

Kandinsky's Colors

Inspired by Russian artist Wassily Kandinsky's work, students will use oil pastel in concentric circles to explore color relationships. They will also learn about Kandinsky's special relationship with color, synesthesia and color theory to convey mood and emotion.



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Fall 2023

PVAC
PALOS VERDES ART CENTER
Beverly G. Alpay Center for Arts Education

For our project today we are going to
think a lot about something that we often
see but don't think that much about -
color!



Have you ever seen this artwork

It's called "Squares with
Concentric Circles"

1913 by Wassily Kandinsky



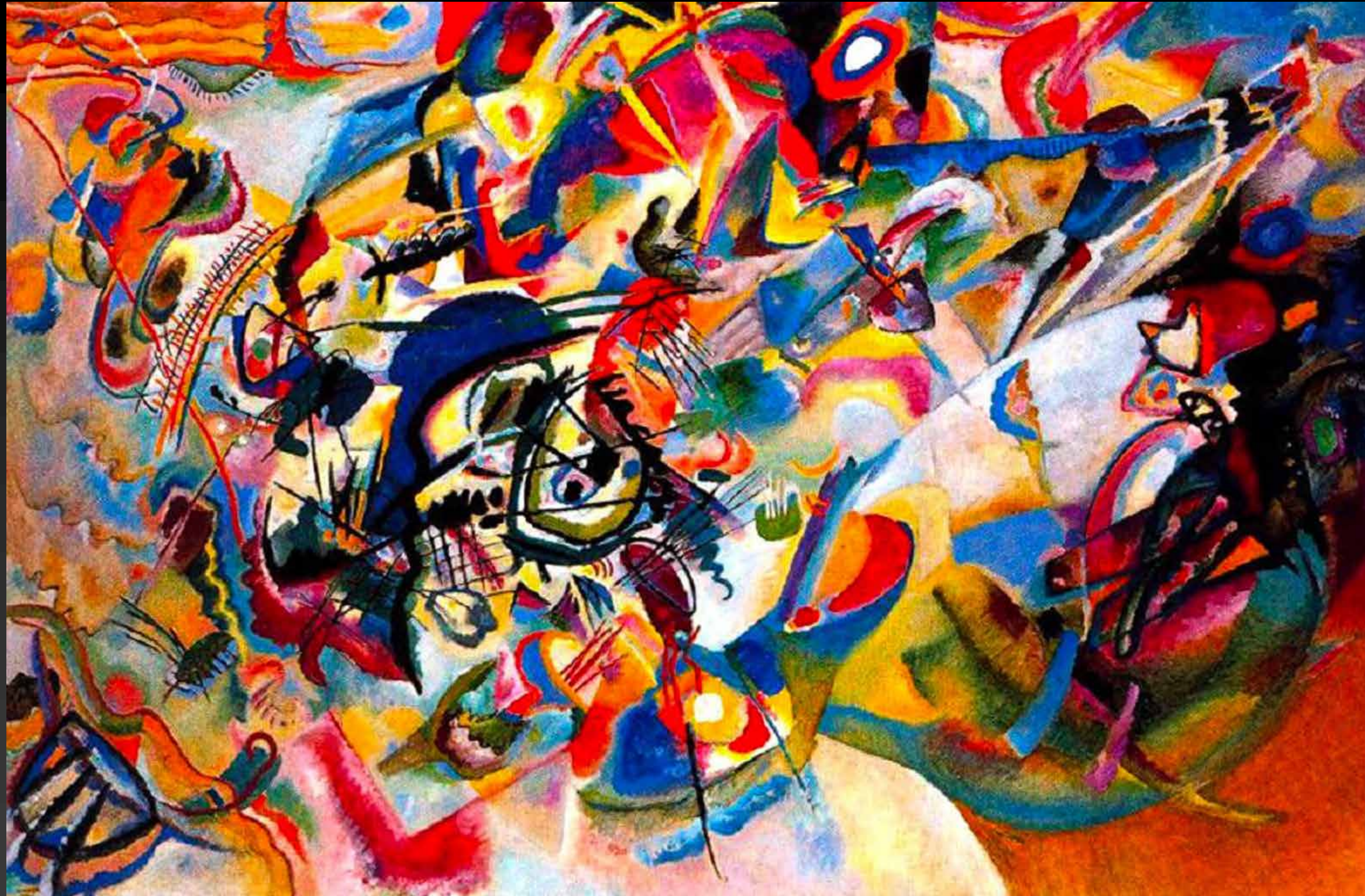
Wassily Kandinsky

Kandinsky was a Russian painter

1866 - 1944

He mostly created abstract art.

Here are some examples:



This one
is called
Composition 7

Does this look
like anything to
you?

This kind of art
is called “abstract”
art.

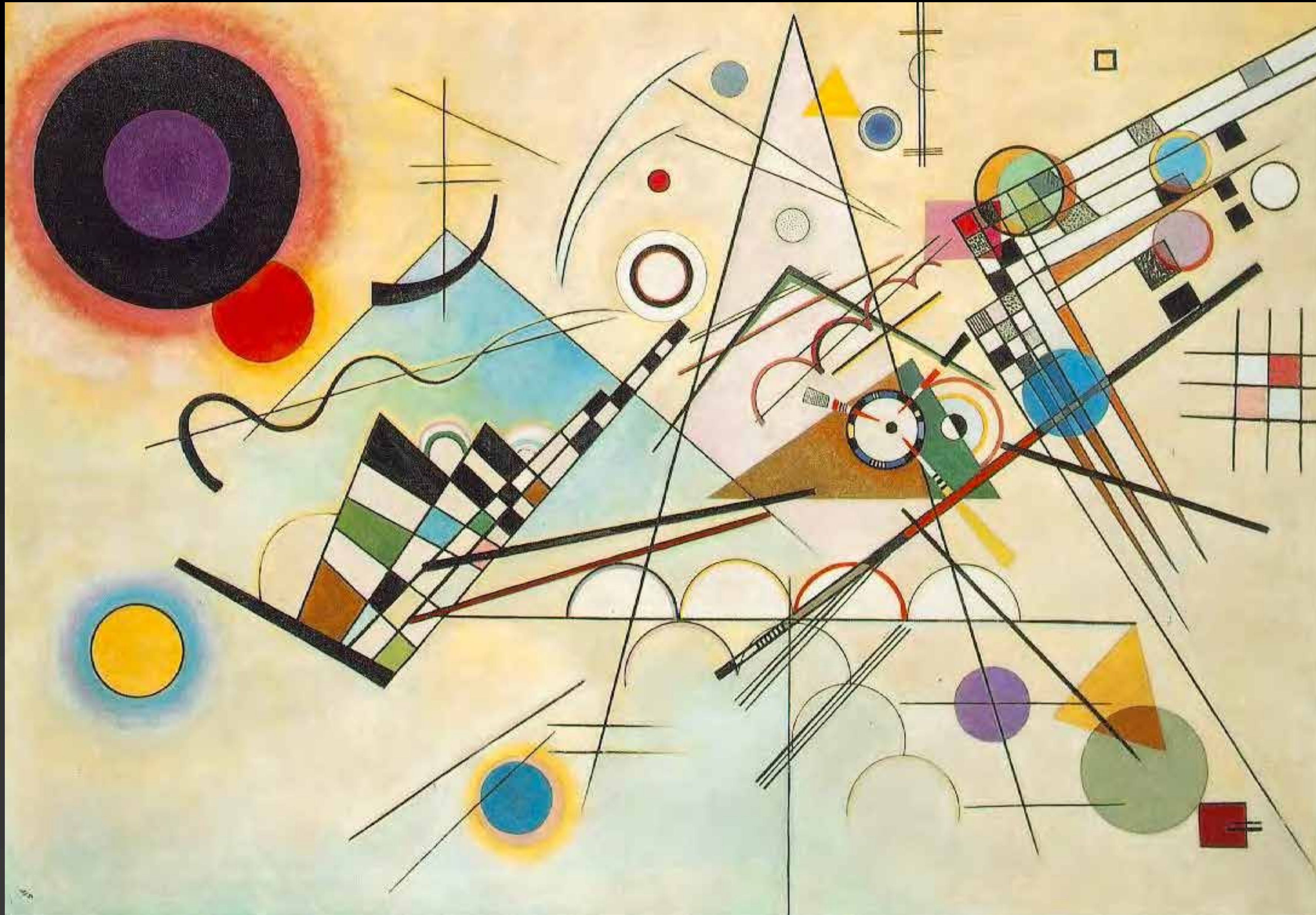
Abstract Art Examples



“Balancement”



“Happy Triangle”



This one is called
“composition 8”

The names sound like
names of musical
arrangements.

Music was also
important to
Kandinsky.

he had a rare
condition called:
SYNESTHESIA

SYNESTHESIA

Kandinsky literally saw colors when he heard music, and heard music when he painted. He explored these sensations in unconventional, artistic ways.

Two or more senses are combined

Hear Color
See Sound

Tastes can produce color

The relationship is consistent and happens every time





Pharrell Williams



Duke Ellington



Billy Joel



Billie Eilish



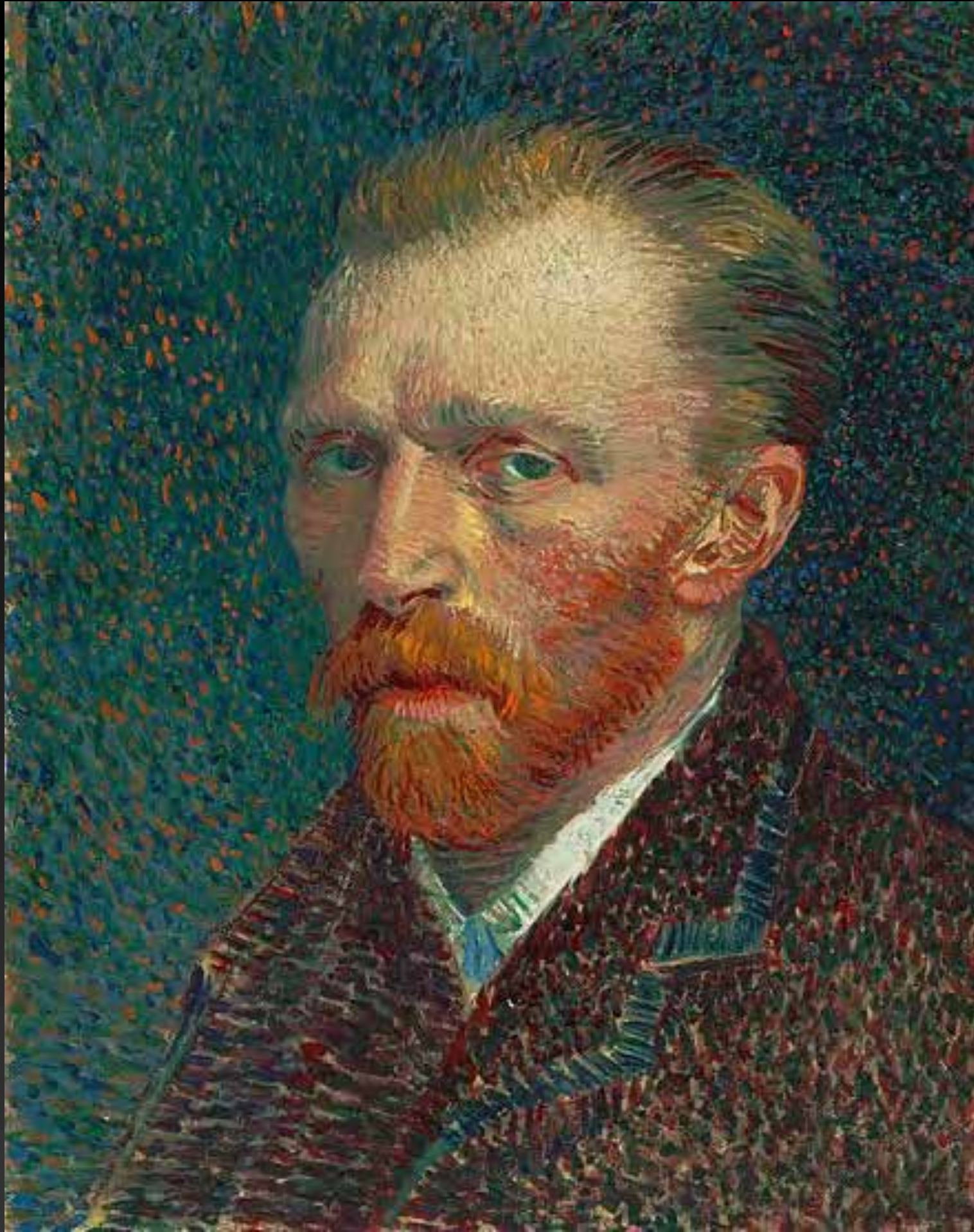
Dev Hines

OTHER FAMOUS SYNESTHETES

Pharrell, Dev Hines, Beyonce, Tori Amos - sound to color

Marilyn Monroe - taste to color

Billy Joel & Billie Eilish - multiple connections



Vincent Van Gogh



Starry Night

Vincent Van Gogh may have had synesthesia too. For him, sounds had colors and it has been said that certain colors, like yellow and blue, were “like fireworks for his senses”



Even if we don't taste or smell our colors, today we can explore the relationships between colors and think about how colors make us feel.

Let's make a piece of art similar to this one of Kandinsky's.

What are some common
color associations?

Yellow

- Warning
- Happiness
- Warmth
- Playfulness
- Wisdom

Red

- Danger
- Energy
- Power
- Love
- Anger
- Heat

Orange

- Sweetness
- Warmth
- Halloween
- Fun
- Youth
- Adventure

Green

- Freshness
- Growth
- Money
- Nature
- Health
- Envy

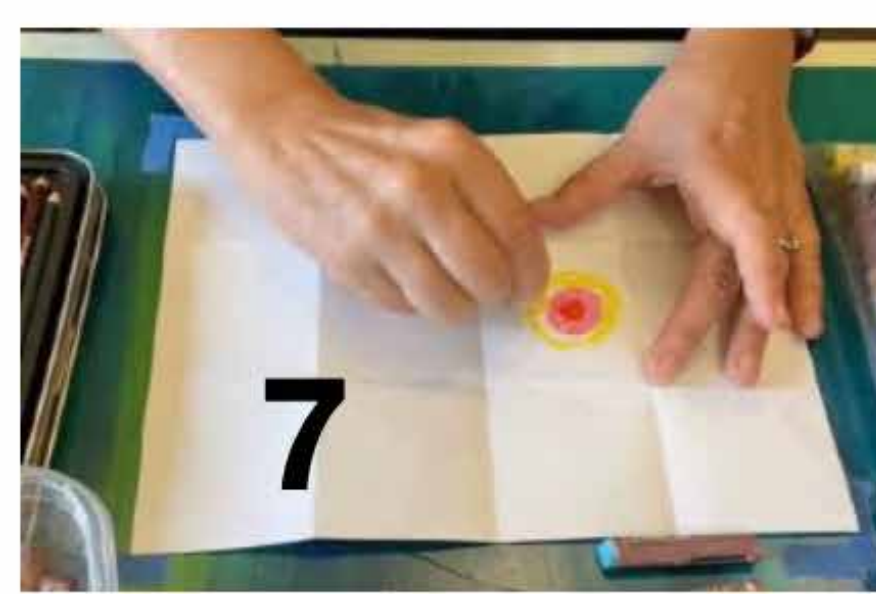
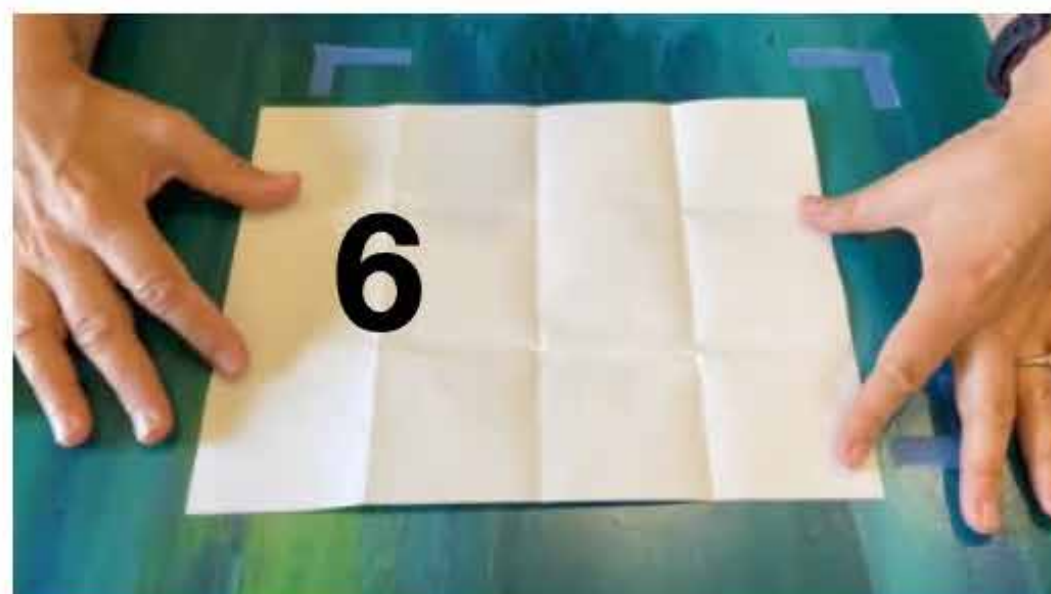
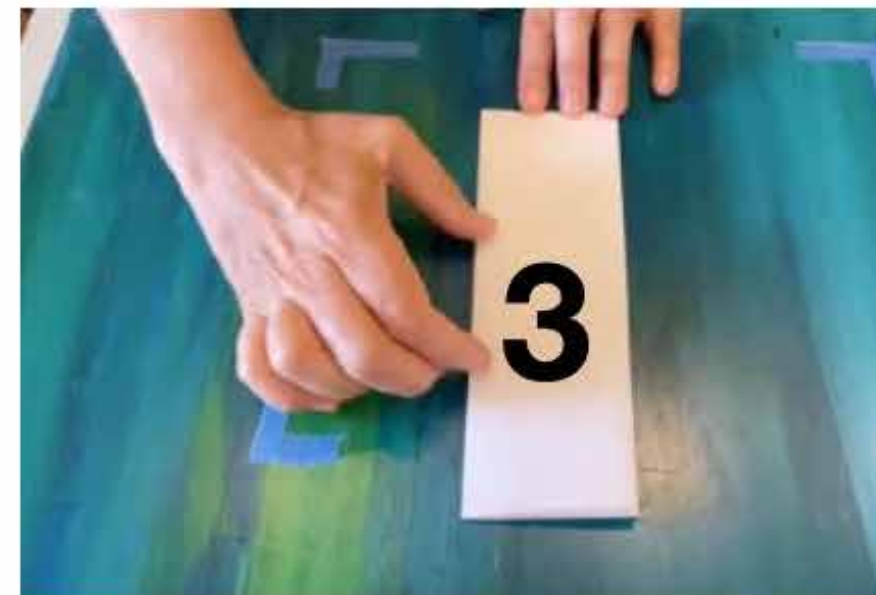
Blue

- Cold/Cool
- Reliable
- Loyal
- Calm
- Idealism
- Sadness

Purple

- Fantasy
- Individuality
- Royalty
- Arrogance

Step by step:



Getting Started

Let's fold our paper into 12 squares.

1. Fold in half horizontally.
2. Fold in half again the same direction.
3. Mentally measure the remaining piece in 3 equal parts.
4. Fold
5. Fold again
6. Open and flatten your paper
7. Choose any square to start



Today we are going to “paint” with oil pastels.

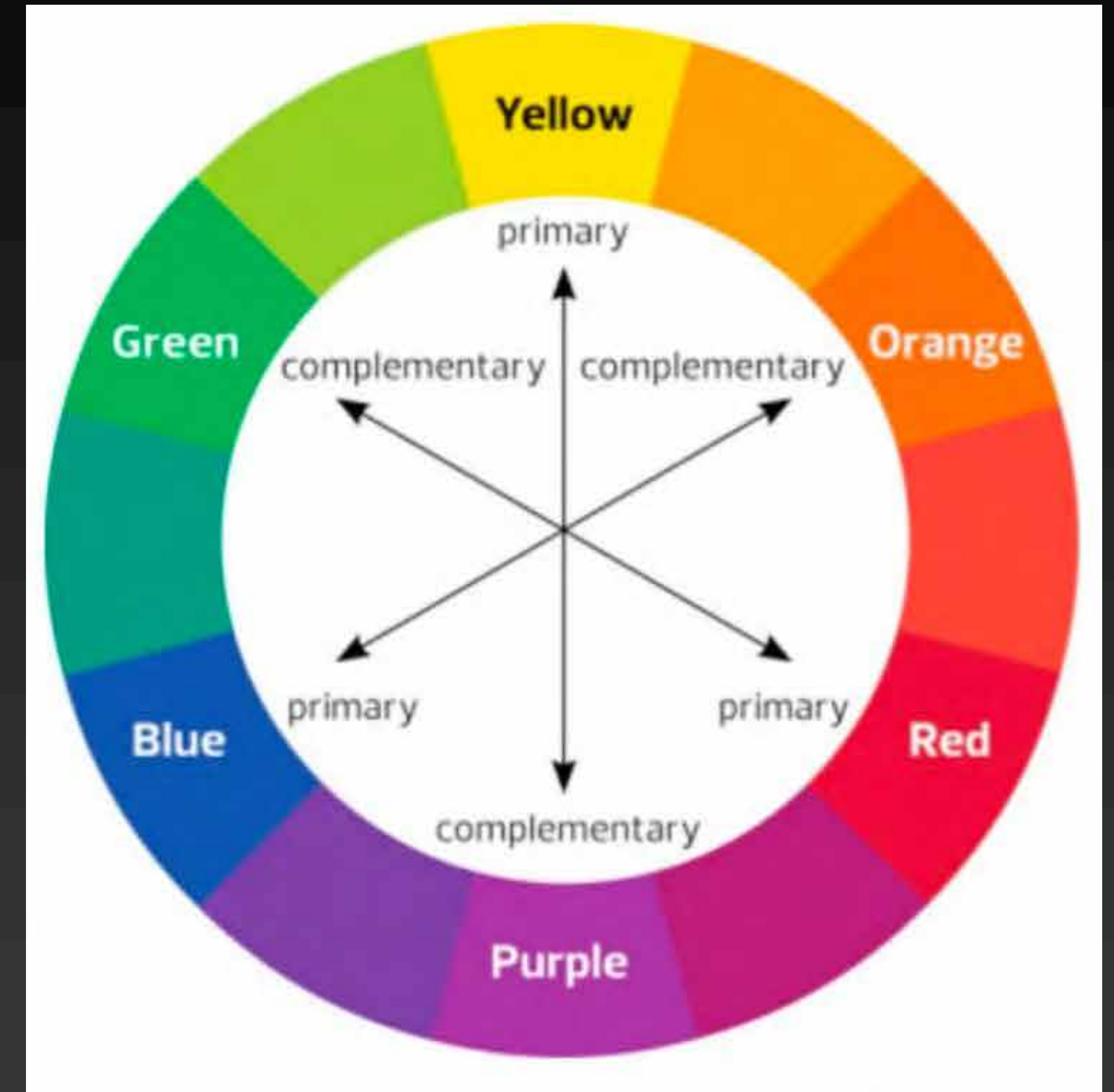
They look like crayons, but they aren’t. They can be blended to look a lot like paint - or create what is called a “painterly” effect.



If you color over oil pastels with a new color it can dirty up your tips. You should have a paper towel handy to clean them.

ARE COLORS RELATED TO OUR EMOTIONS?

First, let's make a square with colors that make you feel happy - or that represent "happy" to you! There is no right answer here... it's up to you!





Choose any square and color it “happy”. What colors symbolize happy to you?

Many people think of a bright yellow - like a smiley face!

Clean the tip of your pastel between colors if needed. Put on reasonably heavy amount of oil pastel.



Start with the lightest color - yellow in this example. Use the blending stump to smooth out all of the yellow areas.

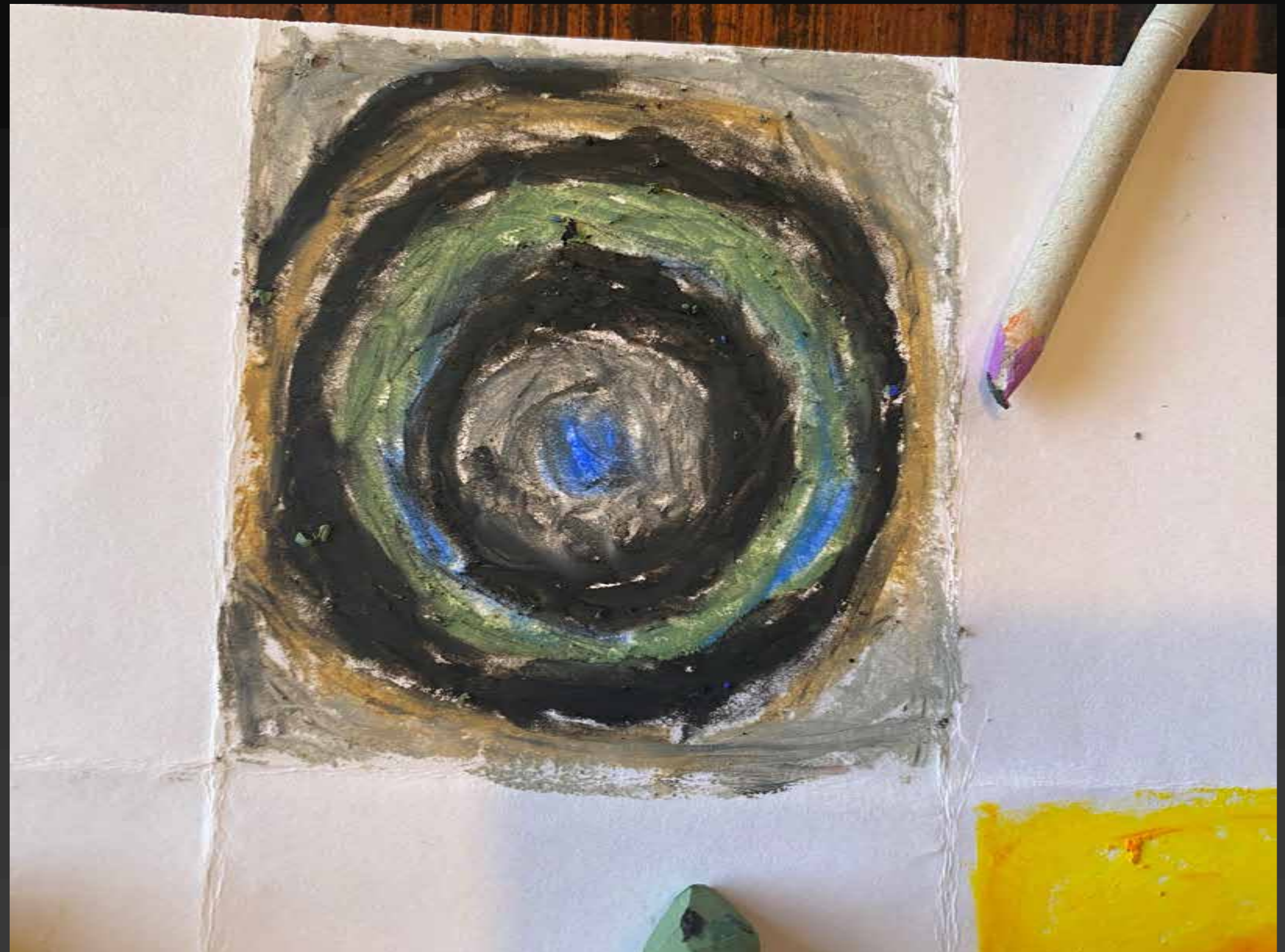
If your next color is also a warm color, like orange, you can blend it also after the yellow. But if it is a cool color, like blue, you will need to clean the tip on a paper towel first.

Use your blending stump to smooth all of the colors... cleaning between.

Now let's think of some colors that represent sadness or melancholy.

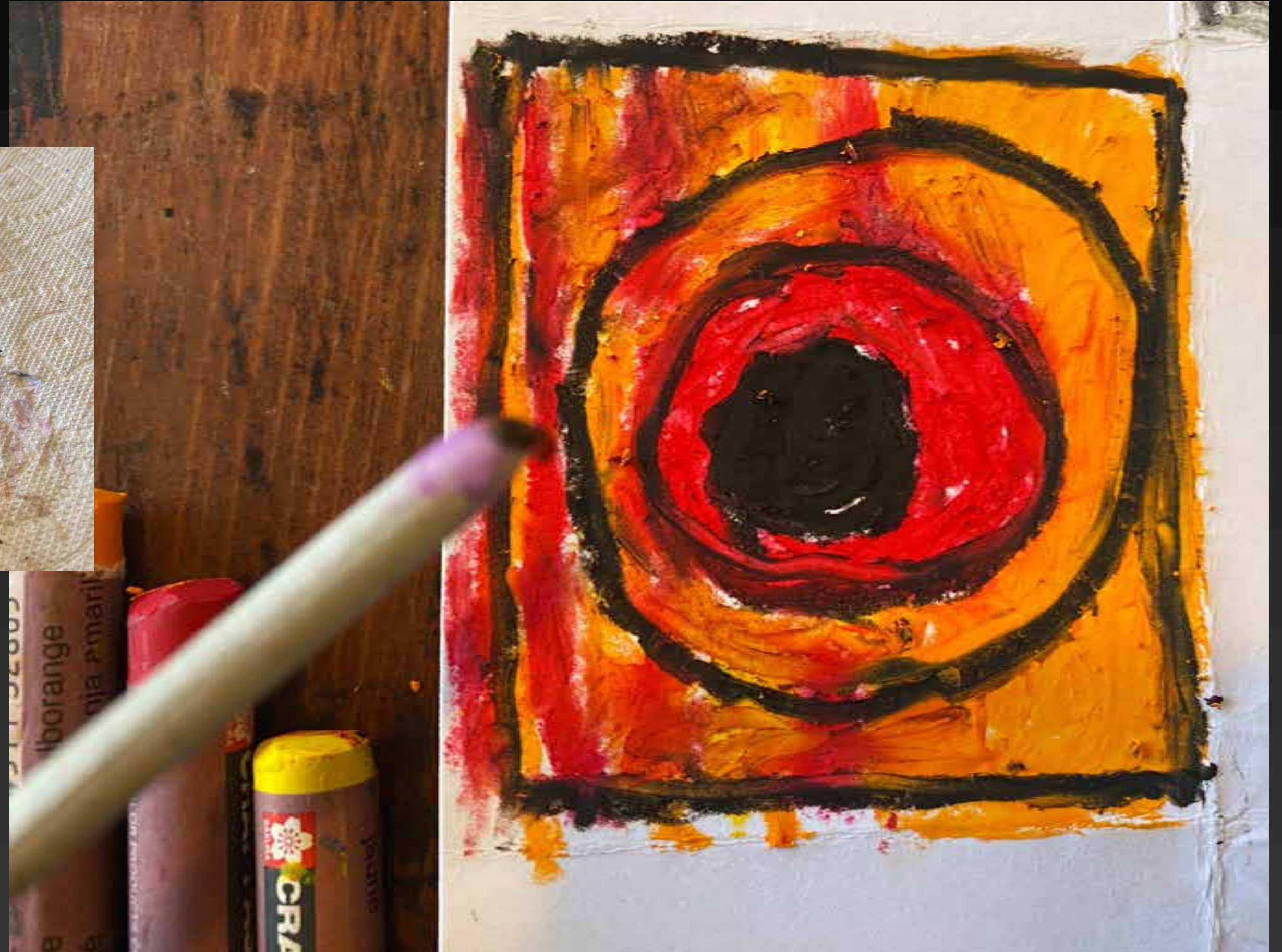
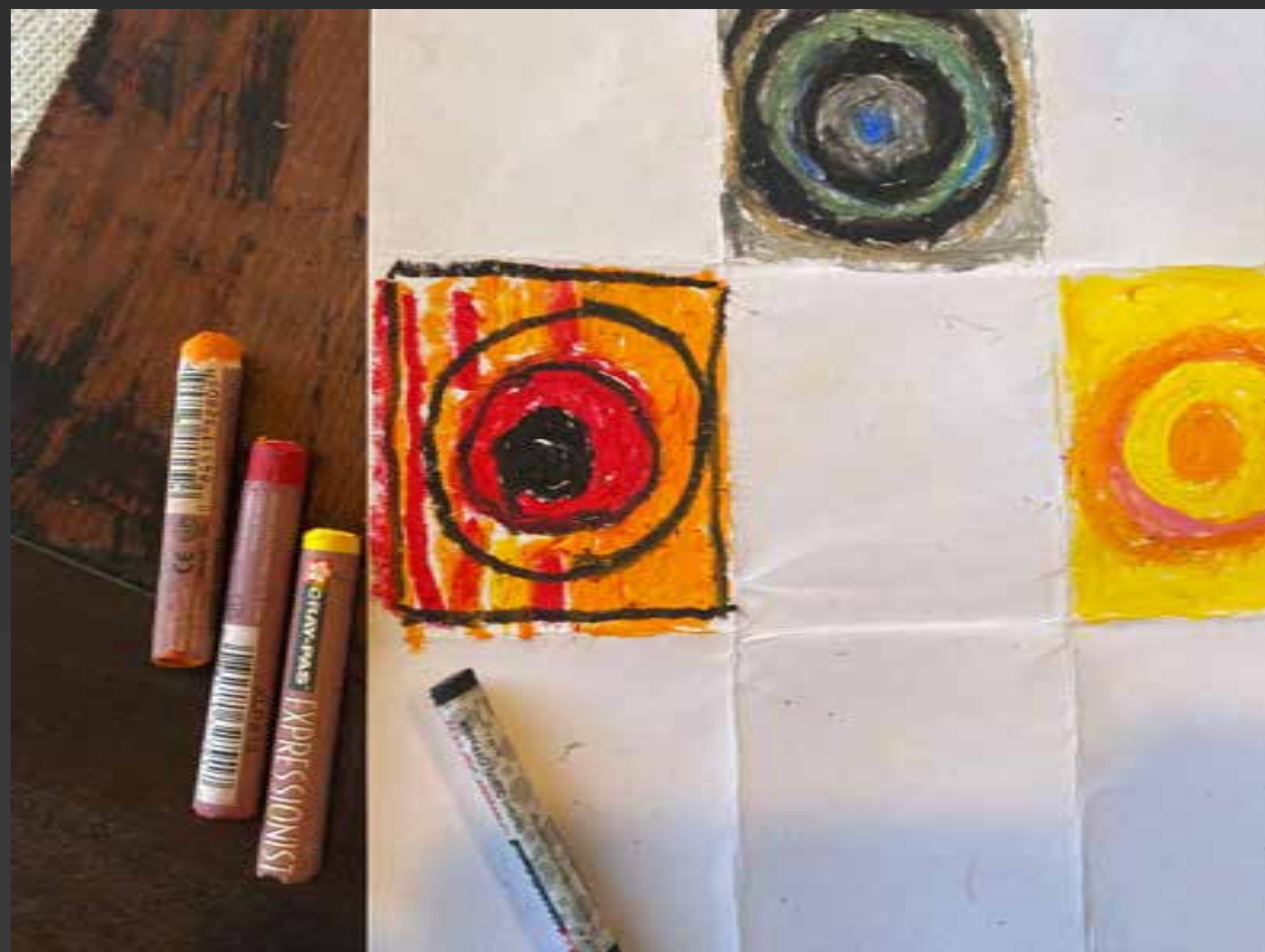


Don't forget to blend your colors by going right on top of your original shapes. (Do not blend side to side.)



How about anger? What colors do you think of? People sometimes use the expression “seeing red” when they are angry. You could start with red...

Red also makes us think of danger...



I tried having some strokes that weren't round. They went “against the grain!” Another term that could relate to “anger”

Let's choose colors that feel peaceful or serene... a lot of people think that the blue sky or cool blue water feels peaceful. What makes you feel peaceful?



I decided to include a symbol for peace in my art. You can do that too if you'd like, or you can show it another way.

Red can symbolize anger or danger... but it can also symbolize love.



Make a square in the colors that make you think of love or valentines.

DID YOU KNOW...

Many, many sports teams use complementary colors for their team logos?

Why? Because complementary colors make each other really stand out.

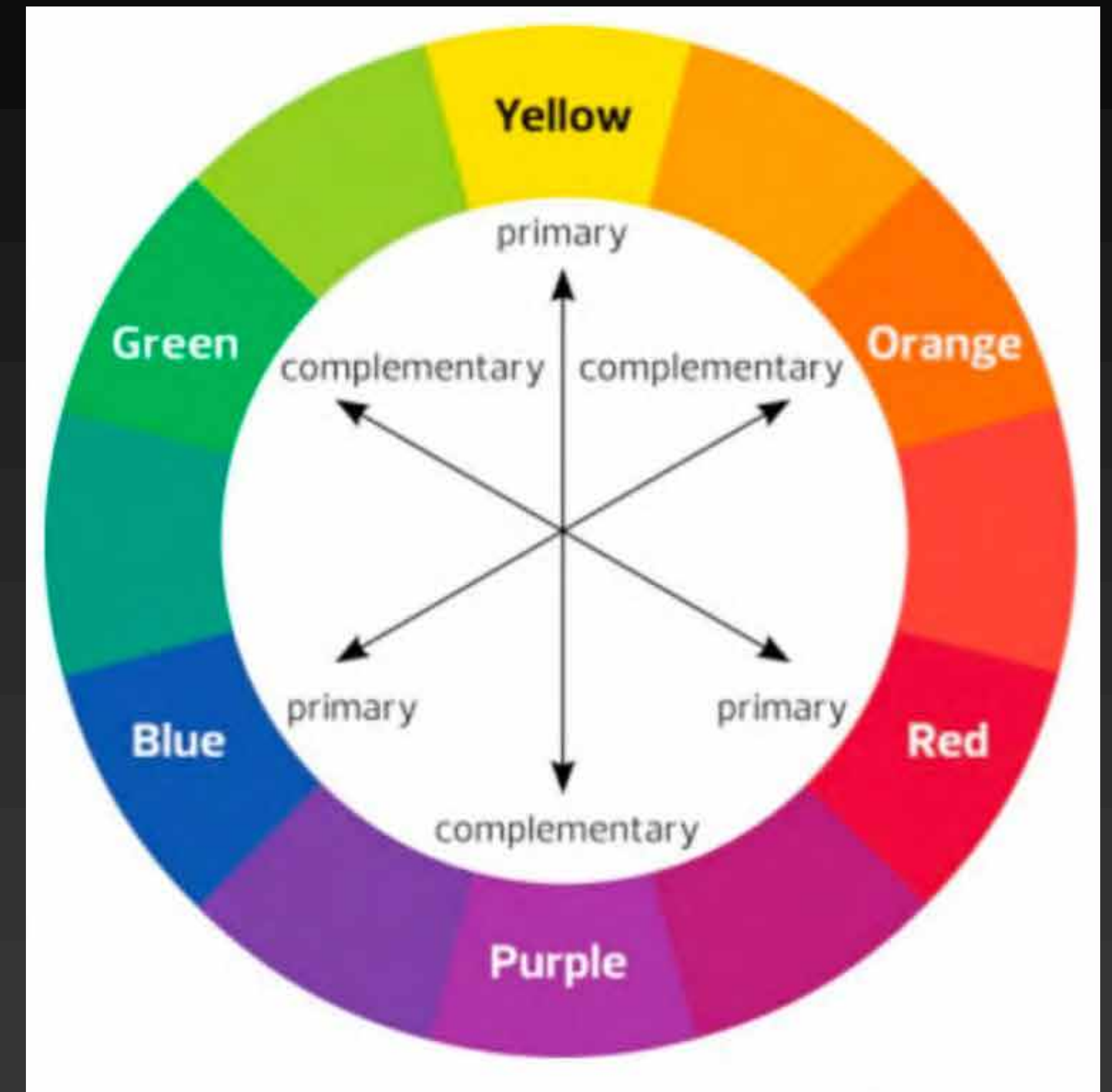


yellow and
purple



orange
and blue

Similarly, they might also use one “warm” color and one “cool” color... (even if they aren’t true complements.)



LET'S TRY COMPLEMENTARY COLORS...

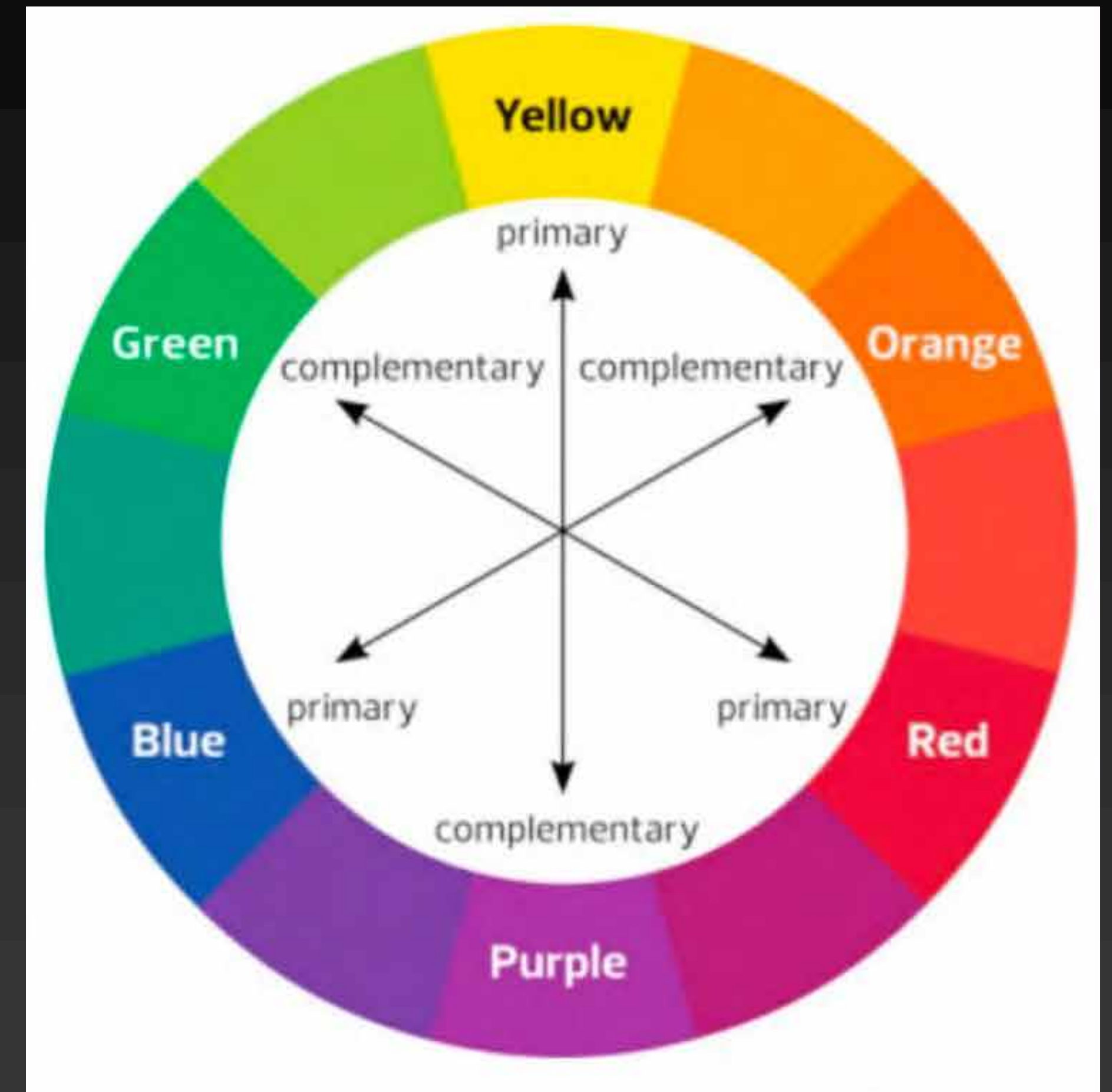
For our next square ...pick two colors that are across from each other on the color wheel - like yellow and purple or orange and blue.

What do you notice? Do the colors really pop out?

Now add some other colors to your square.

You can make some rings wider than others, you can repeat colors. You can overlap colors.

Pay attention! How do the new colors change the look of your piece?





Do you notice... when you blend and a little purple mixes with a little yellow, what color does it make? Why?

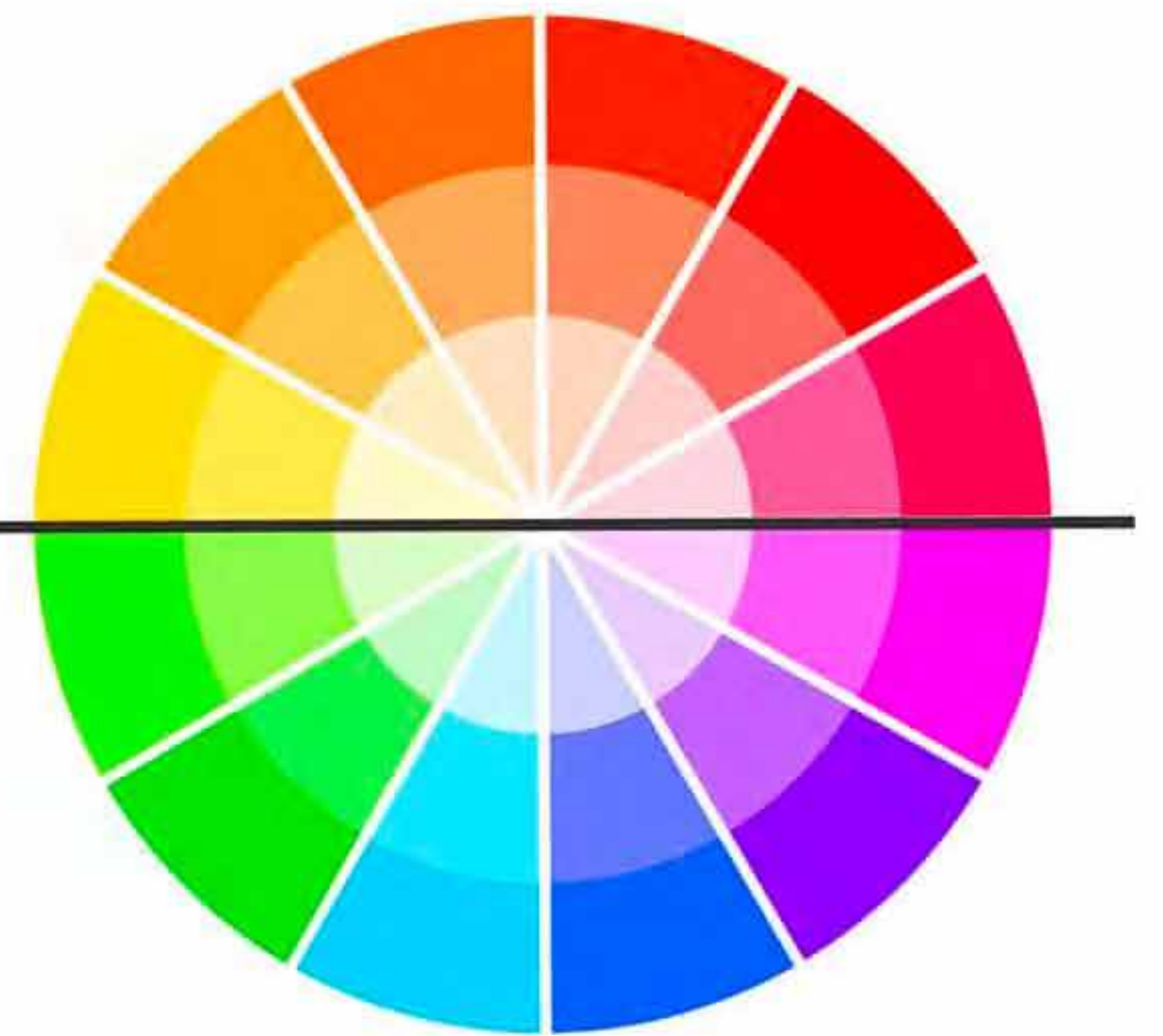
LET'S TRY A SQUARE OF ONLY COOL COLORS

What are cool colors? Think of cool green grass and cool blue water. Basically everything on the bottom of this color wheel!



Warm colors

Cool colors



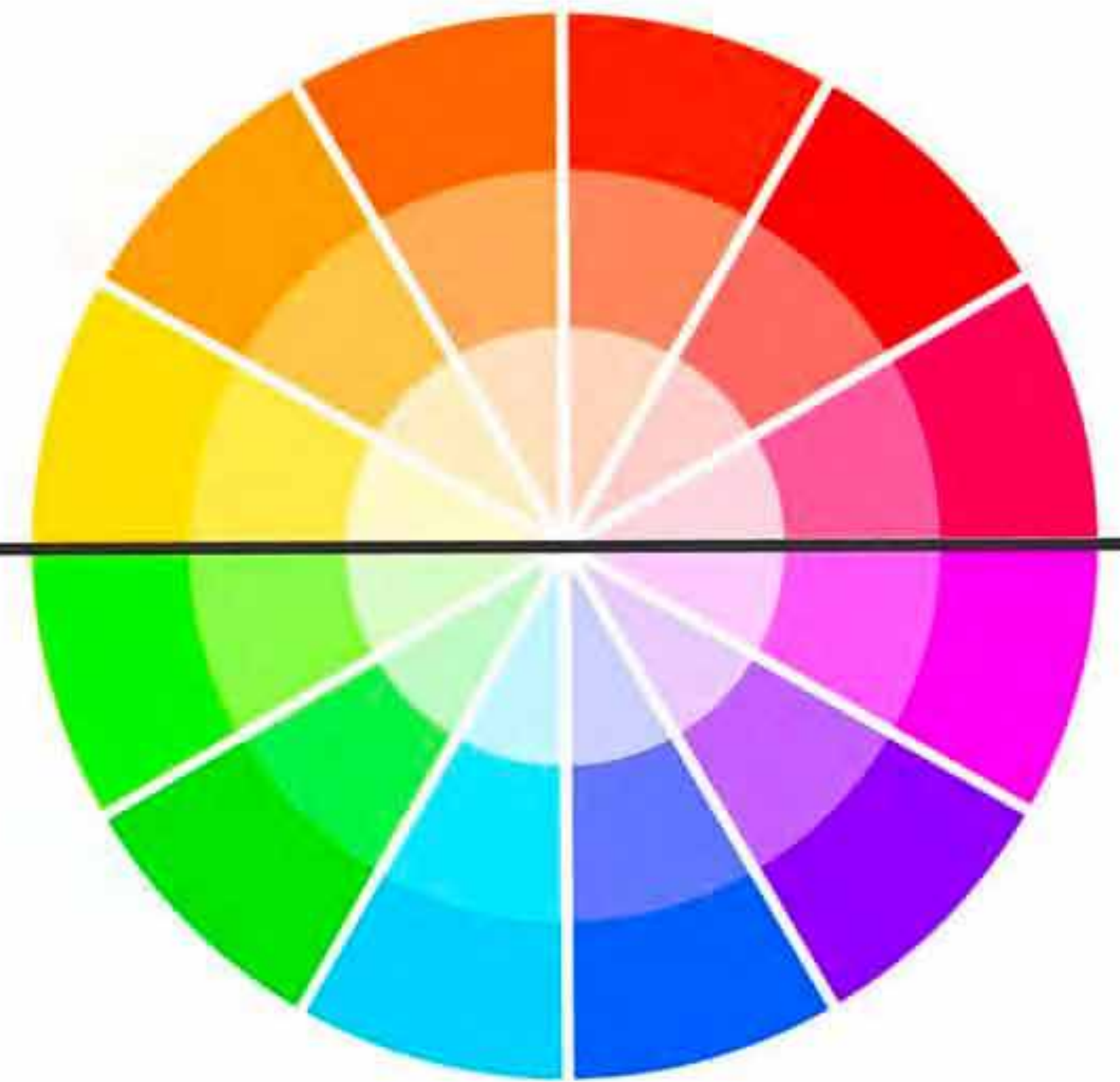
LET'S TRY A SQUARE OF ONLY WARM COLORS

What are warm colors? Think of the yellows, oranges and reds. This one is little like a warm sun.



Warm colors

Cool colors



VOCABULARY WORD:

Monochromatic

Mono means one and chroma refers to color. So, combine these and you make “monochromatic”...

Let's make a monochromatic square



“These are a few of my favorite things...”

Find some of your favorite colors and make a square with them.

Colors used together in a room, or a piece of fabric or art for example, is called a color palette.





Similar art with different color palettes may affect us in different ways. Do you have a favorite? Do you think everyone will like the same one as you?

Go ahead and think like Kandinsky to fill in the rest of your circles. Be curious... try different mixes of color.

Imagine what it would be like to have synesthesia? What color would a trumpet be for you?!

Which one is your favorite?

With the remaining squares you can try out color combinations, show how you think the sound of a trumpet would look, or be your own fashion designer thinking up the colors in a dress, a shirt or even a rug for your room.

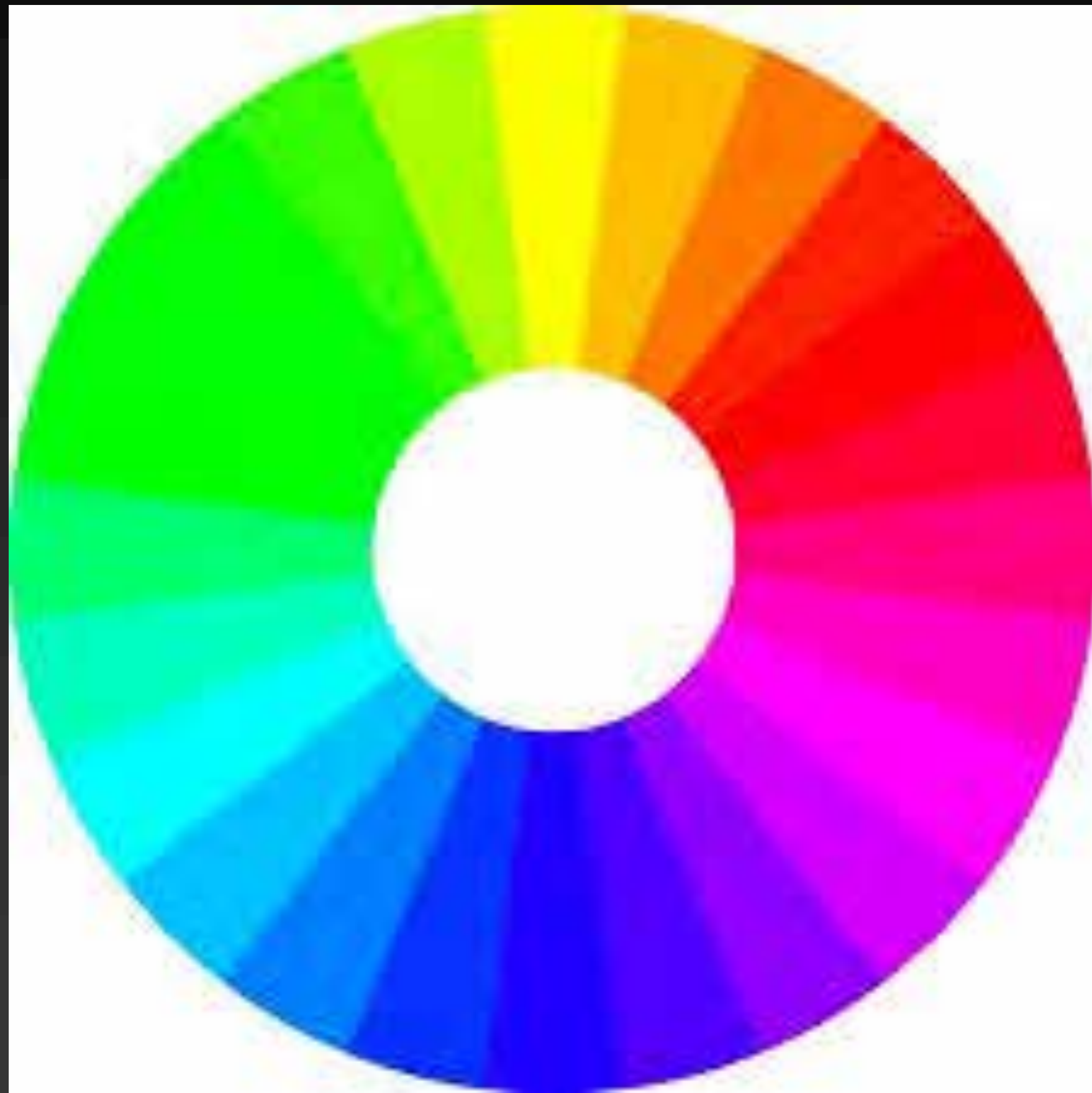


Now we're done! Do you have a favorite square?



Extras

VOCABULARY: Does anyone know the difference between a color wheel and a color palette?



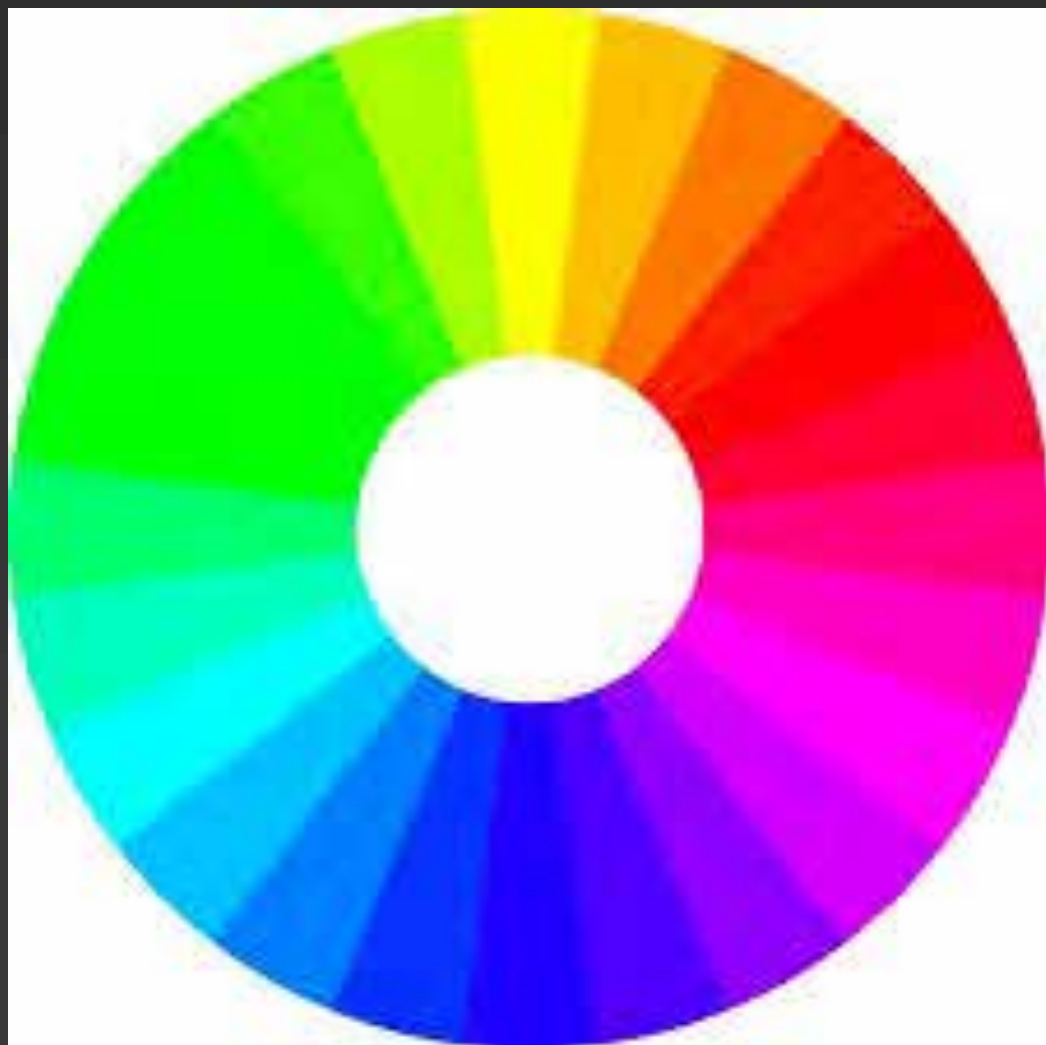
Color Wheel



Color Palette

Wait a minute!!! Why aren't all of the colors on the
color wheel?

Where is the brown? Where is olive green? navy
blue is missing too!



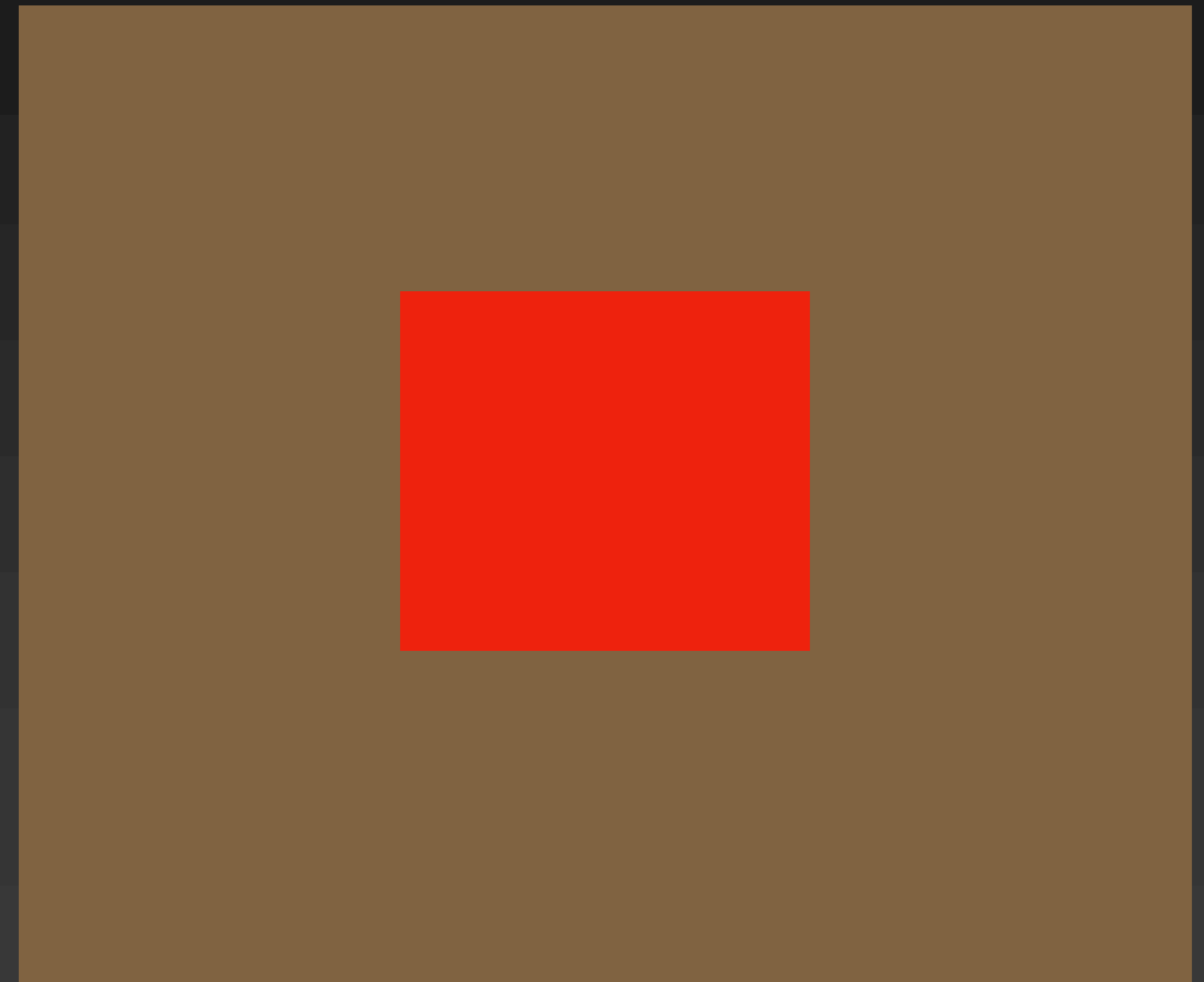
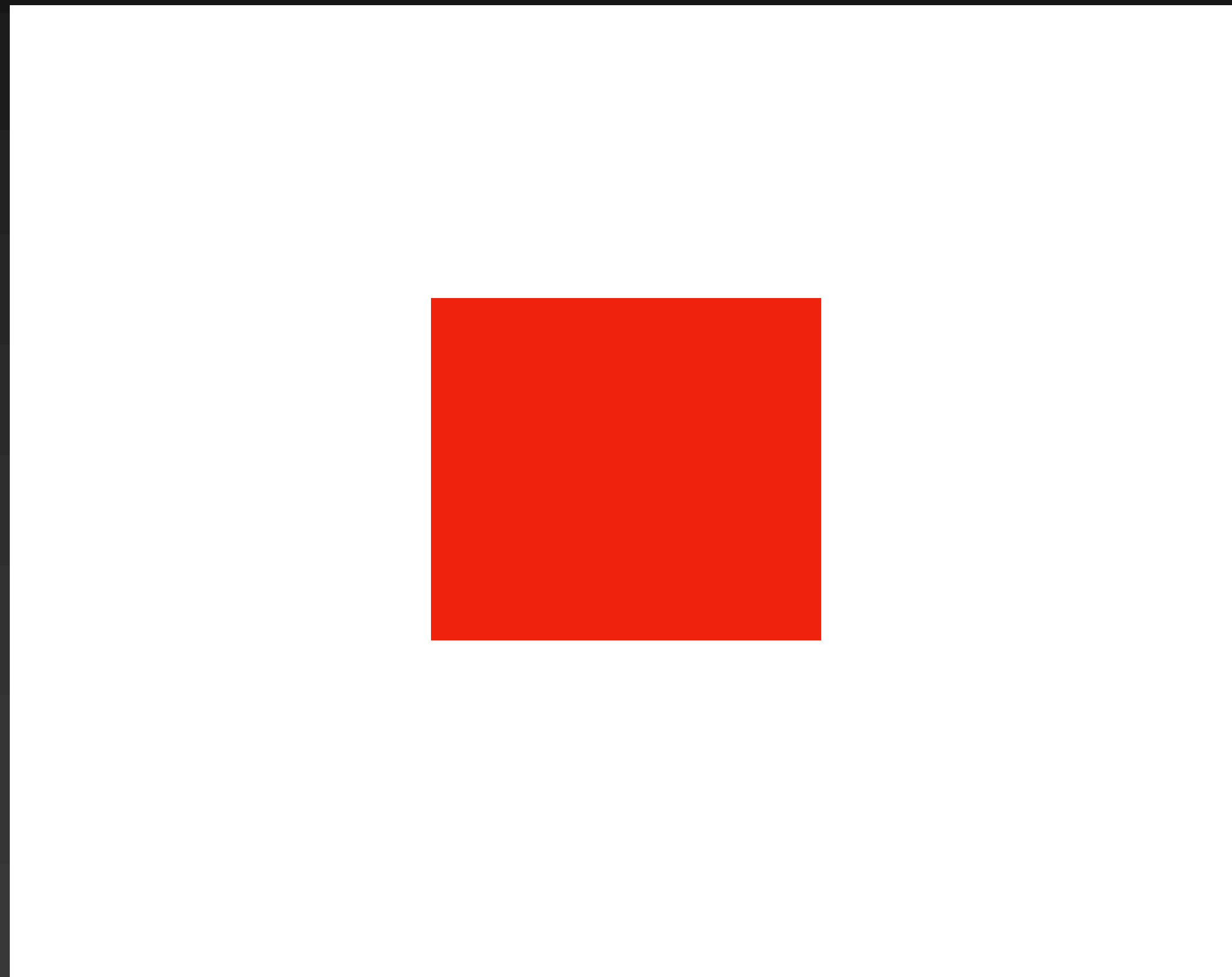
Who knows why? How do we get colors that aren't on
the color wheel?



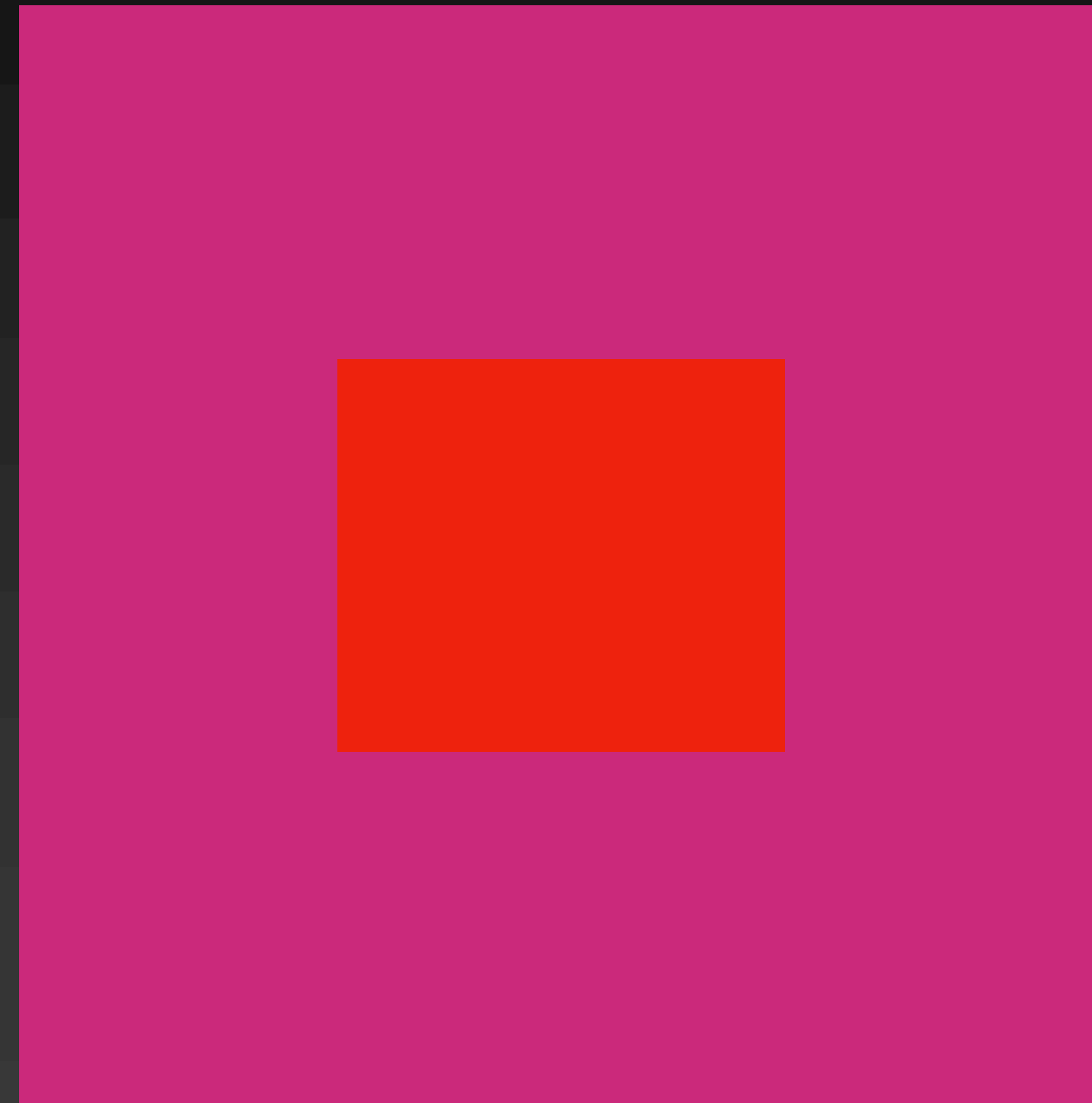
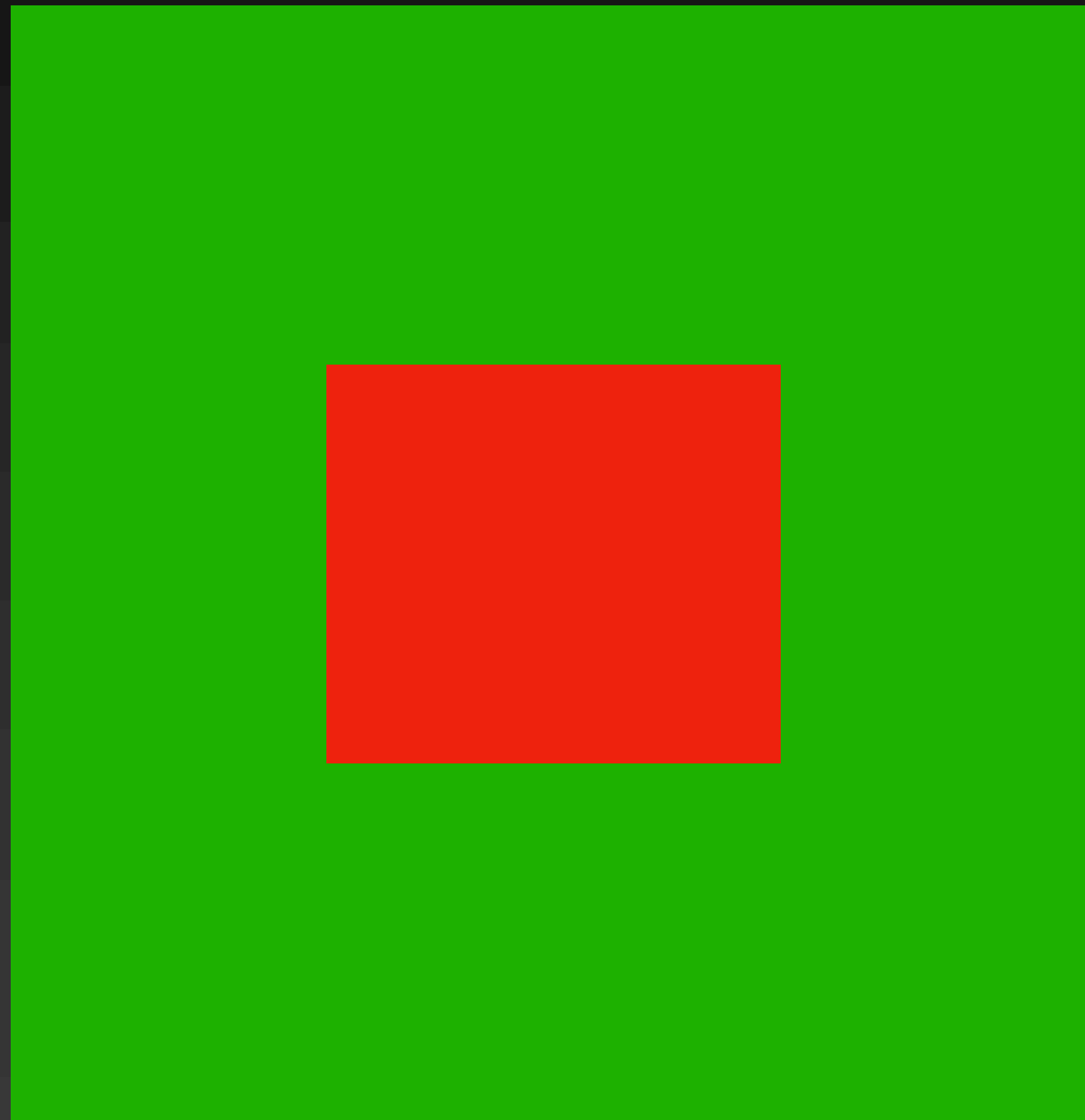
The color wheel is showing “pure” colors, to get colors that aren’t on the color wheel you would combine any number of those colors in various amounts... plus you might add black or white.

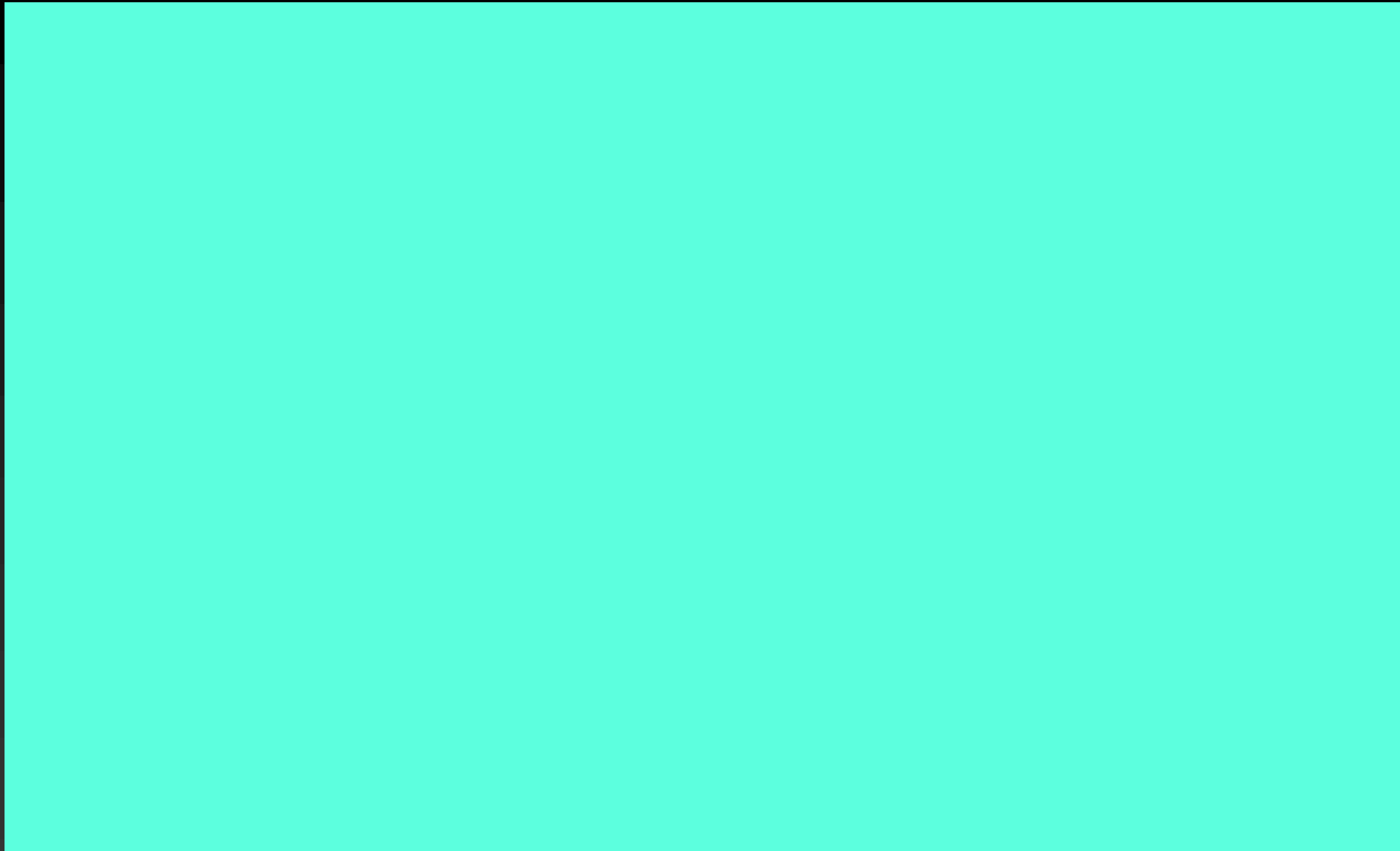
VOCABULARY: Adding black is called “**shading**” and adding white is called “**tinting.**”

Ever had someone say that one of your friends brings out the best in you?
or the worst? Colors are like that too! Look how different the red square
looks next to various colors



The red in the middle is the very same color!



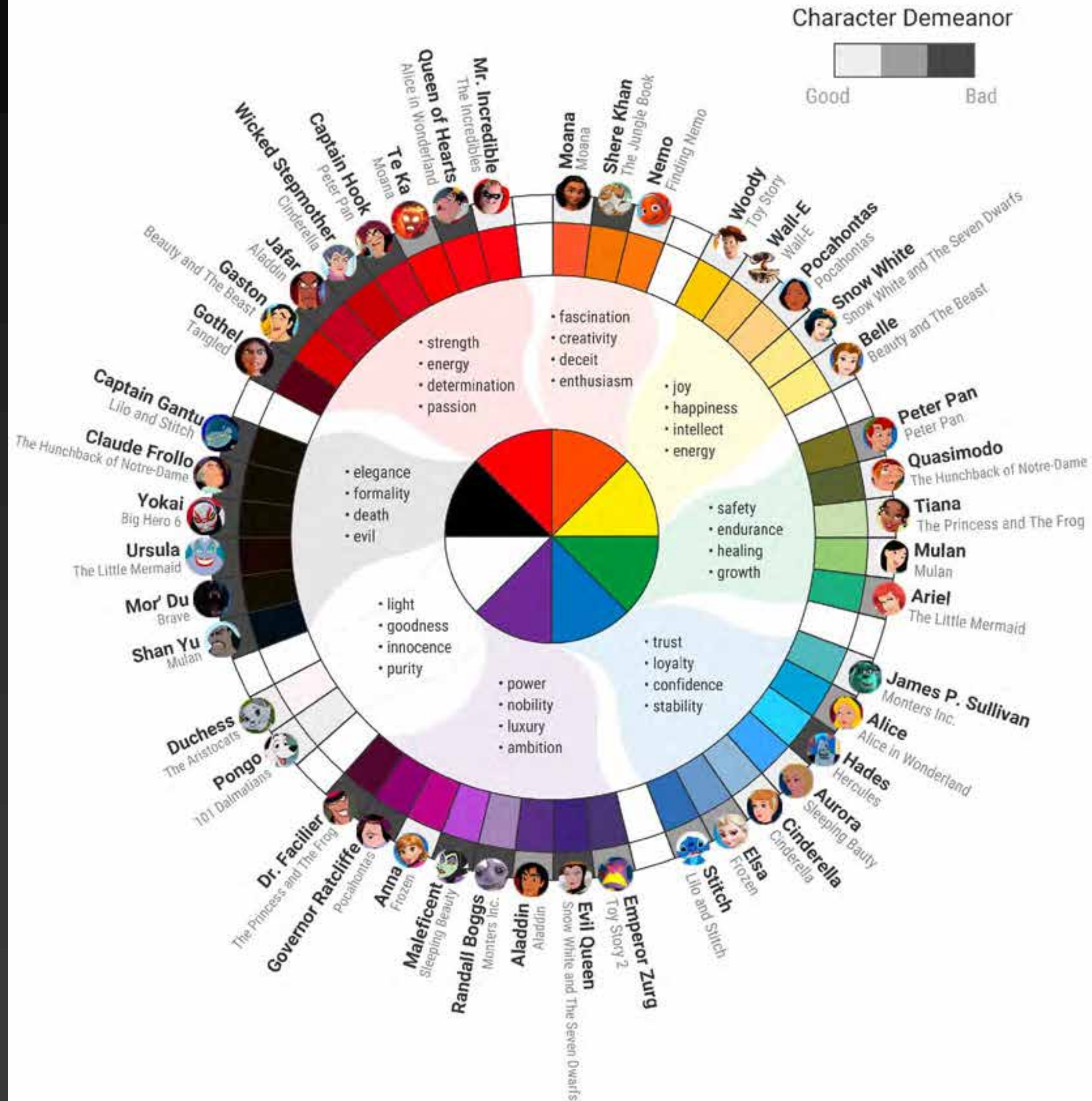


Green? or Blue?





The Color Psychology of Disney Characters



Just for fun:

Think about how
Disney uses color
theory to portray different
characters!

To learn more...

To learn more about our artist, Wassily Kandinsky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7d6zscZF5I>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AaviUsz2r9M>

To learn more about synesthesia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xDnxkzQtdI>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVPd3wH21Z8>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/mar01/>

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/mar01/synesthesia#:~:text=Research%20suggests%20that%20about%20one, and%20the%20physicist%20Richard%20Feynman.>

To learn more about color and design

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2LLXnUdUIc

To have some fun with color and Disney characters

<https://venngage.com/blog/disney-villains/>

For a video version of this presentation see:

<https://youtu.be/yKLGdfdUwxQ>

Some days are yellow.



Some are blue.

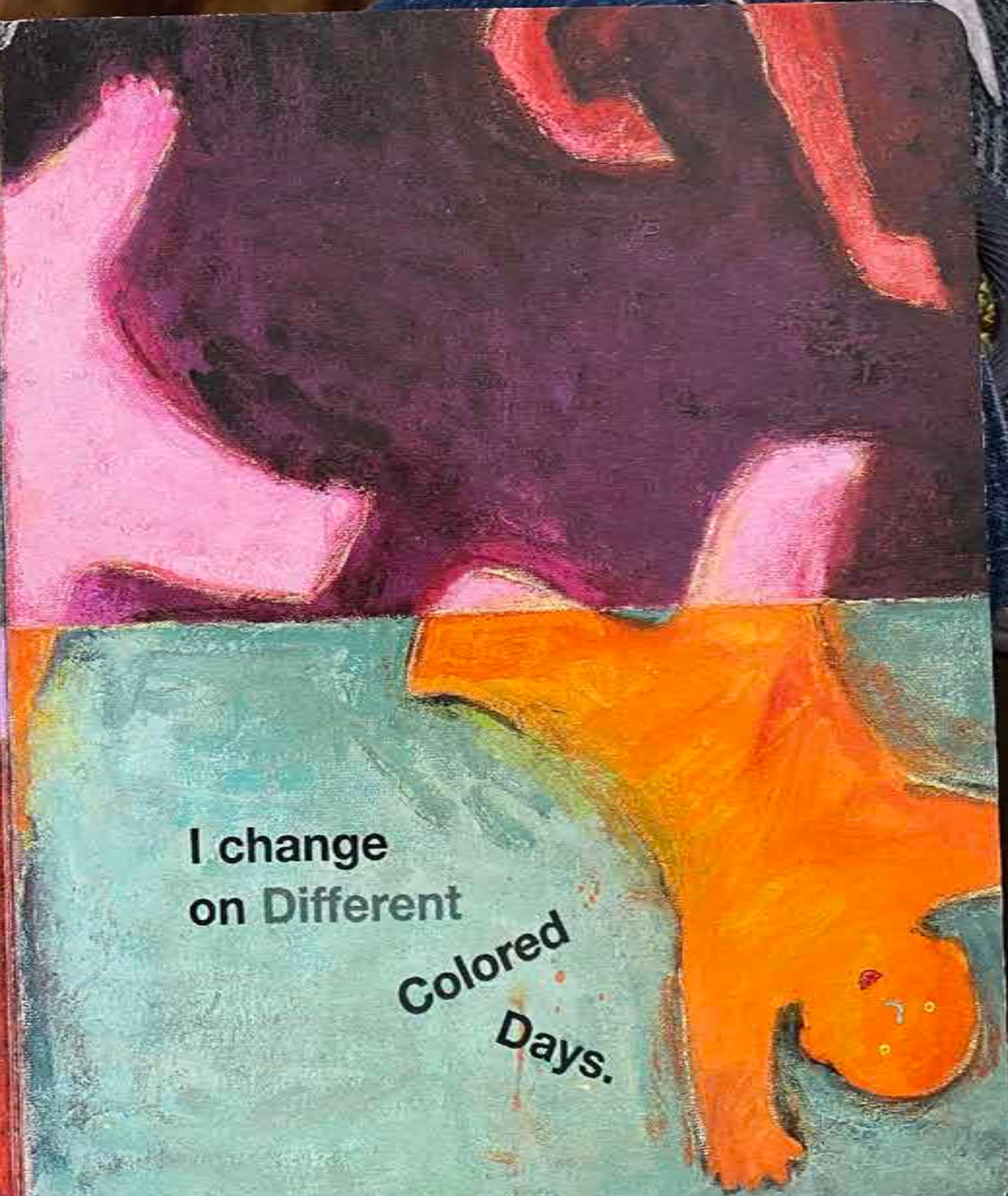


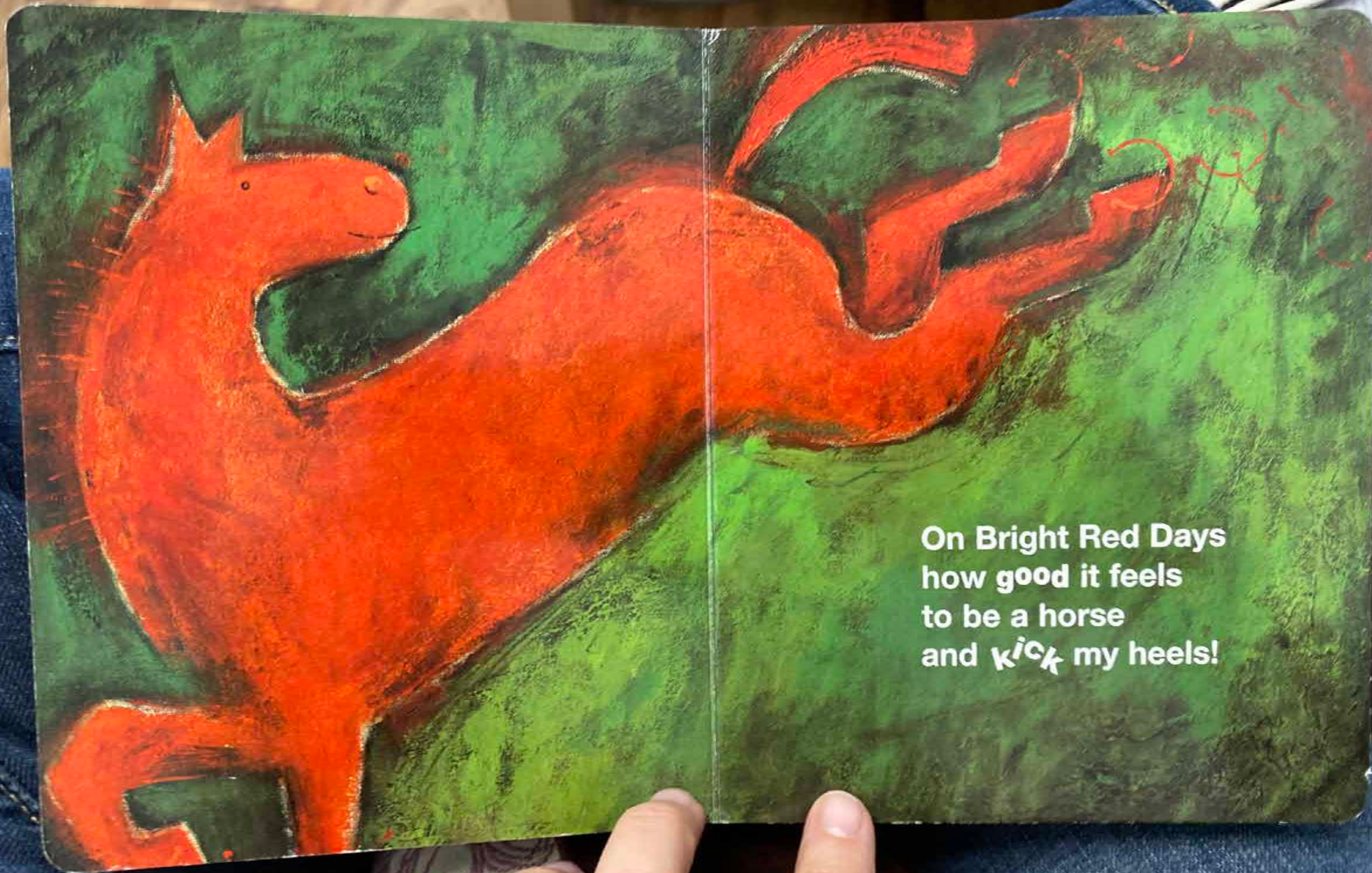
On different days
I'm different too.

You'd be
surprised
how many ways

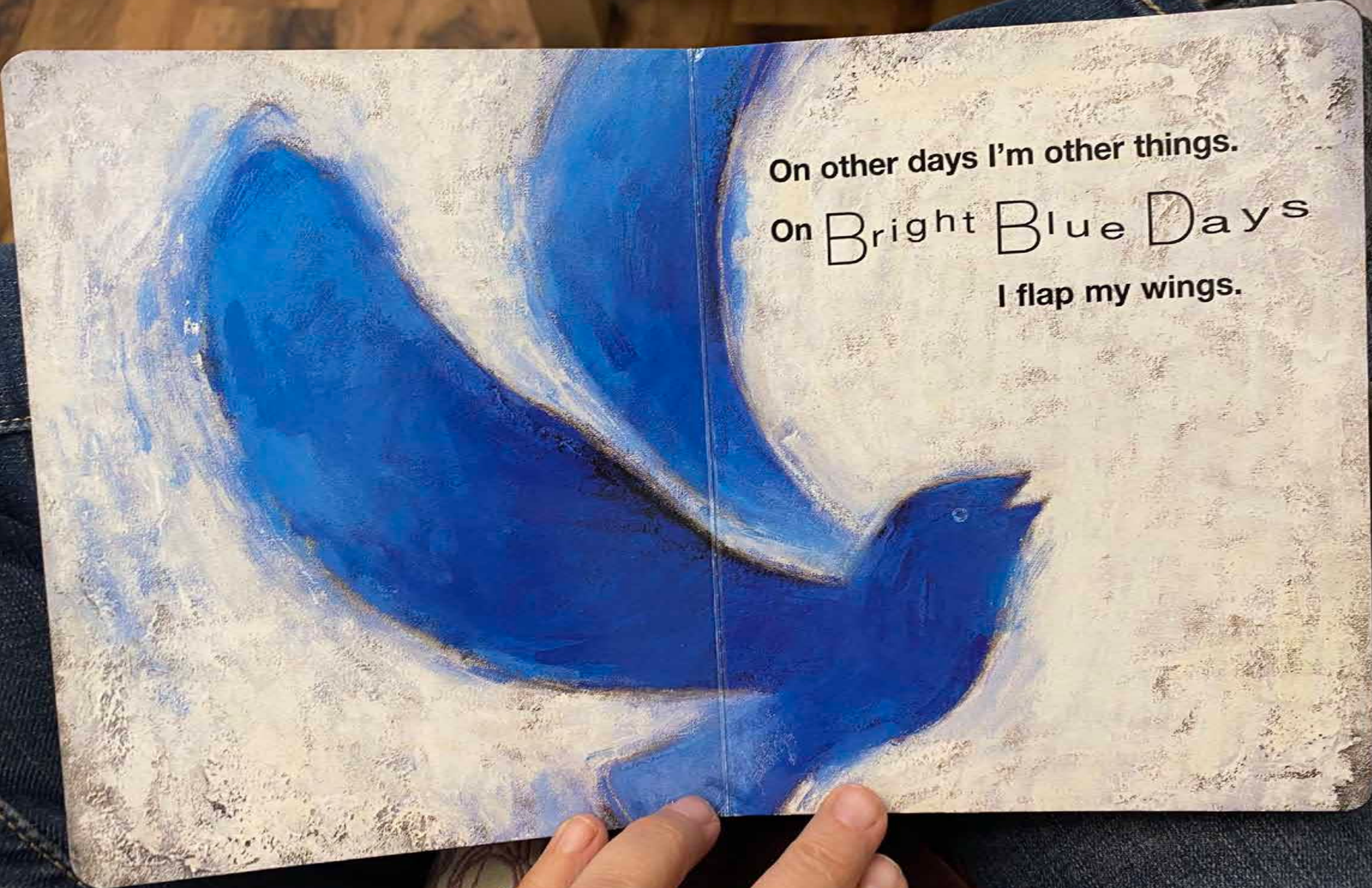


I change
on Different
Colored
Days.



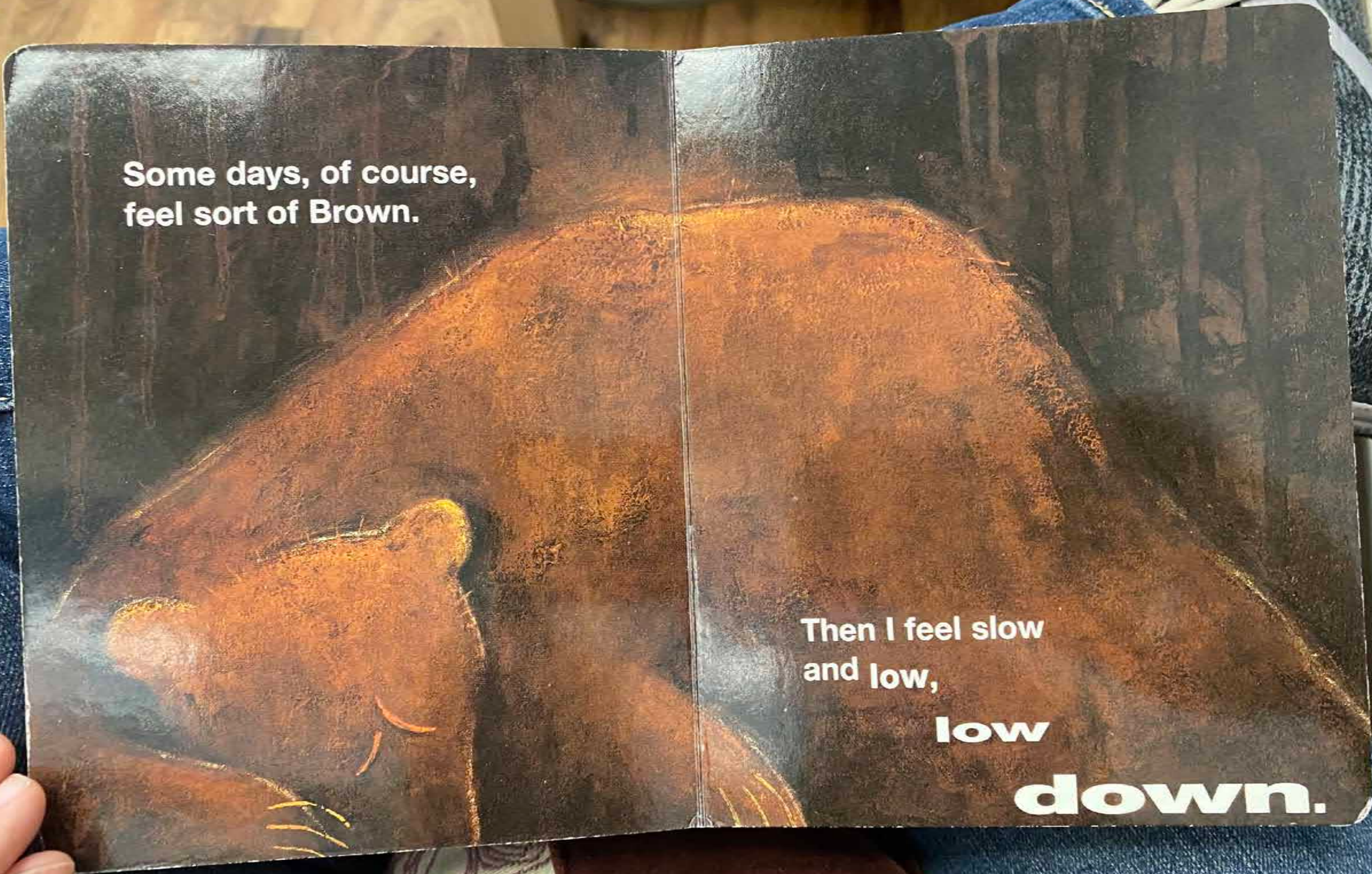


On Bright Red Days
how good it feels
to be a horse
and kick my heels!

A blue bird is depicted in flight, spanning across the gutter of an open book. The bird is painted in a vibrant blue color with soft, blended edges, giving it a watercolor-like appearance. Its wings are spread wide, and its tail is visible on the right page. The background of the pages is a light, textured greyish-white. The book is being held open by a person's hands, which are visible at the bottom of the frame. The book is resting on a dark blue fabric surface, and a wooden floor is visible in the background.

On other days I'm other things.

On Bright Blue Days
I flap my wings.



Some days, of course,
feel sort of Brown.

Then I feel slow
and low,

low

down.

Then comes a Yellow Day.

And,

W H E

E E

E E

E

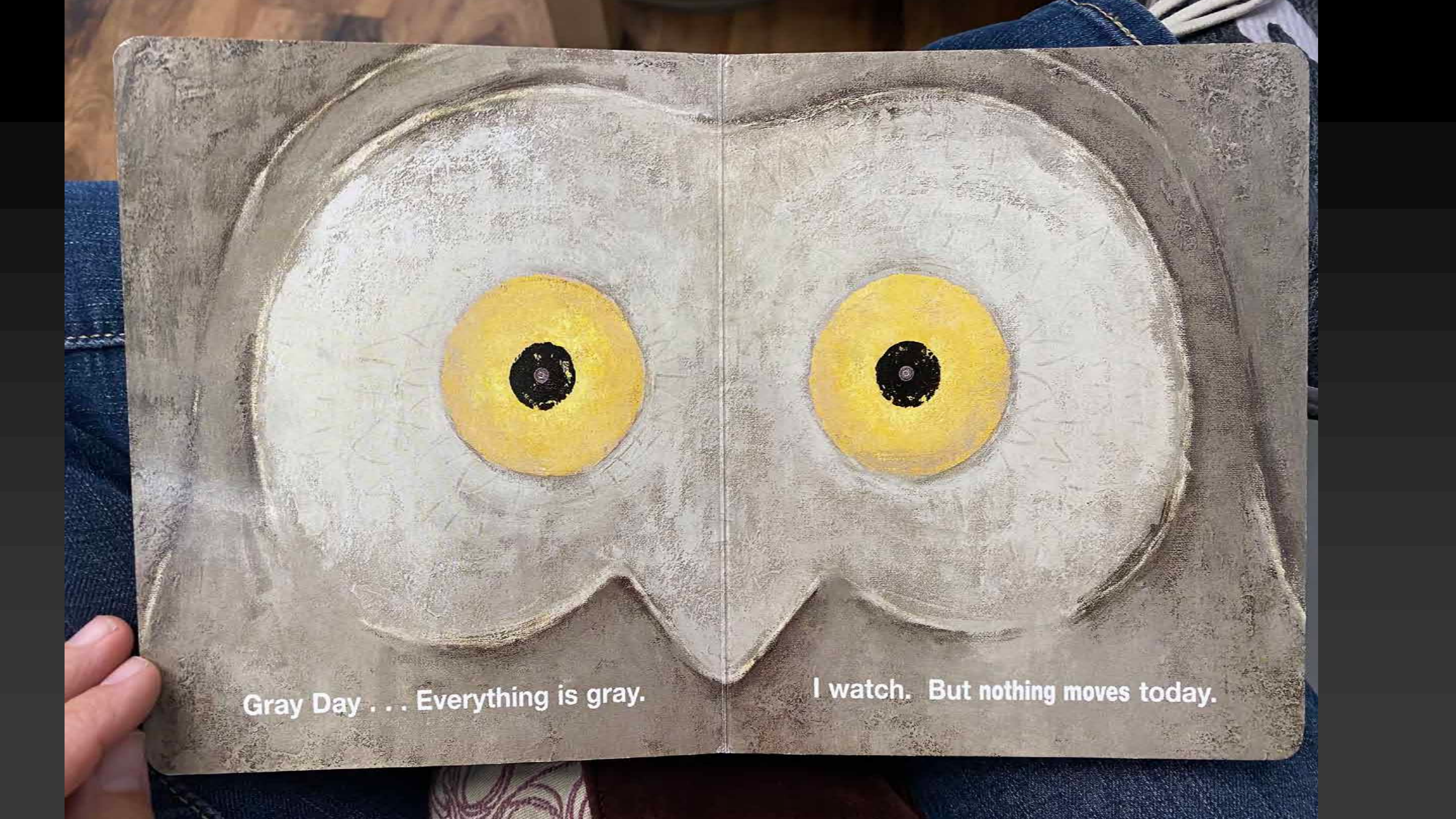
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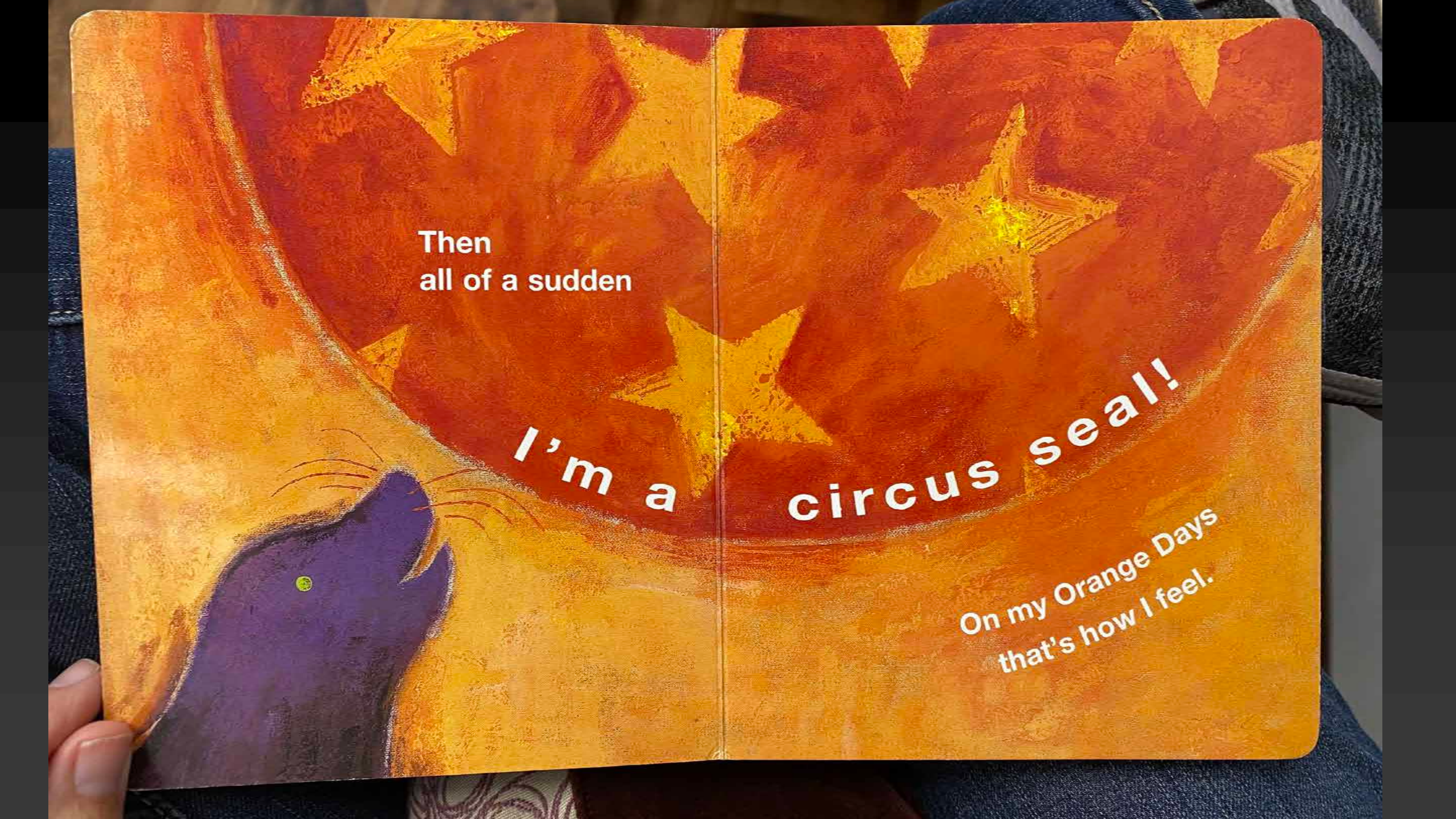
E

I am a busy, buzzy bee.

An open book with a large, stylized owl illustration. The owl's body is formed by the two pages of the book, which are a mottled gray color. The owl has two large, circular yellow eyes with black pupils. The book is being held open by a hand on the left side. The background shows a wooden surface and a blue fabric.

Gray Day . . . Everything is gray.

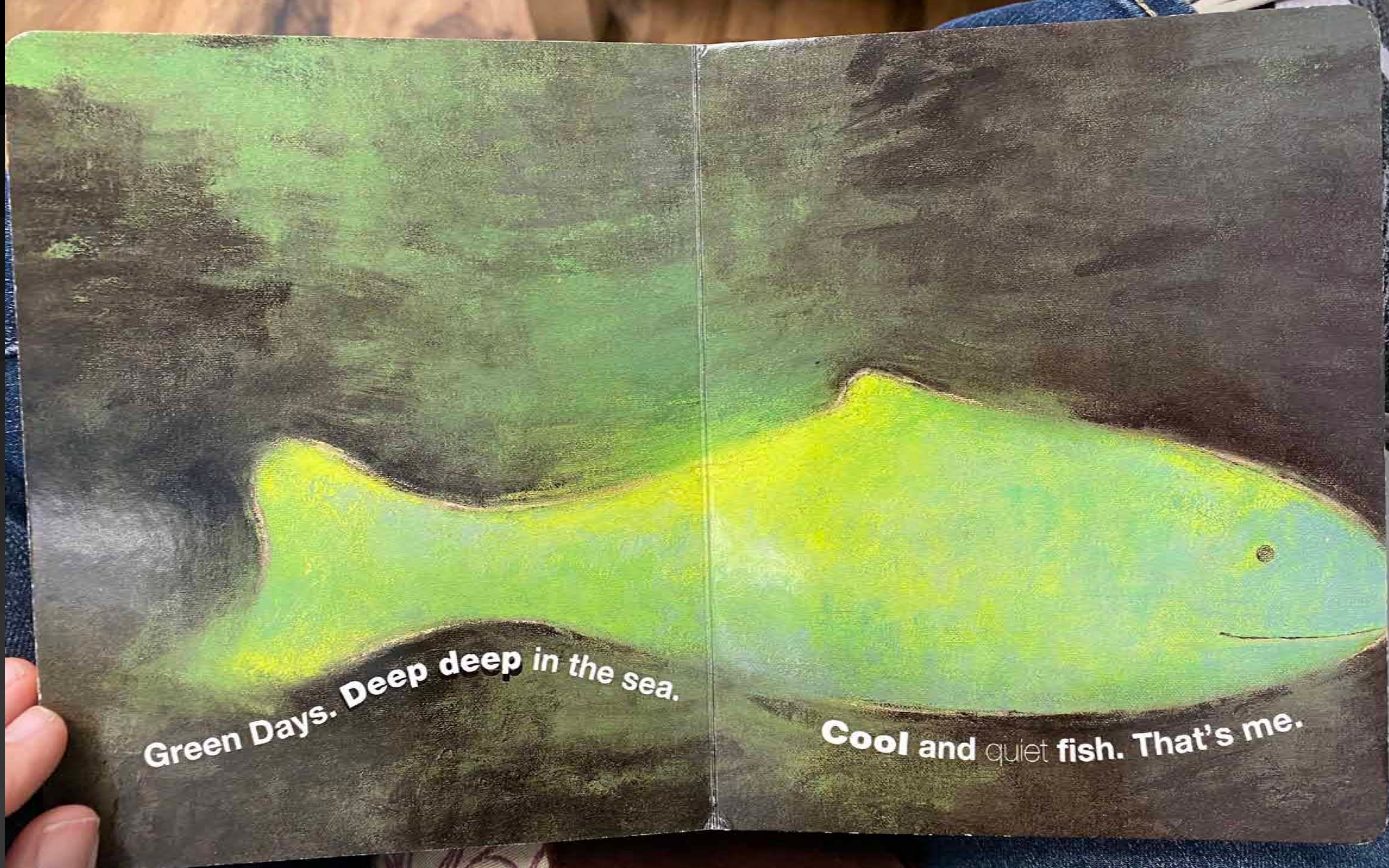
I watch. But nothing moves today.



Then
all of a sudden

I'm a circus seal!

On my Orange Days
that's how I feel.



Green Days. Deep deep in the sea.

Cool and quiet fish. That's me.

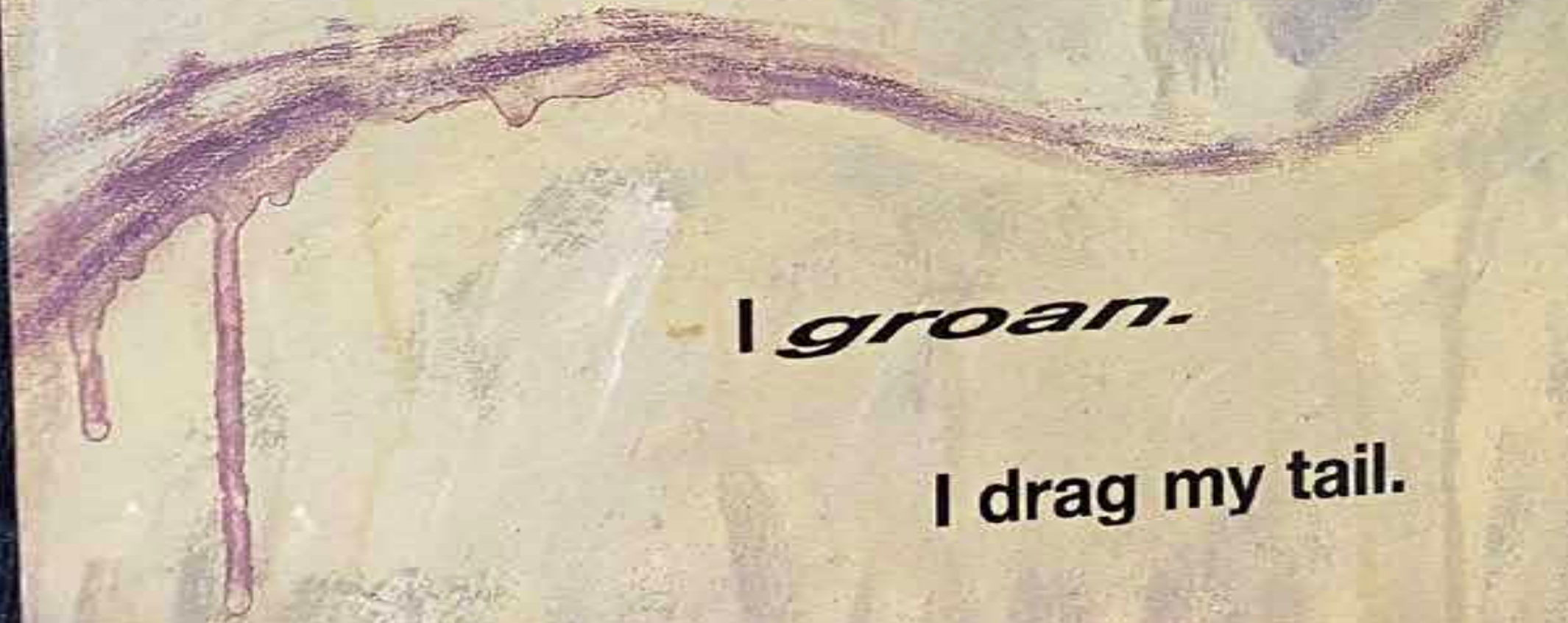
On Purple Days

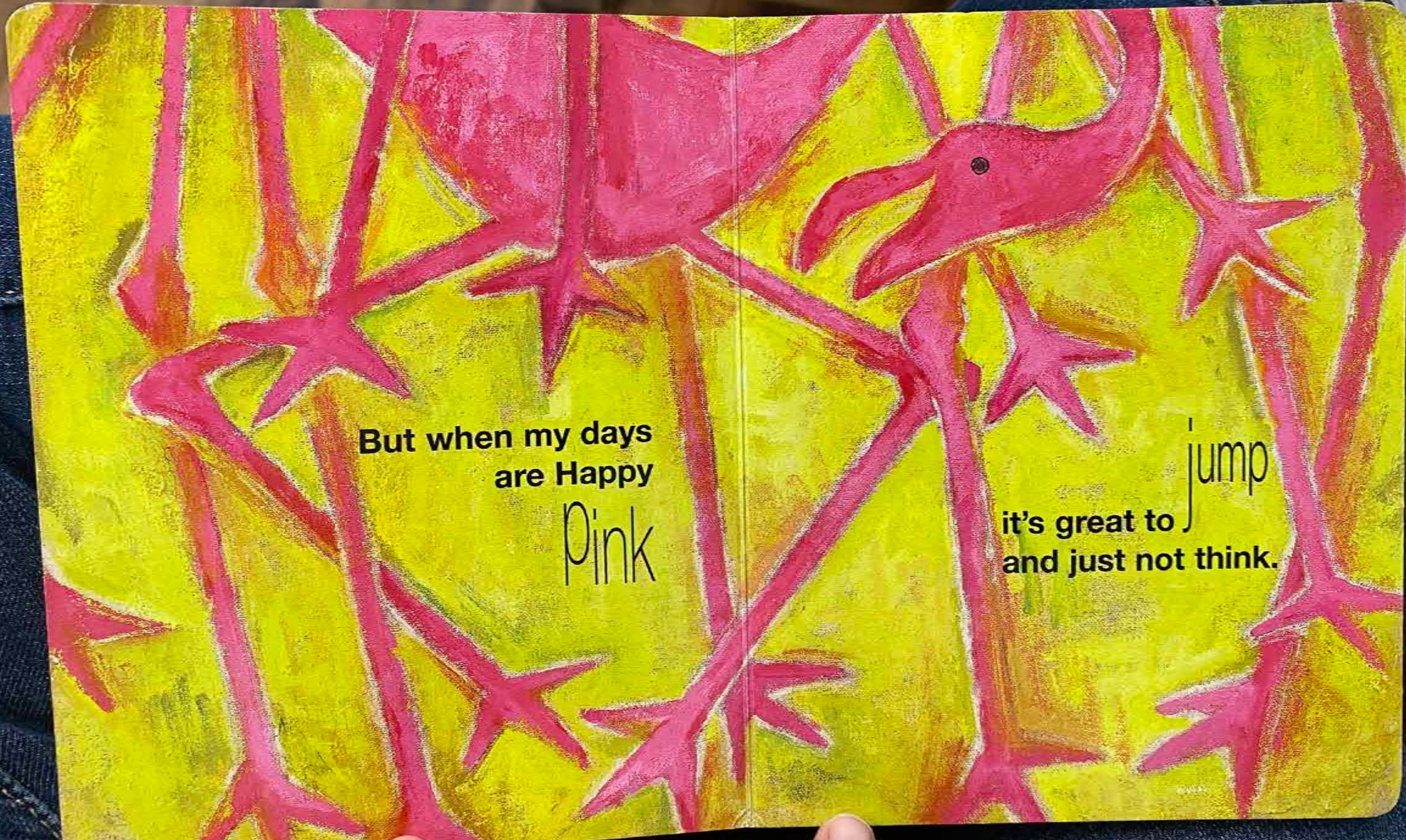
I'm sad.

I groan.

I drag my tail.

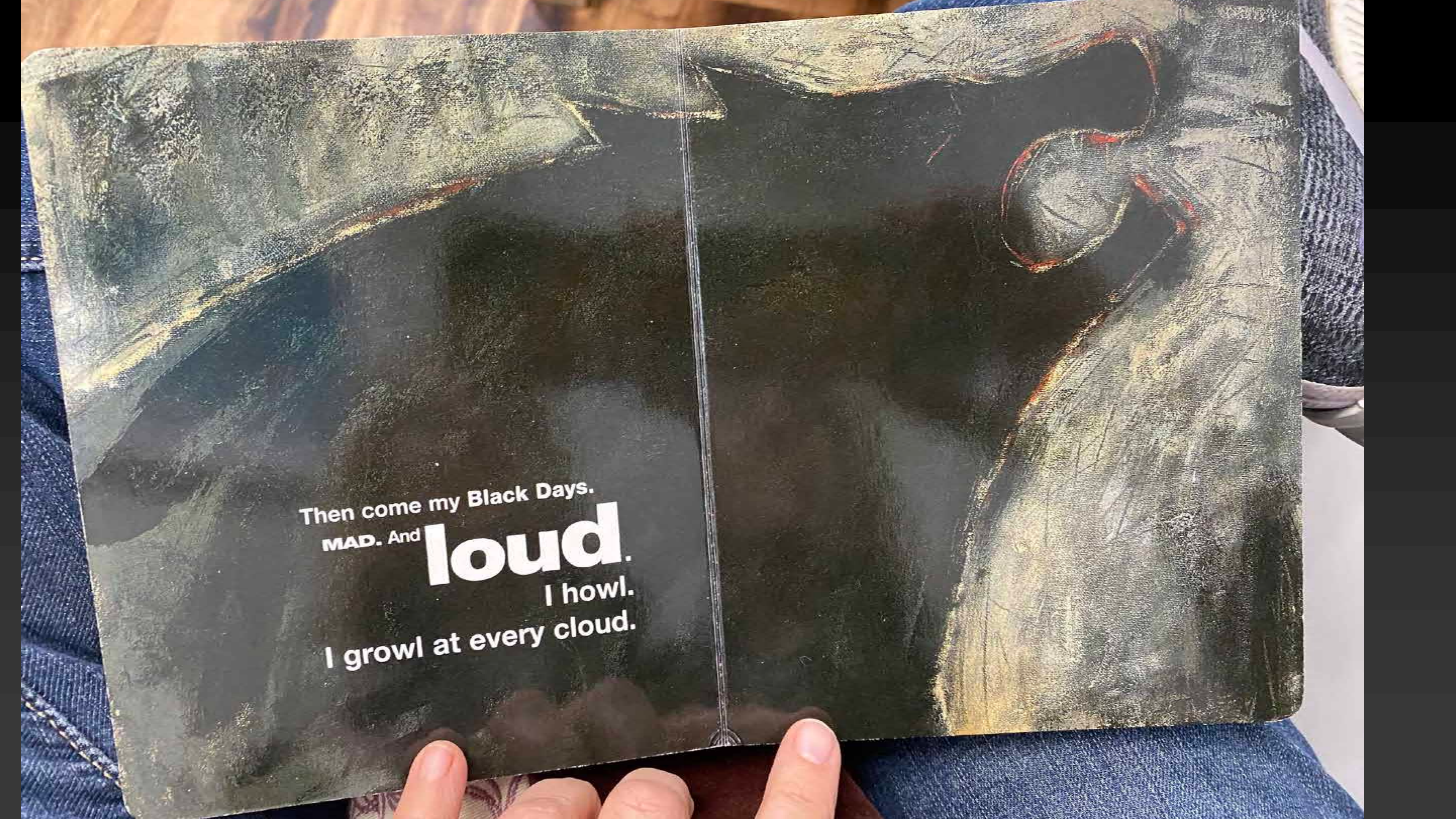
I walk alone.





But when my days
are Happy
Pink

jump
it's great to
and just not think.



Then come my Black Days.
MAD. And loud.
I howl.
I growl at every cloud.

Then comes a Mixed-Up Day.

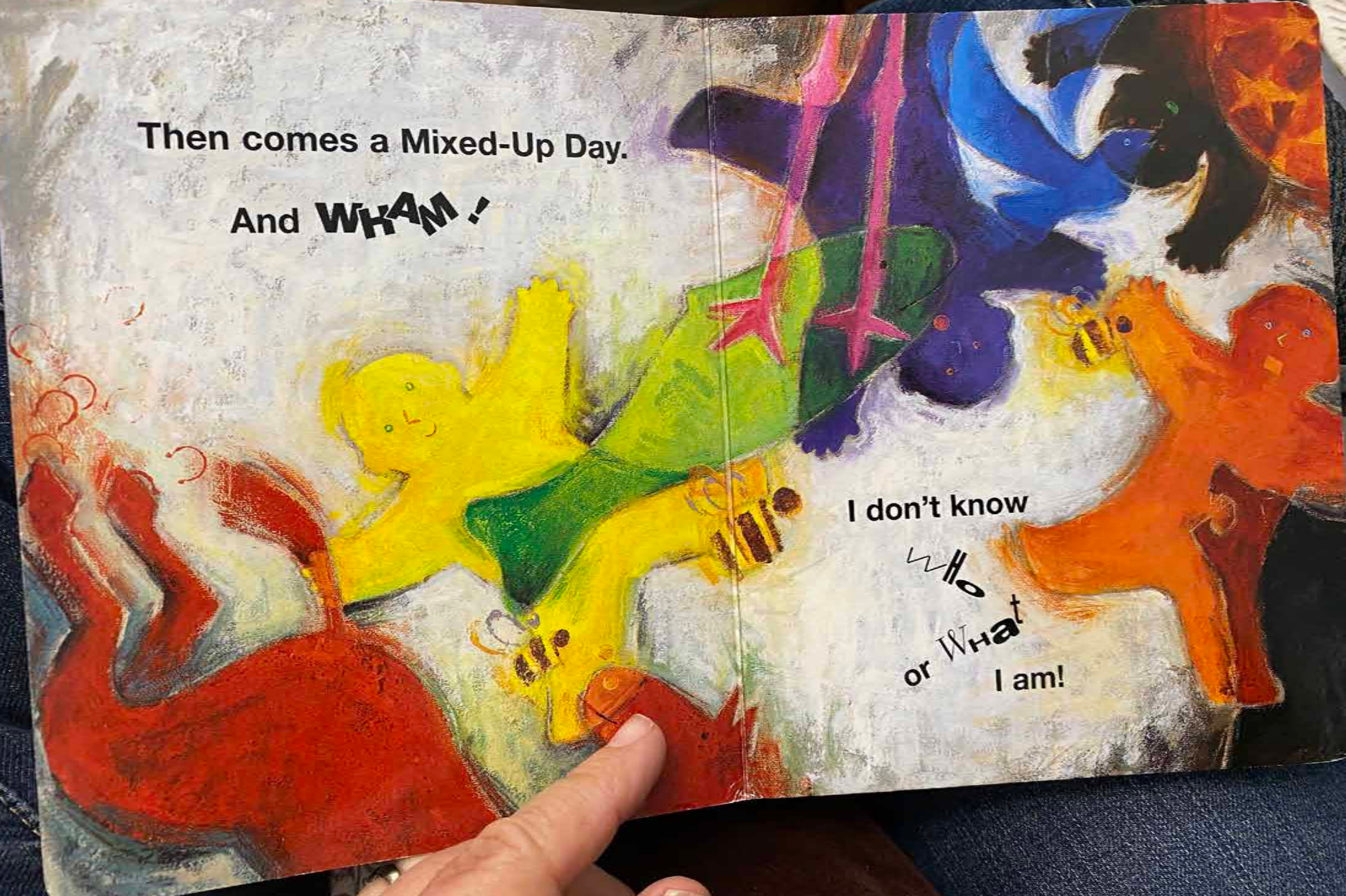
And **WHAM!**

I don't know

Who

or What

I am!



But it all
turns out all right,
you see.

And I go back
to being . . .

me.

