

● Curated by Lauren Child

# Drawing Words



## Introduction

These resources have been created by House of Illustration to accompany *Drawing Words*, a new exhibition of children's book illustration commissioned by the British Council and curated by the UK Children's Laureate, Lauren Child. The exhibition features ten exciting illustrators from across the UK whose work makes an important and original contribution to contemporary British picture book illustration.

The worksheets are aimed at young people visiting the exhibition or enjoying it online at [www.britishcouncil.org/arts/drawing-words](http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts/drawing-words). Designed with 5 to 12 year olds in mind, many activities will also be enjoyed by younger children and older people. They can also be used by families looking at the exhibition together.

## Activities

The illustrated worksheets that accompany the *Drawing Words* exhibition have been designed to provide children and young people with a chance to respond imaginatively to the illustrations on display, while gaining some further insight into the challenges of illustration. They empower the child to be an illustrator rather than merely a consumer of illustration. Each one is a fun and accessible activity that can be enjoyed at different levels

by all ages. It is often assumed that illustrations accompanying text are an attractive and optional add-on to the words; something to add visual appeal. In the case of children's books, it is often assumed that the pictures are there to help persuade young and more reluctant readers to engage in reading and to make books more accessible and enjoyable.

While illustrations certainly can increase the appeal of a text to people of all ages, they have a much larger and more important role. To be successful, illustration must always communicate to its intended audience. An illustration's perceived attractiveness is secondary to how well it conveys a message. Illustration is a visual language that can be understood whether the reader understands the written word or not. It communicates narrative, atmosphere, emotion, ideas, concepts, discoveries, knowledge, opinions, facts and beliefs – very often in ways that language can't.

That is not to say that illustration doesn't complement and interact with text. Where illustrations sit alongside words, they can deepen understanding, add more meaning or nuance, and plant ideas in the reader's mind that trigger the imagination in different ways to that of the words. In the case of children's books, in many cases more is conveyed through the image than the text – especially in books aimed at very young children, where the text is very simple and limited.

Children are visually literate from a young – pre-verbal – age. As a species we are natural visual 'readers'; we have always read faces and body language, skies and landscapes. We don't just look but we interpret what we see. We have been communicating through images for millennia, and long before written language was developed. Children make marks as soon as they can hold a stick or a pencil – communicating ideas, thoughts,

stories or emotions through their marks.

As children grow older, their natural ability to read and write visually should be supported and nurtured so that they can fully harness the power of visual language. This then supports their learning in all subjects and can be used to explain and understand increasingly wide-ranging and complex subjects. Explaining the process of a volcano erupting using words is far less effective than through illustrations and text together.

The illustrator is a problem-solver, using creativity and artistic skills to find effective ways to communicate. Having access to a range of illustrations where these problems have been tackled in different ways supports children in finding their own ways to do the same.

The examples in this exhibition provide doorways into other worlds – both magical and mundane – and introduce us to some distinctive characters: human, animal and other. The images take the reader into the stories, enabling us to empathise with their protagonists while feeding our imaginations and maybe making us want to draw too.

Some of the activities can be extended by teachers to become a more in-depth lesson or research task. Please see the separate Teacher's Pack for more information at <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/project/drawing-words>.

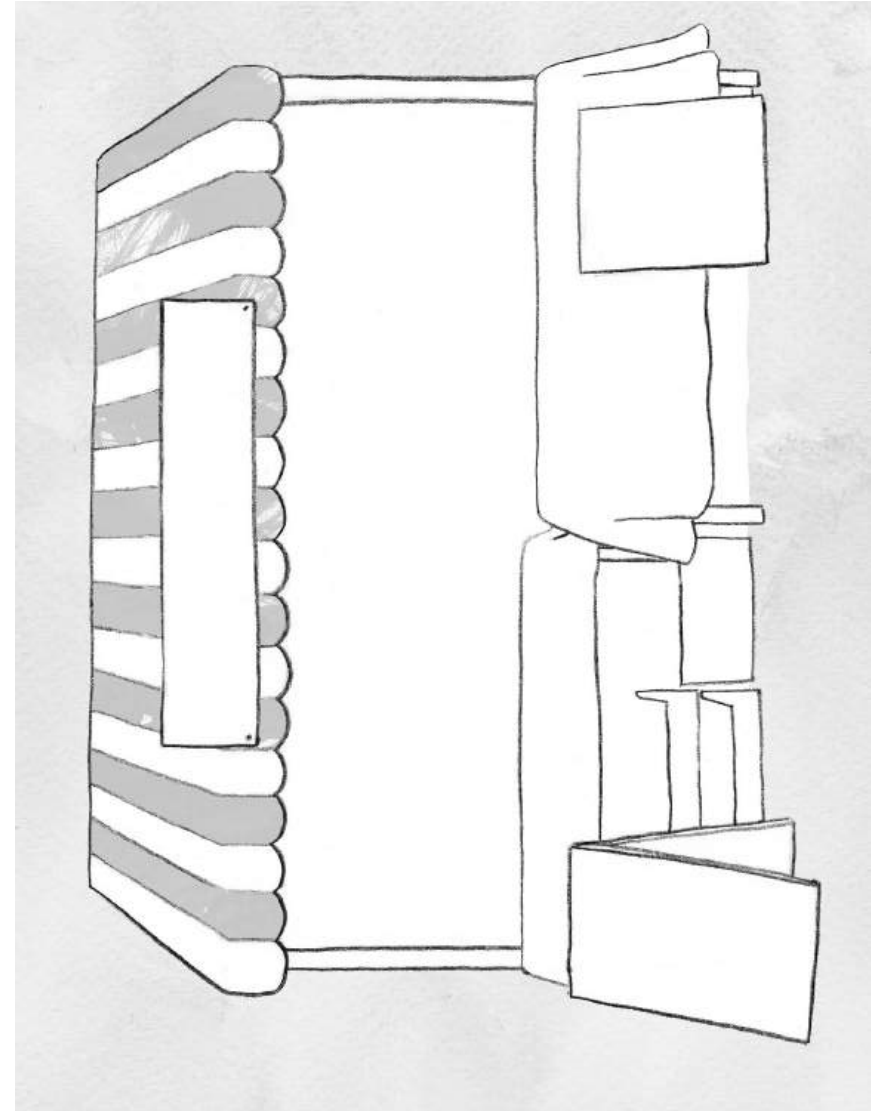
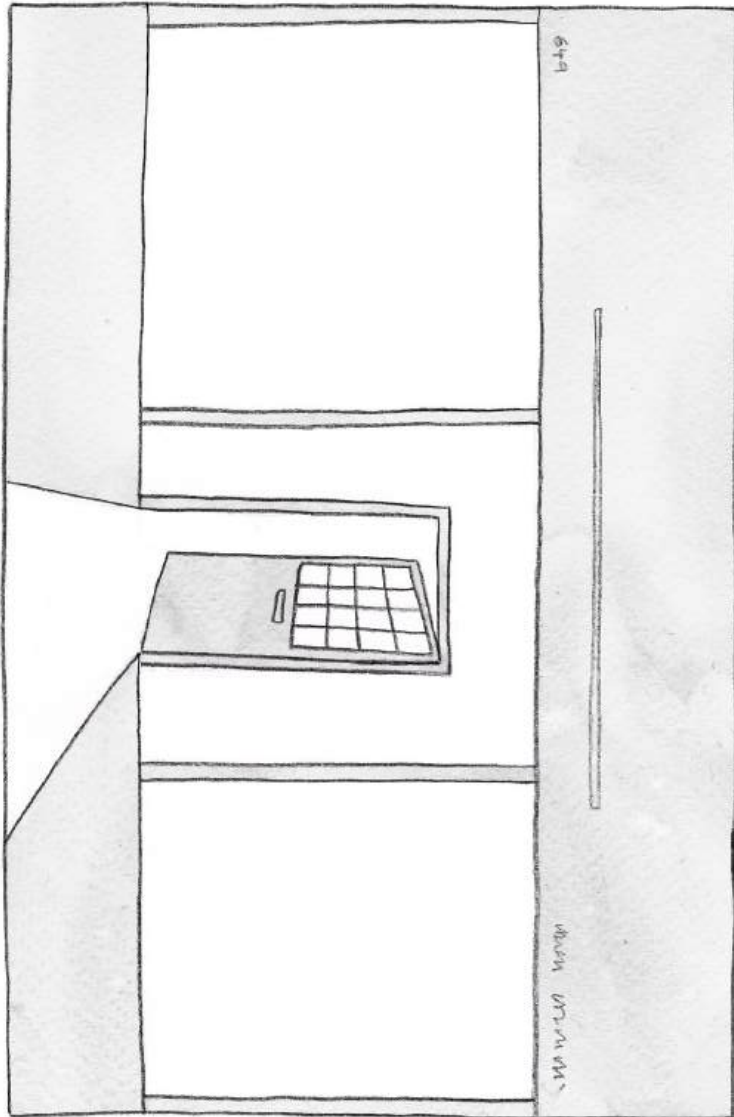


1. (a) Laura Carlin makes characters, things, creatures and worlds from everyday objects. Using a pen or pencil, what can you turn these things into?





2. If you had a shop or a market stall, like the one in Laura Carlin's illustration, what would you sell? Make up a name for your shop and draw a window display, or draw the items for sale on your market stall.







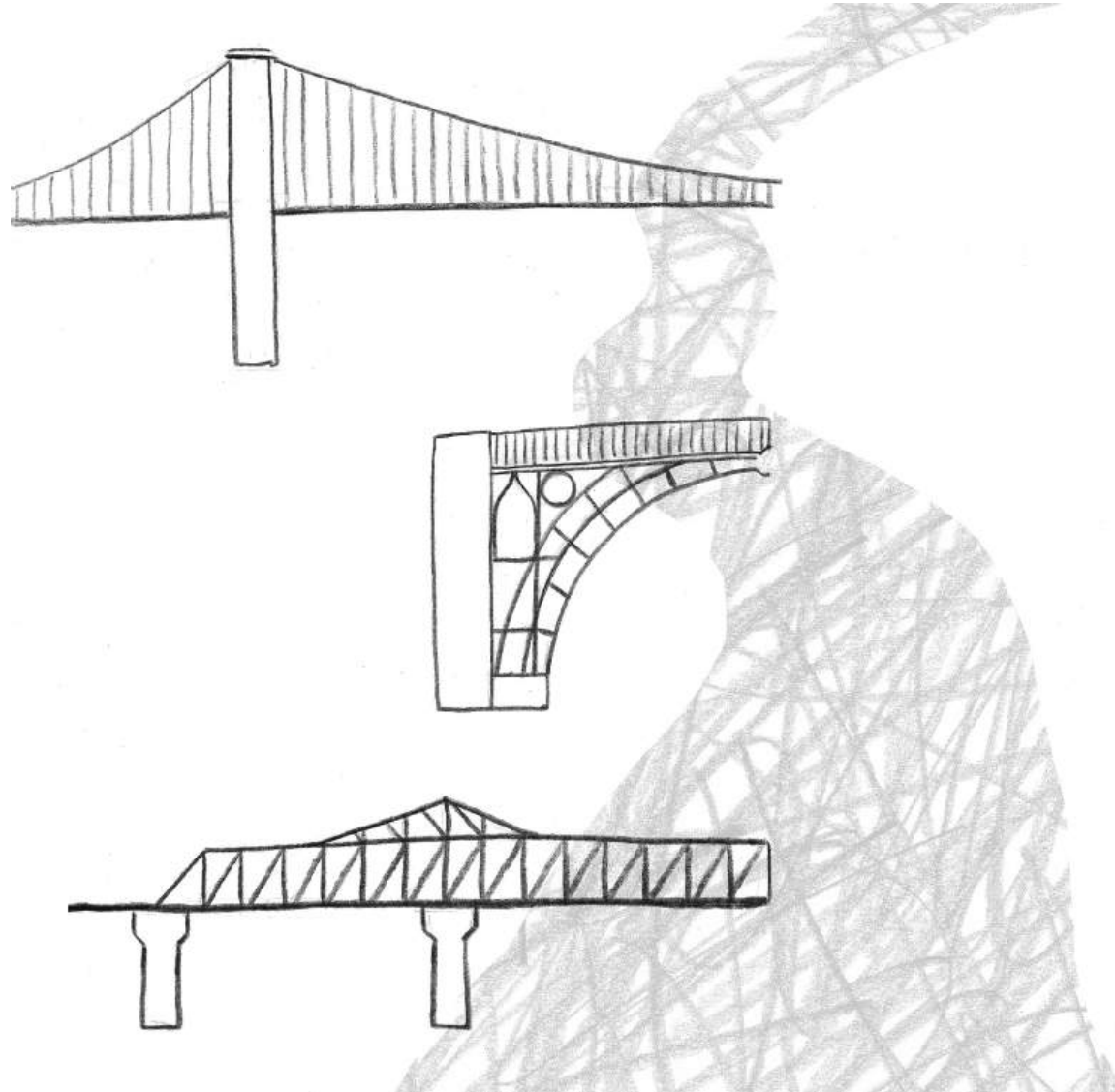
3. (a) Like the children in Rebecca Cobb's illustrations, these children are playing at dressing-up. Design some amazing costumes for them to wear.



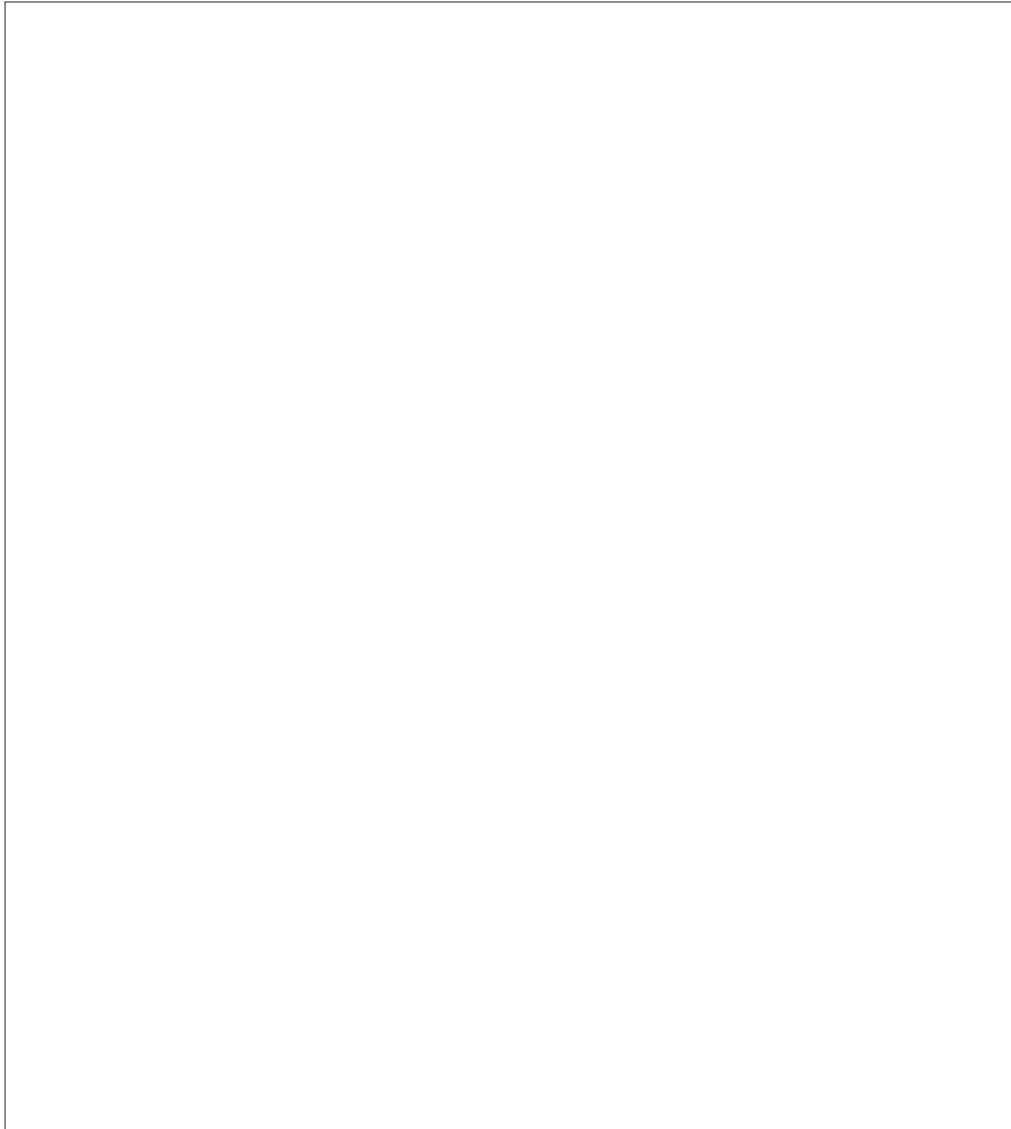
b) Think of a time when you put on a special costume for a performance, party or game. Write about what you wore and how it made you feel.

Lined writing area for a student to write their response to the prompt above. The area consists of two columns of horizontal lines, providing a structured space for handwriting.

4. (a) There are lots of bridges in William Grill's aerial view of New York. Bridges allow travel over rivers, railways and roads. These bridges need finishing. Draw the other half of these bridges – and add the people or vehicles using them if you like.

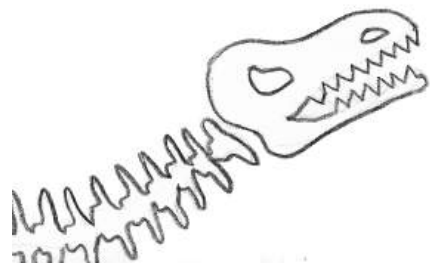


b) Think about different bridges in your area – can you draw one? What problem has this bridge solved, e.g. it crosses a valley or river, or it takes a railway line through a city?

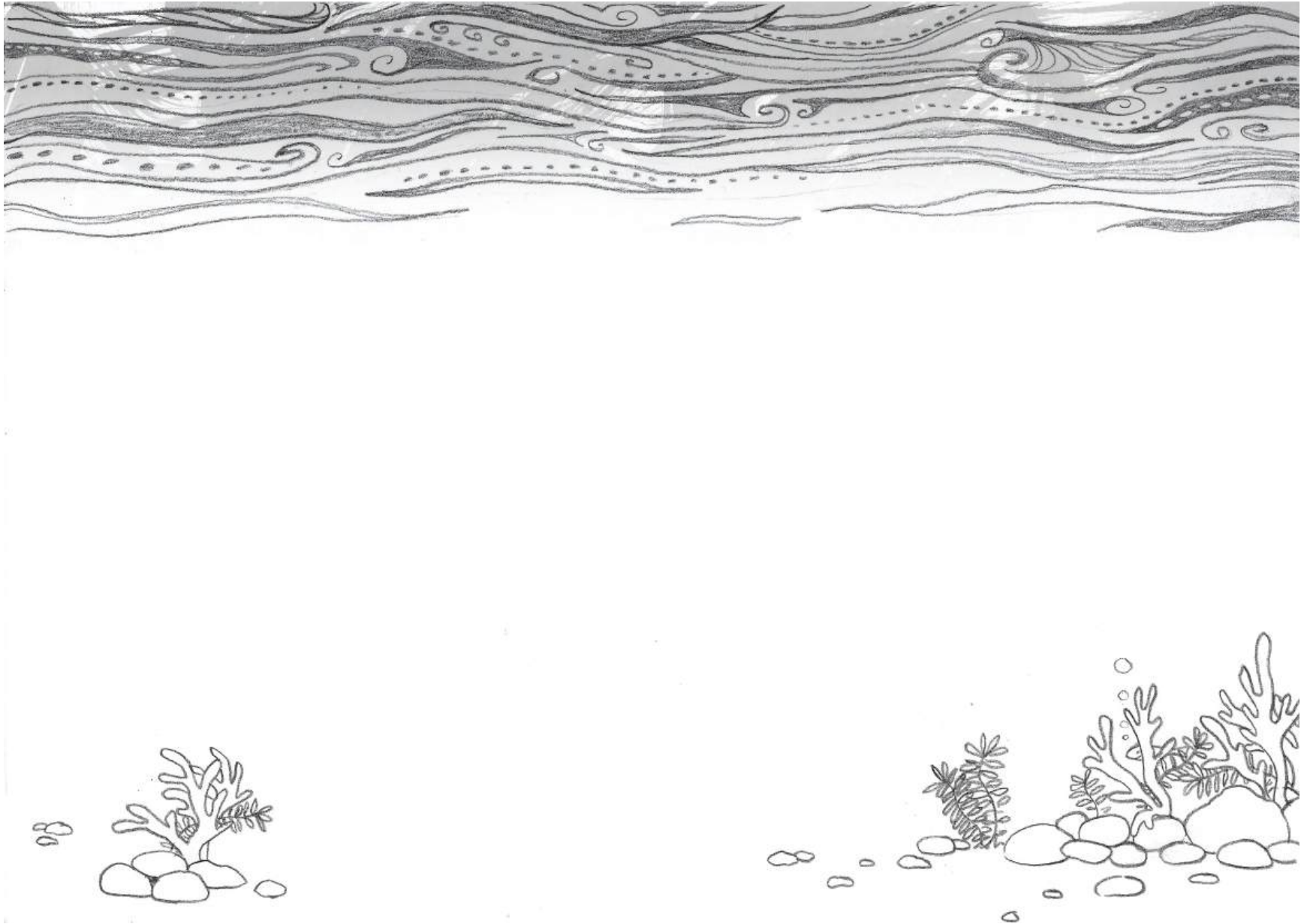


Horizontal lines for writing.

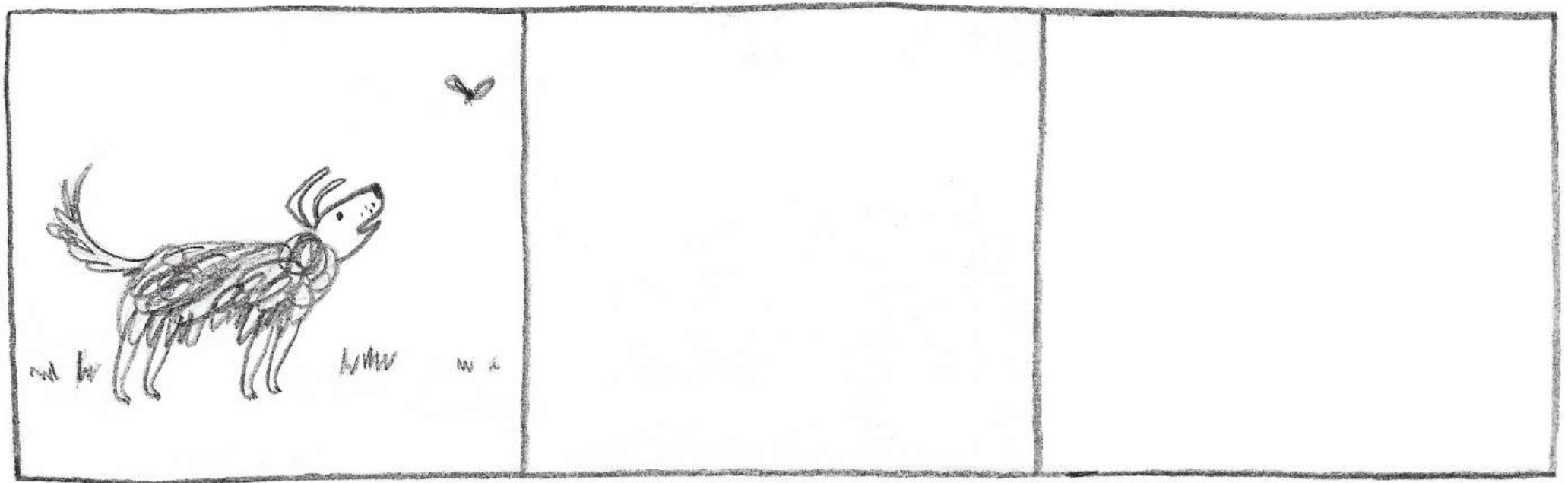
5. (a) Emily Hughes's illustrations explore the living world. All kinds of living things can be found underground. See how many insects, plants and animals you can draw to make an underground world.



b) All kinds of living things can be found underwater.  
See how many plants, fish and animals you can draw to  
make an underwater world.



6. Here is a dog that is about to have an adventure, like the one in Yasmeen Ismail's illustrations. Draw the next two scenes of this dog's adventure to make a comic strip story. Before you start, think about the end of your story, and then show what happens in the middle.



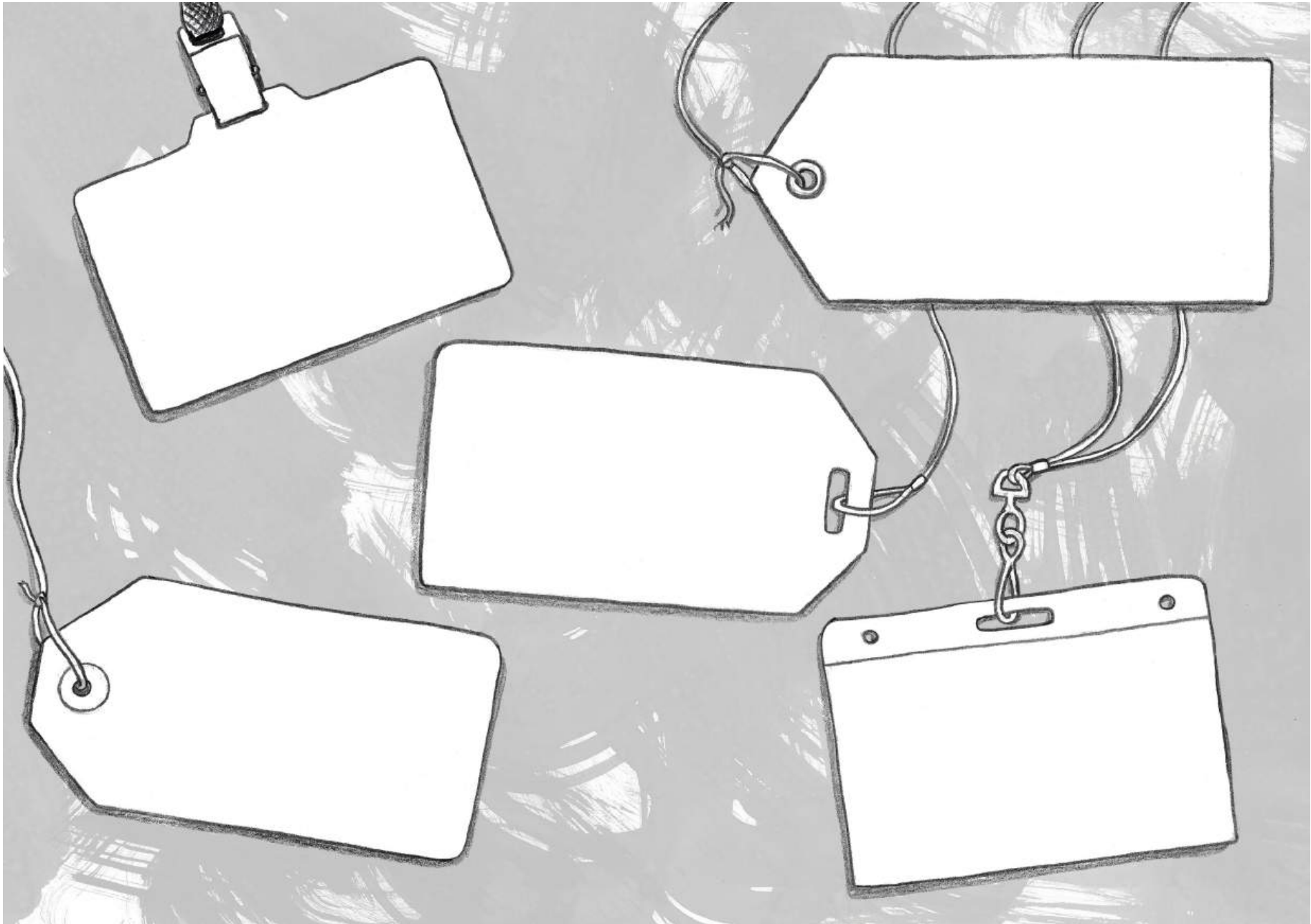




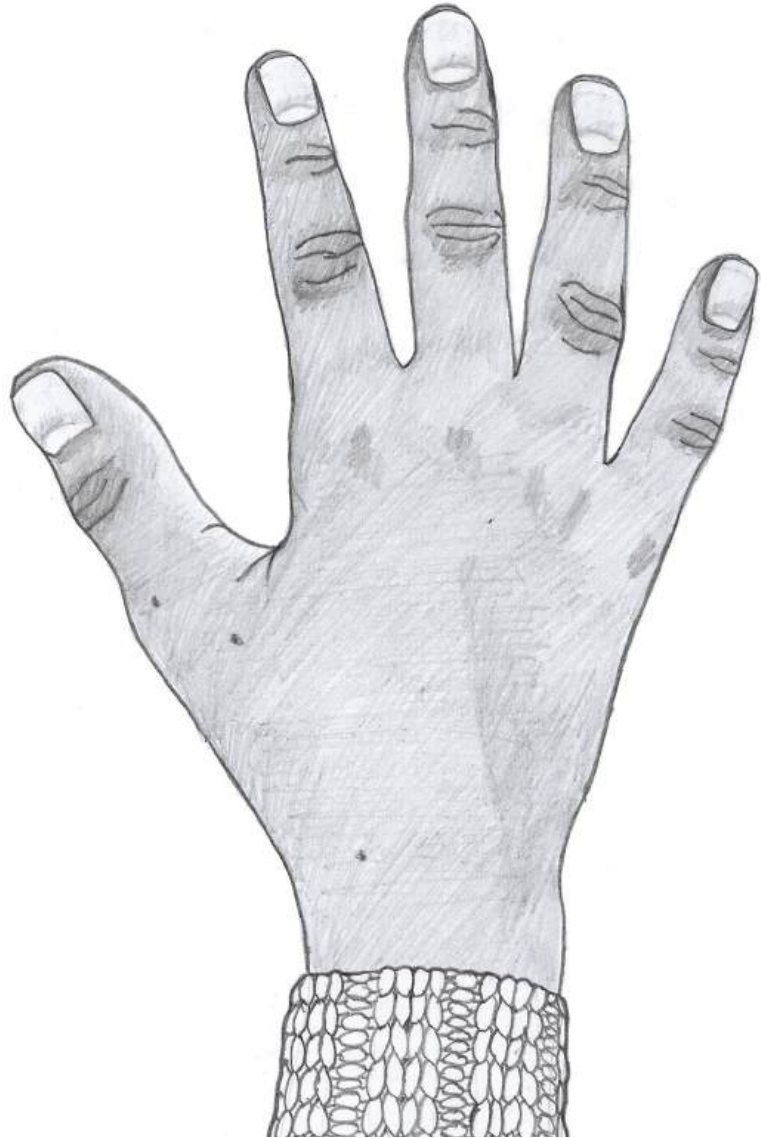
7. (a) Neal Layton has created a monster, and you can too. Turn these scribbles, splashes and parts of faces into some weird and wonderful monsters.



b) Fill in these character labels for your monsters.

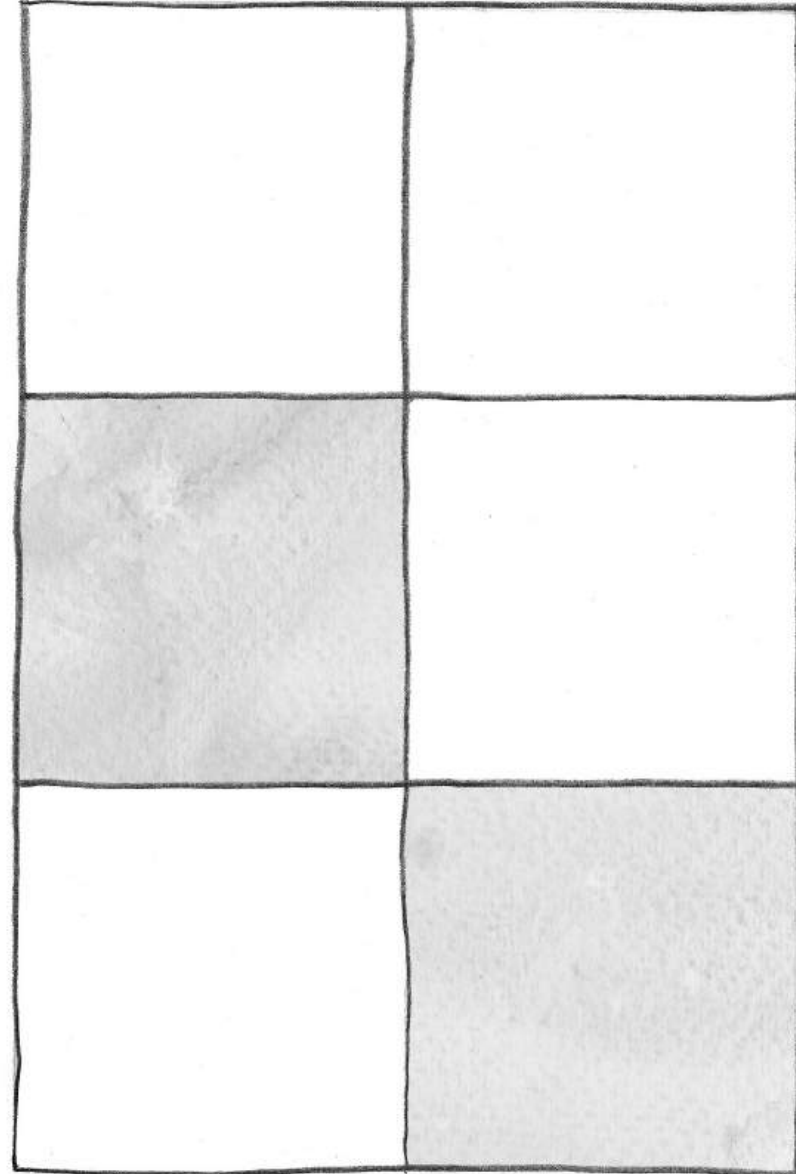
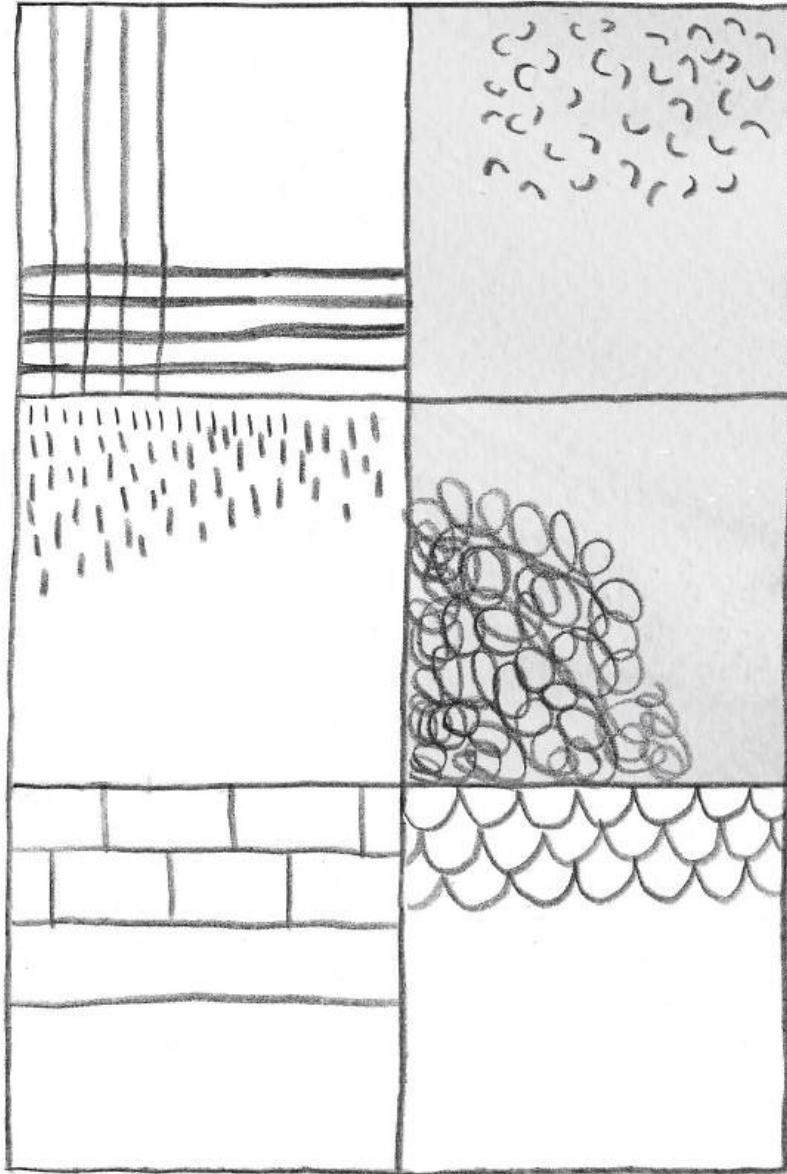


8 (a) Have a look at how David Mackintosh has drawn all the details in his illustrations. Now draw your own hand next to our example. Look really closely and add as many details as you can: nails, wrinkles and your sleeve.



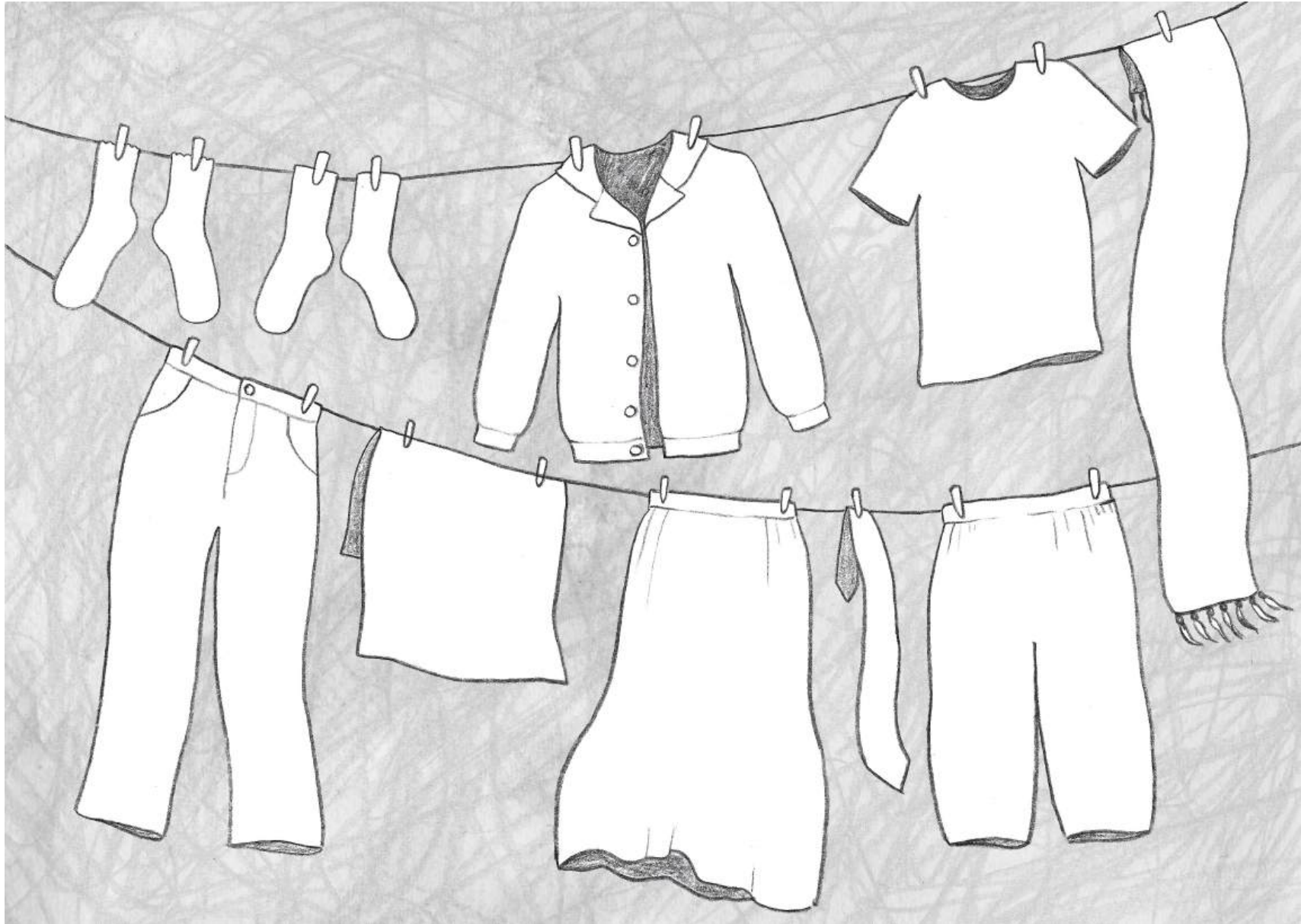


9 (a) Emily Rand puts lots of patterns into her illustrations.  
Use this grid to experiment with different patterns and marks.  
Fill each box with a different design.





(b) Now use your patterns on the clothes on the washing line.



## Credits:

Learning resource created and written by Emily Jost, Head of Education at House of Illustration. Activities illustrated by Toya Walker. All activities copyright British Council.



The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

The British Council believes that all children have potential and that every child matters – everywhere in the world. The British Council affirms the position that all children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse as set out in article 19, UNCRC 1989.

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/>



House of Illustration is the UK's only public gallery dedicated solely to illustration and graphic art. Founded by Sir Quentin Blake, it opened in July 2014 in King's Cross, London. Its exhibition programme explores both historic and contemporary illustration and the work of defining and emerging illustrators, amplified by a vibrant programme of talks and events. A registered charity, House of Illustration supports and promotes new talent, commissions new work and has a pioneering learning programme delivered by professional illustrators. [houseofillustration.org](http://houseofillustration.org)