



Developed with Eric Gibbons, Art Instructor, Vernon Malone College and Career Academy, Raleigh, NC

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# Cartoon skeletons



## National Core Arts Standards

### Creating (Standard 2):

Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

### Performing (Standard 5):

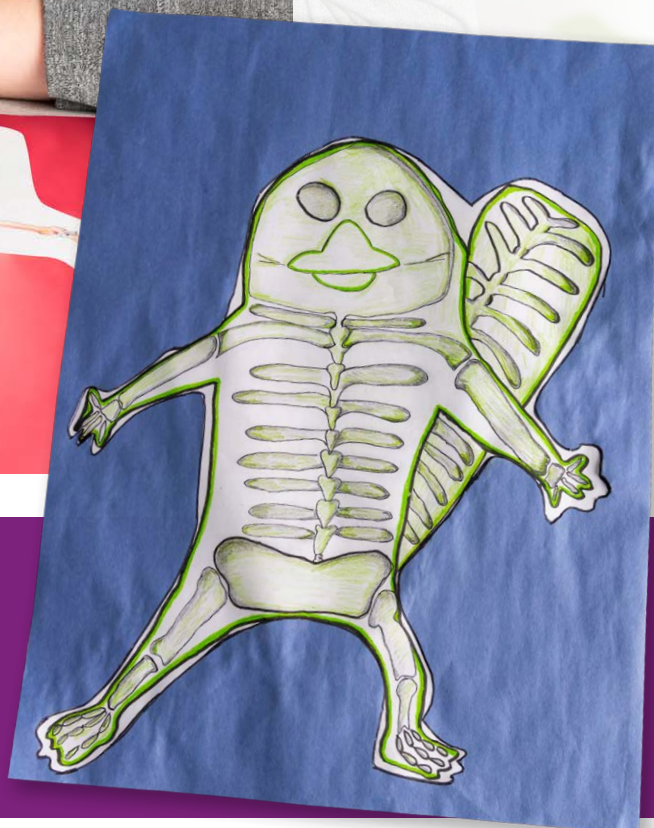
Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.

### Responding (Standard 9):

Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

### Connecting (Standard 10):

Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.



## Objectives

*Students will...*

- Learn about and create a contour of a cartoon figure
- Safely make cuts using scissors or a razor
- Use biology resources as they alter a skeleton to fit within their unique cartoon contours
- Learn the concepts of form and function

# Introduction

This lesson was inspired by contemporary artist Michael Paulus' cartoon skeletons. During the lesson, students will combine their knowledge of biology with their love of cartoons as they create skeletal structures based on their favorite childhood cartoon or a character they think matches their personality. They'll explore both form and function as they adapt realistic bone structures to the shape of their cartoon characters.

## Instructions

1. Show students the work of Michael Paulus and discuss his technique. Then, have students choose a character to work with that is either their favorite childhood cartoon or one that best matches their personality.
2. Have them print the cartoon or upload an image to Google Docs to use as a reference. To save time, use a projector, smartboard, or window to trace an outline.
3. Then, have them draw the contour of their character on construction paper.
4. Next, have them use scissors or a utility knife to cut their contour shape out of the middle of their paper so that they are left with a silhouette (Fig. 1). Then, have them glue their construction paper onto drawing paper so they can draw the skeleton within the contour of their figure (Fig. 2).
5. Have students research skeletal structures or provide a 3D model, books, posters, or online skeleton resources students can reference (including references for animal skeletons if some students are working on animal characters). Point out features of the bone structures, such as how two bones fit together or where the bones are thicker and where they are thinner.
6. Then talk about how form and function are important concepts in science. Students will need to think about how they need to alter their skeletons to fit the contours of their cartoons while still making the bones appear functional. For example, they might need to add or subtract ribs or draw an unusually shaped skull. Students should work through these visual problems to create their skeletons.
7. Before drawing their character's skeleton on their final paper, have students first sketch their character's contour in sketch book or sketch paper for practice and draw the skeleton inside.
8. Have students critique each other's small drawings to determine what they might be missing before having them draw their skeletons on their final project.
9. Before they start their final project, remind them to draw lightly in pencil first so that it is easier to make corrections (Fig. 3).
10. When they are satisfied with their skeleton placement, have them outline the bones in permanent marker and then erase the pencil lines (Fig. 4).
11. They should then shade the bones using regular pencil and tortillons.
12. Then, have them color the bones lightly with colored pencils [the bones don't need to be natural bone color (Fig. 5)].
13. Students can add optional texture and detail when their skeletons are complete.



**Fig. 1**





**Fig. 2**



**Fig. 3**



**Fig. 4**



**Fig. 5**





# Materials list

- Large construction paper, 18" x 24" [9715511(A)]
- Large drawing paper, 18" x 24" (9700926)
- Colored pencils (NE20073 or NE20107)
- Permanent markers (9728351)
- Tortillon (9701043)
- Utility knife (4100418)

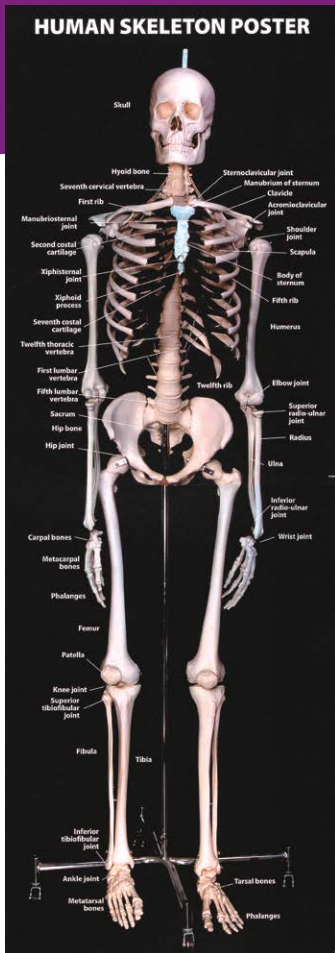
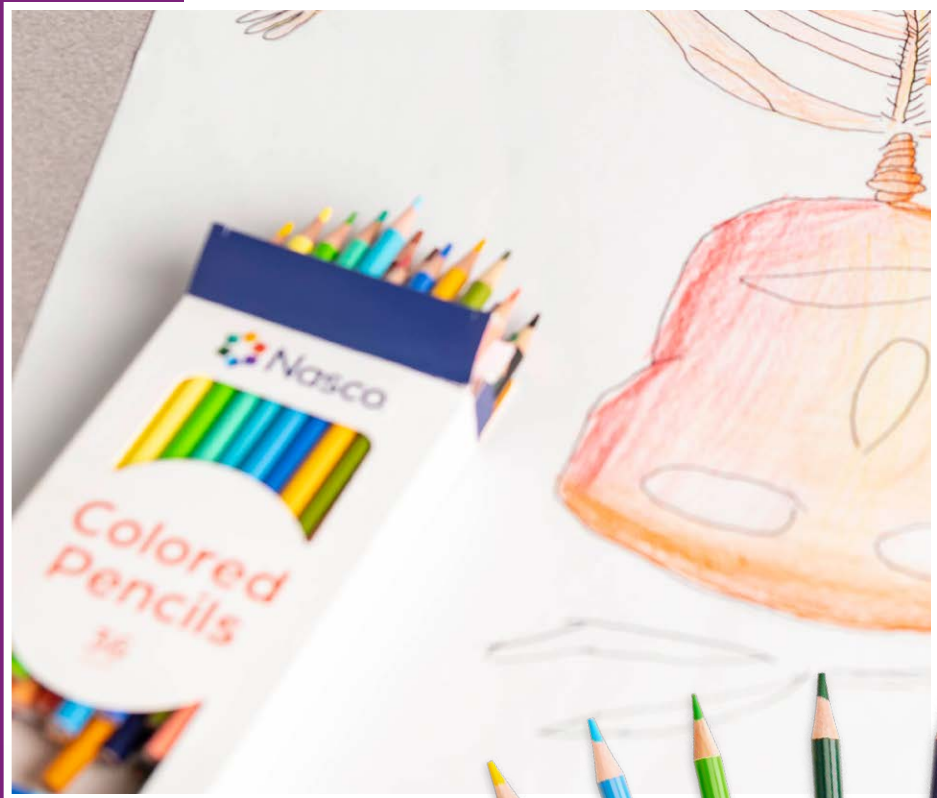
## Additional optional materials

- Skeleton poster (SB28462)
- Full biology class skeleton (SB25209)

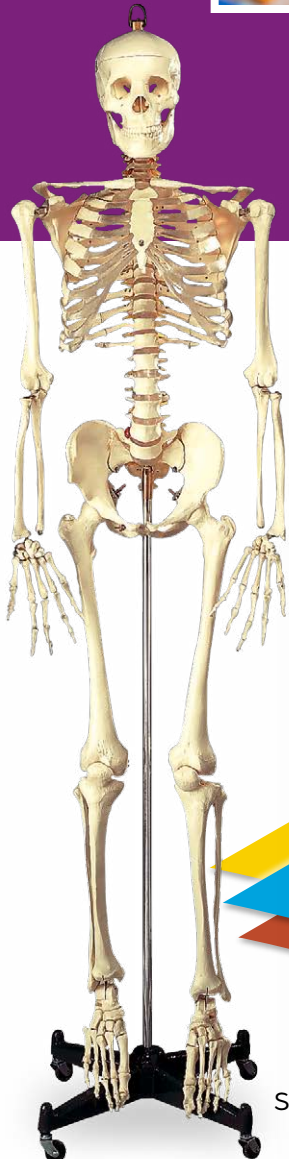
## Resources

Eric Gibbons' blog:

<https://www.artedguru.com/home/cartoon-skeletons>



SB28462



SB25209