

Value

ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

Value refers to dark and light. Value contrasts help us to see and understand a two-dimensional work of art. This type can be read because of the contrast of dark letters and light paper. Value contrast is also evident in colors, which enables us to read shapes in a painting.

Jean Metzinger, *Tea Time (Woman with a Teaspoon)*, 1911. Oil on cardboard, 29 1/2 x 27 1/2 inches (75.9 x 70.2 cm). The Louvre and Waller Avensting Collection, 1952. (1950-194-136). The Philadelphia Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

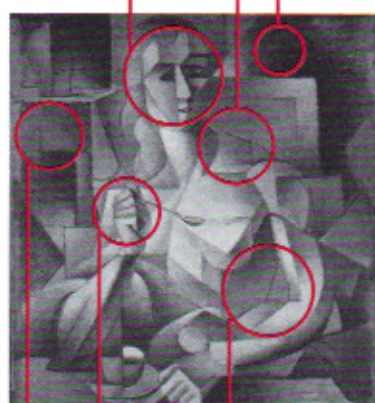


Jean Metzinger's painting, *Tea Time (Woman with a Teaspoon)*, has strong value contrasts as can be seen in the black and white reproduction. The painting is cubist in style with angular fractures and shapes. Follow the visual movement from the tea cup over a light-valued visual path upward to the face, which is the focal area.

Strong value contrasts in the focal area

Middle values

Dark values



Light values

Graded values

Dark middle values



A **gray scale** shows ten values of gray from light to dark. The farther apart the values are on the scale, the more value contrast can be noted. Values next to each other on the scale have the least contrast.

Color and value are closely related. Some pure colors (yellow and orange) are light in value, other pure hues are dark in value (purple and blue). A black and white photo of a full-color painting helps you see the values of the colors that the artist used.



High key paintings are made mostly of light values and contain a minimum of value contrast. Light values often suggest happiness, light, joy, and airiness.



Low key paintings make use of dark valued hues and generally contain little value contrast. Dark values often suggest sadness, depression, loneliness, and sometimes misery.



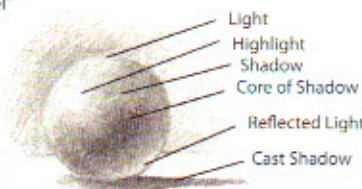
Value contrast is the difference between light and dark values. Photographers use value contrasts to make black and white prints that are exciting and dramatic.

Value changes help us "feel" the roundness of a face or ball by showing us how light hits these forms and creates shadows on them.

Marbury Hill Brown, *The Window*



The **focal area** of a painting can be created by emphasizing dark and light value contrasts or intense color.



In landscapes, distant features are usually lighter in value than closer features. Depicting such value contrast is called **atmospheric perspective**.

Doris Jeffrey, *Wetland Woods #1*

1. Make a Value Scale



Make a value scale from white to black. Draw a chart with five squares next to each other. Paint black at one end and white at the other. Add a little white paint if using tempera, or water if using watercolor, to the black and paint it in the square next to the black. Continue adding white or water and paint the other two squares to complete the value scale from white to black. You can make a more complete value scale using seven or nine squares instead of five. Use the value scale as a reference for your paintings.

2. Tints & Shades



Make tints from a pure hue such as red to white.

1. Draw five squares in a row on a piece of paper.

2. Paint the first square with the pure hue of red. Take some red paint and add a little white paint and paint it in the second square.

3. Add more white and paint the third square, then add even more white and paint the fourth square. Leave the last square white. These are called tints of the original color.

4. Draw another set of five squares.

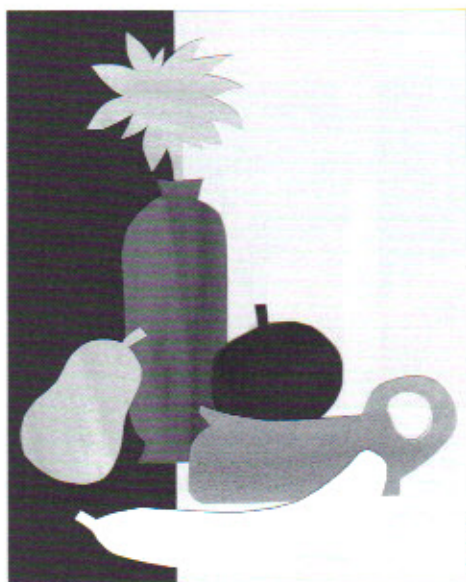
5. Paint the first square with the pure hue of red.

6. Add a little black paint and paint in the next square. Continue adding black to darken the value and paint in the remaining squares. The last square should be black. These are shades of the original color.



3. Make a Collage Using Dark and Light Values

Make a still life collage with dark and light values. Paint pieces of paper approximately 4 x 6 inches with different values from white to black. Then cut shapes such as fruit, a pitcher, bowl, or a bottle from the pieces of paper. Arrange and glue the shapes to a white and black background.



Jim Burns

4. Values in Painting

Cut out a picture of an active figure or animal. Trace the outline of the figure on a sheet of paper, then draw lines outside the outline progressively farther apart as they go toward the edge of the paper. Paint the spaces with progressive value changes, starting with a light value and work towards black. Then, make another painting starting with a dark value next to the figure and work toward white. This should create a feeling of vibration.



Jim Burns

5. Monochromatic Portrait

Paint a portrait with different values of one color: draw the portrait within a rectangle and draw lines through it creating abstract shapes. Paint the shapes with light and dark values of a single color.



Student work, Benard Heights Middle School

ILLUSTRATIONS / CREDITS

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Jean Metzinger, French, 1883–1956. *Tea Time (Woman with a Teaspoon)*, 1911. Oil on cardboard, 29 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 27 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (75.9 x 70.2 cm). The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection, 1950 (1950-134-139). The Philadelphia Museum of Art / Art Resource, NY. © 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Judi Betts, *Curtain Call*. Watercolor, 30 x 22 in.

Gerald Brommer, *Dark Movement*, 15 x 22 in.

U.S. Capitol photo courtesy National Parks Service.

Marbury Hill Brown, *The Window*. Watercolor, 21 x 26 in.

Donal Jolley, *North of Moab #1*. Watercolor, 22 x 30 in.