



## EYE OPENER EXERCISES

Part 1: Colour is contextual

AIC – SGCE Meeting  
January 2024

Sample of a three beta – test exercises  
from the CLP Teachers' Guides.

# **Introductory Colour Exercises for teachers**

## TEACHERS' GUIDE

Beta-test version 2.0  
Fall-Winter 2022-23  
FEBRUARY 19 2023



## INTRODUCTION

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### MOVITATION FOR A NEW APPROACH TO TEACHING COLOUR

Colour surrounds us. It is a visual language that affects how we feel and how we interact with the world around us. It helps us communicate and engage with our surroundings. Although colour is ubiquitous, and plays a critical role in the way we understand and shape the world, much of what most people know about colour is outdated, over-simplified, and full of misconceptions.

The seeds for the Colour Literacy Project began at the Munsell Centennial Color Symposium held in Boston, 2018, where many people voiced their concerns over the current state of colour education. Colour is playing an ever-diminishing role in art and design education worldwide. Much of colour education still revolves around curricula developed in the 1960s or earlier, which has been over-simplified, removed from its context and transformed into a reductive (and somewhat stale) theoretical framework of knowledge. It has unfortunately been reduced to snippets of colour 'facts'. What has been lost is a colour education which fosters a desire to investigate and explore colour, in all its complexity and nuance (and messiness). This over-simplification of colour knowledge has also contributed to many misconceptions about colour, widespread amongst artists and designers, as well as the general public. What is very often taught and published today as "foundational colour knowledge" generally rests on: 1) How red, blue and yellow-coloured paints mix; and 2) The misconception that there are only seven colours in the spectrum or rainbow. Colour is so much more.

The Colour Literacy Project presents a new way to teach colour. Rather than starting with the ubiquitous mixing of the three

(so-called) 'primaries', red, blue and yellow, we start learning about colour by seeing.

Look around and notice the colours around you. If you are inside, look at your wall. It is probably painted a solid colour, but how many variations of that colour do you see? How do shadows change what you see? How does your distance from the wall change the colour you see? Is the colour the same when the Sun is shining brightly outside and when it is dark at night and you illuminate your walls with LED lights? What about that tree outside in the summer– many of its leaves may appear green, but how many variations of green do you see? How can you describe those variations? If you look at the same tree in an hour or two, are the greens the same? This is where we start: by noticing, by describing and by recognizing that the colours we see very much depend on their context. These ideas are foundational, yet are often missed within a traditional colour education.

The primary objective for the Colour Literacy Project is to develop foundational study material for teachers of all educational levels, as well as the general public, with a "top-down/bottom-up" approach, simultaneously addressing colour education upwards from preschool, and downwards from post-secondary levels. We recognize the need for a multi-disciplinary, overarching framework that connects colour with all sorts of curricula – science, history, math, geography, language, dance. Colour is not just for artists. With the daily inundation of colourful images, videos and advertisements, we are now historically at an opportune moment where digital technology has exploded and become an integral element of our culture. Colour literacy, which combines science literacy with visual literacy, is now paramount to navigate in a world in which colour is so accessible.

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Colour Literacy Project  
OCTOBER 2022

## COLOUR FOUNDATIONS: KOFFKA RING

<b>Ages</b>	5 to 99
<b>Time</b>	5 minutes
<b>Learning Outcome</b>	Recognize that the immediate surroundings of an area affect its perceived colour.
<b>Colour Concepts</b>	Colour is contextual. The surrounding colours affect a perceived colour. (And yes - grey is a colour!)

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Cut out the entire rectangle below.
- Cut the rectangle in half vertically (where the arrow points) and separate the two halves by 1/2 inch. Note the changes in the appearance of the greys.
- Bring the two halves back together.
- Slide the left side down until the ring on the left lines up with the center on the right.
- Describe the variations in the perceived colour of the greys.

### MATERIALS

- Scissors

*Cut here*



### QUESTIONS & OBSERVATIONS

1. What happens when you separate the two halves of the rectangle?
2. Were the results as you expected? Why? Describe any differences in the colours you see.

### MORE TO EXPLORE

1. Make a template of the Koffka ring, and try colouring your own versions.

## COLOUR FOUNDATIONS: SIMULTANEOUS CONTRAST

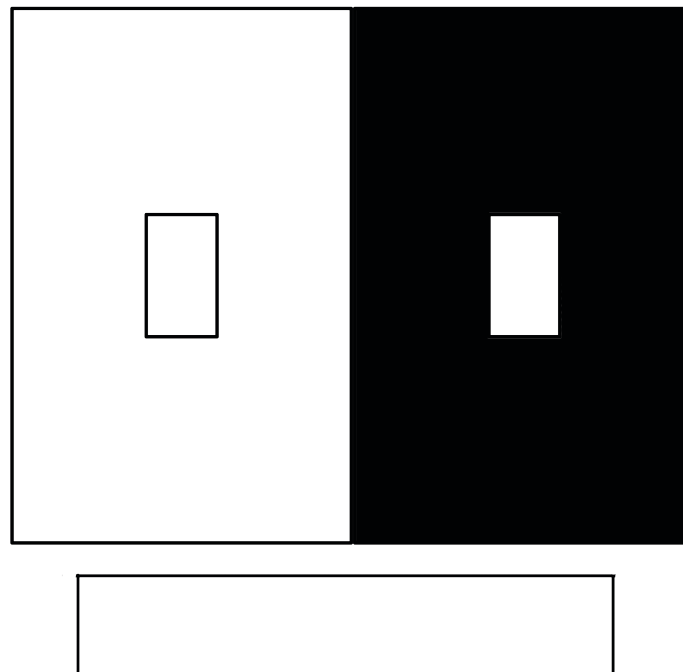
<b>Ages</b>	5 to 99
<b>Time</b>	10 minutes
<b>Learning Outcome</b>	Recognize that the immediate surroundings of an area affect its perceived colour.
<b>Colour Concepts</b>	Colour is contextual. Perceptual colours can differ from object colours.

### MATERIALS

- Crayon (or marker or pencil crayon- something to colour in a space)
- Scissors

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Choose crayon (or pencil crayon etc.) that is not a vivid colour.
- Fill in the rectangle swatches within the large white and black rectangles with the colour. (Make colour as opaque as possible.)
- Hold at arm's length and note the shift in the perceived colour of the two swatches.
- Fill in the rectangular strip below the rectangles with the same crayon.
- Cut out the rectangular strip and place it across the black and white rectangles to verify that the coloured-in sections are the same object colour



### QUESTIONS & OBSERVATIONS

1. *What happens when the same object colour is viewed on the two different backgrounds?*
2. *Were the results as you expected? Why?.*

### MORE TO EXPLORE

1. *Repeat the exercise using different coloured crayons.*
2. *Try the exercise with different coloured backgrounds.*

## COLOUR FOUNDATIONS: MUNKER WHITE ILLUSION

<b>Ages</b>	5 to 99
<b>Time</b>	10 minutes
<b>Learning Outcome</b>	Recognize that the boundaries of an area affect the perceived colour of that area.
<b>Colour Concepts</b>	Colour is contextual. The shape and colour of a boundary can affect a perceived colour.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Choose one colour of crayon (or pencil crayon etc.).
- Fill in the areas between the dashed lines in the image. (Make the colour as opaque as you can.)
- Hold the paper at arm's length and squint at the diagram. Notice how the colour of the surrounding stripes and implied boundaries change the perceived colour of each area.

### MATERIALS

- Crayon (or marker or pencil crayon- something to colour in a space)



### QUESTIONS & OBSERVATIONS

1. Describe how the colour of the surrounding stripes and boundaries change the perceived color of each area.
2. Specifically describe the impact of the black vs. white boundary on the perceived colour.

### MORE TO EXPLORE

1. Repeat the exercise using different coloured crayons.



COLOUR  
LITERACY  
PROJECT

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Part 1: Colour is contextual

**Introductory Colour**

**Exercises for  
teachers**

TEACHERS' GUIDE

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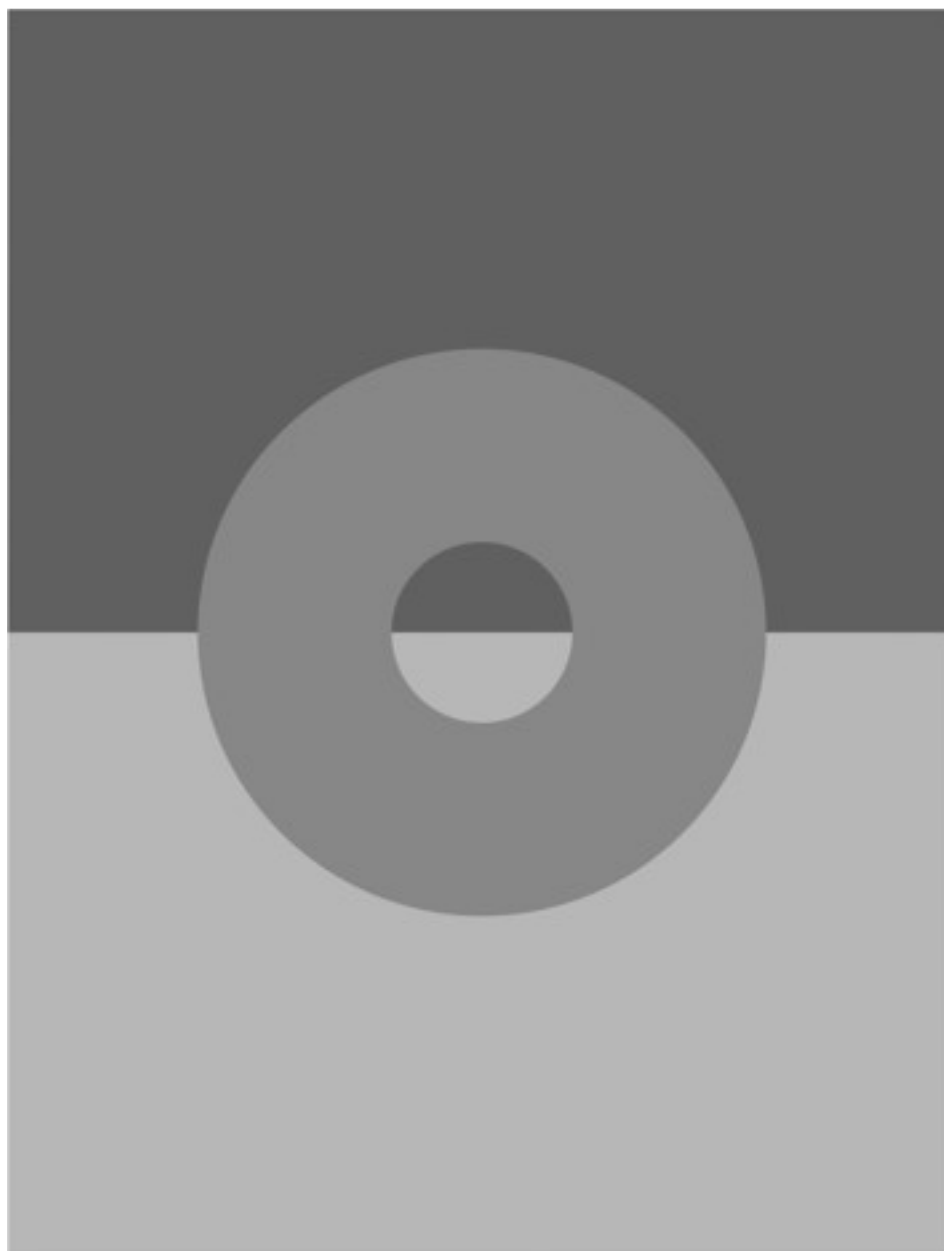
**HANDOUTS**

# EYE OPENER HAND OUT

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Fall-Winter 2022-23

## KOFFKA RING

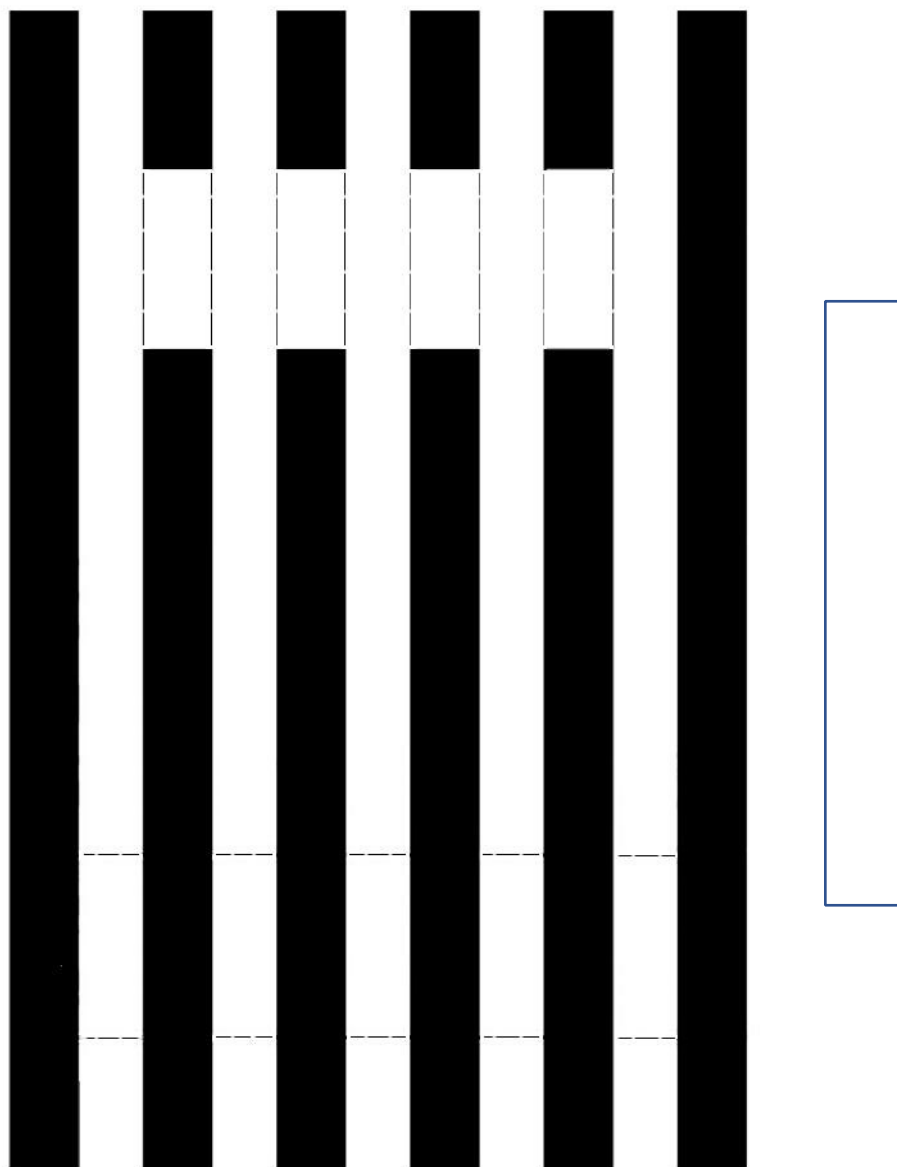


# EYE OPENER HAND OUT

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## MUNKER WHITE

MUNKER - WHITE ILLUSION





# EYE OPENER HAND OUT

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## SIMULTANEOUS CONTRAST

