

## Classroom Activity

### *Character Design: From Cute to Spooky and Beyond*

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<b>Enduring Understanding</b>	In art and storytelling, unexpected combinations can create humorous and unique characters.
<b>Grades</b>	1–12
<b>Time</b>	Two class periods
<b>Visual Art Concepts</b>	Drawing and writing, character and narrative, shapes, juxtaposition, sculpture and animation
<b>Materials</b>	Air-drying clay such as Model Magic (white), markers, pencils, and paper. Optional: craft picks, colored wire, scissors, and small sheets of cardboard.
<b>Talking about Art</b>	<p>View and discuss Tim Burton’s <i>Untitled (The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories)</i>, 1998</p> <p>What do you see? What kinds of shapes do you notice? Curvy shapes such as circles and ovals are called organic shapes. Shapes with straight lines and angles such as squares and triangles are called geometric shapes. Burton used organic shapes to create this character and often uses particular shapes to communicate personality traits.</p> <p>Imagine that this character could walk and talk. What would he say and do? What would his name be? Write a story using him as the main character.</p> <p>Tim Burton identifies this character as Stain Boy. Read more about Stain Boy in the book, <i>The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy and Other Stories</i>, or view the online animated series at <a href="http://www.timburtoncollective.com/multimedia.html">www.timburtoncollective.com/multimedia.html</a>.</p> <p>We have all seen characters that look cute, funny, or spooky. Draw an example of a cute character from a book, a television show or movie, or from your imagination. Use words to describe who your character is and what your character looks like. Next, draw a spooky character. Again, use words to describe your character. Now, choose two traits from your first character that are especially cute and two traits from your second character that are especially spooky. Draw a third character that combines all of these traits.</p>

## **Making Art**

Sculpt a model of your character using air-drying clay. Think about how you will make the transition from a two-dimensional drawing to a three-dimensional sculpture. To start, roll the clay into a ball. The ball will serve as the foundation of the character's figure. Remove parts of clay to sculpt appendages such as arms, legs, or a cape. Consider sculpting with a craft pick or a pencil to add detail and texture. Reattach parts by pressing them onto the body so that all parts are flush with the whole or reattach limbs with wire. Remember, your model should stand and support its own weight so smaller parts should be substantial enough to balance the figure.

When finished sculpting, you can add color immediately without waiting for the clay to dry. Color with markers to bring your model to life!

## **Reflection & Display**

For reflection and display in the classroom, consider placing each sculpture on a piece of cardboard as a base. Students can decorate their base with their character's name and the shapes and colors they incorporated into the model.

Instruct students to clear their desks and place model sculptures on top for a classroom gallery walk. Give students a few minutes to walk around the room and study their peers' characters. Remember, no loud talking or touching artworks in the gallery! Reconvene to discuss and chart similarities and differences between the characters.