Visual Art Elective   
Creating Big Idea

Option #1 Performance Task |   
Teacher Document

Authors: Project Team

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Overview of the Performance Task

This performance task emphasizes the process of creating art, aligning with the 2020 California Arts Framework[[1]](#footnote-1) and the California Arts Standards.[[2]](#footnote-2) The goal of the California Arts Standards is to promote genuine learning in all arts disciplines, as such the Arts Standards are designed to be process-oriented, outlining authentic real-world practices in the arts (Arts Framework, p. 21). Focusing specifically on visual art, the California Arts Standards outline learning expectations that help students develop artistic literacy by detailing the actual processes they engage in as creative individuals in the visual arts. (Arts Framework, p. 526) This performance task gives more attention to the process and aligns with the 2020 California Arts Framework and California Arts Standards by balancing process-oriented and product-oriented learning in visual art.

This performance task evaluates students’ understanding of key concepts within the high school proficient-level visual arts course Big Idea of Creating. The Big Idea of Creating was selected because it closely aligns with the California Arts Standards’ artistic process of Creating. The California Arts Framework emphasizes that “to become artistically literate, students must have ample experiences devoted to learning all the artistic processes: Creating, Performing / Presenting / Producing, Responding, and Connecting” (Arts Framework, p. 21). In Visual Art, the Creating artistic process allows students to “conceive and develop new visual arts ideas and work. Students learn and gain the ability to communicate and create using the unique academic and technical languages of visual arts” (Arts Framework, p. 530).

Creating was chosen as the Big Idea for alternate means of expression because it offers multiple entry points where students can imagine, plan, make, reflect, refine, revise, and investigate (Arts Framework, p. 531). These entry points create a more inclusive learning experience, enabling diverse learners, including students with disabilities (SWDs) and those with IEPs to fully engage in the learning process. The Enduring Understanding within the Creating artistic process states, “Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative artmaking goals” (Arts Framework, p. 531). This process-based, open-ended framework provides numerous opportunities for students to express diverse “right” answers, ensuring universal accessibility for all learners.

High school proficient-level visual arts students engage in creative processes using multiple approaches and contemporary practices, without preconceived plans. They understand the health and environmental impacts of materials and ensure the safe handling of all tools. Students apply both traditional and contemporary criteria to reflect on and revise their work (Arts Framework, p. 571). This performance task provides a process that breaks down the activities and tasks by which students can demonstrate proficiency in the standards associated with the Creating Big Idea in visual art. The process provided for teachers allows them to customize the performance task based on their visual arts discipline-areas expertise, and the unique needs, cultures, interests, and abilities of their students to promote an inclusive and relevant educational experience.

When preparing to administer this performance task, the teacher needs to distinguish between flexible and fixed elements—such as materials, media, and techniques—to ensure students have multiple ways to demonstrate their knowledge without compromising the depth and rigor of the standards. As always, educators should consult the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) to ensure that all required accommodations and supplementary aids are provided during the assessment.

Additional information on providing alternative means of expression can be found in the Best Practice Guides and content-aligned Practice Briefs created as part of California’s *Inclusive Access to a Diploma: Reimagining Proficiency for Students with Disabilities* initiative.

Administering the Performance Task and  
Embedding Supports for Students

This section guides the educator on how to administer the task and how to support the student in demonstrating their understanding of the Big Idea and should be reviewed by the educator before the task is implemented with students. This section outlines key vocabulary, appropriate and inappropriate supports, and potential methods and means of expression for each part of the task:

Key Vocabulary Terms

The key vocabulary terms provided below help complete the performance task, and teachers should be ready to review them with students.

* **Composition**: The arrangement of elements within an artwork.
* **Contemporary Life**: The current or modern aspects of life that can influence or inspire art.
* **Critique**: An individual or collective reflective process by which artists or designers experience, analyze, and evaluate a work of art (Arts Framework, p. 617).
* **Cultural Contexts**: Ideas, beliefs, values, norms, customs, traits, practices, and characteristics shared by individuals within a group that form the circumstances surrounding the creation, presentation, preservation, and response to art (Arts Framework, p. 618).
* **Cultural Traditions**: A pattern of practices and beliefs within a societal group (Arts Framework, p. 618).
* **Final Reflection**: A concluding piece that provides insights into the process, choices, and meaning behind the created artwork.
* **Identity**: The qualities, beliefs, and expressions that make a person or group distinct.
* **Medium/Media**: Modes of artistic expression or communication; material or other resources used for creating art (Arts Framework, p. 619).
* **Peer Review**: An evaluation of a student’s artwork by classmates, providing insights and suggestions.
* **Reflection**: Thoughtful consideration of one’s own work and the processes involved in its creation.
* **Refinement**: The process of improving artwork by making thoughtful adjustments and enhancements.
* **Self-Review**: The process of evaluating one’s own artwork to understand strengths and areas for improvement.
* **Style**: Recognizable characteristics of art or design that are found consistently in historical periods, cultural traditions, schools of art, or works of an individual artist (Arts Framework, p. 619).
* **Symbolism**: Using images or symbols to represent ideas or qualities in art.
* **Techniques**: Methods and skills to use art media effectively, such as shading, blending, or collage.

Strategies for Supporting Students

The following sections describe appropriate and inappropriate resources to provide students as they complete a task.

Appropriate Resources

Maintain the rigor of the standards while also accommodating student difficulties such as confusion and anxiety or providing a material resource the student could use to complete the task without compromising the standard or big idea. Appropriate resources include:

* reading the item to the student
  + answering clarifying questions related to vocabulary (for example, scaffolding art vocabulary with symbols and other visual supports, demonstrating vocabulary associated with art techniques and methods)
* helping the student to make sense of the item by asking questions such as, “What is this question asking you to figure out? What important information does the question give you? Are there any words you want to ask about or look up?”
* providing multiple copies of the content
* printing images or content on larger sheets
* allowing students to complete different parts or items over an extended period (versus completing an entire task or part in one sitting)
* providing visuals and checklists to simplify complex art processes
* showing diverse examples to illustrate various ways to solve artistic problems
* developing a system that allows students to independently access and self-identify art media, tools, materials, and references
* fostering creative choice-making by avoiding “no” and saying “yes” when possible
* ensuring access to tools that enable equitable access to assigned art media (for example, grippers, drawing boards, adapted scissors, stabilizers, daubers, no-spill containers, stamps, tracers, magnifiers, and digital tools)

Inappropriate Resources

The inappropriate resources identify what assistance should be avoided as it may alter the rigor of the standards and negatively impact the student’s ability to independently demonstrate proficiency and be objectively scored on that task.

* explaining to students how to use new media and techniques such as providing direct, concrete instructions with a preconceived right or wrong answer
* retelling students how to complete the concepts being assessed or doing the “creating” for the students
* directing instruction with prescribed outcomes, which limits creativity and results in formulaic, product-based art; instead, assess the artmaking process, emphasizing exploration and personal skill development over the final product
* insisting on uniform materials, processes, or outcomes; this limits creativity and personal expression, diminishing the diversity of student work
* frequently correcting students’ work to match a specific standard or expectation rather than guiding them to self-reflect and improve
* setting rigid criteria for peer review that do not allow students to provide personalized, thoughtful feedback

Potential Alternative Means of Expression

The following options provide various ways students might demonstrate their knowledge of the standards being assessed. This performance task is assessed through two means: the artmaking process and a final reflection. The art media utilized should be identified by the teacher based on their discipline-area expertise. When introducing art media, create opportunities for sensory exploration, prompting students to ask questions such as, “What is this?” and “What can it do?” This process-oriented approach guides students toward developing technical expertise in various art media. For the final reflection, “Offer a variety of ways students can describe and explain their artistic process” (Arts Framework, p. 602). This flexibility mirrors the process-based approach of artmaking, where students explore and construct their own understanding through personal expression.

Students can complete the final reflection by

* using digital software to type
* using text-to-speech or speech-to-text
* verbally expressing
* dictating to a scribe[[3]](#footnote-3)
* writing
* creating a digital presentation
* recording a video
* creating a screencast (a digital recording of screen activity with audio narration)
* keeping a journal or sketchbook
* crafting a poem or short story inspired by the artwork
* creating an interactive installation or performance piece
* designing an infographic or mind map
* creating a podcast
* designing a workshop

Selecting Art Media for “Creating” Big Idea

The art media for completing the performance task must be identified by the teacher, based on their discipline-area expertise, to meet the needs of the specific learners within the learning environment. “The standards do not prescribe to teacher-specific terminology, methodology, techniques, or media. The standards do not propose specific historical topics, artists to study, vocabulary lists, or technical skills. ... Instructional choices need to be flexible and adaptive to students’ needs and local teaching contexts to be responsive to what best prepares and is relevant to learners” (Arts Framework, p. 538).

PART 1. Creating Big Idea

Part 1 of this performance task outlines the following:

* associated standards that will be assessed
* student task requirements
* rubric
* sample student response

Teachers should familiarize themselves with the related standards, review the task directions, explore the rubric, and view the sample student response to sufficiently prepare students to use this performance task to show proficiency in this task. Additionally, teachers must be careful to incorporate any IEP-defined supports specific to individual students with disabilities taking this performance task.

Task Alignment to Key Elements of the Big Idea and Standards

Clusters of content standards exist within this Big Idea showing the central concepts and key understandings of the course content. The assessment categories provide the teacher with the key concepts being evaluated in each Big Idea as well as the associated content standards centered within the Big Idea of this task. The Big Idea, assessment categories, and key concepts come from the 2020 California Arts Framework aligned with the California Arts Standards.

The visual arts standards identify four artistic processes: Creating, Presenting, Responding, and Connecting. In the Creating process, students conceive and develop new visual art ideas and work. Students learn and gain the ability to communicate and create using the unique academic and technical languages of visual arts (Arts Framework, p. 530).

The Creating proficient standards in high school invite students to use multiple approaches as they engage in creative endeavors, shape artistic investigations using contemporary practices, and work in artmaking without preconceived plans. Students understand traditional and nontraditional materials impact human health and the environment and demonstrate safe handling of all materials, tools, and equipment. ... Students are able to apply criteria from traditional and contemporary cultural contexts, using their findings to reflect on and plan revisions for works of art or design in progress (Arts Framework, p. 571).

Related Standards – Creating Big Idea

The following standards align with the Big Idea above and are assessed for this task. The points below are derived from table 3 of the *California Arts Standards Artistic Processes and Anchor Standards* (Arts Standards, p. 9) and table 5 of the *High School Performance Standards*, outlining guidelines for proficient-level arts courses (Arts Standards, p. 11).

* Develop technical expertise in a variety of media
  + **Prof.VA:Cr1.1** Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
  + **Prof.VA:Cr2.2** Explain how traditional and nontraditional materials may impact human health and the environment and demonstrate safe handling of materials, tools, and equipment.
* Demonstrate personal communication and expression
  + **Prof.VA:Cr1.2** Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.
* Make artistic decisions and engage in the refinement of art products
  + **Prof.VA:Cr3** Apply relevant criteria to examine, reflect on, and plan revisions for a work of art or design in progress.
  + **Prof.VA:Cr2.1** Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.
* Solve Visual Arts problems
  + **Prof.VA:Cr2.3** Collaboratively develop a proposal for an installation, artwork, or space design that transforms the perception and experience of a particular place.

Part 1. Item

Task Preparation

This task involves students expressing an idea about their present-day life by engaging in the process of artmaking to solve an open-ended artistic problem[[4]](#footnote-4) through the usage of teacher-identified visual art media. The term “artistic problem” first appears in the Kindergarten Visual Art standard, **K.VA.Cr1.2** “Engage collaboratively in creative art-making in response to an artistic problem” (Arts Standards, p. 202). As students progress, “artistic problem” evolves into “artistic investigations.” The Enduring Understanding for Cr1.2 across grade levels is that “Artists and designers shape artistic investigations, following or breaking with traditions in pursuit of creative artmaking goals” (Arts Standards, p. 202). Regarding the term “open-ended,” “The performance standards are broad and open-ended. … Instructional choices need to be flexible and adaptive to students’ needs and local teaching contexts to be responsive to what best prepares and is relevant to learners. These choices are to be made by the teacher or local district to meet the needs of the specific learners within their classroom” (Arts Framework, p. 538). This indicates that students should have the opportunity to explore open-ended artistic problems and investigations without concerns about right or wrong answers, recognizing that multiple solutions and methods exist to achieve a completed art product. The learning process itself is where students gain the most, rather than the final product. Therefore, to assess proficiency, teachers must provide ample opportunities for students to engage in artistic problem-solving and investigations. Due to the open-ended nature of the Creating Big Idea and the standards that emphasize artistic inquiry and artistic problem-solving, students should be provided with multiple opportunities for revision and feedback prior to assessment against these standards.

Directions – Setting Up the Task

The following steps are designed to guide teachers in how to plan, set up, carry out, and assess the task successfully. The *Visual Art Elective Performance Task Creating Big Idea: Student Materials* resource provides students with an overview and directions to this performance task. In addition to this guidance, educators should also refer to the performance task overview.

* **Step 1 –** Identify a source of inspiration relating to the contemporary life of the artist for students to analyze.
* **Step 2 –** Select art media for students to gain technical expertise.
* **Step 3 –** Establish clear technical skills and safety guidelines for the art media.
* **Step 4 –** Formulate an open-ended artistic problem tasking students to use artmaking to communicate personal ideas about their present-day life through the application of technical skills and expertise in art media.
  + Examples of open-ended artistic problems (including but not limited to):
    - **Example 1 –** Develop a collage that uses various found materials to symbolize significant aspects of your current life experiences and identity.
    - **Example 2 –** Produce an abstract artwork that utilizes non-representational forms, colors, and lines to convey your current emotional state, exploring the expressive potential of abstract art techniques.
    - **Example 3 –** Create an artwork that incorporates motifs and symbols from your cultural heritage, exploring how these elements influence your identity and present-day experiences.
* **Step 5 –** Establish regular opportunities for formative teacher feedback, peer review, and self-review during student work time.
  + Formative Teacher Feedback
    - Share observations to prompt deeper thinking.
    - Acknowledge effective choices and suggest improvements.
    - Encourage expansion of their work.
  + Peer-Review
    - Use guiding questions to focus peer feedback on narrative and technical elements.
    - Encourage peers to give positive reinforcement and suggestions.
  + Self-Review
    - Encourage self-awareness and critical thinking by encouraging and/or providing reflective questions.
    - Use rubrics for objective self-evaluation.
* **Step 6 –** Provide a prompt for students to craft a final reflection on their artmaking process. Give students alternative means of expression as a way to support their having options in how they complete their reflection (examples include but are not limited to an essay, slides, sketchbook, screencast, video, poetry, or animation).

Item 1

Item 1 Task [Student Document, p. 3]

Please review the task below and respond to it by creating an artwork. You have been tasked by your teacher to use your creative skills to solve a specific artistic problem. You’ll use art materials and art techniques that your teacher has taught you, and ones you already know.

**Step 1**

Create an artwork that reflects important aspects of your life, experiences, identity, or emotions. Begin with the provided art materials but you can also include any other art materials you think will help convey your message. While you are creating your artwork,

* listen and reflect on feedback provided to you by your teacher—consider what actions you can take based on your teacher’s feedback;
* listen and reflect on feedback provided to you by your peers—consider what actions you might take based on your peers’ feedback; and
* stop, look, and reflect on your artwork—consider what actions you will take based on your thoughts on your own artwork.

**Step 2**

Once you are done creating your artwork, tell the story of your artwork by crafting a final reflection in which you reflect on the materials you used, how your art shows your message, how feedback from your teacher and classmates helped, and what you learned along the way. You can choose any format—write it out, keep a sketchbook, make a slideshow, record a video, create a poem, or even make another piece of art.

A Note About the Task Rubric

This rubric assesses the two aspects of the performance task: the artmaking process and the final reflection. “Self-reflections written in response to intentional or open-ended prompts can be an effective method of assessment. Self-reflection can provide important evidence and immediate feedback to the teacher and/or the student regarding progress toward the intended learning” (Arts Framework, p. 585). To accurately assess student proficiency, both elements must be considered together. The final reflection should offer additional evidence of the student’s understanding and proficiency. It should also reference the artmaking process, linking it to the performance task to provide a comprehensive assessment.

A Rubric for Assessing a Response to Item 1

The points below are derived from table 3 of the *California Arts Standards Artistic Processes and Anchor Standards* (Arts Standards, p. 9) and table 5 of the *High School Performance Standards*, outlining guidelines for proficient-level arts courses (Arts Standards, p. 11). The following success criteria are used to assess proficiency in the performance task according to the Related Standards listed above.

Rubric for Item 1

| **Success criteria** | **Attempted** | **Approaching** | **Proficient** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Develop technical expertise in a variety of media** | The student experiments with new media and techniques but has limited understanding. The student has a basic awareness of safety but needs reminders. | The student begins exploring new media and techniques with some guidance. The student shows improving ability with safety and materials. | The student confidently uses media and demonstrates technical expertise. The student consistently practices safe handling. |
| **Demonstrate personal communication and expression** | The student attempts personal ideas but relies on patterns or copies the imagery. The student shows initial steps toward personal expression. | The student begins to share original ideas and explores personal expression. The student’s work reflects personal thoughts more clearly. | The student effectively communicates original ideas and personal expression. The student’s work demonstrates a strong connection to personal experiences. |
| **Make artistic decisions and engage in the refinement of art products** | The student makes some artistic decisions but requires significant guidance. The student shows initial attempts at reflection and considering feedback. | The student begins self-reflection and peer review with growing independence. The student starts to refine work based on feedback and reflection. | The student actively engages in self-reflection, peer review, and teacher feedback. The student consistently refines and improves work based on thoughtful feedback and criteria. |
| **Solve visual arts problems** | The student attempts to address the artistic problem but requires significant guidance. The student response is unclear or incomplete. | The student develops a clear response to the problem with some guidance. The student’s work starts to show a thoughtful approach. | The student solves artistic problems effectively with clear, innovative responses. The student’s work demonstrates a deep understanding of the artistic problem, visible to viewers. |

Part 1. Sample Student Response

The content below provides a sample of proficient responses from a student. The text that leads with “Student Voice” is an example of how a student might respond to each item. This section should only serve as a model—different students will arrive at solutions in different ways. Additionally, the authors of this performance task selected an artistic problem to use to provide context to the student sample and are not endorsing this artistic problem as the one all educators should use. The artistic problem selection is a highly student-driven artistic medium and community-specific decision.

Context to Student Sample – Sample Artistic Problem

In this sample student response, the student was tasked with addressing the following artistic problem: “Create an artwork that reflects important aspects of your life, experiences, identity, or emotions. Begin with the provided art materials, but you can also include any other art materials you think will help convey your message. Once you are finished with your artwork, craft a final reflection. Reflect on the materials you used, how your art shows your message, how feedback from your teacher and classmates helped, and what you learned along the way. You can choose any format—write it out, keep a sketchbook, make a slideshow, record a video, create a poem, or even make another piece of art.”

Item 1 Task [Student Document]

Please review the task below and respond to it by creating an artwork. You have been tasked by your teacher to use your creative skills to solve a specific artistic problem. You’ll use art materials and art techniques that your teacher has taught you, and ones you already know.

Step 1

Create an artwork that reflects important aspects of your life, experiences, identity, or emotions. Begin with the provided art materials, but you can also include any other art materials you think will help convey your message. While you are creating your artwork,

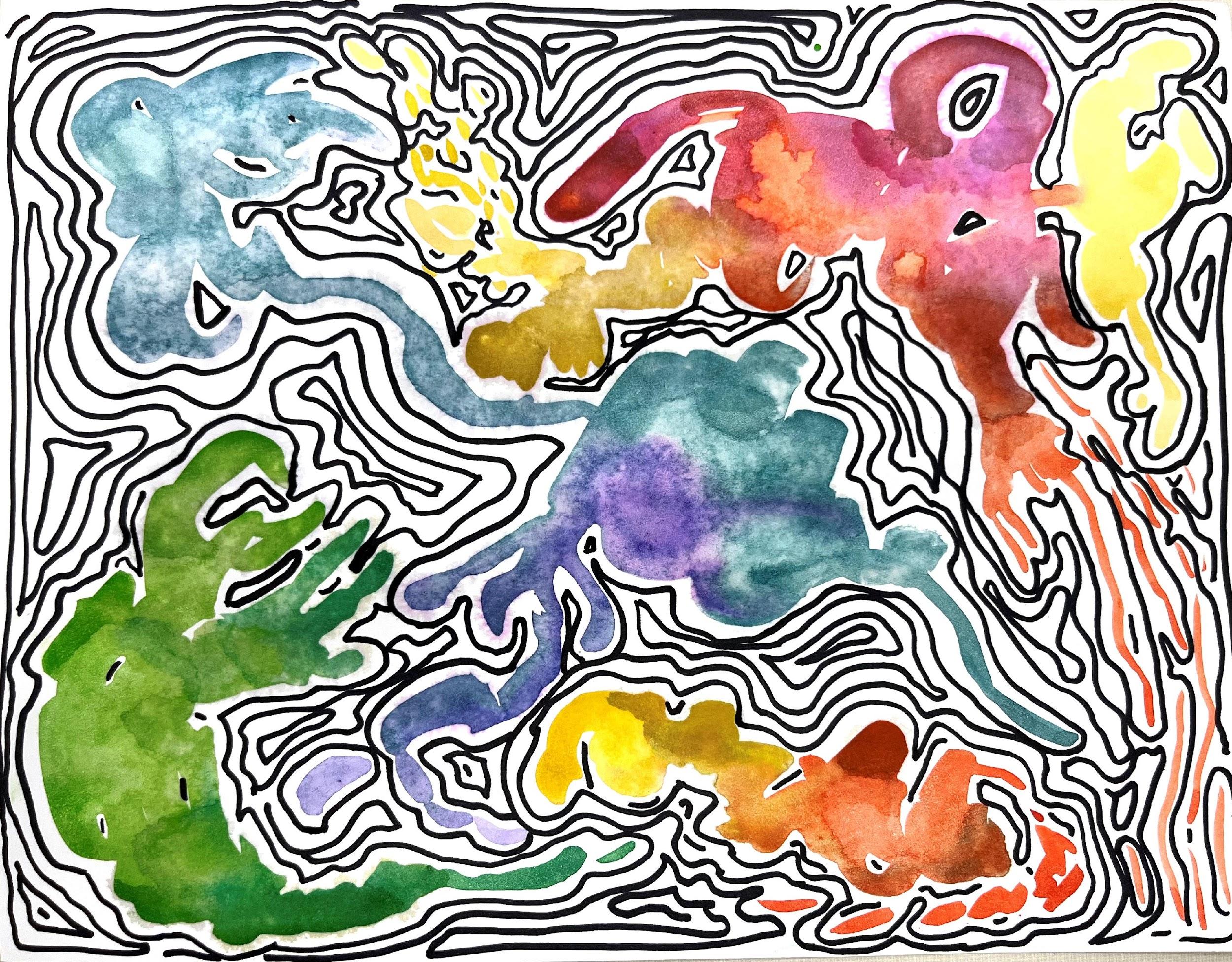
* listen and reflect on feedback provided to you by your teacher—consider what actions you can take based on your teacher’s feedback;
* listen and reflect on feedback provided to you by your peers—consider what actions you might take based on your peers’ feedback; and
* stop, look, and reflect on your artwork—consider what actions you will take based on your thoughts on your own artwork.

Step 2

Once you are done creating your artwork,

* tell the story of your artwork by crafting a final reflection—reflect on the materials you used, how your art shows your message, how feedback from your teacher and classmates helped, and what you learned along the way. You can choose any format—write it out, keep a sketchbook, make a slideshow, record a video, create a poem, or even make another piece of art.

**Student Voice:** For my abstract watercolor painting, I used different colors to show my emotions. Bright, bold colors represent my happier moments, while darker, cooler shades show when I felt sad. I used curved lines to show how my feelings spread and connect with each other in the way they are always changing. At first, I didn’t know much about watercolors, but I messed around to see what worked. I got better at blending colors and using water for different effects. Now, I’m better at mixing colors and blending them together in my paintings. I wanted my painting to be personal and not just copying something I saw online. The colors and lines are unique to what I was feeling. This piece shows more of my own ideas and my style coming through. The way the colors blend and the curved lines overlap is my way of showing how my emotions mix and interact. I made lots of choices about the colors and lines to represent my feelings. At first, I wasn’t sure how it would look, but I kept adjusting based on feedback from my teacher and friends. They suggested using lighter colors for contrast, which helped balance the painting. The biggest challenge was showing my emotions in an abstract way. I experimented with blending and curving the lines. With some guidance, I made the painting reflect my emotions more clearly. In the end, I think my painting does a good job of expressing my feelings, and I’m really proud of it.

Figure 1. Sample Piece of Student Artwork Accompanying Reflection  


*Image alternative text: a colorful, abstract watercolor and marker artwork with swirling shapes, bold lines, and a mix of bright red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple colors.*

1. The multiple references to the California Arts Framework in this performance task are cited and abbreviated as (Arts Framework, p. number).   
   California Department of Education. 2020. *California Arts Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Sacramento, CA: CDE Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The multiple references to the California Arts Standards in this performance task are cited and abbreviated as (Arts Standards, p. number).  
   California Department of Education. 2020. *California Arts Standards for California Public Schools: Prekindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Sacramento, CA: CDE Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. If a student dictates to a scribe, it is important for the scribe to be careful to record **only** what the student explicitly communicates, rather than making interpretations and “filling in the blanks.” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. An “open-ended artistic problem” is an assignment that lets students explore and create without a fixed outcome or solution. It encourages creativity, critical thinking, and personal expression, allowing students to interpret the task and define their artistic vision. (Arts Framework, pp. 505, 538, 581, 585, 602, and 605). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)