The Art & Science of Lucasfilm: ILM Art Department
STUDY GUIDE

Content written by Maddy Leonard.
Designed by Ankoor Patel, Camille Gwise, Keith Zwolfer and Maddy Leonard.

All SFFILM Education materials are developed in alignment with California educational standards for media literacy. SFFILM Education welcomes feedback and questions on all printed study materials.

More info at sffilm.org/education
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Presentation Overview

This presentation marks the 13th year of our long running collaborative educational series in which experienced professionals from Lucasfilm talk about their educational journeys and the career path that led them to where they are today. Artists and leaders in the field share their expertise in a behind-the-scenes, interactive multimedia presentation that demonstrates the intersection of art, science, and technology in the entertainment industry, all while making connections to current STEAM curriculum topics. Our look at the ILM Art Department will feature Senior Concept Artist Tyler Scarlet, who will discuss designing creatures and characters for film. His work has been a part of the exciting worlds created for *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*, *Kong: Skull Island*, and *Ready Player One*, just to name a few. He also has experience creating concept art for TV, theme parks, and VR.

Subject Areas

- Arts/Media
- Career Path Training
- Math
- Peer/Youth Issues
- Science

TUE APR 20, 2021 | 12:00 pm
Recommended Grades: 6-12

Presenter Bio

Tyler Scarlet is a Senior Concept Artist at ILM with over 8 years of experience designing characters and creatures for films. He grew up in Michigan and studied Illustration and Product Design at the College for Creative Studies in Detroit. He started his career at Hasbro where he worked on pitches for film, tv, and games, before moving to the west coast and joining the Art team at Industrial Light & Magic. At ILM, he’s had the opportunity to work on a wide slate of titles across many well known IPs such as *Star Wars*, *Transformers*, *Ready Player One*, and *Captain Marvel*. He’s also had the honor of collaborating with directors such as Steven Spielberg, David Fincher, and Martin Scorsese to help bring their visions to life. When he’s not at his computer, you can find him geeking out over the latest history documentary, getting lost on hikes in the forest, or playing with his girlfriend’s German Shepherd, Nala.
Art Department Terminology

**Production Design** encapsulates a holistic, visual approach to an entire film. This process determines the look of the environment, which includes locations, colors, textures, space, and objects that are used in a scene. Also, the aesthetics of an actor’s presentation, costume, and makeup. This creates (or is created from) an overall color palette for the film—a fundamental requirement in filmmaking that can have a profound impact on the tone and underscored message of your movie.

If a Production Designer oversees the entire look of the film, an **Art Director**’s job is to facilitate and implement the Production Designer’s creative intent. This eventually gives the film its unique visual identity. They take care of the nitty gritty bits. From the largest scale locations to the smallest details. On a finer level, art direction also encompasses several other important things such as tweaking and fixing up a location so that it looks correct on screen. This can be referred to as “set dressing”. Art Direction also includes props & wardrobe. These elements, when chosen wisely, will render a scene more believable or convincing. The overall aesthetic, dictated by a Production Designer and implemented by an Art Director, influences the final film as much as lighting, storylines, and dialogue.

**Concept Artists** come up with ideas for the look of the film. They draw the characters, creatures and environments as well as vehicles, props and buildings. They begin with a brief, which might be a script, or the original concept of a film as told by its filmmaker. They carry out research and create mood boards, which they use as a starting point to create lots of versions of their designs. The artwork that concept artists create helps other members of a production, or in the VFX pipeline, to have a shared vision.

Concept artists use digital and traditional drawing and painting to create their work. A lot of the work they produce is in the form of still 2D images; however, concept artists can also produce work using 3D software to create 3D wireframe computer-generated images (CG). This can help speed up the VFX production pipeline.

**Concept art** and **illustration** often experience some crossover, but they represent two different aspects of visual storytelling. The main difference between concept art and illustration is that concept art is the idea of what the character, environment, or prop might look like. Illustration is when you put all of those elements into one image to tell a story (also known as a narrative image).

“For example, concept art could be the front and back of a Marvel hero’s costume or their weapon. An illustration is the next stage: putting a hero and a villain together in one image to tell a story.” says CG Spectrum mentor and professional illustrator Eric Wilkerson.

Source: cgspectrum.com

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**THE ILM ART DEPARTMENT**

ILM has produced a multitude of fun and educational resources where you can learn straight from their art department. Check some of them out below!

1. ILM Art Department Website
2. ILM Art Department: What is the Star Wars Aesthetic?
3. The ILM Art Department Challenge — Working as a Concept Artist

1. Ralph McQuarrie, Star Wars Concept Artist: Tribute to a Master (Part 1), (Part 2), and (Part 3)
Discussion Questions

1. Did you enjoy this presentation? What were your favorite moments? What did you learn?

2. Before this presentation, did you know about the intense process that goes into creating and designing the unique creatures in your favorite films? What did you learn about that process?

3. Tyler explained in his presentation that there are three different types of creatures in movies; Character, Atmospheric, and Prop. What is the difference between these three creature types?

4. Why do you think it's important to understand anatomy, biology, and physics when designing otherworldly creatures for films?

5. In a few sentences, summarize the process that Tyler would go through while taking a design from his head to the big screen.

6. Tyler mentioned in his presentation how at ILM, they are able to work on a very diverse catalogue of projects. Some of his examples showed his work in pre-production and some showed his work within the different stages of post production. What was different about the projects that he worked on in pre-production vs in post-production? How did his work at different stages of the filmmaking process influence the director and producers’ vision for the film?

7. If you had Tyler’s job, which part of the production timeline would you want to work on and why?

8. Why do you think it is so important for concept artists to provide lots of different options to the director and/or art supervisor?

9. How does concept art help drive a filmmaking process forward and how does it influence the overall feel of a film?

10. How does concept art influence CG artists in post production?

11. Why do you think it’s important for artists at production companies like Lucasfilms to continuously be trying new things and exploring new technology? How does their openness to experimentation drive innovation within the film world?

12. When discussing the weekly sculpting and drawing sessions he attended at ILM before the pandemic, Tyler said that he is “never done learning.” Why do you think it’s important to always keep learning and growing as an artist? Do you think keeping an open mind to learning opportunities can make you a better artist? Why or why not?

13. Was there any advice that Tyler gave about developing a career path that stuck with you? Did you find it interesting that he worked in other industries, like interning at the toy company Hasbro, before he found his way to ILM?

14. During the presentation, Tyler discussed how to get over a creative block. He suggested that you either take a break from your project, and go back to the internet or a book to do more research; or that you ask a friend or colleague for a second look at your art. Do you think either of these methods would work for you? Do you have any other tips or tricks for getting over a creative block?
Create a Creature!

Research an animal that inspires you. Spend some time learning about this animal’s anatomy. Find out how the animal moves, eats, and interacts with other animals. Research the environment the animal spends its time in. Maybe even watch some videos of the animal. Now use the research you have gathered to re-imagine this animal as an alien creature that doesn’t exist on Earth. Draw inspiration from the Earth-dwelling animal’s movements, shapes, colors, or personality but reinvent it using your own imagination and curiosity.

Now place your creature in an other-worldly scene. Use the research you did about the Earth-dwelling animal’s habitat to design the world that your creation inhabits. Ask yourself the questions below as you design your scene. They will help you picture what environment will look and feel natural for your creature.

• How does my creature get around? Does it fly? Swing from vines? Run? Is it as slow as a turtle?
• How does my creature sustain life? Does it eat plants? Is it a carnivore? Does it store lots of fat so that it doesn’t need to eat for weeks?
• Does my creature cohabitate with other creatures of the same species? How about with other species?
• If you met your creature in real life, would you be afraid of it? Or would you want to cuddle it like a kitten or a puppy?
• What sounds does your creature make? Are they loud or soft? Do they startle or soothe the other beings that live near your creature?

Continue to expand your animal’s universe. Add to your original research by making inspirational art board that helps you imagine an expansion of your creature’s world. (Apps like Pureref or Pinterest are great for this!) Spend some time looking for and organizing reference images that help you imagine your new world.

Connect your concept art to a larger story. If you are interested in storytelling and writing, you could take this activity a step further and write a screenplay based in the new world you created. Here are some great resources about the screenwriting process.

Build your creature in 3D with ZBrushCoreMini. ZBrushCoreMini is a free version of the program Tyler was using during his presentation. The company that makes ZBrush even has free online training courses you can learn from!

TIPS FROM TYLER

1. During his presentation, Tyler discussed how some artists keep a “mental library” of different shapes, textures, colors, etc. to draw from while they are designing creatures for films. He explained that they will spend time researching a character and creating an inspiration board for that character, and then they will put all that research to the side and start drawing from memory. Tyler explained that this exercise is a great way to force your mind to combine pieces of inspiration from your “mental library” together into one creature. Try this exercise out as you begin designing your creature. It might just be the tool you need to help yourself think outside of the box!

2. As Tyler explained in his presentation, there are three different types of creatures in movies; Character, Atmospheric, and Prop. Think about which category your creature falls into. This will help you move to the next step; designing the animal’s environment.
How Do I Become a Concept Artist?

**Draw and paint a lot:**
Practice drawing and hone your technical skill in a variety of mediums. Experiment with different styles to find and develop your own. Carry a sketchbook around with you and draw what you see.

**Build a portfolio:**
Create work that you can show off to employers. It isn't necessary to show moving images to show off your skills in concept art, only stills. Curate an online presence. Many scouts and producers will use social media to look for new artists. Be aware of fashions in design and of your competition.

**Consider an apprenticeship or internship:**
Before taking any apprenticeship, check what you'll be learning with your prospective employer and/or college, so you can be sure it will be giving you the skills you want.
- Lucasfilm has an amazing internship program called [The Jedi Academy](https://www.lucasfilm.com/about/jedi-academy)! See more here.

**Get a degree:**
A degree in fine art or illustration will equip you well for this job. So will a degree in film or animation.

**Look outside the industry:**
You might be able to find a job as a concept artist or work experience in an art department outside of the animation industry, such as in games or advertising. You may also find illustration or painting work. It’s worth taking concept artist jobs in other industries, building up a portfolio and moving into animation at another point.

**Network:**
Get to know people in the animation industry by attending events. Meet producers and concept artists and ask them questions about their work, while demonstrating interest and knowledge in the industry. Offer to provide them with your professional contact details and try to stay in touch with them.

**Search for jobs:**
Research animation companies you’d like to work for. Go to their websites and check if they are advertising for junior concept artist roles. Even if they aren’t, send in your CV and portfolio, if you think your work is appropriate, and ask them to bear you in mind for future roles.

**A CONCEPT ARTIST IS GOOD AT...**

**Drawing:** They have a very high level of skill at drawing, painting, or using computer software to produce varied work.

**Creativity:** They produce innovative work, in the form of storyboards, graphic designs, and paintings, that spark the director's imagination.

**Communication:** They are able to take direction and use constructive feedback to make changes to their work.

**Knowledge of animation:** They have a strong and wide-ranging interest in animation and live-action film and TV.

**Freelancing:** They often find work opportunities for themselves, are self-motivated and work efficiently to deadlines.

Source: [screenskills.com](https://www.screenskills.com)
2021 Nellie Wong Magic of Movies Essay Contest

SFFILM Education is pleased to present the twelfth annual Schools at the Festival Student Essay Contest at the 2021 SFFILM Festival. This contest is made possible by the generous support of the Nellie Wong Magic of Movies Education Fund, endowed by Tim Kochis and SFFILM board member Penelope Wong to honor the memory of her mother, Nellie Wong (1917-2007), who was an avid filmgoer and cinephile. Developed to support the year-round outreach efforts of SFFILM Education, the Fund aims to cultivate students’ imaginations, enhance their critical thinking and creative writing skills and instill a greater appreciation for the magic of movies in young audiences of the Bay Area.

ESSAY CONTENT + QUESTIONS

Winning essays will be determined based on creativity, depth, enthusiasm, clarity, grammar and relevance to the essay questions. Essays must be written in response to the following questions about the selected Schools at the Festival screenings ONLY. Students may choose one film program or submit separate essays for more than one program. Students are not limited to only selecting films in their grade category, but do need to follow the word count guidelines for their grade. Students are not required to answer every question listed for an individual film, but should select enough for a thoughtful and complete response.

ESSAY REQUIREMENTS

Grades 1-5: 150-200 words
Grades 6-8: 300-350 words
Grades 9-12: 450-500 words

DEADLINES

Essays must be submitted online here by May 7, 2021.

REQUIRED ENTRY INFORMATION

To be eligible for consideration, all essays must include the following information: student name, grade, school name, teacher name, teacher phone number, and teacher email address.

The Art and Science of Lucasfilm is one of the presentations included in the essay contest. There are other other essay prompts listed on this SFFILM Education webpage.

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF LUCASFILM ESSAY PROMPT

Did this presentation make you think differently about your own career trajectory? Did it make you think differently about how you might use your skills in either math, science, or art in your future career? Think about the experiences that led Tyler toward working for Lucasfilm. Have you had an experience in your own life that inspired you toward a particular kind of work? Imagine and describe a future in which that experience leads you into the career of your dreams.

Use your imagination to create a new character or creature in a story of your own. Give a basic synopsis of your story and describe how you would create this character or creature using techniques from Tyler’s presentation like life science, biology, anatomy, animal reference, etc. Keep in mind the character or creature’s motivation and backstory as you design them. If you would like to include a drawing of your character or creature, please do, but it is not required.

PRIZES

Contest winners will be announced the week of May 24, 2021. Teachers will be notified directly if their students have won.

Elementary School
Grand Prize: $150 cash
Runner-up (2): $75 cash

Middle School
Grand Prize: $300 cash
Runner-up (2): $150 cash

High School
Grand Prize: $500 cash
Runner-up (2): $250 cash

All winning essays will be published on www.sffilm.org.
For questions, contact Keith Zwölfer at 415-561-5040 or kzwolfer@sffilm.org.
Common Core Standards

Grades 6-8

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.9
Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video, or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7
Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.6
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.

Grades 9-10

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.6
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9
Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Grades 11-12

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.6
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology’s capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9
Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.11-12.7
Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.4
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.6
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9
Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
We live in a world where technology mediates a large portion of human interaction and the exchange of information. Every projected image, every word published on a page or a website, and every sound from a speaker reaches its audience through the medium, through the language of the device. The ability to parse the vast array of media messages is an essential skill for young people, particularly in a mainstream commercial culture that targets youth as a vulnerable, impressionable segment of the American marketplace. Most students already have a keen understanding of the languages different media use and the techniques they employ to inspire particular emotions or reactions, but they often lack the skill or awareness to fully deconstruct the messages they continuously receive. Analysis of a media message—or any piece of mass media content—can best be accomplished by first identifying its principal characteristics:

1. **Medium**: the physical means by which it is contained and/or delivered
2. **Author**: the person(s) responsible for its creation and dissemination
3. **Content**: the information, emotions, values or ideas it conveys
4. **Audience**: the target audience to whom it is delivered
5. **Purpose**: the objectives of its authors and the effects of its dissemination.

Students who can readily identify these five core characteristics will be equipped to understand the incentives at work behind media messages, as well as their potential consequences. Media literacy education empowers students to become responsible consumers, active citizens and critical thinkers.

### COMMON CORE STANDARDS

**MEDIUM**

All Media Is Constructed.
- What is the message, how is it delivered and in what format?
- What technologies are used to present the message?
- What visual and auditory elements comprise the media content?
- What expectations do you bring to the content, given its medium and format?

**AUTHOR**

All Media Is Constructed by Someone.
- Who is delivering the message?
- Who originally constructed the message?
- What expectations do you have of the content, given its author(s)?

**CONTENT**

Media Is A Language For Information.
- What is the subject of the media message?
- What information, values, emotions or ideas are conveyed by the media content?
- What tools does the author employ to engage the viewer and evoke a response?
- To what extent did the content meet your expectations, given the format/author?

**AUDIENCE**

All Media Messages Reach an Audience.
- Who receives the message?
- For whom is the message intended?
- What is the public reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- What is your reaction to the media content and/or its message?
- How might others perceive this message differently? Why?

**PURPOSE**

All Media Messages Are Constructed for a Reason.
- Why was the message constructed?
- Who benefits from dissemination of the message? How?
- To what extent does the message achieve its purpose?
- What effect does the message have on the audience it reaches, if any?