

DIRECTOR'S LESSON PACKAGE OVERVIEW

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

K–2 Literacy Package — Informed by 4-H STEM Reading Connections 2025

Created by Helix Education in partnership with Beyond School Bells

FOR

Program directors, site coordinators, and lead educators

USE

Background knowledge, standards alignment, materials planning, and reporting data to implement this 3-lesson unit

FRONTLINE EDUCATORS

Should use the Grab & Go Lesson Package

Unit Overview

This three-lesson unit uses ***Perfect Square*** by Michael Hall as the anchor text for an integrated K–2 literacy and STEAM experience. The book tells the story of a square that is cut, torn, poked, and soaked each day of the week, yet always transforms those challenges into something beautiful. This theme of **creative resilience** runs through every lesson.

Lesson-at-a-Glance

#	Lesson Focus	Lesson Overview	SOR Skill	STEAM Activity
1	Introducing Square & Phonemic Awareness	Students will listen to a story about creative transformation before using tangrams and construction paper to engineer their own square-based sculptures. The lesson also focuses on foundational literacy by having students identify rhymes or segment sounds in words taken directly from the text.	Phonemic Awareness (rhyming, segmenting, phoneme substitution)	Students use tangrams to create items out of geometric shapes. Students create a Construction Paper Square Sculpture by ripping and gluing construction paper into a new shape.
2	Vocabulary & Nature Exploration	Students act as "word detectives" to define new vocabulary and participate in a shared reading of the full story. They transition outdoors to apply math and science skills by observing and sketching every detail found within a one-square-foot area of nature. Can also be done entirely indoors.	Vocabulary in context (text + picture clues)	Students complete a nature investigation by viewing nature items through a square foot of yarn.
3	Retelling, Fluency & Mondrian Art	Students practice reading with expression and work in pairs to retell the story's events in correct sequential order. To conclude the series, they	Fluency: phrasing, expression,	Students create art pieces inspired by Piet Mondrian.

#	Lesson Focus	Lesson Overview	SOR Skill	STEAM Activity
		explore the work of Piet Mondrian and use primary colors and geometric lines to create their own abstract masterpieces.	partner reading	

Nebraska ELA Standards Alignment

Grade	Literary Text (Reading)	Science of Reading Focus
K	LA.K.RP With adult help, retell stories with details and identify the main message.	LA.K.F.2.b Recognize and produce rhyming words. (L1) LA.K.F.4 Read smoothly and correctly. (L3)
1st	LA.1.RP.1 Retell a story using important details.	LA.1.F.2.a Segment and blend phonemes in CVC words. (L1) LA.1.F.4.a Read and understand first-grade books with expression. (L3)
2nd	LA.2.RP.1 Retell stories and explain the important lessons within them.	LA.2.F.2.a Manipulate phonemes (substitution) to build new words. (L1) LA.2.F.4.a Read aloud a variety of texts smoothly, correctly, and with expression. (L3)

Lesson Structure

Each lesson is designed for **60 minutes** in an out-of-school time (OST) setting. The timing below is flexible and can be adjusted based on your group's needs. The full lesson includes welcome and closing time, which can be removed if already included in your programming. For programs that prefer to divide lessons into literacy and project days, see the recommended split structure on the right.

Standard 60-Minute Lesson	Time
Welcome & Check-In	5 min
Activate Prior Knowledge	5 min
Science of Reading Mini Lesson	10 min
Read Aloud or Shared Reading	15 min
STEAM Activity	20 min
Closing & Celebration	5 min

Divided Lesson Structure

Day 1 – Literacy Focus

Lesson Component	Time
Welcome & Check-In	5 min
Activate Prior Knowledge	5 min
Science of Reading Mini Lesson	10+ min
Read Aloud or Shared Reading	15 min

Day 2 – STEAM Project

Lesson Component	Time
Welcome & Check-In	5 min
Activate Prior Knowledge	5 min
STEAM Activity	30+ min
Closing & Celebration	5 min

Lesson Modifications

Each lesson contains modifications throughout for grade-level specific modifications (Kindergarten, First, and Second), along with modifications for Emerging and Advanced students.

Emerging	Emerging Learner An emerging learner is just beginning to develop foundational literacy or numeracy skills and relies heavily on hands-on manipulatives, visual cues, and direct adult support.
Advanced	Advanced Learner An advanced learner quickly grasps new concepts and can independently apply them to different tasks or creative projects without needing step-by-step instructions. They often show curiosity beyond the basic lesson, using more descriptive language or complex logic to solve problems and explain their thinking.

Literacy Background & Staff Preparation Guide

This unit integrates three Science of Reading skills across three lessons — phonemic awareness, vocabulary in context, and fluency. The sections below give you the background knowledge to understand each skill, run the activity yourself, and prepare your staff. **You do not need a teaching degree to facilitate these lessons effectively.**

Lesson 1 — Phonemic Awareness

What it is	Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words, entirely by ear, not by sight. It is one of the strongest early predictors of reading success. It is not about letters or spelling; it is purely about sound.
Why it matters	Students who can hear and manipulate sounds in words are better able to decode unfamiliar words and spell. Phonemic awareness is a bridge to phonics. Research shows it is best taught explicitly and playfully.
Skills in this unit	Kindergarten: Rhyming: Recognizing that words share the same ending sound (cat/hat). Activity: Thumbs up/down for rhyming word pairs from the story. 1st Grade: Elkonin Boxes: Segmenting a word into its individual sounds by pushing a counter into a box for each phoneme heard. The word "shape" has 5 letters but 3 sounds: /sh/-/æ/-/p/ = 3 boxes. 2nd Grade: Phoneme Substitution: Swapping one sound for another to build a new word. Example: Change /skw/ in "square" to /b/ - "bare."
How to run Elkonin Boxes	1. Draw or print 3–4 connected boxes on paper (one row per word). Laminated sheets can be reused. 2. Place small objects (coins, chips, beans) above the boxes, one per box. 3. Say the word slowly. As you say each sound out loud, push one object down into a box from left to right. 4. Count the objects in the boxes to confirm the number of sounds. Key rule: Count sounds, not letters. "Shape" = /sh/ /æ/ /p/ = 3 sounds, 3 boxes. "Place" = /p/ /l/ /eɪ/ /s/ = 4 sounds, 4 boxes.
Director try-it	Practice segmenting these words before the lesson, say each sound aloud as you push a counter: • "shape" → /sh/ /æ/ /p/ = 3 sounds (sh - ay - p) • "place" → /p/ /l/ /eɪ/ /s/ = 4 sounds (p - l - ay - ss) • "same" → /s/ /eɪ/ /m/ = 3 sounds (s - ay - m)
What to tell staff	"You're not teaching spelling — you're teaching listening. Say the word out loud, have students repeat it slowly, then push a counter for each sound they hear. If students say letters instead of

sounds, redirect them: sounds only. Model it two or three times before asking students to try independently."

Lesson 2 — Vocabulary in Context

What it is	Vocabulary in context means using surrounding text and pictures to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word, rather than giving students a definition before they encounter it. This mirrors how skilled readers naturally build vocabulary. This is completed in lesson 2, so students have experience with the words in lesson 1.
Why it matters	Vocabulary is the bridge between decoding (sounding out words) and comprehension (understanding what you read). OST settings are uniquely positioned for vocabulary development because conversation and exploration are less restricted than during the school day.
Words in this unit	Unexpected — "Un" = not. Expected = what you thought would happen. Unexpected = a surprise. Transform — "Trans" = across. To change completely from one thing into something else. Fountain, Garden, Waterfall — Concrete nouns introduced with picture support from the book's illustrations.
Teaching strategy	Model the "Word Detective" process aloud before students try: 1. Point to the word. Read it aloud with students. 2. Look at the picture on the same page. What clues does the image give? 3. Read the sentence around the word. Are there context clues in the surrounding text? 4. Make a reasonable guess. Try it in the sentence — does it make sense?
Grade-level practice	K: Teacher points to the picture + word. Students say it aloud and draw what it means. 1st: Sentence frame: "The word [] means ___ because in the book it says/shows ___." 2nd: Students write an original sentence using the vocabulary word in their own context.
What to tell staff	"Don't give students the definition first, let them be word detectives. Point to the picture, read the sentence around the word, and ask 'What do you think this means?' Accept reasonable guesses and guide them toward meaning using the book as evidence."

Lesson 3 — Reading Fluency

What it is	Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately, at an appropriate pace, and with expression (prosody). It is the bridge between decoding individual words and understanding the full meaning of a passage.
Why it matters	When students read word by word, their working memory is consumed by decoding, and comprehension suffers. Fluent reading frees the brain to focus on meaning. OST settings are ideal for fluency practice because the stakes feel lower and repetition feels natural and fun.
Strategies in this unit	Echo Reading (K): Educator reads a sentence with expression; students immediately repeat it, matching the tone and pacing. Partner Reading (1st): Student pairs take turns reading one page each. Partners give a 'fluency star' if their partner reads with expression. Independent Re-Read (2nd): Students self-rate their reading on a 1–2–3 scale for expression and re-read until they reach a 3.
Director try-it	Read this robotically: "Square. Was. Torn. Into. Tiny. Pieces." Now read it with expression: "Square was torn into tiny pieces!" That contrast is exactly what students should practice. Model it clearly for staff before the lesson — do it in front of them, exaggerating the difference.
Story retelling cards	The retelling cards (Monday–Sunday) help students sequence the story before partner reading. Each card names a day. Students arrange them in order from memory, then use the cards as a reference while reading their page with a partner.
What to tell staff	"Model fluent reading first — big expression, clear pauses, emotion. Then have students try. If a student reads robotically, say 'Let's try that again like you really mean it!' Fluency is not about perfection — it's about bringing the story to life. Keep it playful and low-pressure."

Grant & Reporting Data

This unit supports the following reporting categories for **21st CCLC and similar OST grant programs**:

- **21st CCLC Program Quality:** Literacy enrichment aligned to Nebraska ELA standards (K–2). Each lesson targets grade-level reading standards in literary text, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency.
- **STEAM Integration:** Art + Math + Engineering (L1: Square Sculptures), Science + Math + Nature (L2: Square Foot Exploration), Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression (L3: Mondrian Art). All activities align to ELG Standard M.02.
- **School-Day Alignment:** Phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency instruction mirrors the Nebraska Science of Reading framework at each grade level. This unit reinforces, not replaces, school-day instruction.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Grade-level modifications are built into every lesson for K, 1st, and 2nd grade learners in a multi-grade OST setting, supporting both emerging and advanced learners.

Recommended Documentation

If your program is collecting impact and student data, the following options are recommended:

- Photograph completed STEAM projects (Square Sculptures, Nature Observation Drawings, Mondrian Art)
- Collect student Check-In Forms to document character development and behavioral tiered data
- Note which grade-level Science of Reading activities were implemented
- Record attendance for each of the 3 sessions
- Optional: Have students write one sentence about what they learned for a portfolio artifact

Materials & Budget Planning

All materials for this unit are intentionally chosen to be **low-cost and easy to source**. Most items are everyday classroom or household supplies. Where a standard item may not be available, substitutions are listed — nearly every material in this unit has a free or no-cost alternative. The **Student Materials and Printables** package includes all printable items needed per student.

Material	Quantity	Lesson	Substitution / Notes
Perfect Square by Michael Hall	1 per class	All	Free library copy or YouTube read-aloud
Helix K-2 Check-In Forms	1 per student	L1, L2	Draw simple faces on sticky notes; post feelings chart on board
Tangram puzzle sets	1 per student or group	L1	Print paper tangrams free online
Construction paper squares	1 per student	L1	Any scrap paper, newspaper, or paper bags
White paper	1 per student	L1, L3	Any available white paper
Scissors, glue, crayons/markers	1 per student or shared	L1, L3	Share supplies across groups
Elkonin Box sheets (1st grade)	1 per student	L1	Draw 3 boxes on any paper
Counters/coins (1st grade)	Set per student	L1	Bingo chips, buttons, beans, or ripped paper
Yarn loops	1 per student	L2	Any string, rope, or tape to make a square on the floor
Clipboards	1 per student	L2	Use any notebook or binder; draw on any paper
Story retelling cards (Mon–Sun)	1 per student pair	L3	Write days on index cards; students draw what happened

Ruler	1 per student	L3	Use a book or paper edge as a ruler
Red, blue, yellow paint/crayons	1 set per student	L3	Any available colors; emphasize 'only 3 colors' as the artistic challenge
Whiteboards (optional)	1 per student	L1	Use for SOR whiteboard activities
Magnifying Glasses (optional)	1 per student or group	L2	Use during L2 nature exploration for observations

Director's Prep Guide

The following provides an overview of prep for the full unit and itemized prep for each day. This can be completed by a director or site coordinator, or assigned to a staff member who receives prep time.

BEFORE THE UNIT BEGINS (ALL 3 LESSONS)

- Obtain a copy of Perfect Square by Michael Hall.
- **Print required items:** Helix Daily Check-In Form (2 copies per student — L1 and L2), Emoji Feeling Cards (1 per class, L3), Storytelling Sequence Cards (1 per student pair, L3), PDF of Perfect Square text (1 per student, L3), Pictures of Piet Mondrian and Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow (1–4 per class, L3).
- **Organize grade-specific Science of Reading materials.** Determine whether students will be grouped by grade or whole group for SOR activities. K: Print Rhyming Picture Cards (L1). 1st: Print Elkonin Boxes and review instructions. 2nd: Prepare whiteboards and markers or paper.
- Prepare or print Tangram Sets (1 per student or student group for L1).
- **Secure supplies for each lesson:** L1 – Colored construction paper, white paper, scissors, glue, crayons, markers. L2 – Yarn, clipboards, drawing paper, pencils, magnifying glasses (optional). L3 – White paper, ruler, black crayons or markers, red/blue/yellow paint or art supplies.
- Identify an outdoor space for L2 nature exploration (playground, field, garden) or create indoor nature trays.
- Optional: Create teacher examples of STEAM projects.

LESSON 1 CLASSROOM PREP – DAY OF

- Write the book title Perfect Square on the board.
- Set out Check-In Forms per student.
- Prepare tangram sets at a central table or in bags (one set per student or pair).
- Cut construction paper squares in advance if time is short (one per student).
- 1st grade: Review Elkonin Boxes instructions to familiarize with the concept.

LESSON 2 CLASSROOM PREP – DAY OF

- Tie yarn into loops if not yet completed (one per student or partner pair).
- Write the 5 vocabulary words on the board: Unexpected, Transform, Fountain, Garden, Waterfall.
- Prepare clipboards and drawing paper (1 per student).
- Confirm the safe outdoor space (grass, garden bed, gravel area) or create a 'nature tray' at each table with materials from outdoors.
- Bookmark specific pages in Perfect Square for shared reading stops.

LESSON 3 CLASSROOM PREP – DAY OF

- If using paint: set up paint stations with red, blue, and yellow paint and small cups at each table.
- Display an image of Mondrian's Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow on the board.
- Pre-draw a sample Mondrian-style grid on chart paper as a model.

- Write the fluency sentence strip on the board: *"Square was torn into tiny pieces. But it still knew how to be beautiful."*
- Option: Cut story retelling sequence cards (one set per pair or small group) if students are not cutting.
- Option: Pre-draw lines on paper for emerging students.

FOR SCHOOL-BASED LEADERSHIP

Perfect Square — K–2 Literacy & STEAM Unit

A share-out for principals, superintendents, and school-based partners

Developed by: Helix Education in partnership with Beyond School Bells, informed by 4-H STEM Reading Connections 2025. Designed for K–2 students in out-of-school time (OST) settings.

Purpose: This 3-lesson unit uses *Perfect Square* by Michael Hall as an anchor text for integrated literacy and STEAM instruction.

What Students Are Doing

Over three 60-minute sessions, students engage with *Perfect Square* by Michael Hall, a picture book about a square that is transformed by challenges each day of the week. This theme of **creative resilience** connects literacy, math, science, and art into a cohesive three-lesson unit.

#	Literacy Skill	STEAM Project	What Students Learn & Do
1	Phonemic Awareness — rhyming, segmenting & blending sounds	Square Sculptures (Art + Math + Engineering)	Identify and produce phonemes; retell key story events; engineer original art from geometric shapes
2	Vocabulary in Context — using text and picture clues	Square Foot Nature Exploration (Science + Math + Nature)	Define vocabulary from context clues; observe and sketch a one-square-foot area of nature
3	Fluency — accuracy, expression, and partner reading	Mondrian-Style Art (Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression)	Retell the story in sequence; practice expressive partner reading; create primary-color geometric art

Alignment to School-Day Standards

This program directly reinforces Nebraska ELA standards being taught during the school day. OST staff are often not certified teachers, so this unit is specifically designed with scripted lesson plans so non-credentialed facilitators can implement high-quality, standards-aligned activities.

Grade	Nebraska ELA Standards	Connection to School Day
K	LA.K.RP.1 · LA.K.F.2.b · LA.K.F.4	Retelling stories, rhyming words, smooth and correct reading
1st	LA.1.RP.1 · LA.1.F.2.a · LA.1.F.4.a	Retelling with details, phoneme segmentation and blending, expressive reading
2nd	LA.2.RP.1 · LA.2.F.2.a · LA.2.F.4.a	Story retelling with lesson identification; phoneme substitution; expressive oral reading

Grant & Reporting Category Alignment

This unit supports the following reporting categories for **21st CCLC and similar OST grant programs:**

- **21st CCLC Program Quality:** Literacy enrichment aligned to Nebraska ELA standards (K–2) across literary text, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and fluency.
- **STEAM Integration:** Art + Math + Engineering (L1), Science + Math + Nature (L2), Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression (L3). Aligns to ELG Standard M.02.
- **School-Day Alignment:** Mirrors the Nebraska Science of Reading framework at each grade level. Reinforces, not replaces, school-day instruction.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Grade-level modifications built into every lesson for K, 1st, and 2nd grade learners in a multi-grade OST setting, with Emerging and Advanced learner supports.
- **Attendance & Engagement:** 3-session unit with structured check-in forms and portfolio artifacts for impact documentation.

Additional Notes

Extra space to provide additional context and notes for school-based leadership.

SCRIPTED LESSON PACKAGE

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Lesson 1 of 3 — Introducing Square & Phonemic Awareness

⌚ 60 minutes • ➡ Square Sculptures — Art + Math + Engineering

STANDARDS

Reading Prose & Poetry / Literary Text:

- **K: LA.K.RP.** With adult help, I can retell stories with details and show understanding of the main message or lesson.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.1** I can retell a story I know using important details.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.1** I can retell stories and explain the important lessons within them.

Science of Reading: Phonemic Awareness Focus:

- **K: LA.K.F.2.b** I can recognize and make rhyming words.
- **1st: LA.1.F.2.a** I can break down short words and say each sound by itself. I can put sounds together to speak words.
- **2nd: LA.2.F.2.a** I can break down short words and say each sound by itself. I can put sounds together to speak words.

OBJECTIVES

Adult Language (SWBAT):

- Students will be able to retell the key events in Perfect Square and identify the theme that challenges can lead to creative transformation.
- Students will be able to identify and produce rhyming words (K) or segment and blend CVC (Consonant-Vowel-Consonant) words (1st/2nd) using words from the story.

Student-Friendly Language:

- I can tell what happened to Square and what it did about it.
- I can hear the sounds in short words and tell what they are.

Materials

SUPPLIES

- Perfect Square by Michael Hall
- Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form
- Whiteboard or chart paper + markers
- Feeling words cards / emoji visuals
- Tangram puzzle sets (paper version available online)
- Colored construction paper squares (1 per student)
- White paper (1 per student)
- Scissors and glue
- Crayons and markers

OPTIONAL

- K: Picture cards — words that rhyme with 'square' (bear, chair, stare, hair)
- Sentence strips with target words in large font
- Small mirrors for students to watch mouth as they produce sounds
- 1st: Counters/coins/bingo chips (3 per student) for Elkonin boxes
- Letter tiles or magnetic letters (2nd grade — building and swapping phonemes)

PRE-LESSON SET-UP

- Write the book title Perfect Square on the board.
- Draw a large square on chart paper. Write inside it: "What can a square become?"
- Set out Check-In Forms and emoji/feeling word cards at each student's spot.
- Prepare tangram sets at a central table or in bags (one set per student or pair).
- Cut construction paper squares in advance if time is short (one per student).
- Write the phonemic awareness target words on the board: square, shape, change, same, place.

Welcome & Student Check-In (8–10 min)

Greet students warmly as they arrive and invite them to pick up their Check-In Form.

"Good [morning/afternoon], friends! Before we start today, I want to know how YOU are feeling right now? Take a look at the feeling words and emoji on your form and circle or cut and paste the one that shows how you feel inside today."

Give students 2–3 minutes to complete the "How am I feeling?" section. Then invite 3–4 volunteers to share.

"Who would like to share? Tell us: 'I am feeling ___ today because ___.' There are no wrong answers — all feelings are okay!"

Say It Game — Feeling Word Focus:

"Our feeling word for today is SURPRISED. Let's all say it together — SURPRISED! Now whisper it... now say it as if you ARE surprised! Turn and say it to a friend."

"In our story today [Show the book], Square is going to feel many things — happy, surprised, and brave. Let's find out what happens!"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Provide a printed emoji chart. Allow students to point to their feelings instead of writing/cutting.
- **Advanced:** Ask students to share two feelings and explain the connection between them.

Activate Prior Knowledge (7 min)

"Before we open our book, I want to show you something."

Hold up (or draw) a perfect square. Ask:

"What shape is this? How do you know it's a square? What makes a square... a square?"

Take 3–5 responses. Then hold up a torn or crumpled piece of paper.

"What if something unexpected happened to this square? [rip the square] What could it become? Turn and tell a partner what you think."

"Today's book, Perfect Square by Michael Hall, is all about a square that gets changed in surprising ways every single day, but instead of being upset, Square turns those changes into something BEAUTIFUL."

"As I read, think about: How does Square FEEL? And what does Square DO about it?"

Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Phonemic Awareness (10 min)

Kindergarten

Rhyming: Recognize and produce rhyming words.

1st Grade	Phoneme Segmentation & Blending: Segment and blend CVC words using Elkonin Boxes.
2nd Grade	Phoneme Manipulation: Substituting sounds to build new words.

Step 1 — Introduce (All Grades):

"We're going to listen carefully to the SOUNDS in words today. Good readers notice sounds in words — it helps them read and spell!"

Step 2 — Kindergarten (Rhyming):

"I'll say two words. You tell me, do they RHYME? Thumbs up if yes, thumbs down if no! Square... bear. [pause] Shape... cape. [pause] Change... strange. [pause] Now YOUR turn — tell me a word that rhymes with 'square!'"

Step 2 — 1st Grade (Segmentation & Blending with Elkonin Boxes):

What are Elkonin Boxes? Elkonin Boxes (also called Sound Boxes or Push Boxes) are a research-based phonemic awareness tool. Each box represents exactly ONE sound, not one letter. The word "shape" has 5 letters but only 3 sounds (/sh/-/æ/-/p/), so it uses 3 boxes.

► **How to Set Up:** Draw or print 3–4 connected squares. Place one small manipulative (counter, coin, button) above each box. As the student says each sound, they push one manipulative down into a box from left to right. Count the manipulatives to confirm the total sounds.

"Watch me first. I'll say the word 'shape' slowly and push a counter for each sound I hear. Ready? /sh/ [push] — /æ/ [push] — /p/ [push]. How many sounds? 3 sounds — 3 boxes! Now let's try together. The word is 'place.' Say it slowly with me..."

Step 2 — 2nd Grade (Phoneme Substitution):

"We're going to change one sound in a word to make a new word! Start with 'square.' Change the /skw/ to /b/... You get BARE! Now try: Change the /sp/ in 'spare' to /sh/. What word do you get? [share!]"

Hands-On Practice (5 min):

Kindergarten	Partners share a rhyming picture card set and take turns saying a rhyming pair aloud.
1st Grade	Students use 3 counters placed above a printed or drawn Elkonin Box sheet to segment the words: shape, place, same. Push one counter per sound into each box. Count and check!
2nd Grade	Students write two "before and after" word pairs on a mini whiteboard (e.g., spare - share, square - bare).

Teacher Tip: Always say the sounds aloud as you push — the physical motion paired with the vocal sound is what builds the phonemic awareness connection. Avoid spelling the word out; this activity is purely about sound, not letters.

Read Aloud (15 min)**Hold up the book Perfect Square.**

"I can't wait to read this book with you. Let's look at the cover. The title is Perfect Square, and the author is Michael Hall. What do you notice about the shape of the book? [Identify that the book is also a square]"

"Now let's read! I want you to notice each day of the week, something happens to Square. Watch what Square DOES about it. Think about: Does Square give up? Or does it find a way to be creative?"

Read the book aloud. Use the following prompts and think-alouds:

"On Monday, Square was cut into pieces. How do you think it felt? What did it do? Let's look at the picture. What do you see?"

"On Tuesday, Square was torn into scraps. What do you think will happen to Square?"

"The book says 'unexpected' — that's a vocabulary word we are going to learn. Who can tell me what 'unexpected' means? [Something that happens that isn't planned — a surprise!]"

After reading — quick phonemic awareness connection:

"I heard the word 'square' many times! Let's clap the sounds: /skw/ – /eɪ/ – /r/. Three sounds! Can anyone think of a word that rhymes with square?"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Seat near the book; use finger pointing to track. Use turn-and-talk instead of whole-group responses.
- **Advanced:** Ask students to predict what Sunday will look like before the last page.

STEAM Activity: Square Sculptures [Art + Math + Engineering](#) | 20 min

Part 1 — Explore with Tangrams (5 min):

"Just like Square in our story, YOU are going to transform a square into something new today! First, let's explore tangrams. A tangram is a puzzle of 7 shapes that can make all sorts of pictures. Can you arrange yours to make something? A house? An animal? Keep exploring!"

Give students 4–5 minutes to freely explore tangrams or blocks.

Part 2 — Transform Your Square (12 min):

"Now you'll get your very own square of construction paper — just like in the story! You can tear it, fold it, cut it, or crinkle it to turn it into SOMETHING NEW. When you're happy with your creation, glue it to your white paper and add details with crayons and markers."

Circulate and ask: What did your square become? How does your creation make you feel? What shape is that part — do you see any squares still hiding in it?

Part 3 — Sentence Writing Connection (3 min):

"At the bottom of your paper, let's write 'On [day], my square was ___ so it made itself into a ___.' You can use your best sound spelling or ask me for help!"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Pre-cut the square into 3–4 pieces and invite the student to rearrange and glue. Offer a sentence frame: 'My square became a ___.'
- **Advanced / Early Finishers:** Challenge students to create a second transformation and write two sentences. Ask: 'How many squares, triangles, or rectangles can you count in your creation?'
- **Time:** This activity can be extended based on students' interest and available programming time.

Closing & Celebration (5 min)

"Wow, look at all of these amazing creations! Just like Square in our story, YOU took a simple square and made it into something beautiful. Let's do a gallery walk. Place your creation on your desk and walk around to admire everyone's work. If you LOVE someone's creation, give it a thumbs up!"

Option: Give students stickers to give to their favorite pieces.

"Before we go, give yourself a 'WOW' and pat yourself on the back. Today you listened to a story, practiced your sounds, and became an artist and engineer. That's AMAZING!"

"Tomorrow, we'll read the book again and go on a nature adventure to explore shapes around us. See you then!"

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Lesson 2 of 3 — Shared Reading & Nature Exploration

⌚ 60 minutes • ➡ One Square Foot — Science + Math + Nature

STANDARDS

Reading Prose & Poetry / Literary Text:

- **K: LA.K.RP.2** With adult help, I can tell the main character, setting, and important events in a story.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.2** I can tell the characters, setting, and what happens in stories.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.4** I can describe how a story is written, including how the problem is solved.

Science of Reading: Vocabulary Focus:

- **K: LA.K.RP.6** With adult help, I can ask and answer questions about important details in stories.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.6** I can ask and answer questions about important details in stories.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.6** I can ask and answer different kinds of questions about stories I have read.

OBJECTIVES

Adult Language (SWBAT):

- Students will be able to identify and explain key vocabulary words (unexpected, transform, fountain, garden, waterfall) in context using the text and illustrations.
- Students will be able to apply observational and measurement skills during a nature exploration using a 12-inch square frame.

Student-Friendly Language:

- I can explain what important words in our story mean.
- I can explore one square foot of nature and describe what I see.

Materials

SUPPLIES

- Perfect Square by Michael Hall
- Vocabulary word cards: unexpected, transform, fountain, garden, waterfall
- Chart paper for class vocabulary anchor chart
- Helix K-2 Daily Check-In Form
- 48-inch string or yarn, pre-tied in a square loop (one per student or pair — makes a 12x12 square)
- Clipboards (one per student)
- Drawing paper + pencils

OPTIONAL

- Magnifying glasses
- Emoji Faces for check-in
- If outdoors is unavailable: large tray of sand/soil, small items, or a printed nature photo for an indoor 'nature tray'

PRE-LESSON SET-UP

- Tie yarn into loops — one per student or partner pair.
- Write the 5 vocabulary words on the board or chart paper with blank boxes next to each.
- Prepare clipboards and drawing paper.
- Identify a safe outdoor space (grass, garden bed, gravel area) for the square foot activity. If outdoors is unavailable, create a 'nature tray' at each table.
- Bookmark specific pages in Perfect Square for the shared reading stops.

Welcome & SEL Check-In (5 min)

"Welcome back, friends! Before we dive in, let's check in. I'm going to ask you a question, and I want you to show me with your emoji circle — or tell me with words."

"Has something ever happened to you that was unexpected — a surprise? How did it make you feel at first? Show me your feelings with emojis and make your face look like the emoji."

Take 2–3 brief responses. Connect to the story theme:

"In our story, Square faces surprises EVERY day. Today we're going to look closely at how it handles each one, and we'll also go on our own little exploration adventure!"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Offer sentence frame: 'Something unexpected was _____. I felt _____.'
- **Advanced:** Ask: 'Did the unexpected thing turn into something good in the end?'

Activate Prior Knowledge + Vocabulary Intro (8 min)

"Yesterday, we started reading about Square. Who can remember what happened to Square on Monday? On Wednesday? (Turn and tell a partner before sharing out!)"

After 2–3 shares, introduce vocabulary words:

"Today we're going to be Word Detectives before we read. I'll put a word on the board. You look at it, say it with me, and then we'll figure out what it might mean."

- **UNEXPECTED** — 'Un' means 'not.' Expected means you thought it would happen. So unexpected means... NOT what you thought would happen! A surprise!
- **TRANSFORM** — 'Trans' means 'across.' Transform means to change from one thing into something totally different.
- **FOUNTAIN, GARDEN, WATERFALL** — Show simple picture cards. Quick picture + word match activity.

"Keep these words in mind as we read today. Every time you HEAR one of these words, give me a quiet thumbs up!"

Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Vocabulary in Context (10 min)

Skill Focus: Vocabulary — Using Text and Illustrations to Understand Word Meaning

Teacher-Led Modeling:

"Good readers figure out what new words mean using clues from the words around them AND the pictures. Watch me: [Open to the fountain page.] I don't know this word, but I can look at the picture, and I see water shooting up! That's a fountain. The words say Square 'tumbled and splashed' — that tells me the fountain has water in it."

Gradual Release — by grade:

Kindergarten	Teacher points to picture + word. Students say the word aloud and draw a quick picture of its meaning.
1st Grade	Students use a sentence frame: 'The word [____] means ____ because in the book it says/shows ____.'
2nd Grade	Students write a sentence using the vocabulary word in their own context — e.g., 'I was transformed when...'. Students can swap sentences and read them aloud to one another.

"Let's find each of our vocabulary words in the book. [Open book to garden and waterfall pages and use the appropriate grade vocabulary identification]"

Shared Reading: Full Book (15 min)

"Today we're reading the WHOLE book together. I want you to be the reader with me — whenever I point to the page, read along as loud as you can!"

Model what this looks like with students:

K: Stop reading at a known word and have everyone say the word together. Example words: square, four, happy.

1st: Read a sentence and have the students repeat.

2nd: Have students read the whole page as you read.

Shared Reading Stops:

• **After Monday:** "Square was cut into pieces. How do you think that felt? What do you notice in the picture?"

• **After Thursday:** "Square was soaked and turned into a fountain. Give a thumbs up if you heard a vocabulary word! [fountain]"

• **After Sunday:** "Sunday was different — nothing unexpected happened. How did Square feel? How do you know?"

Comprehension Discussion (5 min):

"What is the BIG lesson of this story? What does it teach us about when hard or unexpected things happen to us?"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Partner students to echo-read. Provide a picture sequence card to support retelling.
- **Advanced:** Ask: 'The author never tells us Square's feelings in words. How does Michael Hall SHOW us how Square feels instead?'

STEAM Activity: One Square Foot Nature Exploration Science + Math + Nature | 17 min

"In our story, Square is one square. Today, you are going to explore one square foot of the world around you! A square foot is about this big [model with yarn on floor]. What do you see in this square?"

Take students outside (or to nature trays). Each student places their yarn square on the ground.

"Look inside your square foot. What do you notice? Use your magnifying glass! Draw everything you see — rocks, sticks, dirt, plants, bugs, anything! Scientists call this observing."

As students draw, circulate and prompt:

- What colors do you see inside your square?
- How many different things can you count?
- Is there anything living in your square? How do you know?
- Move your square to a new spot. Did anything change?

Back inside — share out (3 min):

"What was the most surprising thing you found in your square foot? Turn and tell a partner!"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Provide a numbered observation sheet with boxes (1. color, 2. living things, 3. cool find) so students have structure.
- **Advanced:** Have students write 2–3 sentences describing what they see in their square and comparing it to a second location.

Closing & Celebration (5 min)

"Scientists, hold up your drawings! Look at all the amazing things we found inside just one square foot. Just like our Square in the story, small things can be big discoveries!"

"Today you were readers, vocabulary detectives, and nature scientists. Give a friend near you a high five for being a great scientist. Tomorrow is our last day with Perfect Square — and we're going to create our own art. Get excited!"

SCRIPTED LESSON PACKAGE

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Lesson 3 of 3 — Retelling, Fluency & Mondrian Art

⌚ 60 minutes • ➡ Mondrian-Style Art — Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression

STANDARDS

Reading Prose & Poetry / Literary Text:

- **K: LA.K.RP.1 & RP.4** With adult help, retell stories with details; tell characters, setting and events.
- **1st: LA.1.RP.1** I can retell a story I know using important details.
- **2nd: LA.2.RP.1** I can retell stories and explain the important lessons within them.

Science of Reading — Fluency Focus:

- **K: LA.K.F.4** I can read smoothly and correctly.
- **1st: LA.1.F.4.a** I can read and understand first-grade books with expression.
- **2nd: LA.2.F.4.a** I can read aloud a variety of second-grade texts smoothly, correctly, and with expression.

Writing Connection:

- **K: LA.K.W.3** With adult help, I can tell the order of events by drawing, speaking, and writing.
- **1st-2nd: Speaking & Listening:** Students present their artwork and explain their creative choices.

OBJECTIVES

Adult Language (SWBAT):

- Students will be able to retell the story of Perfect Square in sequential order using key vocabulary and text-based evidence.
- Students will be able to read selected text from Perfect Square with appropriate phrasing and expression.
- Students will be able to create a Mondrian-inspired artwork using shapes, lines, and primary colors while making mathematical observations.

Student-Friendly Language:

- I can retell the story of Perfect Square in order using my own words.
- I can read part of our story with my best expressive voice.
- I can create my own artwork using shapes, lines, and colors, just like a real artist!

Materials

SUPPLIES

- Perfect Square by Michael Hall
- Story retelling sequence cards (Monday–Sunday)
- Mini whiteboards or lined paper for partner reading

OPTIONAL

- Portrait of Piet Mondrian (to show students)
- Print of Mondrian's Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow

- Emoji feeling words with picture and word
- White paper (9" x 9" works well)
- Ruler
- Black crayon or thick black marker
- Red, blue, and yellow paint OR crayons/markers

PRE-LESSON SET-UP

- Print and cut story retelling sequence cards (Monday–Sunday) — one set per pair or small group.
- If using paint: set up paint stations with red, blue, and yellow — small cups at each table.
- Display an image of Mondrian's Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow on the board.
- Pre-draw a sample Mondrian-style grid on chart paper as a model.
- Write the fluency sentence strip on the board: *"Square was torn into tiny pieces. But it still knew how to be beautiful."*

Welcome & Student Check-In (5 min)

"Welcome to our last day with Perfect Square! You have worked so hard this week — let's celebrate that! Before we start, let's check in. Today's check-in activity is a Moving Emotions check-in."

Moving Emotions:

"I'm going to ask you to move to a feeling word posted around the room. Move to the word that describes how you are feeling about finishing our book today! [Post: excited, proud, sad, curious, happy, nervous, etc.]"

"Look around! Notice where your friends are. It's okay to feel any of these. Let's take one deep breath together. In through the nose [pause]... out through the mouth. Okay, we're ready!"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Allow students to point to a word on a desk card instead of walking to a posted word.
- **Advanced:** Ask: 'Can you feel two emotions at once? Move to the second emotion you are feeling. Which two are yours?'

Activate Prior Knowledge: Story Retelling (8 min)

"We've been spending time with Perfect Square all week. Today, before we re-read, I want to see what YOU remember. With your partner, put the story sequence cards in the right order, Monday through Sunday. Go!"

Give partners 2–3 minutes to sequence cards. Then check as a whole class:

"Let's check together. What happened on Monday? [torn into pieces, made a garden]. Tuesday? [poked full of holes, made a fountain...]!"

"You all know this story so well. Now we're going to read it one more time, but this time, your voice is the star."

Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Fluency with Expression (12 min)

Skill Focus: Reading Fluency — Accuracy, Rate, and Prosody (Expression)

Introduce the Concept:

"Fluent readers don't just say words — they make the words sound like the story feels. Imagine reading like a robot: 'Square. Was. Torn. Into. Tiny. Pieces.' [read robotically]. Boring! Now watch: 'Square was torn into tiny pieces!' [with expression]. Which felt better? That is what fluency sounds like."

Gradual Release by Grade:

Kindergarten	Echo reading — repeat the sentence after the teacher with the same expression. Focus: matching voice to feeling.
1st Grade	Partner reading — take turns reading one page each. Partners give a 'fluency star' for expression.
2nd Grade	Independent re-read — self-rate fluency (1–2–3 scale). Practice until rating = 3.

Shared Fluency Practice:

"Let's all read the sentence on the board together with BIG expression: 'Square was torn into tiny pieces. But it still knew how to be beautiful.' Again, even more feeling!"

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Allow the student to listen to one page, then echo. Use a pointer on each word.
- **Advanced:** Challenge students to read a page as though they ARE Square — first scared, then proud.

Read Aloud / Partner Reading (10 min)

"Now we're going to experience Perfect Square one more time, and this time you are the readers. I'll start us off..."

Read the first 2–3 pages aloud with high expression as a model. Then transition to partner reading or echo reading based on grade.

"As you read, listen for the feeling words we learned this week. What do the illustrations tell you that the words DON'T say?"

After reading — quick comprehension check:

"What is the most important thing you will remember about Perfect Square? Tell your partner in ONE sentence. Go!"
Call on 3–4 students to share.

STEAM Activity: Mondrian-Style Art Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression | 20 min**Part 1 — Artist Introduction:**

"I want to introduce you to an artist named Piet Mondrian [Peet Mon-dree-ON]. [Option: show portrait of Mondrian] He was famous for making art using only straight lines and three colors: red, blue, and yellow. These are called primary colors. Look at this painting [display image]. What do you notice? [squares, rectangles, bold black lines, only 3 colors]"

"Today you're going to be Mondrian! You'll start with a white square — just like in our book — and transform it into a piece of art."

Part 2 — Create:

Step 1: Use a ruler and black crayon/marker to draw 3 vertical lines and 2 horizontal lines across your white paper. Make some thick, some thin!

Step 2: You will have squares and rectangles. Color some of them red, blue, or yellow. Leave some white. Think about balance, and spread your colors around!

Step 3: When dry, add your name and title: 'My Square, Transformed.'

As students work, circulate and ask:

- How many rectangles can you count in your artwork?
- How many squares are there?
- Which primary color did you use the most? The least?

Modifications:

- **Emerging:** Pre-draw the grid lines. The student focuses only on color choices. Provide a color key reference (red = warm, blue = cool, yellow = bright).
- **Advanced / Early Finishers:** Create a second Mondrian piece using a different shape (circle or triangle) as the starting point, but keep the same color rules!

Closing & Celebration: Gallery Walk (5 min)

"Artists, step away from your masterpieces! You have just created your own version of what Square was always meant to be — something transformed and beautiful."

"Let's do our final gallery walk. Walk around the room slowly. When you see a piece that makes you feel something, stop and put a sticky-note star next to it, or simply tell the artist: 'Your art is amazing because ____.'"

After gallery walk — full group closing:

"This week, we read, explored, observed nature, and created art — all because of one little square. What did you learn about yourself this week? [Take 2–3 responses.]"

"You are all Perfect Squares — and just like in the story, no matter what unexpected things happen, you know how to turn them into something wonderful. Thank you for being incredible learners!"

Optional Feelings Connection:

"On your Check-In form, draw how you feel right now at the end of this week. Compare it to how you felt on Day 1. Did your feelings transform just like Square?"

GRAB AND GO LESSON PACKAGE

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Lesson 1 of 3 — Introducing Square & Phonemic Awareness

⌚ 60 minutes • 📖 Square Sculptures — Art + Math + Engineering

BOOK

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

BIG IDEA

Challenges can lead to creative transformation.

VOCAB WORD

Unexpected: something that happens that isn't planned (a surprise!)

Materials

SUPPLIES

- Perfect Square by Michael Hall ([Youtube Link](#))
- Tangram puzzle sets (paper version available [online](#))
- Colored construction paper squares (1 per student)
- White paper (1 per student)
- Scissors and glue
- Crayons and markers
- Whiteboards or chart paper
- TO PRINT: Helix Daily Check-In Form (In student materials and printables package)

OPTIONAL

- K: Printed rhyming picture cards (one set per partner pair -In student materials and printables package)
- 1st: Printed or hand-drawn Elkonin Box sheets (one per student - In student materials and printables package)
- 2nd: Mini whiteboards + dry-erase markers

PRE-LESSON SET-UP

- Write the book title Perfect Square on the board.
- Set out the Check-In Forms.
- Prepare tangram sets at a central table or in bags (one set per student or pair).
- Cut construction paper squares in advance if time is short (one per student).
- Review [Elkonin Box Instructions](#) if incorporating with first grade

Welcome & Student Check-In (8–10 min)

1. Greet students warmly as they arrive and invite them to pick up a Check-In Form.
2. Give students 2–3 minutes to complete the "How am I feeling?" section. Then invite 3–4 volunteers to share.
3. Play a "say it" game:
 - Share a feeling word with the students (Ex: Surprised, Proud, Frustrated).
 - Ask the students to whisper the word, say the word showing that feeling in their face, and act it out.

Modifications:

- Emerging: Provide a printed emoji chart. Allow students to point to their feelings instead of writing/cutting.
- Advanced: Ask students to share two feelings and explain the connection between them.

Activate Prior Knowledge (5 min)

1. Hold up (or draw) a perfect square.
 - Ask: "What shape is this? How do you know it's a square? What makes a square... a square?"
2. Take 3–5 responses. Then hold up a torn or crumpled piece of paper.

- Ask: "What if something unexpected happened to this square? What could it become? Turn and tell a partner what you think?"
- Explain that in today's book, Perfect Square by Michael Hall, unexpected things happen to Square, and we can see how Square reacts.

Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Phonemic Awareness (10 min)

Before Starting: Determine your grade-level structure. Suggested options:

- Separate students into grade levels with an adult or student leader
 - Complete each activity per grade level as a whole group
 - Complete one main activity with the whole group
1. Explain that today, students will learn about sounds in words.
 2. Introduce the activity chosen by modeling for students (see the leveled box below).
 3. Complete the grade level or whole group activity.

Kindergarten	• Rhyming Thumbs: Say two words. Students give thumbs up if they rhyme, thumbs down if they don't. • Pairs: square/bear ✓ shape/cake ✗ chair/hair ✓ change/strange ✓ • Then ask: "Tell me a word that RHYMES with square!" (Nonsense words count!) • Repeat asking students to share a word, and then have other students share rhyming words. • Provide students with rhyming picture cards to match.
1st Grade	• Elkonin Box Push: Model pushing one counter per sound. "Watch me: SHAPE = /sh/ [push] – /æ/ [push] – /p/ [push] = 3 sounds!" • Students try: shape, place, same. Always say sounds aloud as you push; this is about sounds, not letters.
2nd Grade	• Sound Swap: "Start with SQUARE. Change /skw/ to /b/... BARE! Now try: change /sp/ in SPARE to /sh/. What word? [share!]" • Say different words aloud and have students change the first sound to another word. • After, have students write two "before → after" word pairs on their whiteboard or piece of paper and share with the class or a friend.

Read Aloud (15 min)

1. Introduce the book Perfect Square, showing the author, illustrator, and note that the shape of the book is also a square.
 - Say: "As we read, notice each day of the week, something happens to Square. Watch what Square DOES about it. Think about: Does Square give up? Or does it find a way to be creative?"
2. Read the book aloud. Use the following prompts and think-alouds for students.
 - "On Monday, Square was cut into pieces. How do you think it felt? What did it do? Let's look at the picture. What do you see?"
 - "On Tuesday, Square was torn into scraps. What do you think will happen to Square?"
 - "The book says 'unexpected' — that's a vocabulary word we are going to learn. Who can tell me what 'unexpected' means? [Something that happens that isn't planned, a surprise!]"
3. After reading, complete a quick phonemic awareness connection by determining syllables/sounds of words:
 - Say: "I heard the word 'square' many times! Let's clap the sounds: /skw/ - /eɪ/ - /r/. Three sounds! Can anyone think of a word that rhymes with square?"

Modifications:

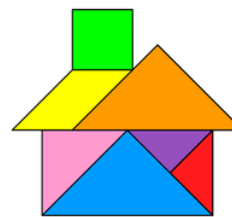
- Emerging: Seat near the book; use finger pointing to track. Use turn-and-talk instead of whole-group responses.
- Advanced: Ask students to predict what Sunday will look like before the last page.

Activity #1: Tangrams

- Provide students with the tangram sets. Have them create new shapes with their tangrams, like Square transformed in the book.
 - Example new shapes can include buildings, animals, people, etc.
- Give students 4–5 minutes to freely explore tangrams or blocks.
- Ask students to share what they created — whole group, in small groups, or with a partner.

Modifications & Extensions:

- Emerging: Model the tangrams for the students, creating a shape together. Hand out tangram puzzle sheets for students to create with guidance vs. freestyle.
- Advanced: Have students instruct other students on shapes to create. Ask, "How many shapes, triangles, and rectangles can you count in your creation?"

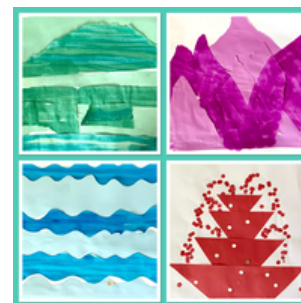


Activity #2: Transform A Construction Paper Square

- Provide each student with a construction paper square.
- Instruct students to tear it, fold it, cut it, or crinkle it to turn it into something new.
- When students have finished transforming the paper, glue it to the paper, and have them add details with crayons and markers.
- Once complete, have the students write on the bottom of their paper: "On [day], my square was ___ so it made itself into a ___."

Modifications & Extensions:

- Emerging: Pre-cut the square into 3–4 pieces and invite the student to rearrange and glue. Offer a sentence frame: 'My square became a ___.'
- Advanced / Early Finishers: Challenge students to create a second transformation and write two sentences. Ask: 'How many squares, triangles, or rectangles can you count in your creation?'



Closing & Celebration (5 min)

1. Celebrate the students' creations and invite the students to walk around and admire everyone's art. This is a gallery walk for the students.
2. Ask students to share their favorite pieces of art and why they like them.
3. Close out by recalling what the students did today: check in on themselves, sound out words, read, and make art.

GRAB AND GO LESSON PACKAGE

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Lesson 2 of 3 — Shared Reading & Nature Exploration

🕒 60 minutes • 📖 One Square Foot — Science + Math + Nature

BOOK

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

BIG IDEA

There is beauty and surprise all around us, even in a single square foot.

VOCAB WORD

Transform: to change from one thing into something totally different

Materials

SUPPLIES

- Perfect Square by Michael Hall
- 48-inch string or yarn, pre-tied in a square loop — one per student or pair (creates a 12x12 square)
- Clipboards (one per student)
- Drawing paper + pencils
- TO PRINT: Helix Daily Check-In Form (In student materials and printables package)

OPTIONAL

- Magnifying glasses
- If unable to go outside, create indoor nature tables or trays with items from nature on a table or in a tray

PRE-LESSON SET-UP

- Tie yarn into loops — one per student or partner pair.
- Write the 5 vocabulary words on the board or chart paper with blank boxes next to each.
- Prepare clipboards and drawing paper.
- Identify a safe outdoor space (grass, garden bed, gravel area) for the square foot activity. If outdoors is unavailable, create a "nature tray" at each table.
- Bookmark specific pages in Perfect Square for the shared reading stops.

Welcome & Student Check-In (5 min)

1. Greet students warmly as they arrive and invite them to pick up a Check-In Form.
2. Ask the students to hold up an emoji from their check-in form showing how they are feeling.
3. Ask the students: "Has something ever happened to you that was unexpected, a surprise? How did it make you feel at first? Show me your feelings with emojis and make your face look like the emoji."
4. Remind the students that in Perfect Square, Square faces surprises every day, and today you are going to see how it feels when something unexpected happens.

Modifications:

- Emerging: Offer sentence frame: 'Something unexpected was ____. I felt ____.'
- Advanced: Ask: 'Did the unexpected thing turn into something good in the end?'

Activate Prior Knowledge + Vocabulary Intro (8 min)

1. Ask the students to share what they remember from the story of Square. Ask them to do this in partners or call on a few students to share.
2. Introduce vocabulary words. Show the words in the book first before defining:

- Unexpected: 'Un' means 'not.' Expected means you thought it would happen. So unexpected means... NOT what you thought would happen! A surprise!
 - Transform: 'Trans' means 'across.' Transform means to change from one thing into something totally different.
 - Fountain: A structure that shoots water up into the air and catches it again.
 - Garden: A place where plants, flowers, or vegetables are grown.
 - Waterfall: Water from a river or stream that flows over the edge of a cliff or big rock and falls down.
3. As you introduce the words fountain, garden, and waterfall, ask if students have ever seen any of these and to describe them.

Modifications:

- Emerging: Show pictures of fountains, gardens, and waterfalls, and introduce each with the vocabulary word. You can show the pictures in the book for each to preview the image and definition before the next activity.
- Advanced: Open the book to the fountain, garden, and waterfall, and ask the students to identify what each is before identifying the vocabulary word.

Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Vocabulary in Context (10 min)

Before Starting: Determine your grade-level structure. Suggested options:

- Separate students into grade levels with an adult or student leader
 - Complete each activity per grade level as a whole group
 - Complete one main activity with the whole group
1. Share that authors use other words and pictures to help us, as readers, learn what new and unknown words mean.
 2. Model for the students how this looks. Say "[Open to the fountain page.] I don't know this word, but I can look at the picture, and I see water shooting up! That's a fountain. The words say Square 'tumbled and splashed' — that tells me the fountain has water in it."
 3. Introduce the activity chosen by modeling for students (see leveled box below).

Kindergarten	• Teacher points to picture + word. Students say the word aloud and draw a picture of its meaning.
1st Grade	• Students use a sentence frame: 'The word [___] means ___ because in the book it says/shows ___.'
2nd Grade	• Students write a sentence using the vocabulary word in their own context. An example is 'I was transformed when...!' Students can swap their sentences and read them aloud to one another.

Shared Reading: Full Book (15 min)

1. Show the students the book and say, "I want you to be the reader with me, whenever I point to the page, read along as loud as you can!" Model what this looks like with students.
 - K: Stop reading at a known word and have everyone say the word together. Example words might be square, four, happy, etc.
 - 1st: Read a sentence and have the students repeat.
 - 2nd: Have the students read the whole page as you read.
2. Provide instructions for students to engage with vocabulary. Say "Keep the new vocabulary words in mind as we read today. Every time you hear one of these words, give me a quiet thumbs up!"
3. Read the book aloud. Use the following prompts and think-alouds for students.
 - After Monday: "Square was cut into pieces. How do you think that felt? What do you notice in the picture?"
 - After Thursday: "Square was soaked and turned into a fountain. Give a thumbs up if you heard a vocabulary word! [fountain]."
 - After Sunday: "Sunday was different; nothing unexpected happened. How did Square feel? How do you know?"
4. After reading, ask the students, "What is the big lesson of this story? What does it teach us about when hard or unexpected things happen to us?"

Modifications:

- Emerging: Partner with students to echo-read. You read a line, and they repeat. Do this again to practice fluency.

- Advanced: Ask: 'The author never tells us Square's feelings in words. How does Michael Hall SHOW us how Square feels instead?'

STEAM Activity: One Square Foot Nature Exploration Science + Math + Nature | 17 min

Square Foot Exploration

- Provide each student with the yarn tied into a circle.
- Take students outside, or provide the students with nature trays or a nature table indoors.
- Instruct students to place their yarn on the ground or around different items and to look inside, and draw everything they see. (Ex: rocks, sticks, dirt, plants, bugs, anything.)
- After students return, discuss as a class or in partners: "What was the most surprising thing you found in your square foot?"

Modifications & Extensions:

- Emerging: Provide a numbered observation sheet with boxes (1. color, 2. living things, 3. cool find), so students have structure.
- Advanced: Have students write 2–3 sentences describing what they see in their square and compare it to a second location.



Closing & Celebration (5 min)

1. Create a list as a class of all of the items students found in their nature exploration.
2. Celebrate their discovery skills and share that they are like Square, and show that small things can be big discoveries.
3. Close out by recalling that the students were vocabulary detectives and nature scientists.
4. Have the students give a high five to a fellow scientist.

GRAB AND GO LESSON PACKAGE

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

Lesson 3 of 3 — Retelling, Fluency & Mondrian Art

⌚ 60 minutes • 🎨 Mondrian-Style Art — Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression

BOOK

Perfect Square by Michael Hall

BIG IDEA

We can retell stories in our own words and express ideas through art.

VOCAB WORD

Primary Colors: red, blue, and yellow; the three colors that make up all other colors

Materials

SUPPLIES

- Perfect Square by Michael Hall
- White Paper
- Ruler (one per student)
- Black Crayons or Black Markers
- Red, blue, and yellow paint OR crayons/markers
- TO PRINT: Emoji Feeling Words (In student materials and printables package)
- TO PRINT: Story Telling Sequence Cards (In student materials and printables package)
- TO PRINT: Fluency Reading Segment of A Perfect Square (In student materials and printables package)
- TO PRINT: Pictures of Piet Mondrian and Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow (In student materials and printables package)

OPTIONAL

- Additional art supplies for early finishers
- Display screen or projector for showing Mondrian's art

PRE-LESSON SET-UP

- Print and cut story retelling sequence cards (Monday–Sunday) — one set per pair or small group.
- If using paint: set up paint stations with red, blue, and yellow — small cups at each table.
- Display an image of Mondrian's Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow (search online or print) on the board.
- Pre-draw a sample Mondrian-style grid on chart paper as a model.
- Write the fluency sentence strip on the board: "Square was torn into tiny pieces. But it still knew how to be beautiful."

Welcome & Student Check-In (5 min)

1. Greet students warmly as they arrive.
2. Give several volunteer students an emoji feeling card and have them tape it somewhere in the room.
3. Ask the students to look around the room at all of the emoji feelings and decide which they are feeling.
4. Instruct students to move to that feeling. Once students are all there, ask the students to tell another person in that area why they are feeling that way.

Modifications:

- Emerging: Allow students to point to a word on a desk card instead of walking to a posted word.
- Advanced: Ask: 'Can you feel two emotions at once? Move to the second emotion you are feeling. Which two are yours?'

Activate Prior Knowledge: Story Retelling (8 min)

1. Partner the students and provide them with the sequence cards.
2. Ask the students to put the cards in order based on what they remember from the story.
3. Review the answers as a class by flipping through the pictures of the story.

Science of Reading Mini Lesson: Fluency with Expression (12 min)

Before Starting: Determine your grade-level structure. Suggested options:

- Separate students into grade levels with an adult or student leader
 - Complete each activity per grade level as a whole group
 - Complete one main activity with the whole group
1. Explain that fluent readers read with expression and emotion, and use their whole face when reading aloud.
 2. Model for the students: "Imagine reading like a robot: 'Square. Was. Torn. Into. Tiny. Pieces.' [read robotically]. Boring! Now watch: 'Square was torn into tiny pieces!' [with expression]. Which felt better? That is what fluency sounds like."
 3. Read a sentence on the board together: 'Square was torn into tiny pieces. But it still knew how to be beautiful.' Provide students with different ways to read the sentence (Ex: like a robot, in a sad voice, in a whisper, etc.)

Kindergarten	• Echo reading with the students. The teacher reads a line, and the students repeat the sentence after the teacher with the same expression. Focus on matching voice to feeling. • Use a pointer to point to each word so that the students can associate seeing the word and the sounds of the word.
1st Grade	• Students will be in partners and take turns reading one page each. Partners will use expression and emotion when reading.
2nd Grade	• Students complete an independent re-read aloud of 5 pages. After each time, they should self-rate their fluency (1-2-3 scale). Practice until rating = 3.

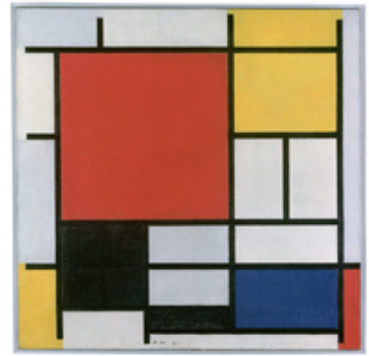
Read Aloud (10 min)

1. Have the class be the readers of Perfect Square and decide to:
 - Echo read the entire book
 - Class reads chorally (all together)
 - Students read different pages showing fluency
2. After reading, discuss:
 - What do the illustrations tell you that the words DON'T say?
 - What is the most important thing you will remember about Perfect Square? Tell your partner in ONE sentence. Go!

STEAM Activity: Mondrian-Style Art [Visual Art + Math + Creative Expression](#) | 20 min

Introduction

- Explain that you will be making art today inspired by the artist Piet Mondrian [Peet Mon-dree-ON].
- Show the picture of Mondrian and then a picture of his art piece Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue.
- Explain that he was famous for making art using only straight lines and three colors: red, blue, and yellow. These are called primary colors.
- Explain that the students will be creating art with Mondrian today, using primary colors and squares.



Creation Steps

- Use a ruler and black crayon/marker to draw vertical lines and horizontal lines across your white paper. Make some thick, some thin!
- Color some of them red, blue, or yellow. Leave some white.
- Add your name and a title.

Modifications & Extensions:

- Emerging: Pre-draw the grid lines. The student focuses only on color choices. Provide a color key reference (red = warm, blue = cool, yellow = bright).
- Advanced or Early Finishers: Create a second Mondrian piece using a different shape (circle or triangle) as the starting point, but keep the same color rules.

Closing & Celebration: Gallery Walk (5 min)

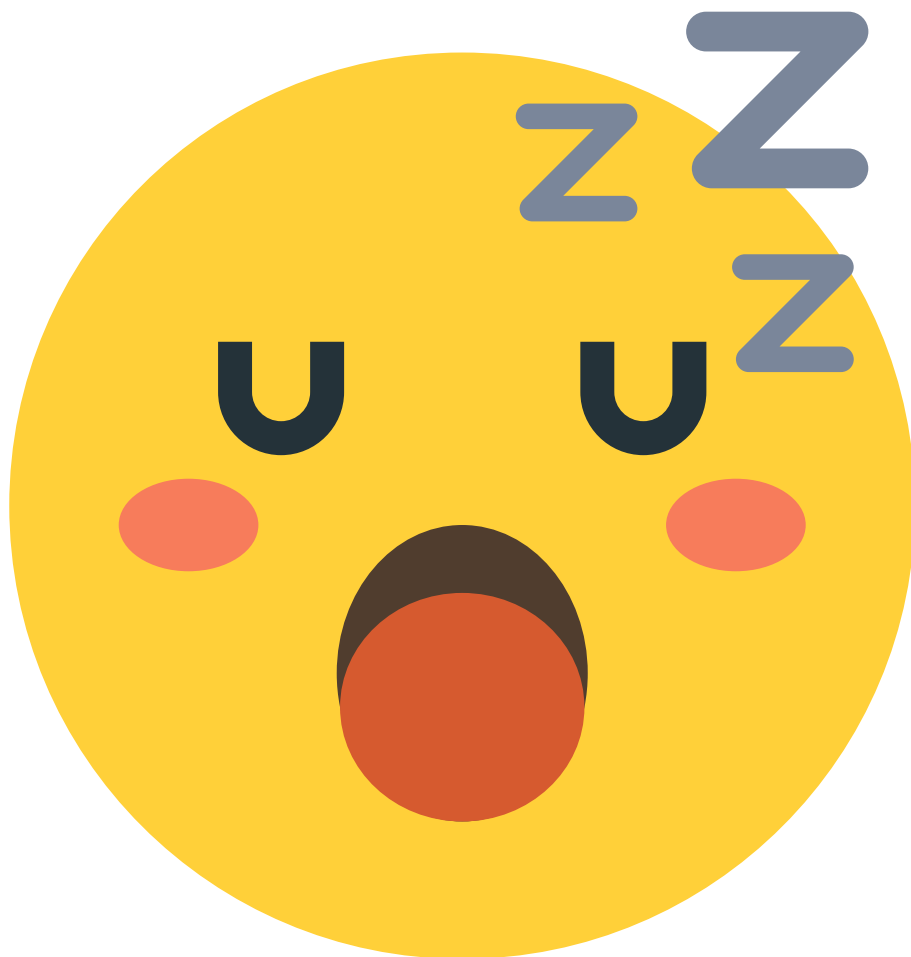
1. Celebrate the students' creations and invite the students to complete a Gallery Walk, by walking around and viewing everyone's art.
2. Pick a collection of students' art to showcase and have students celebrate the art by finishing the sentence: 'Your art is amazing because ____.'
3. Celebrate everything the students have done with Perfect Square. Ask the students: What did you accomplish and learn this week?

A diagram illustrating a layout with two rows of rectangular boxes. A horizontal dashed line separates the two rows. The top row contains two boxes of equal width, and the bottom row contains three boxes of equal width. The boxes are outlined with solid black lines, and the dashed line is composed of short horizontal segments.

Happy



Sleepy



Angry



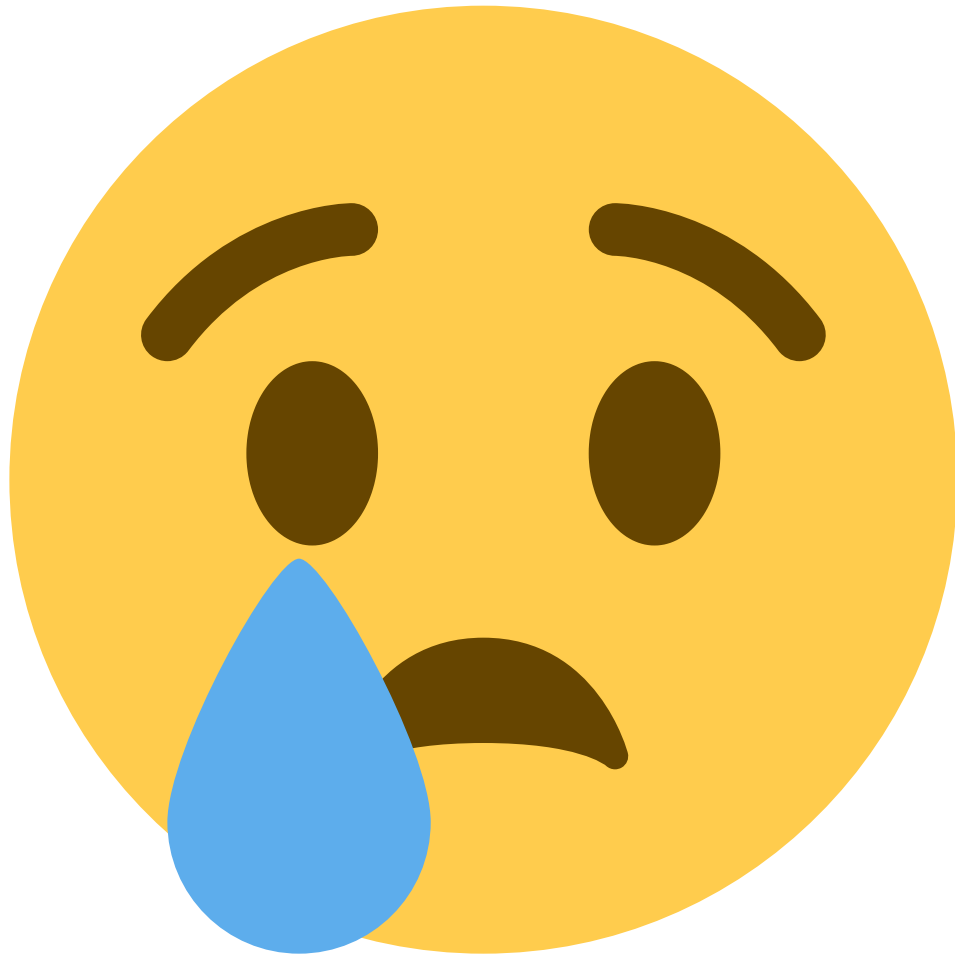
Sick



Nervous



Sad



Scared



Silly



Frustrated



Excited



Calm



Afraid



Confused



Caring



Perfect Square Fluency Reading Section

It was a perfect square. It had four matching corners and four equal sides. And it was perfectly happy.

But on Monday, the square was cut into pieces and poked full of holes. It wasn't perfectly square anymore.

So it made itself into a fountain that babbled and giggled and clapped.

On Tuesday, the square was torn into scraps. So it made itself into a garden.

On Wednesday, the square was shredded into strips. So it made itself into a park.

Day of the Week:



Date

What will I do today?

Cut and paste at least 4 pictures of what you will do today. Glue them in the order that you will complete them.

1

2

3

4

How am I feeling?

Cut and paste the feeling faces you are feeling right now.

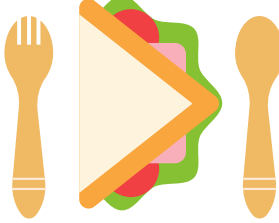
How am I feeling?



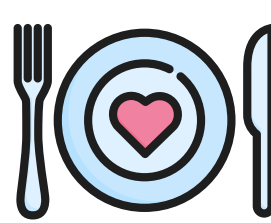
Brush Teeth



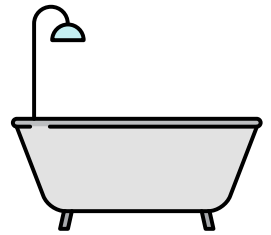
Eat Breakfast



Eat Lunch



Eat Dinner



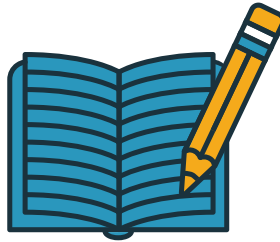
Shower or Bath



Read



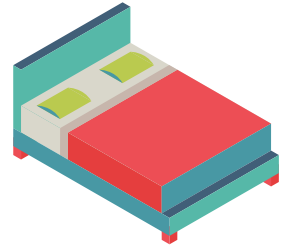
School



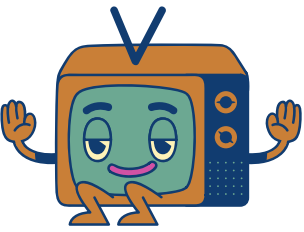
Homework



Exercise



Get ready for bed



Watch TV



Do Your Chores



Wake Up



Play with friends
or family



Relax



Happy



Sleepy



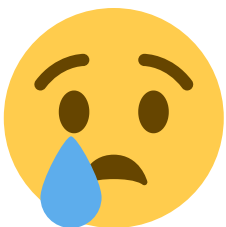
Angry



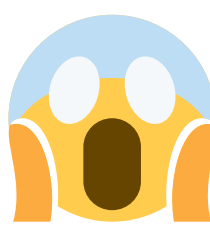
Sick



Nervous



Sad



Scared



Silly



Frustrated

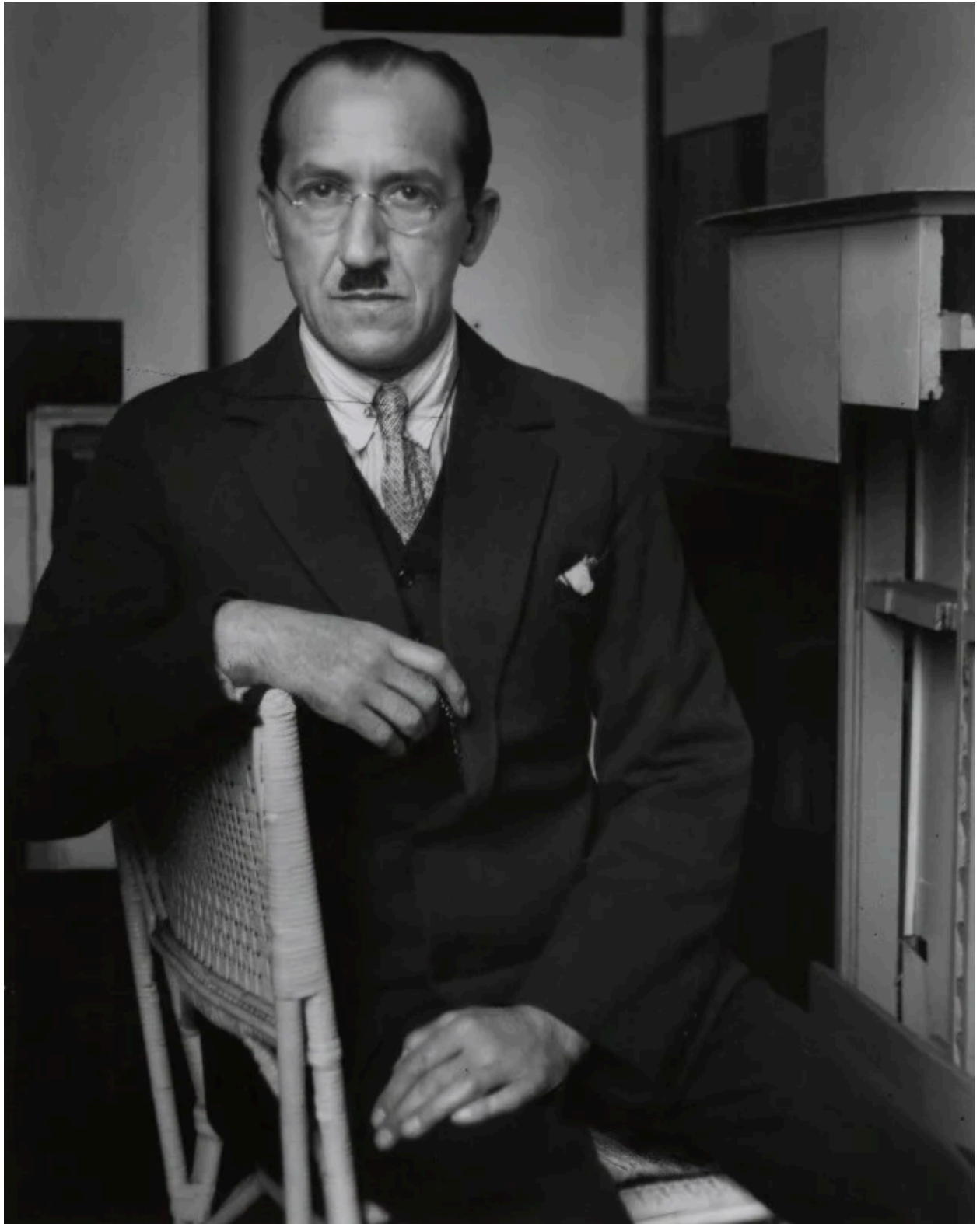


Excited

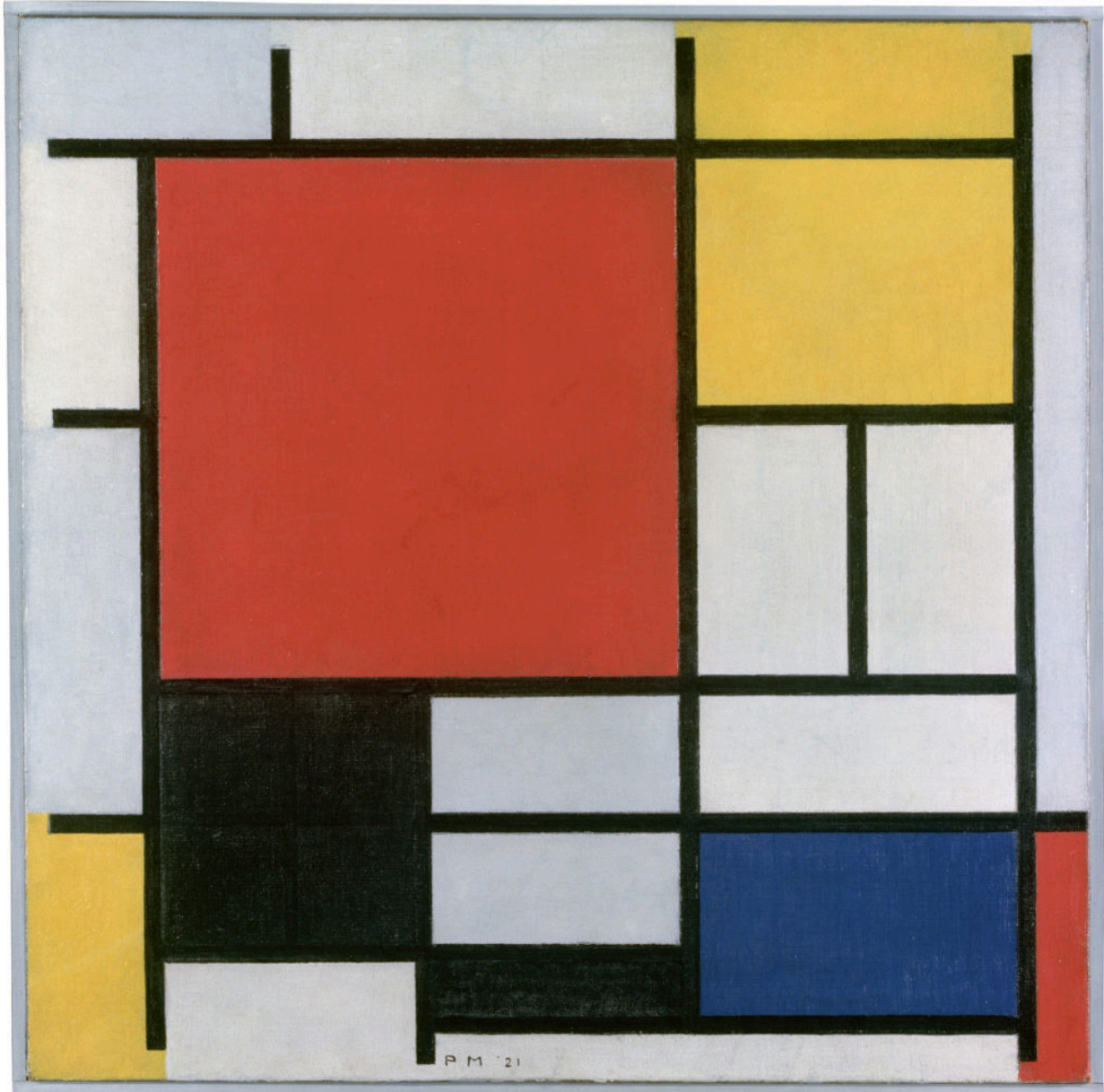
Cut out each of the schedule squares and the feelings and emotions. Use these to complete your daily reflection. Use the blank boxes to create your own!

[illegible]

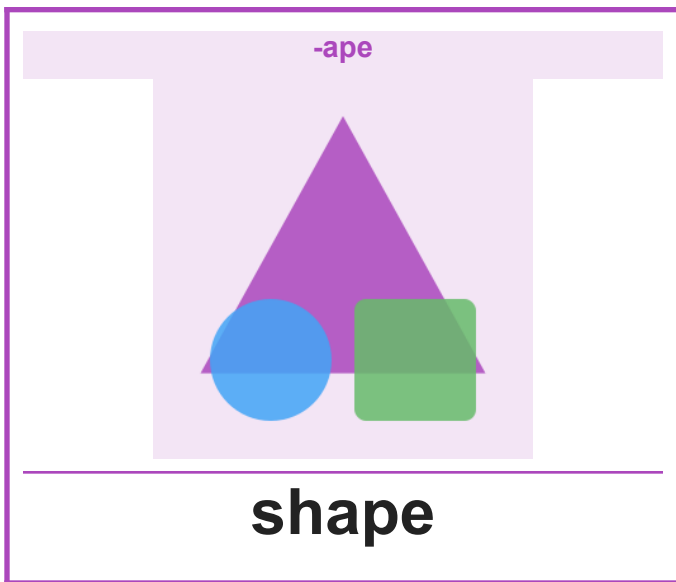
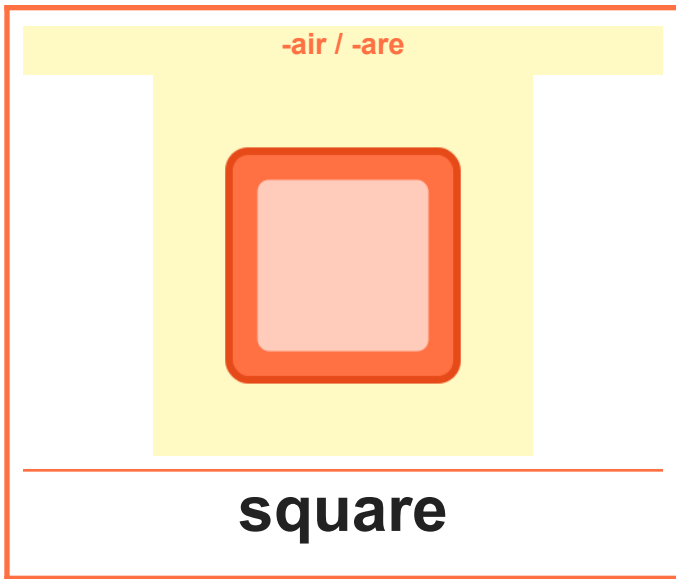
Piet Mondrian Portrait



***Composition with Red, Yellow, and
Blue by Piet Mondrian***

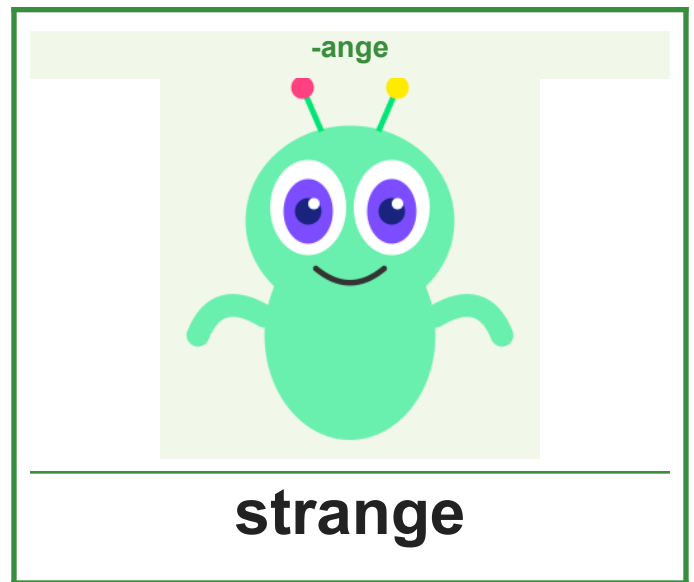
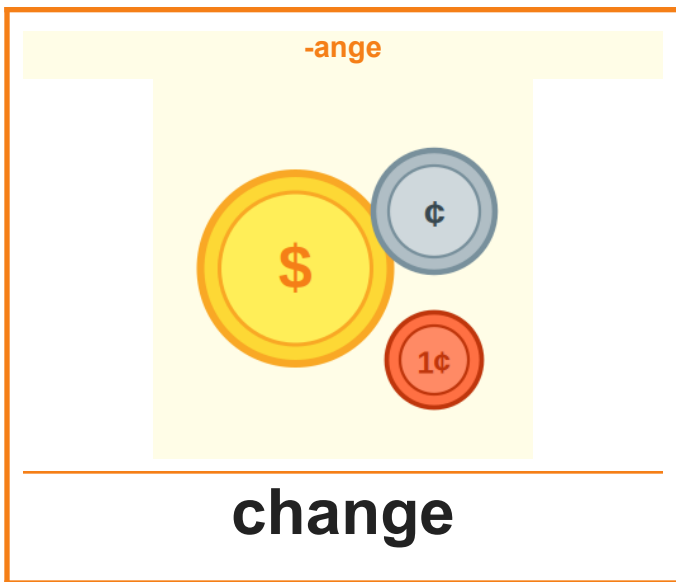
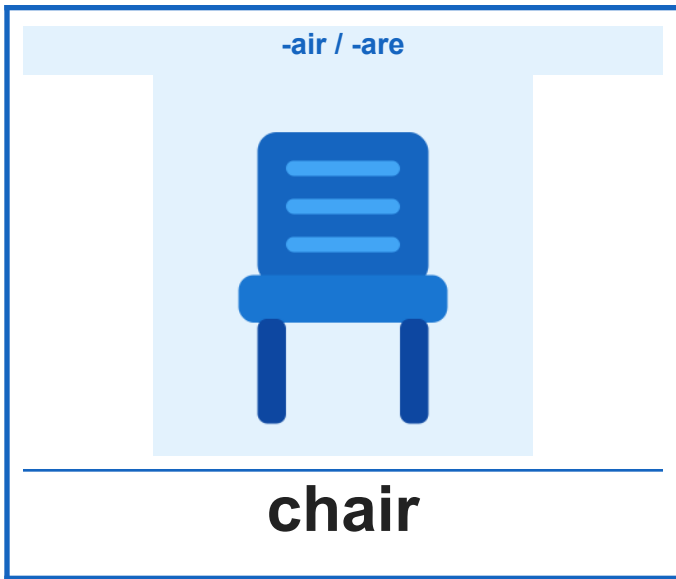


Rhyming Picture Cards Page 1



Cut out each card • Flip over and shuffle • Match the rhymes!

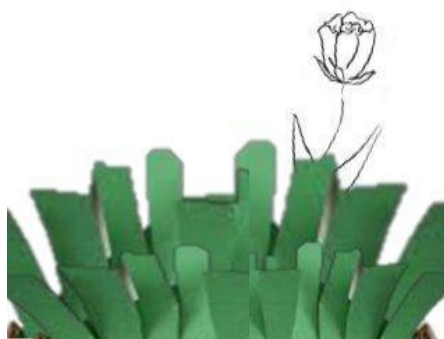
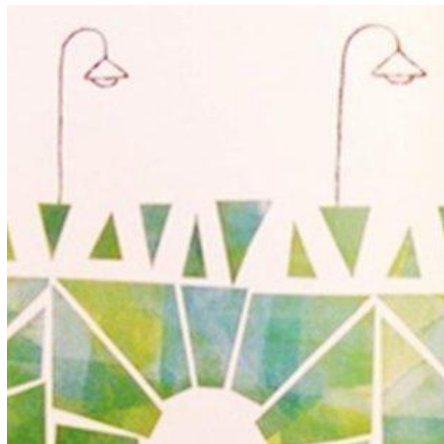
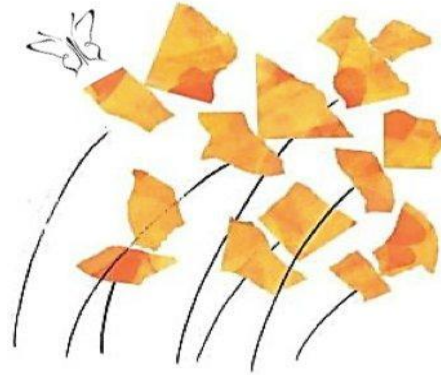
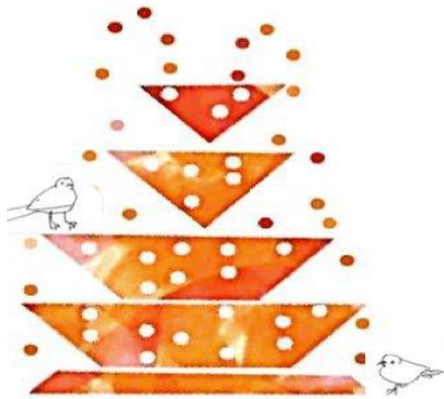
Rhyming Picture Cards Page 2



Cut out each card • Flip over and shuffle • Match the rhymes!

Storytelling Sequence Cards - Perfect Square

Cut out each card for classroom use





Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday