, along with the visuals and elements that could be used to express each idea.

Check out these super useful articles to help with brainstorming ideas.

- [Art Project Ideas: A Guide to Subject Matter Selection](#)
- [How to Avoid the Cliché in a High School Art Project](#)
- [GCSE /A Level Art Exam Ideas 2013](#)

This part of your summer work could potentially be done quickly, but it's worth saying again that this is one of **the most important parts of the year** because the idea you settle on will be the foundation for an entire year's worth of art and sustained investigation. I suggest starting this page and then coming back and adding to it throughout the summer. Feel free to expand onto more pages if inspiration hits or if you're struggling with ideas.

**Extra Journaling, but not required-** Responding to Experiences

***Each week, use your portfolio as a response to important experiences and produce artistic investigation pieces. Journal important events and art pieces that inspired your work. This part of your summer assignment may be more vague and widely differing each time. This is just a start.***

- Listen to music, eat food, read books, watch movies, interview people, talk/listen. Once a week, journal about something you've experienced. This is mostly about writing your thoughts like a journal, but you can also sketch and doodle too. Try to do one entry each week and related to your essential question. Date each entry. Write at least 2 sentences for each entry. Don't make this just a list of what you did each week. Instead, strive to contemplate your experiences and write about how they made you feel or what they made you think and what questions they make you consider.

## **Step 5: Sketchbook Experiments and Practice** (Graded Assignment)

A experiment in general is an activity where one truly is unsure of the outcome. The person doesn't know enough to make an educated guess. Experiment and practice works are connected in that at first a new materials, techniques, and combinations of materials produce unknown results, but after experimenting after a couple tries there is enough knowledge to make a good guess about what will happen, and at this point the activity starts to turn towards practice. In practice an individual is trying to perfect their craft, whatever that may be. For us, we want to make changes to those new techniques until it looks the way we want it to and improves the expressive nature of our artworks. These two things are also required of the College Board, but more importantly these two things help us develop our own style and ideas, which are part of being a true artist. For us there are

### **Exploration and Experimentation:**

Experiment with new techniques discovered in the research process and techniques previously gained.  
Experiment with new media or new ways of mixing media. If you are using a familiar medium, what materials or steps can be changed, removed, or combined from the production process? What new steps can you imagine and add to your process?

#### a. Constraints:

What technique limitations or physical limitations can you put on yourself when producing your art? How will this change your art?

Article with examples: <https://nancyhillis.com/constraint-in-art/>

In and other areas: <https://blog.musicbed.com/articles/exploring-the-power-of-creative-constraints/188>

List of Oblique (Constraint) Strategies:

<https://carinelallemmand.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/enobliqstrat1.pdf>

Random Oblique Strategy Generator: <http://stoney.sb.org/enoblique.html>



- b. Experiment with Process:  
Painting Materials: What materials can you change or switch?  
<https://www.mybluprint.com/article/11-things-you-need-to-get-started-in-oil-painting>
- c. Experiment with Technique:  
Drawing: <https://www.studentartguide.com/articles/line-drawings>  
Acrylic Painting: <https://www.mybluprint.com/article/13-acrylic-painting-techniques-all-beginners-should-try>  
Oil Painting: <https://drawpaintacademy.com/9-oil-painting-techniques-for-beginners/>  
Painting: <https://www.creativebloq.com/art/painting-techniques-artists-31619638>  
Basic Brushstrokes: <https://feltmagnet.com/painting/Acrylic-Brush-Stroke-Techniques>  
Painting Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fdHnR0sFS8k>
- d. Follow the Leader: Copying and combining strategies of other artists.  
Experiment using strategies or techniques that other artists use. Research the techniques used by the artist or in the artworks that you researched earlier. What techniques do you want to use? Can you combine them with your own techniques?
- e. Oblique Strategies: Creativity through Limitations.  
Oblique Strategies are a random set of commands that require an action or remove techniques to limit possibilities and promote creative problem solving.

## Limiting Material and Tool Prompts for Experimentation:

### Directions:

- Prompts are not like directions with specific outcomes in mind. Prompts are just statements to get the artist thinking, and each artist should have different ideas depending on personal styles, mediums, and experiences.
- Prompts often limit your options, which requires creative solutions to produce a work.
- Read the prompts and use one you like, or for more of a challenge, have someone pick one at random for you and you must do something related to the random prompt.
- Prompts might evoke multiple thoughts or directions, explore all of them, but if the prompt only gives you one idea you can try another prompt after completing the first experiment.

### Prompts: You can only use...

- |                              |  |                                    |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Experimental "Brush"      | 13. Use only one shape                   | 25. Change time limits, faster     |
| 2. A stick                   | 14. Same stroke                          | 26. Electrified artistic movements |
| 3. Limited colors            | 15. Like a child                         | 27. Depressed artistic movements   |
| 4. Thicker                   | 16. Thrown                               | 28. Textured                       |
| 5. Thinner                   | 17. 100 marks, 50 marks, 25 marks, 10... | 29. Smooth                         |
| 6. Large media               | 18. Household utensil                    | 30. Fire, burning, burnt           |
| 7. Tiny media                | 19. Colors you hate                      | 31. Multiple mediums, one tool     |
| 8. Non-art tools             | 20. Abstract and simple                  | 32. Multiple tools, one media      |
| 9. Non-art mediums/materials | 21. As fast as possible                  | 33. One color, one line time       |
| 10. Angry marks              | 22. Huge brush, marker, tool...          | 34. Two colors, two line types     |
| 11. Simple marks             | 23. Tiny brush, marker, tool...          |                                    |
| 12. Never used before        | 24. Repeated shapes                      |                                    |

- |                                  |                                 |   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| 35. Work with your eyes closed   | 48. One layer                   | 63. Geometric   |
| 36. Work with opposite hand      | 49. Large black lines           | 64. Organic   |
| 37. Work upside down             | 50. No black, no lines          | 65. Smash, mush, smush...   |
| 38. Work to a beat               | 51. Realistic depth             | 66. Destroy, maybe reassemble   |
| 39. Hands/body only              | 52. Unrealistic depth           |   |
| 40. Clothes only                 | 53. Exaggerated depth           | Randomized Options: May use to get started but then connect back to Essential Question. |
| 41. Made with nature             | 54. Work on something 3D        |   |
| 42. Press hard                   | 55. Drops of...                 | 1. Rorschach Blot   |
| 43. Press light                  | 56. Watered down                | 2. Random Image Generator   |
| 44. Cut and paste                | 57. Fragment into part          | 3. Random Word Generator  |
| 45. Small parts                  | 58. Break, rip, separate...     |   |
| 46. Large parts                  | 59. Letters, symbols, emojis... |   |
| 47. Mix two different techniques | 60. Cliches only                |   |
|                                  | 61. Found objects               |   |
|                                  | 62. Planes (not airplanes)      |   |

## Assignment 6: Practice

### 2D Design and Drawing

- A. Create 1 sketchbook experimental artwork in response to some of the ideas, images, and photos you produced earlier. How you visually respond to these ideas and images is up to you. Try to be inventive and creative with it rather than just doing a strict copy. Use up a whole page in your sketchbook for this experiment. Pick out 2 principles of design to focus on with this artwork. Use any materials.
- B. Create a 2nd sketchbook artwork in response to your previous ideas and the last experiment. This time, focus on your technical skills and mark making to express emotions. Experiment with new tools or materials for drawing, painting, collages, mixed media, etc..

### 3D Design

- A. Create 1 mockup sculpture (small, rough artwork) demonstrating experimental materials and techniques in response to ideas, images, and photos you previously produced. How you visually respond to your ideas is up to you. Try to be inventive and creative with it rather than just doing a strict copy. Produce a sculpture that is a minimum of eight inches. Pick out 2 principles of design to focus on with this artwork. Use any materials.
- B. Create a 2nd mockup artwork in response to previous ideas and the last experiment. This time, focus on different materials and connections. Experiment with painting materials, mixed materials, ready made materials, etc.

These are meant to be trial pieces to explore any potential sustained investigation themes, images, and/or techniques. These do not need to be super polished perfect artworks, but instead they should represent at least 2 hours worth of work each and demonstrate effort, reflection, and development of potential themes for the year. Think and write about what worked, what didn't, and how you would change or improve works.

## **Part 6: Planning** (graded)

### **Return to your Meaning Making and Brainstorming ideas.**

Narrow your Meaning Making and Brainstorming ideas down to your 2 favorite ideas. Expand the idea in writing and sketches. Be specific. Describe what and why. What is the image going to be of and about? Why? What materials are best to use to get your idea across? Why?

### **Assignment 6: Thumbnails and Rough Sketches**

#### **Thumbnail**

Draw 10 quick and loosely detailed thumbnails based on your 2 favorite ideas. These should be at least 2 to 3 inches in size and have a background and some layering to indicate depth and form. These can be sketchy, but they should have some clarity to them. Sketches should show objects proportional to what they would be in the final work, but you don't need every detail. Explain meanings, what is happening in your sketch, and what materials you are going to use in writing. Thumbnail sketches are quick 3-minute drawings and 2" by 3" in size.

#### **Rough Sketches**

Draw 2 loose but more detailed Rough Sketches based on your 2 favorite thumbnails. These should be at least half a page in size and have some details along with better shading. These can still be sketchy, but they should have a more detailed plan and look to them. Explain any changes that were made between the thumbnails and rough sketches including meanings and materials. This is one of the revision possibilities to demonstrate for the portfolio.

## **Part 7: Reference Images** (graded)

### **Assignment 7: Multiple images for each element.**

Take multiple photographs to use as reference images for each object or element of your final design. Images taken by you may be used in any manner you want. Images taken from the internet must be edited, combined, or manipulated so that you are not accused of plagiarism, and absolutely NO AI is allowed. If images must be found on the internet because of logistics, such as you can't fly to Spain to take pictures, then multiple images must be combined and manipulated to produce your own work. You may want your reference images for the planning sketches and this could be done earlier in the process.

## **Part 8: Final Artworks** (graded)

### **Assignment 8: Create (100 pts)**

Complete 1 finished artwork based on your favorite idea for your rough sketches. Do the best you can and know that you can still change your theme after school starts if you don't like the result of your art. The most important things are that you have the experience using the creative steps and finishing an artwork for your S.I. so that we can discuss the results when we return to school and move forward from there. You're encouraged to create more artworks for your Sustained Investigation if you feel inspired to do, and if you want to make the school year a little easier.