

Animals with a MONDRIAN Twist

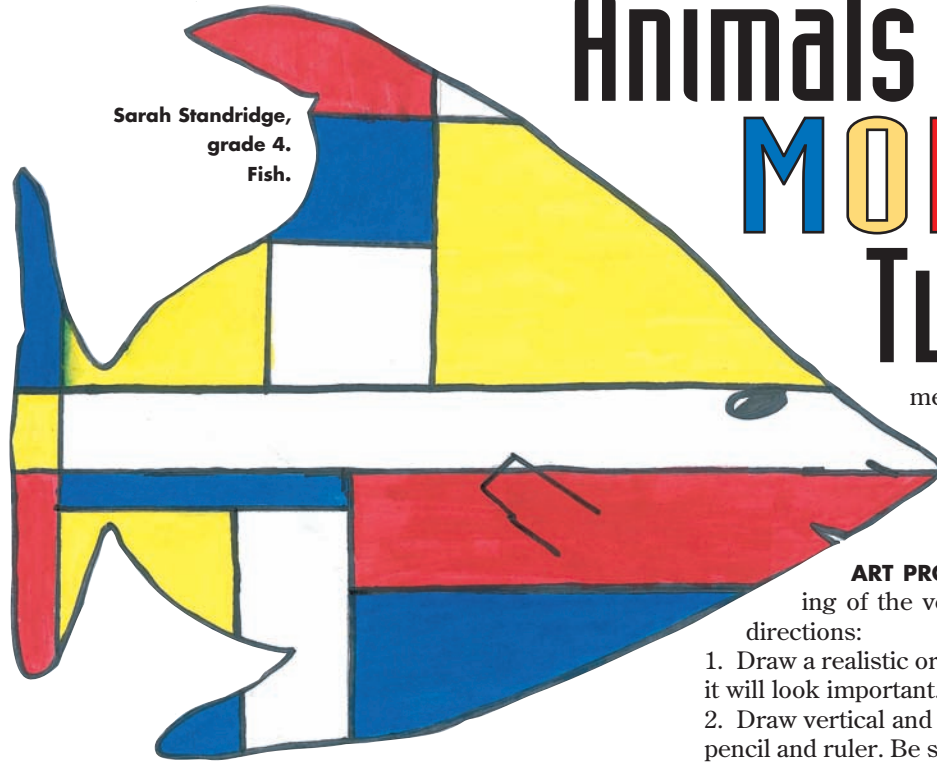
by Berniece Patterson

metric simplifications are clean, sharp-edged and pure. There is balance and contrast in his style, conveying a sense of order that has been created with precision.

ART PRODUCTION After discussing the meaning of the vocabulary words, I gave the following directions:

1. Draw a realistic or fantasy animal, making it large so that it will look important.
2. Draw vertical and horizontal lines on the animal, using a pencil and ruler. Be sure the ruler is parallel with the side of the paper when drawing vertical lines. To draw horizontal lines, make certain that the ruler is parallel to the top and bottom of the paper.
3. Still using a ruler, go over the lines and outline the animal with a black marker.
4. Select shapes to color with red, blue and yellow markers, leaving some white.

Drawing parallel lines can be a challenge for fourth- and fifth-graders. I occasionally had to show students their lines were actually slanted. I would place the ruler next to the line they had drawn and ask them to look at the ruler, so they could see that the ruler was slanted across the page. I demonstrat-



Sarah Standridge,
grade 4.
Fish.

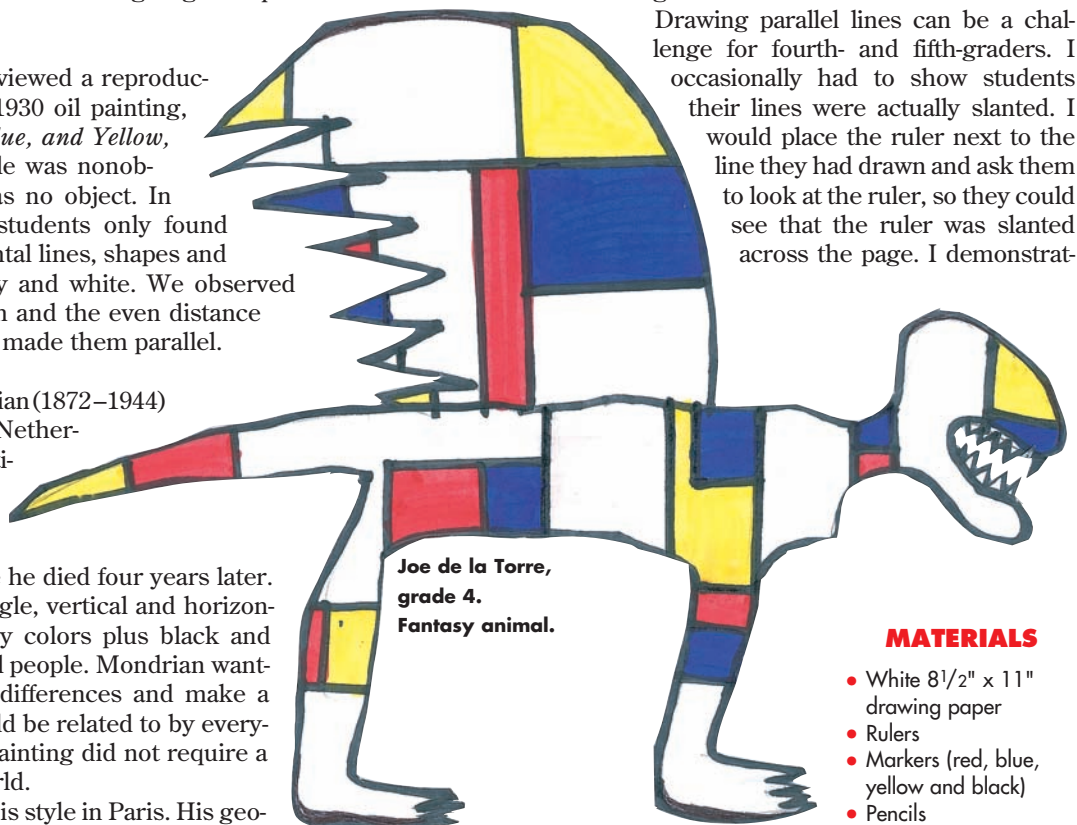
My fourth- and fifth-grade students really enjoy drawing animals, so I decided to give their drawing lesson a different twist by adding Piet Mondrian's artistic style to the design. Planning this type of lesson serves as an example to students of how to think "outside of the box." A different slant can be intriguing and promote creativity.

ART CRITICISM Students viewed a reproduction of Piet Mondrian's 1930 oil painting, *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow*, and decided that his style was nonobjective because there was no object. In analyzing the painting, students only found black vertical and horizontal lines, shapes and primary colors, plus gray and white. We observed the sameness of direction and the even distance between the lines, which made them parallel.

ART HISTORY Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) was born in Amersfoort, Netherlands. He left the Continent for London at the outbreak of World War II and then moved to New York in 1940, where he died four years later.

He felt that the rectangle, vertical and horizontal lines, and the primary colors plus black and white were common to all people. Mondrian wanted to eliminate cultural differences and make a visual statement that could be related to by everyone. He believed that a painting did not require a subject of the natural world.

Mondrian developed his style in Paris. His geo-



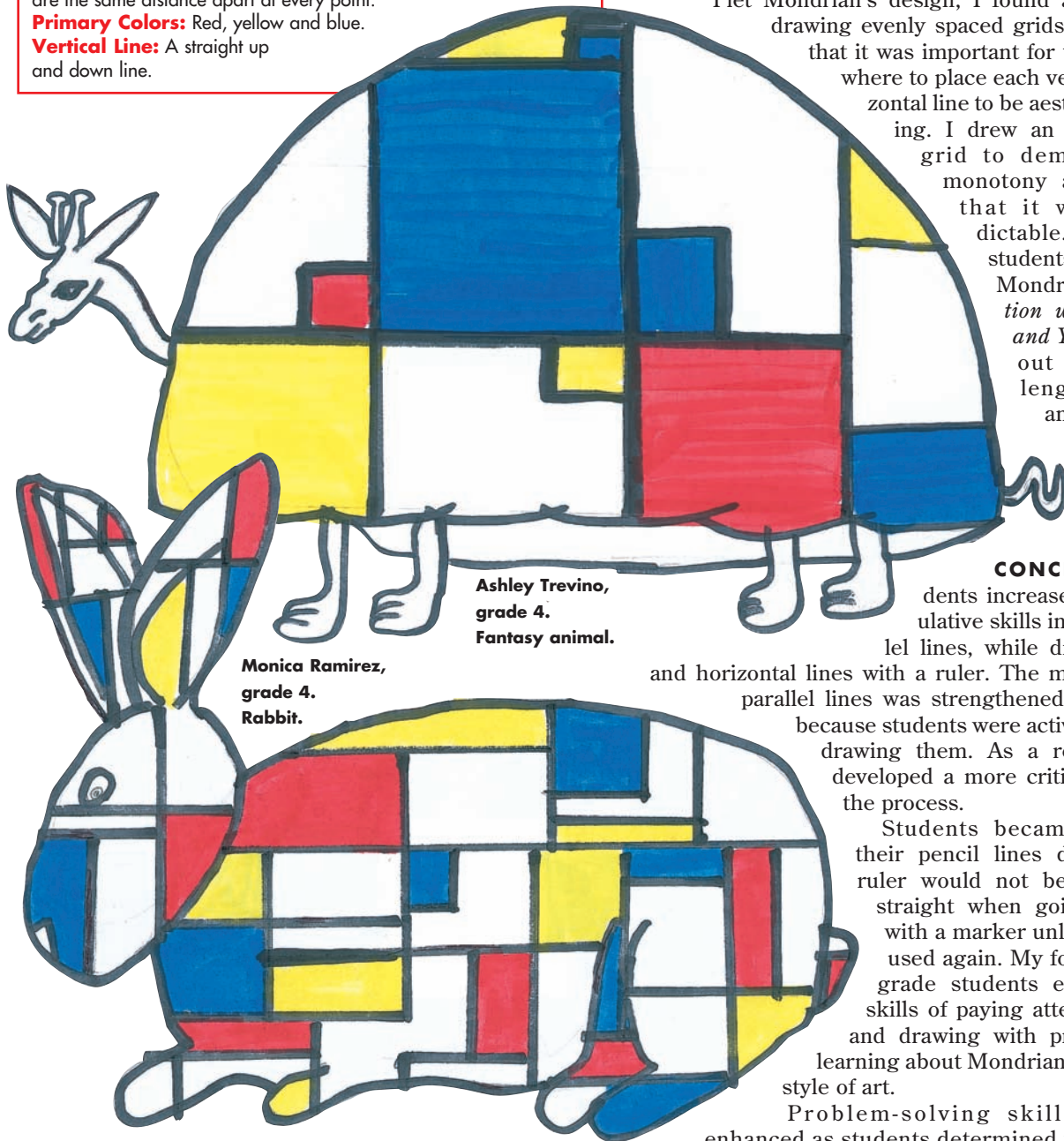
Joe de la Torre,
grade 4.
Fantasy animal.

MATERIALS

- White 8 1/2" x 11" drawing paper
- Rulers
- Markers (red, blue, yellow and black)
- Pencils

VOCABULARY

- Horizontal Line:** A straight line that goes across.
Nonobjective Art: A style of art in which one does not recognize an object.
Parallel Lines: Lines that go in the same direction and are the same distance apart at every point.
Primary Colors: Red, yellow and blue.
Vertical Line: A straight up and down line.



Ashley Trevino,
grade 4.
Fantasy animal.

Monica Ramirez,
grade 4.
Rabbit.

ed how the distance between the ruler and the edge of the paper should be the same all the way down for a vertical line and the same all the way across for a horizontal line.

AESTHETICS Even though we had viewed and discussed Piet Mondrian's design, I found a few students drawing evenly spaced grids. I emphasized that it was important for them to decide where to place each vertical and horizontal line to be aesthetically pleasing. I drew an evenly spaced grid to demonstrate the monotony and explained that it was too predictable. I redirected students' attention to Mondrian's *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow*, pointing out his different lengths of lines, and encouraged them to draw long, medium and short lines.

CONCLUSION Students increased their manipulative skills in creating parallel lines, while drawing vertical and horizontal lines with a ruler. The math concept of parallel lines was strengthened in this lesson because students were actively involved in drawing them. As a result, students developed a more critical eye during the process.

Students became aware that their pencil lines drawn using a ruler would not be automatically straight when going over them with a marker unless a ruler was used again. My fourth- and fifth-grade students enhanced their skills of paying attention to detail and drawing with precision, while learning about Mondrian's nonobjective style of art.

Problem-solving skills were also enhanced as students determined the length and location of each line and the rectangles that needed to be completed with primary colors. Fourth- and fifth-grade students created effective nonobjective designs using black lines, shape, and primary colors, plus white on their creative animals. ■

Berniece Patterson supervises the student teachers in the art education department at the University of North Texas in Denton. She was teaching art at South Hi Mount Elementary in the Fort Worth Independent School District and serving as supervisor at the time of this lesson.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Gilbert, Rita. *Living with Art*, Fifth Edition. McGraw Hill, 1998.
- Mendelowitz, Daniel M. *A History of American Art*, Second Edition. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970.
- Moore, Lamont. *The First Book of Paintings*. Franklin Watts, Inc., 1960.

WEB SITES

- www.ptank.com/mondrian/
- www.artcyclopedia.com/artists/mondrian_piet.html
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Piet_Mondrian