EXPLORE MORE BOOK GUIDE

Activities, tools & resources for learning with this book!

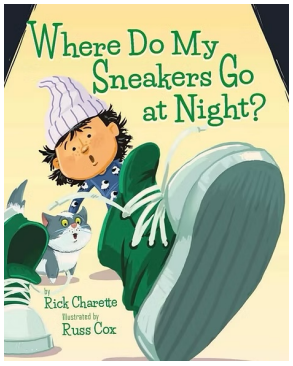
MEET RUSS

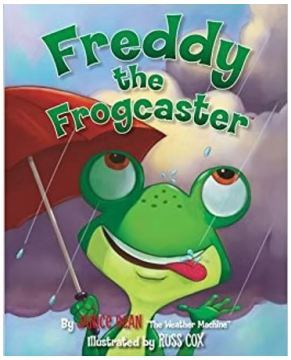
Russ Cox was raised by a pack of crazed hillbillies in the backwoods of Tennessee. Without much in the way of modern conveniences, like television or running water, he spent his time drawing, whittling, and throwing dirt clods at his cousins. With the bulk of his life spent in Pennsylvania, he met his wife, became a graphic designer, played in punk, alternative, and surf bands, had two kids, and started his own illustration studio, SMILING OTIS STUDIO (named after one of their enormous cats).

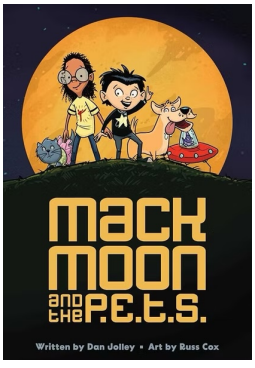
Russ creates his art using digital software, primarily Clip Studio and other digital tools. He works in traditional mediums, often with a mixture of paper, pencil, pen & ink, gouache, and watercolor.

Russ lives in Maine with his wife and three cats.

MORE FROM RUSS







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LET'S BEGIN! BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Use the Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) questions below to orient readers, and to help guide a group discussion. Begin by taking a quiet moment to look closely at the book jacket, allowing time for observation and contemplation of the images.

- *What is going on in this picture?*
- *What do you see that makes you say that? (provide evidence)*
- *What more can we find?*

Watch this VIDEO for a quick VTS demo

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Please contact Alison Johnson at Island Readers & Writers, 207-460-6828 or ajohnson@islandreadersandwriters.org.

LET'S TALK!

Discussion Questions

In the dedication (in the front matter), Russ notes that the book is dedicated to his three muses.
Learn the definition of muse and consider—do you have a muse?

Muse: a person, or an imaginary being or force that gives someone ideas and helps them to write, paint, or make music.

Right off the bat we learn that Sheldon's best friend moves far away.

- Why does Sheldon think that his friend "might be moving to Jupiter?"
- What do you see that helps you know this?

Have you ever moved to a new home or had a friend move away?

- How did that make you feel?
- How do you keep in touch with people whom you love?
- Do you write letters?
- Do you send pictures or Facetime or Zoom?
- How is that different than being together in person?

Sheldon counts backwards from 10-zero (count down) for blast off—can you think of any other time there is a count down?

Sheldon uses his creativity to find a way to see his friend.

- Have you ever been a creative problem solver?
- What did you do?

STANDARDS Covered throughout this Explore More Book Guide:

SL.1. Prepare for and participate in conversations across a range of topics, types, and forums, building on others' ideas and expressing their own.

SL.2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

R.4. Read various texts closely to determine what each text explicitly says and to make logical inferences; cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the texts.

R.5 Provide an accurate summary of various texts; determine the central idea(s) or theme(s) and analyze its development throughout each text.

R.6. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

R.9. Assess how perspective or purpose shapes the content and style of various texts.

L.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

L.5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative languag, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

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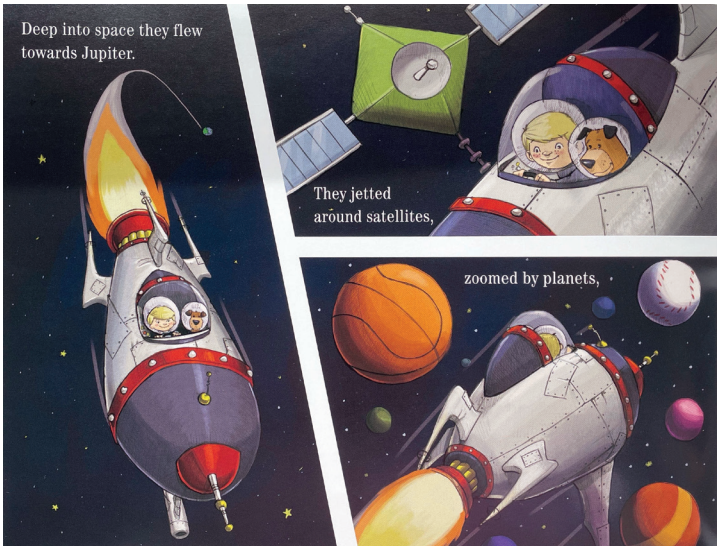
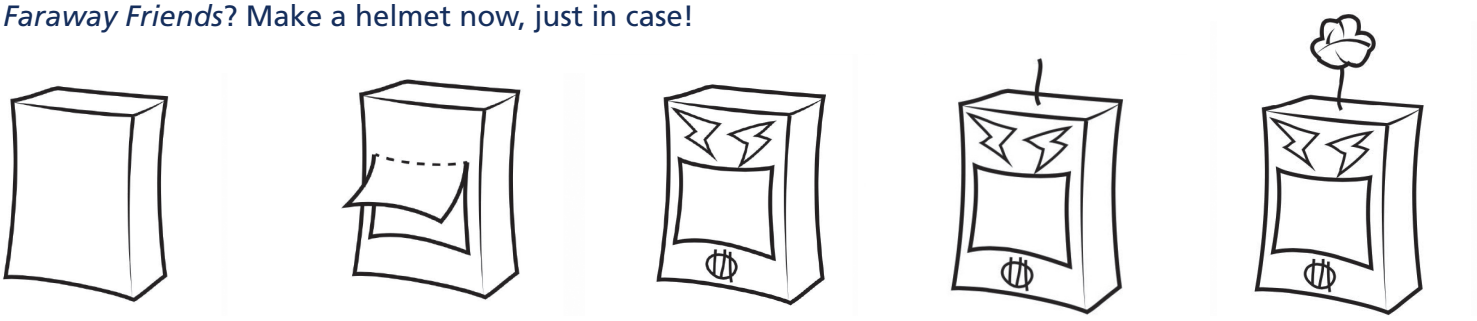
LET'S CREATE (AND DO)! Book-Inspired Art

1. Russ Cox was inspired by cartoons from his childhood in the 50's & 60's. What are your favorite cartoons? Use that inspiration to draw your own. Sometimes artists copy other works to practice and hone their skills, however, be sure not to steal others' work.

2. Look at these pages below and allow them to guide you in drawing your own version of the story. What else might Sheldon and Jet speed, zoom or zip past? *When you are ready*, use the blank comic templates in the Appendix to create your own comic.



3. Make A Space Helmet. Wouldn't it be great if Russ Cox visited your school and you, Russ, your classmates, and your teachers all wore paper space helmets together, just like Sheldon wears in Russ's book *Faraway Friends*? Make a helmet now, just in case!



1. Get paper bag
2. Cut a hole* for face
3. Add cool space designs
4. Punch a hole* and add pipe cleaner, tape into place
5. Add a foil ball, tape into place

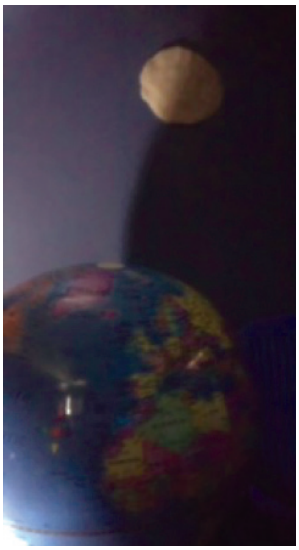
* For any cutting any hole punching, please get help from a grown up.

4. Moon Activity – Exploring craters and phases of the moon

Use clay or playdough to make a sphere, then talk about the craters on the moon's surface and what causes them (meteors hitting the surface).

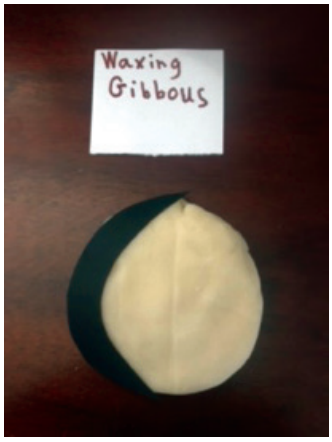
Find small stones to "reenact" the meteor hitting the surface.

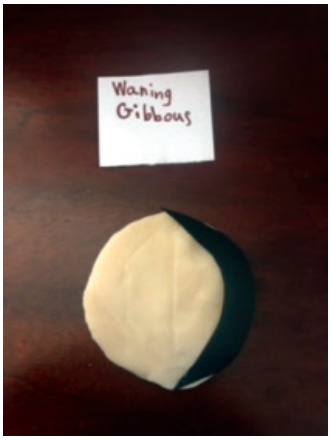
If you have a globe, you can show how the phases work by shining a flashlight (Sun) across the Earth to cast shadows on the moon.



>>> Now flatten the dough and use a knife to cut the shape of each moon phase. You can cut the dough directly, or a piece of black paper covering works well.

Photos provided by Dawn and Caden Severns.





Standards:

SL.3. Present information and supporting evidence appropriate to task, purpose, and audience so listeners can follow the line of reasoning and incorporate multimedia when appropriate.

A1. Disciplinary Literacy–Visual Arts, Artist's Purpose: Students show literacy in the art discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes

B: Creation, Performance, and Expression - Visual Arts: Students create, express, and communicate through the art discipline

B1 Media Skills, B2 Composition Skills, B3 Making Meaning

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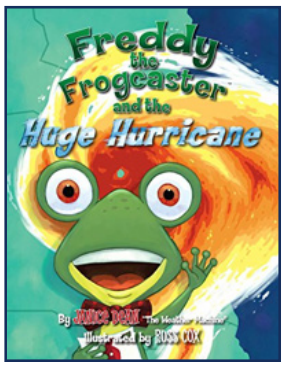
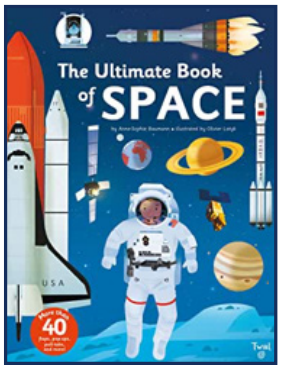
LET'S DIVE DEEPER! Explore More

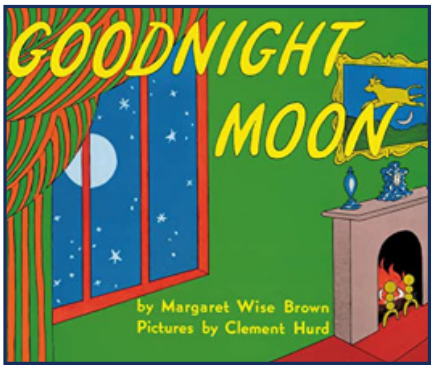
Nasa has programs that gather photos from space and other information.

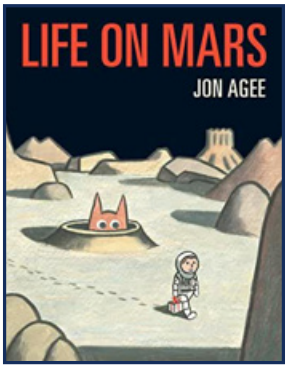
- Check out some cool photos from the JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE.
- NASA WEBSITE

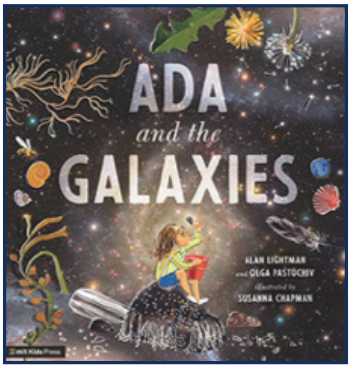
LET'S READ MORE! Text to Text Connections











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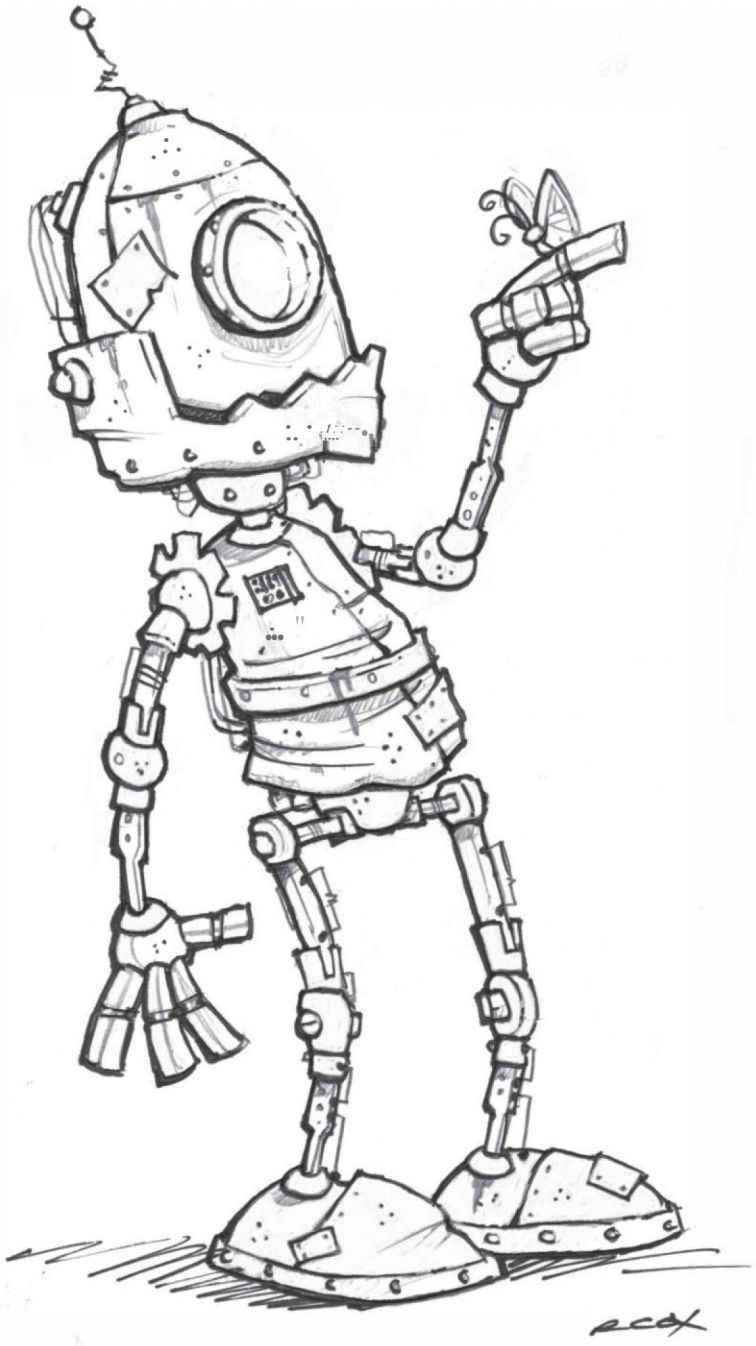
Let's Create!



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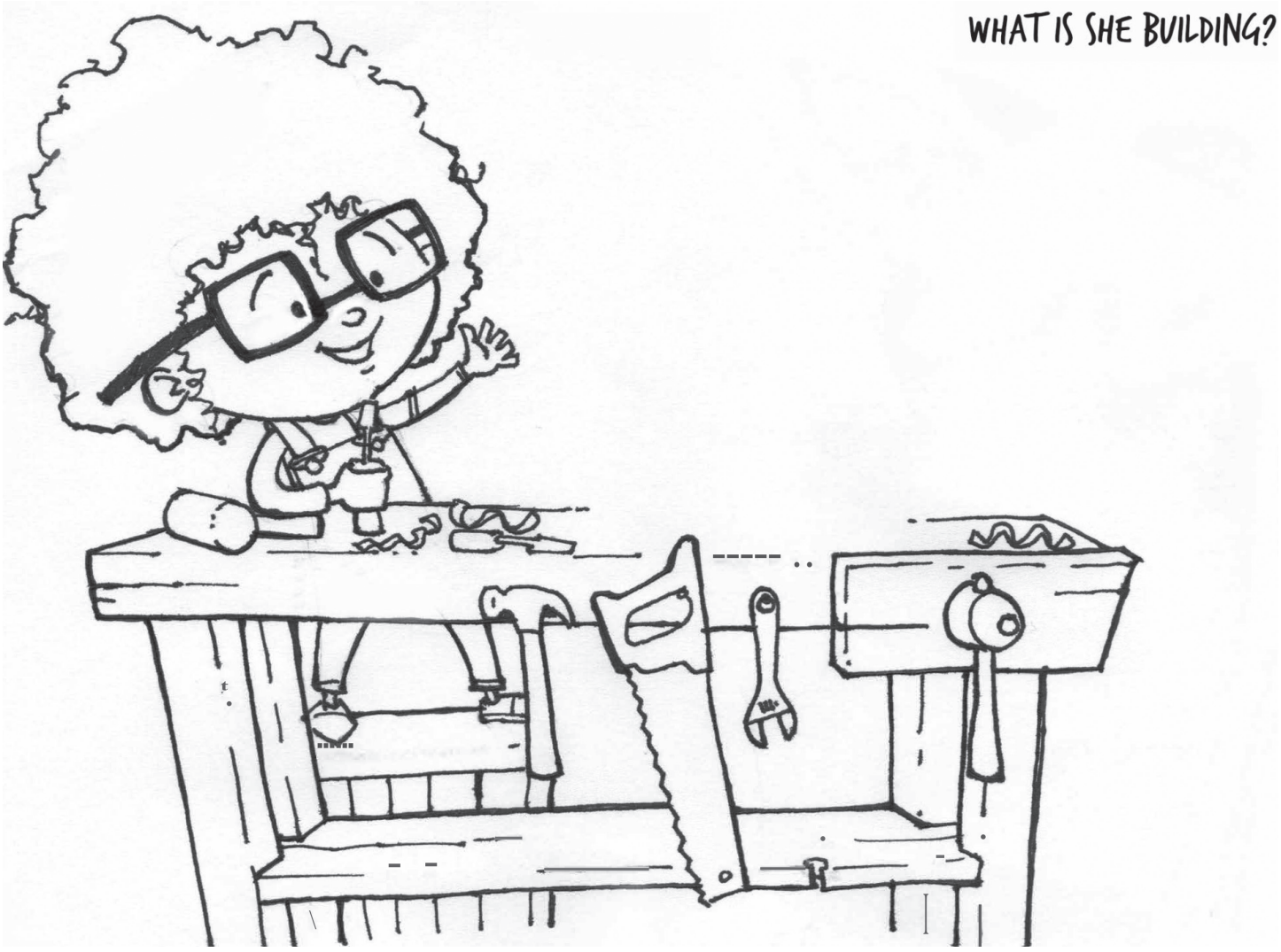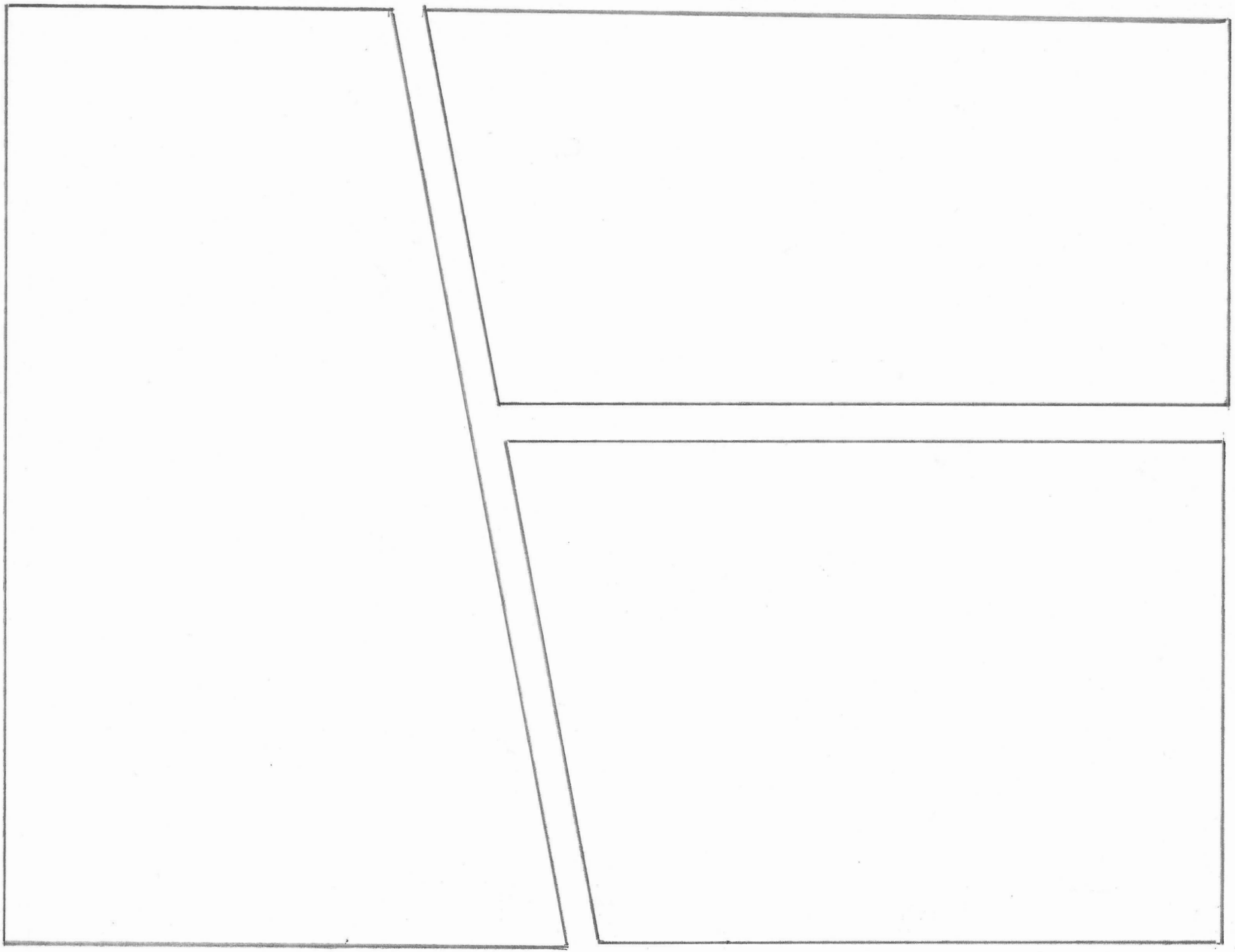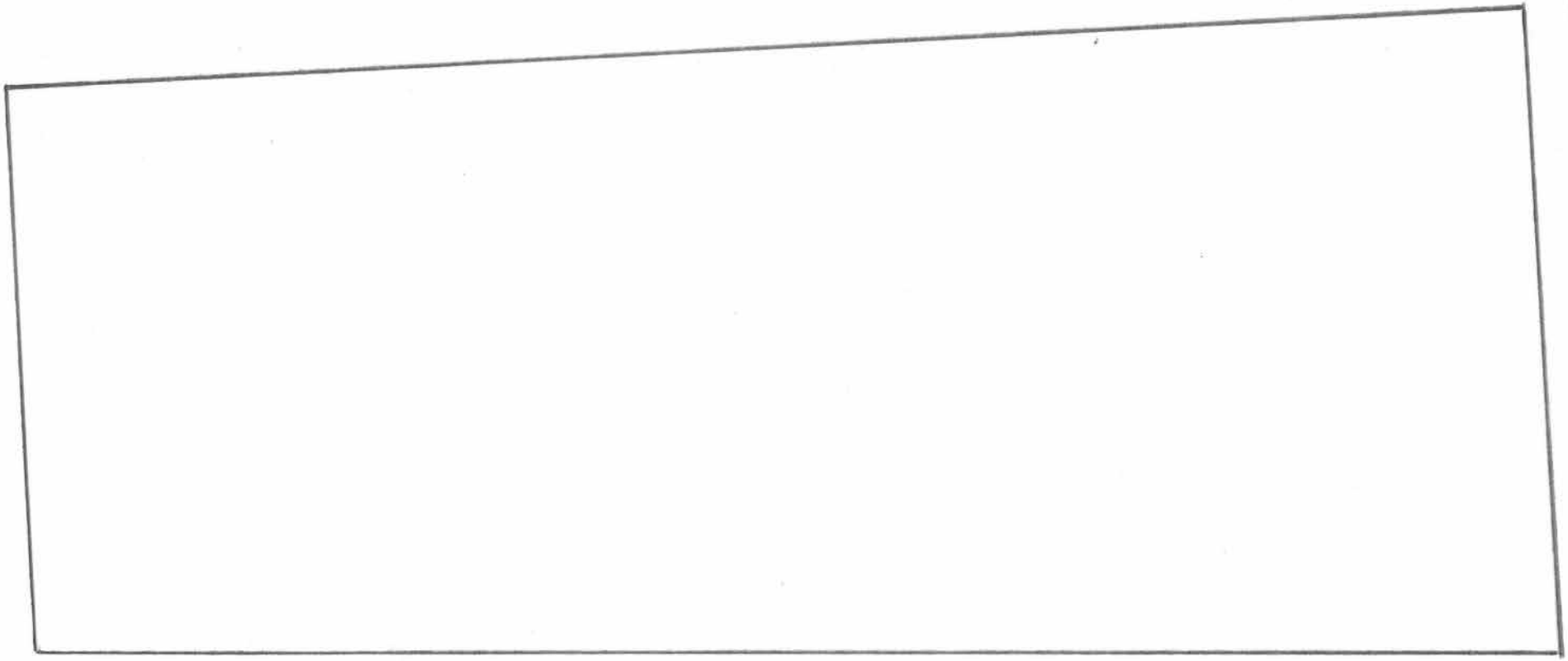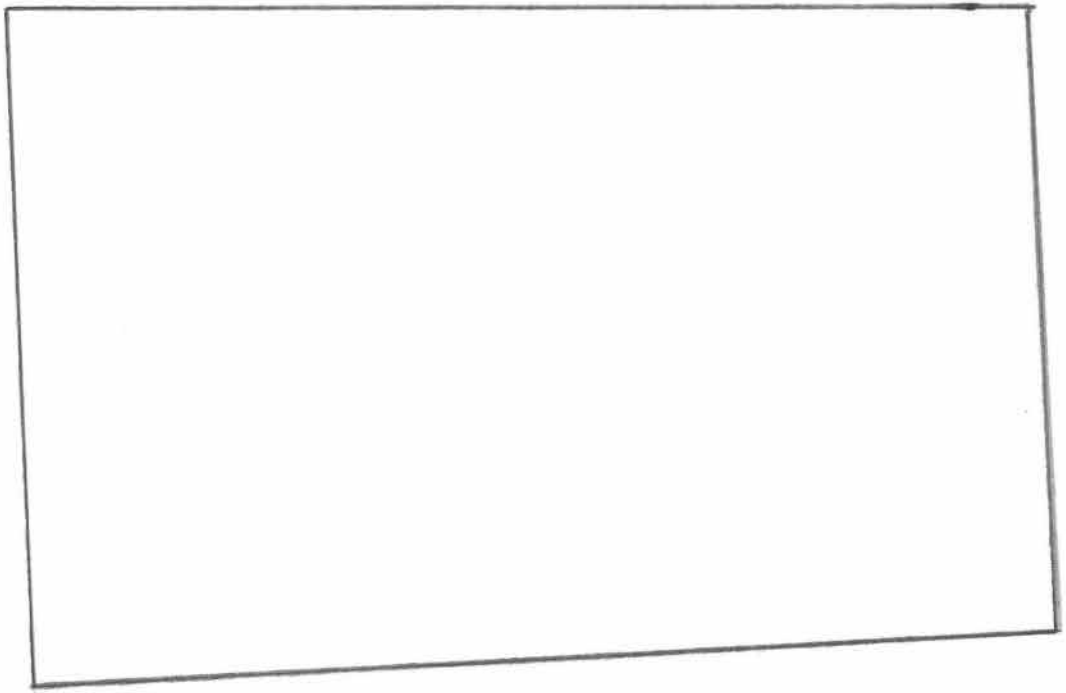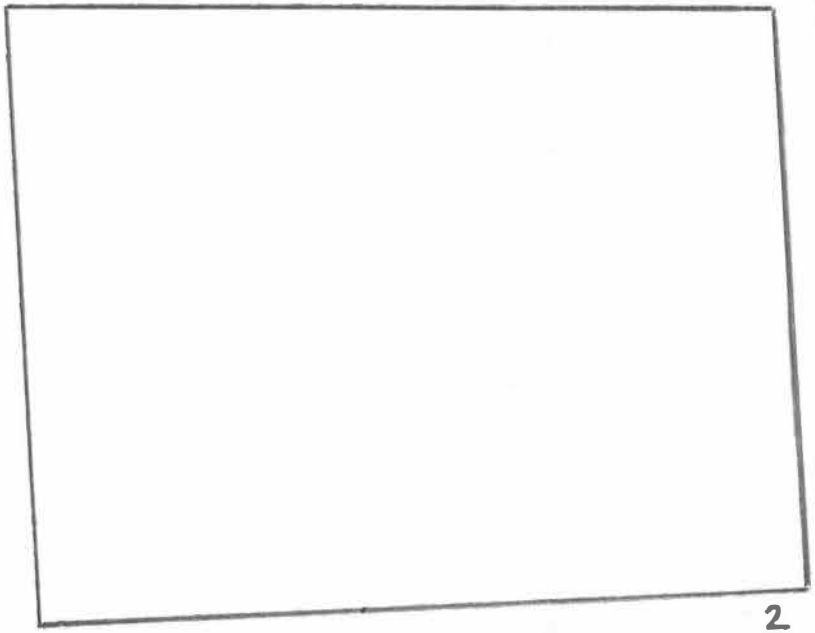
Let's Create!