

Jim Davis

Jim Davis was born in 1945 and raised on a cattle farm in Indiana along with twenty-five stray cats who found their home in the barn. As a child, he spent most of this time in the house because he suffered from asthma. So he kept himself busy by drawing. At first he was not very good. He had to label all his pictures in order to know what they were. But he continued to practice and he improved over time. When he went to college, he studied art and business. Later this combination helped his art career to become successful. After college, he worked for the cartoonist Tom Ryan, who created Tumbleweeds. Here Jim learned the important skills of cartooning and started his training to create his own cartoon strip called Gnorm Gnat. Although his strip was funny, it did not become popular because no one could relate to a bug! It was challenging to get started in the cartoon business. Jim was rejected many times. But he didn't give up and kept learning from his previous mistakes. He studied all the comic strips that were being printed at the time and he realized that, of all the animals, there were no cats! As fate would have it, Garfield was born! In 1978, Jim created a fat, lazy, cynical, lasagna loving cartoon cat that became one of America's favorites.

At 69 years old, Jim Davis continues to write and illustrate his Garfield comic strip. He works for 12-14 hours every day. One week out of the month he focuses solely on writing. Once he starts writing, the ideas just flow and it's easy to write about a month's worth of

material. He has assistants that help him with blue-lining, inking, lettering and coloring the strip. In addition to the weekly comic strip, Garfield has television shows, cartoon movies, and other licensed products that Jim manages through his company called Paws, Inc. Garfield is so loved that he has won numerous awards for funniest comic strip and television shows.

Jim believes that comic strips are a popular art form because people read them to escape from all the bad news being reported. It forces people to take a break, relax and gain hope that life isn't so bad. His advice to future cartoonists is to "Read a lot! Become a good writer. Art is important, but writing can make or break you. Study people's behavior; learn as much as you can. Try different drawing styles, techniques and tools. Most importantly, say something unique or different that is only from you."

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Materials:

Tracing Paper or white drawing paper, Pencil/eraser, Black Sharpie & colored markers

Elements of Art:

1. A **Shape** is a closed line with two dimensions; height and width. Three kinds of shapes are Geometric, Representational and Abstract.
2. **Symmetry** describes one type of **balance** a shape has when there is an equal reflection on both sides of the center line, called the line of symmetry.

Look At: "Garfield, 1978-2000"

Garfield is a round eyed, lazy, lasagna loving, practical joking cat with a strong personality. He is popular because he's the anti-hero. He removes our guilt for being lazy, over-indulgent slob. He's a cat who deals with problems that people deal with: weight, aging, sleep, motivation and getting along with others. He is the combination of all the cats on Jim's childhood farm and has his grandpa's grouchy personality and dry wit. Garfield's design was inspired by the clean, simple lines and shapes from Charles Schultz' Peanuts and the prankster personalities of Calvin & Hobbes. From 1978 to 2000, Garfield's design went through a few changes.

Q: What changes do you see? (His eyes got bigger. His face got rounder. He morphed from a cat to more human-like and standing up. But his appetite always stayed the same.)

Do you wonder how Jim comes up with funny ideas? He explains, "When I write, I see him in my mind's eye. I put him in a certain situation and follow him until something funny happens. Then back up three frames and record what just happened."

Art Analysis:

1. Find Shape: What kinds of shapes do you see in Garfield? (abstract)
2. Find Balance and Symmetry: Look at Garfield's face. Successful artwork requires balance. Where is the line of symmetry on Garfield's face? (in the center.) What shapes are reflected on both sides of the line of symmetry?

Art Practice (see Step by Step directions):

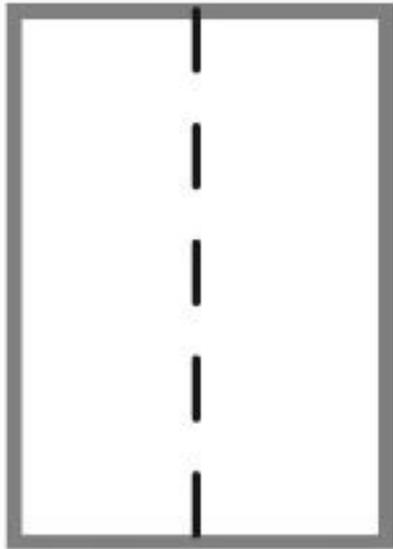
Draw Garfield's face with symmetry.

1. Trace Method: Fold a piece of tracing paper in half. Use the fold line as the line of symmetry and lay over each step and trace.
2. Copy Method: Fold a piece of drawing paper in half. Use the fold line as the line of symmetry and copy each step.
3. Follow the steps to draw Garfield's face, but only draw half of his face, shown above. Draw with a pencil, then trace over with a black Sharpie marker.
4. Flip over the paper and trace over the lines onto the other half of paper.
5. Open and flatten the paper when done to see a perfectly symmetrical face.
6. Color with markers, if time permits.

For younger students, lay tracing paper over a copy of Step 5 and have them trace the entire image.

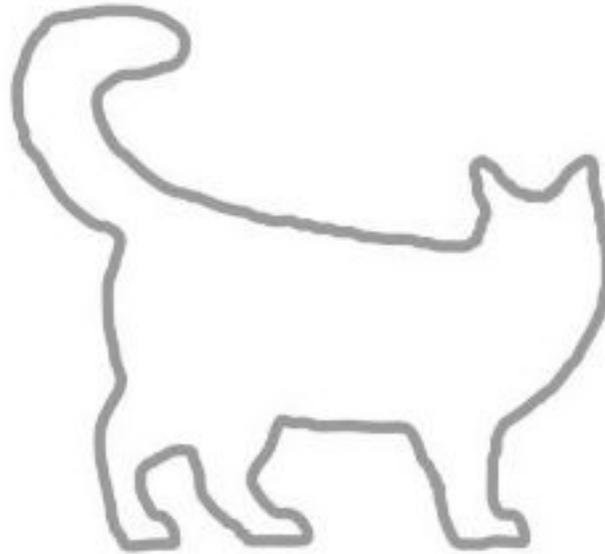
Shapes

Geometric

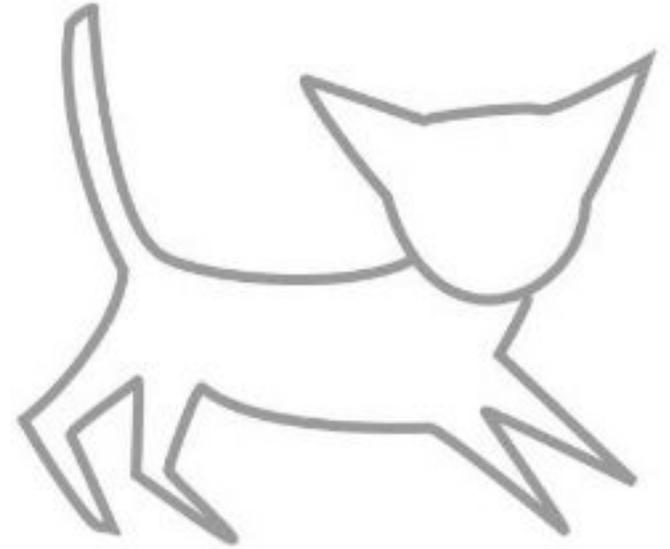


Symmetry

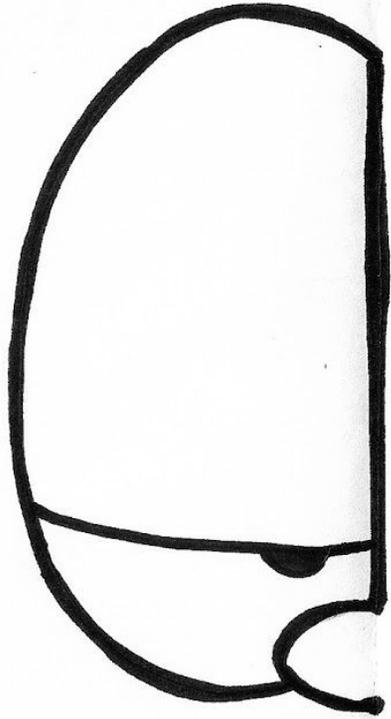
Representational



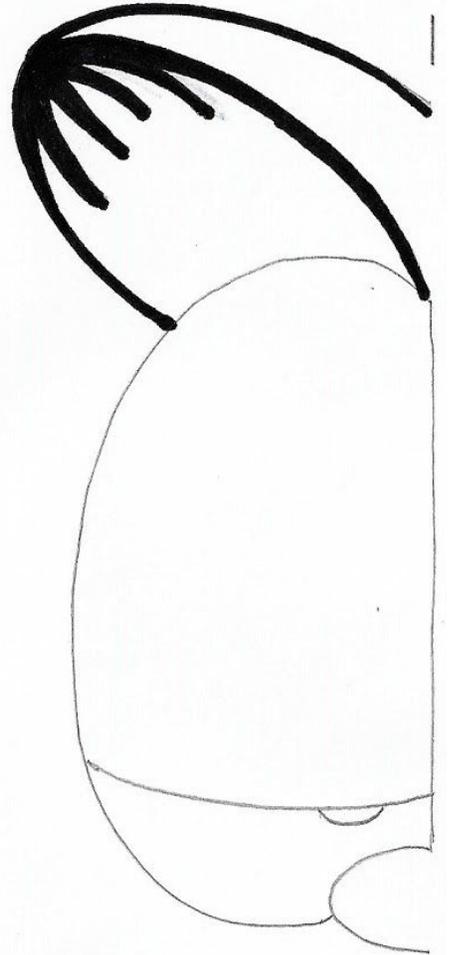
Abstract



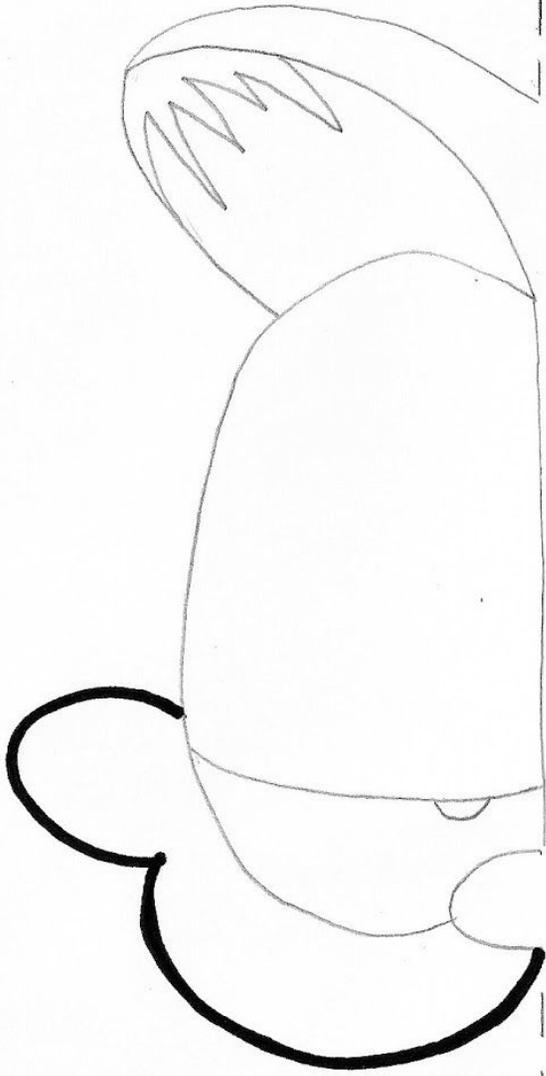
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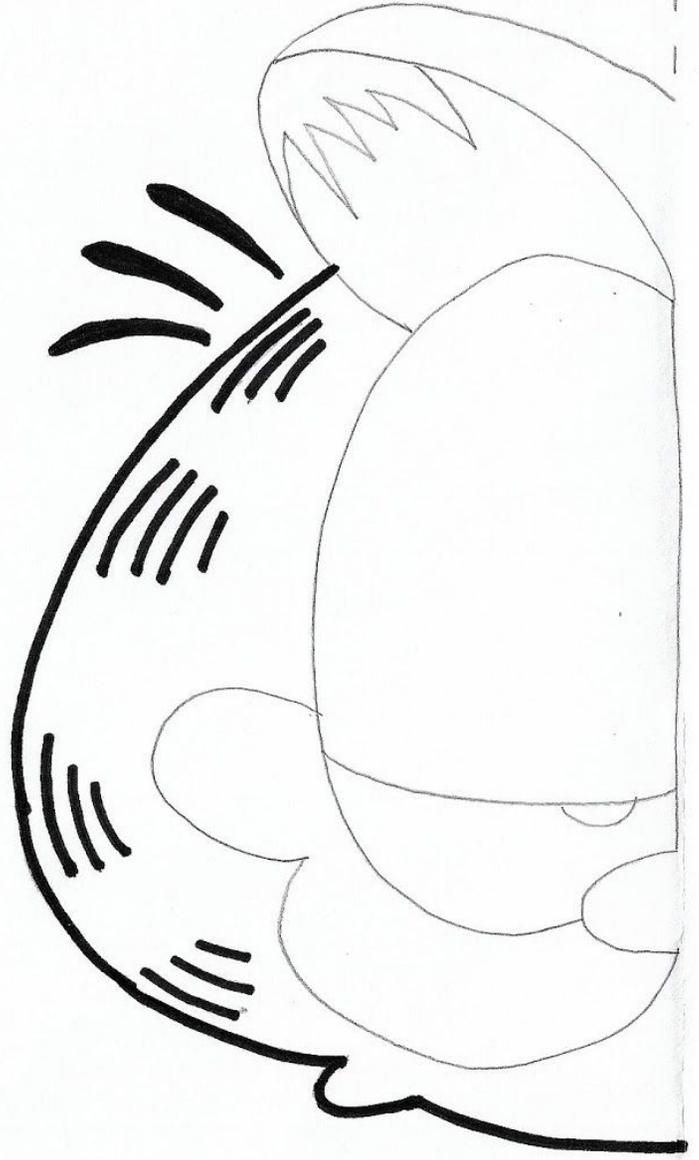
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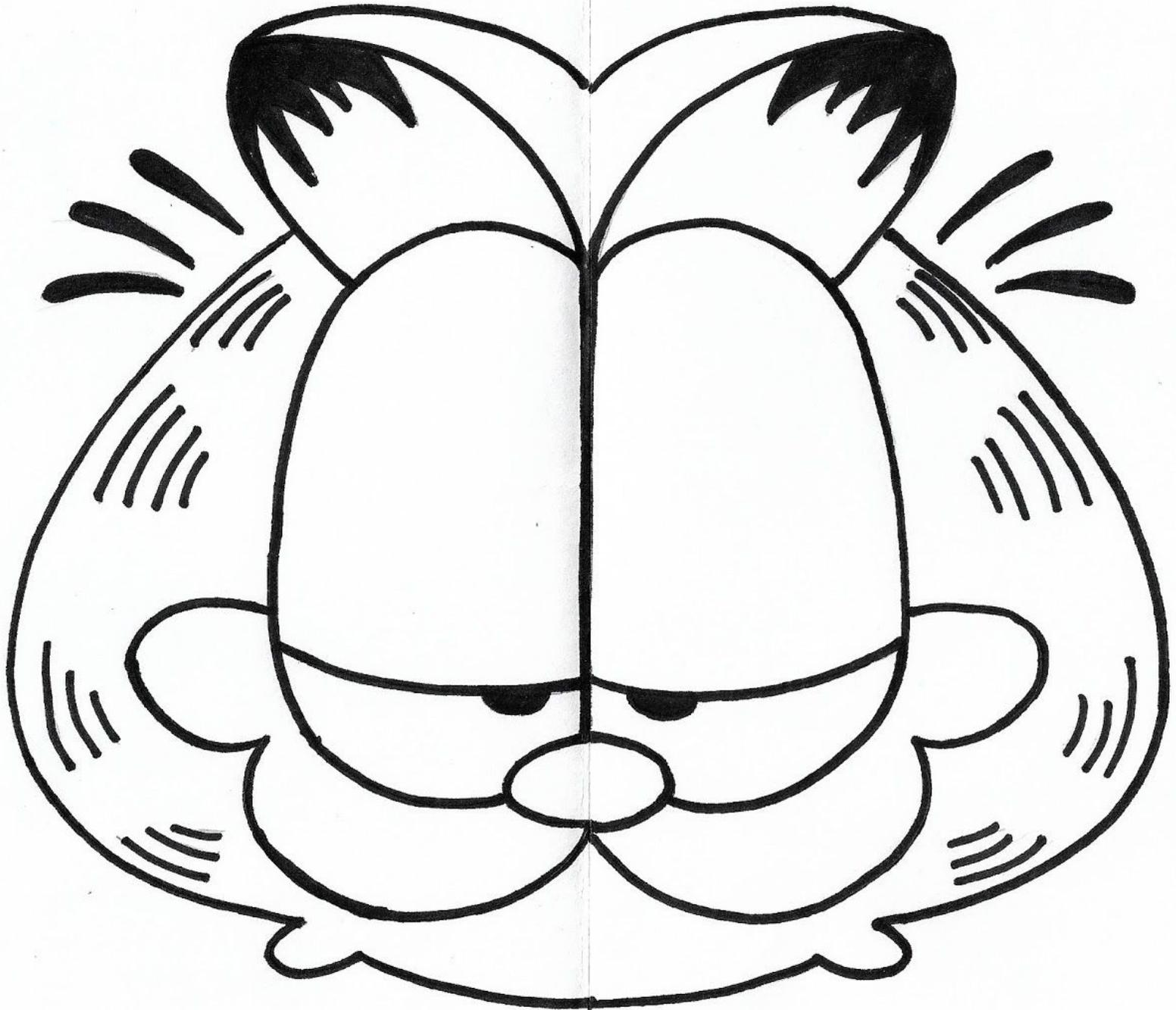
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