Lesson Title: Edward Gorey Inspired Book Covers
Grades: 6–8
Time Required: 3–5 classroom periods
Subject Areas: Visual Art, Language Arts

Lesson Overview: In this lesson students will examine Edward Gorey’s use of line to create value and create a book cover design using cross-hatching.

Common Core English Language Arts
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.2.A
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.9

National Core Art Standards
VA:Re.7.2.6a
Analyze ways that visual components and cultural associations suggested by images influence ideas, emotions, and actions.
VA:Re8.1.8a
Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, artmaking approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

Learning Objectives:
Students will be able to:
- Analyze Edward Gorey’s book covers for clues about the book’s plot and mood
- Identify key elements in a book they have read
- Design a book cover that conveys key elements of the book while building a sense of mystery
- Use cross-hatching to create value and texture

Artwork in Focus:
Click on the link below to access these images through the Wadsworth’s Public Portal. Once on the portal, click on the image to view the object information. You may download a jpeg of the image by clicking the image again. NOTE: Works of art used in this lesson may not currently be on view at the museum.

Edward Gorey, Haunted America, 1990

Materials:
- Image of Haunted America by Edward Gorey (using the above link)
- Image of Haunted America as a book cover [included in this lesson plan]
- Projector and screen/SMART Board or equivalent
- Crosshatching Worksheet [included in this lesson plan]
- Book Review Web [included in this lesson plan]
- Pencils
- Fine-tipped Sharpies or equivalent
- Heavy stock paper
- Watercolors (optional)
Lesson Procedures:

Part One: Guided Looking
1. Project the image of *Haunted America* and lead a group discussion based on the questions below:
   - Describe the setting. Where does this scene take place? Can we tell the time of day? The time of year? Where in the world might we be? Does the setting seem like a real place? Why or why not?
   - Describe the figures in the image. Are they realistic? Why or why not? What colors does the artist use to portray them? How are they interacting?
   - What do you think is going on in this image? If you had to make up a narrative, what would it be?

2. Give students some background information about the artist Edward Gorey:

   Edward Gorey was an author and illustrator born in Chicago in 1925. He wrote and illustrated over 100 books filled with imaginative and nonsensical creatures and darkly funny plots. His writing and illustrations are hard to concretely label in one category, and Gorey made a point of never saying whether his work is for adults or children.

3. Focus on Gorey’s use of lines and to create value and texture:
   - What kinds of lines do they see? What direction are the lines? Are they short? Long? How have they been spaced? Notice how some lines are parallel and some are crossed. This is hatching and cross-hatching. Where has Gorey left white space?
   - Look at the different materials in the image (trees, stone, a paved road, etc.). How has Gorey used line to create the different texture of each?

4. Tell students that Gorey often designed book covers as well and share the image of *Haunted America* as a book cover and either lead a whole-class discussion or have students discuss in small groups the following questions:
   - How has the image been changed? What has been added? What has been left out?
   - Book covers often give us clues about the content of the book.
     - What do you think this book is about looking at its cover?
     - What characters might we encounter? What do you think they will be like?
     - Who do you think the audience is? Adults, children, teens? What makes you think that?

5. Have students look at a number of Gorey book cover illustrations. A database of these illustrations can be found here: [https://goo.gl/U6tGyB](https://goo.gl/U6tGyB). You may want students to browse the site in groups, or pre-select a number of examples and print them for small group discussion. Ask students to focus on the following when looking at the covers:
   - How Gorey creates a sense of mystery
   - His use of cross-hatching
   - His limited use of color
   - The relationship to text (title, author, etc.)

Part Two: Cross-hatching practice
1. Tell students they will be designing book covers for their favorite book incorporating hatching and cross-hatching in their illustrations.

2. Hand out the cross-hatching worksheet included in this lesson. Demonstrate different cross-hatching techniques before having students practice on their worksheet. You can also show students a video tutorial, like this one: [Cross-Hatching Video Tutorial by Shoo Rayner](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ)
Part Three: Creating their own Book Covers

1. Either using a book the class has been reading together, or a free-choice read, tell students they will be designing a new book cover in the style of Edward Gorey.

2. Ask students to brainstorm the most important or memorable aspects of their book, using the Book Review Web worksheet provided in this lesson. They should focus on aspects such as the setting, characters, plot, and theme.

3. Ask students to brainstorm the most important or memorable aspects of their book, using the mystery. Brainstorm with the class how they might create a sense of mystery, referring to the Gorey book covers as inspiration. Some ideas might include:
   - Framing their scene in a doorway or window
   - Isolating a single detail (object, figure, etc.) from their book with no context
   - Including figures with inscrutable facial expressions
   - Depicting a setting with no figures

4. Before beginning to plan out their book covers, remind students that their design needs to include the title and author. (You can extend the assignment to include a back cover as well, in which case you should review the elements of a good synopsis).

5. Have students lightly sketch their covers designs in pencil, including the title and author.

6. Before filling in with pen, have students swap cover designs with a partner for a peer review.

7. After they have reviewed any comments or suggestions, students should fill in their cover designs with pen using hatching and cross-hatching. Remind students that:
   - They are not scribbling
   - Consider where the light is coming from
   - To vary the length of their lines
   - To draw lines further apart for light areas, and closer together/overlapping for dark areas
   - To create different textures with their lines

8. Optional: students may add color to their covers using watercolors. Make sure they are being judicious!

9. After students have finished their book covers, display the finished products in the classroom and allow students time to browse the book covers and use them to select another book to read.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Edward Gorey, Cover design for “Haunted America: Star-Spangled Supernatural Short Stories,” 1990

For almost five decades, Gorey designed dust jackets for more than two hundred paperback and hardcover books. The artistic direction of these commercial projects was largely dictated to him by an editor. For example, he may have been directed to use a red, white, and blue palette to symbolize this book’s patriotic title: Haunted America.

Yet Gorey’s artful covers still show elements of his unique aesthetic and taste for the peculiar. For unknown reasons, he inserted an oversized hand with its pointer finger aimed at the sky. The publisher ultimately removed this enigmatic element from the final design.
Cross-Hatching Worksheet

Try to replicate the above value scale in the boxes below using only lines.

Shade the cube below using *straight* lines.

Shade the sphere using *contoured* lines that follow the curves of the shape.
Book Review Web

Use the web below as a starting point to brainstorm the most important elements in the book you read.