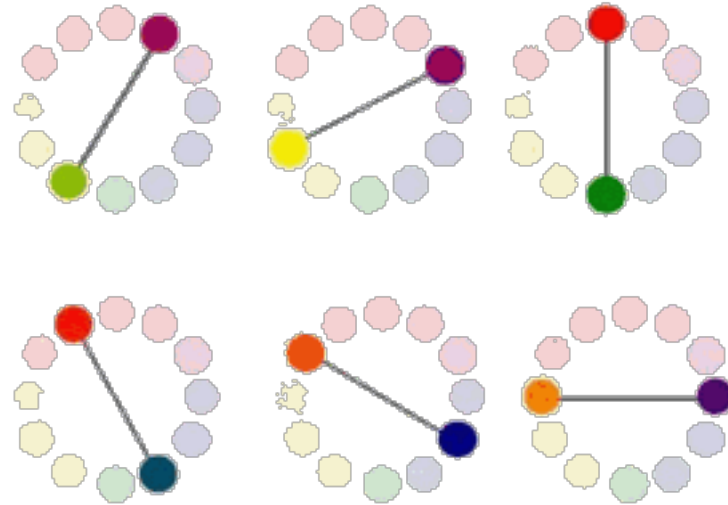
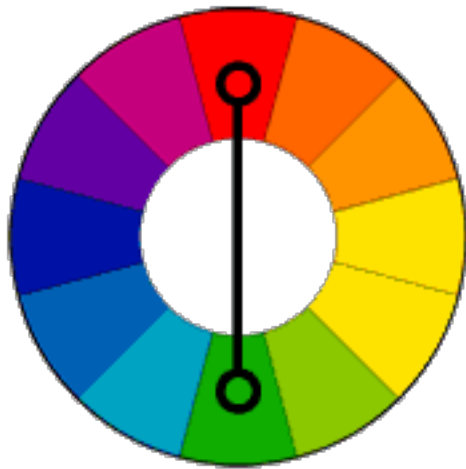


Color Relationships



Color wheels help us understand the relationships between colors. These color relationships are key in establishing *focal point*, *mood*, overall narrative and *emotional read*. Let's look at some of the most basic color harmonies.

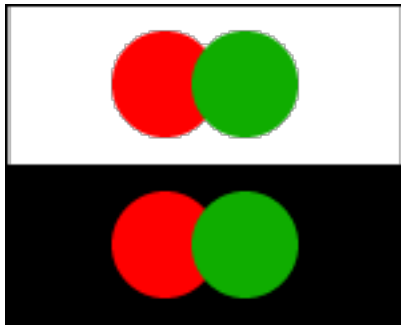
Complementary Colors



We know that colors located opposite each other on the color wheel are complementary colors (orange and blue, yellow and purple, and red and green). This is a very important color relationship to understand.

Color Relationships

Complementary colors are **very high contrast** when placed next to each other. At their full saturation, they are the highest possible color contrast you can have in a piece. In practical terms this means green near red will draw your eye right to it.



Vibrating Boundaries

In fact this contrast is so powerful it can actually create the illusion of movement.

Notice the vibrating edges and illusion of raised text created by using complementary colors together.

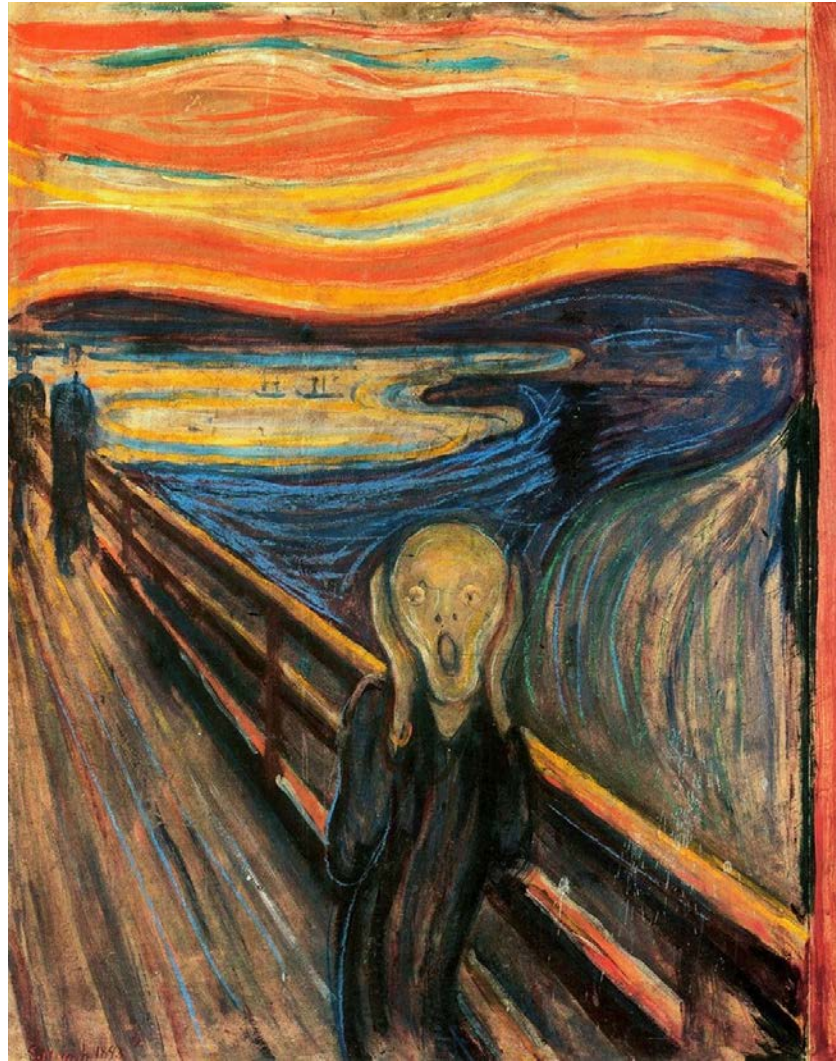
COMPLEMENTARY COLORS AT WORK



Sandy Skogland,
Revenge of the Goldfish, 1981



Complementary color schemes will infuse an image with a natural sense of tension, which we can use strategically in any visual medium.



Edvard Munch, *The Scream*

Nineteenth-century expressionist Edvard Munch's famous painting *The Scream* is another example of an orange-blue complementary color palette.

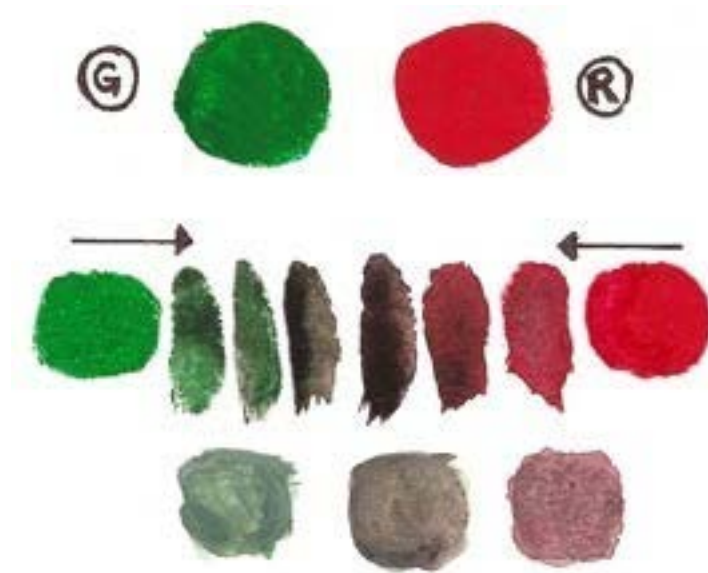


Andrew Hem, *Why start with the bridge*

Contemporary illustrator Andrew Hem's painting *Why start with the bridge* uses a complementary blue-orange palette to support a strongly implied narrative.

How does the palette, when considered together with the content of the image, affect your perception of the story?

MIXING COMPLEMENTS



When colors opposite each other on the color wheel are mixed, their complementary relationship will cause them to annihilate each other, turning into a muddy neutral color, as in this sample.

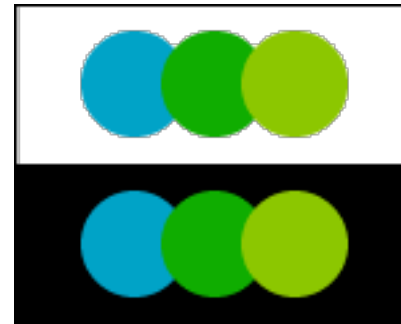
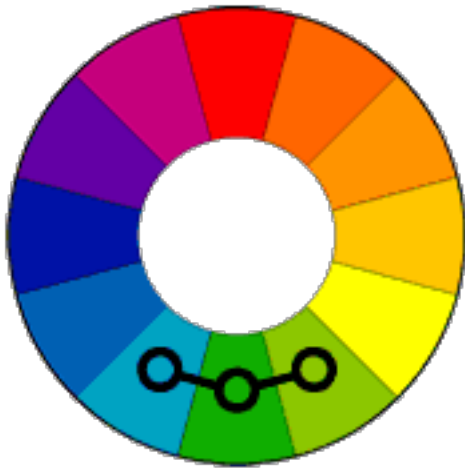
These more muted neutral tones can make a complementary palette work really well, taking away much of the sense of tension.



Note how this image for the year of the dragon created by Victo Ngai is infused with energy and life by using complementary colors.

However, the *natural tension* between colors is downplayed by the Ngai's choice to de-saturate the colors, bringing them closer to neutral, and also by choosing one color (green) as dominant.

Analogous Colors



Colors located next to each other on the color wheel are called *analogous colors*. These colors used together are usually harmonious or pleasing to the eye.



We often see this color scheme in nature and thus its naturally relaxing .

The harmonious qualities of complimentary colors are often put to use by interior designers.



Nineteenth-century Dutch impressionist Vincent van Gogh uses an analogous color scheme in this painting, *Sunflowers*.

Which color has he chosen to dominate and which is the support?

Where has a third color been used as an accent for contrast?

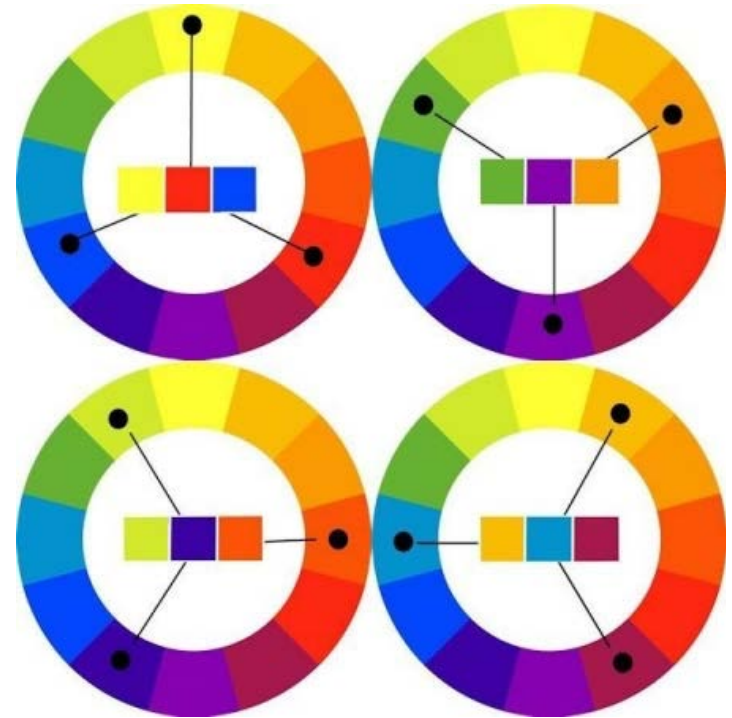
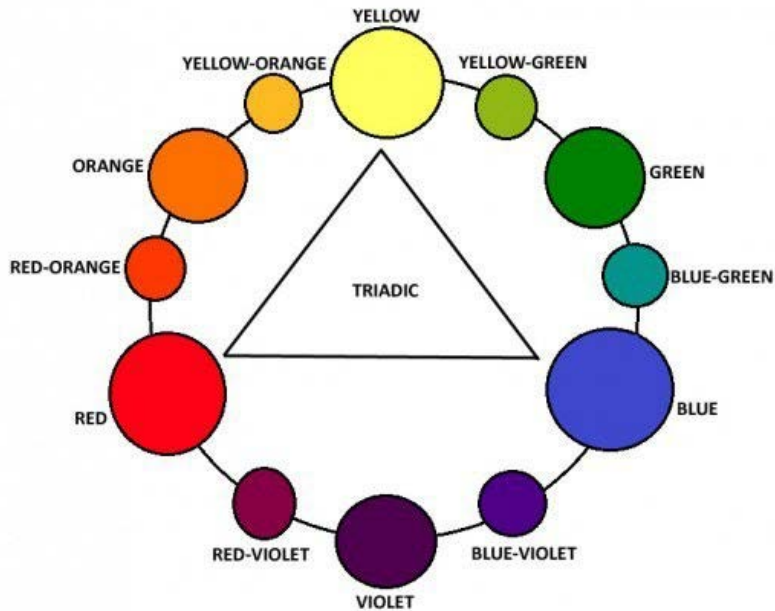


And in the classic illustration from *The Frog Prince*, 19th-century British illustrator Walter Crane uses the same yellow-green analogous palette.

In it we find orange, yellow-orange, and yellow, along with shades of yellow-green.

Note how the subject's red hair brings our eyes up to her face, and the heart charm on her hip pops forward due to saturation and contrast with the predominantly green background.

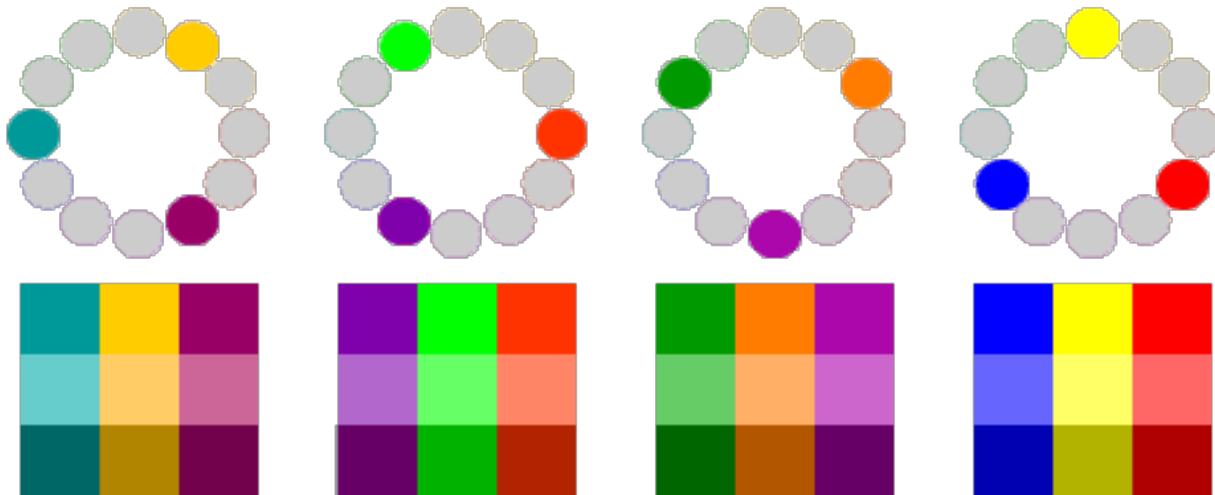
Triadic Color Schemes



A triadic color scheme uses colors that are spaced evenly around the color wheel. The classic triadic color scheme is red, yellow, and blue, our primaries.

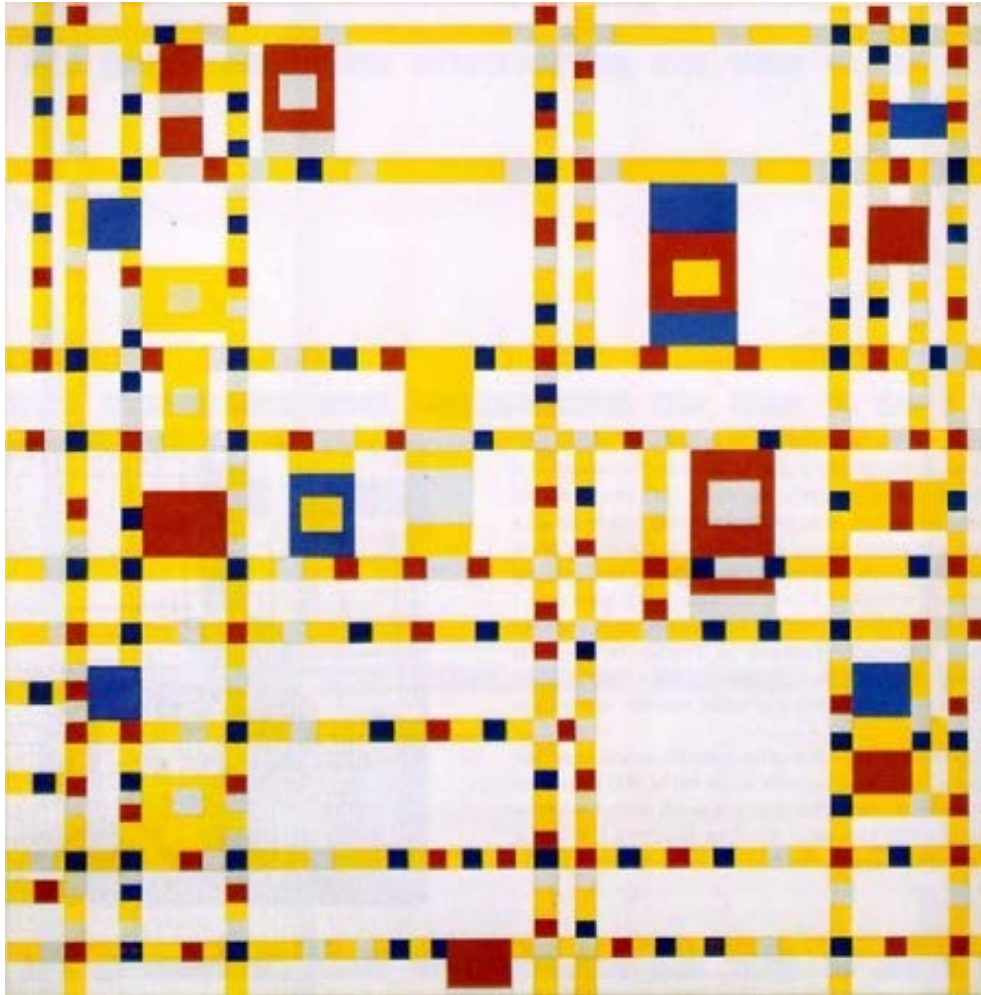
To find others, simply turn the triangle over on your color wheel to find the next set of triadic colors, as in this diagram.

Triadic Harmonies



When working with a triadic color scheme, usually one of the three colors is the dominant color. The other two will be used for contrasting accents. Also as in the example below, consider using differing levels of saturation.

Triadic Colors at Work



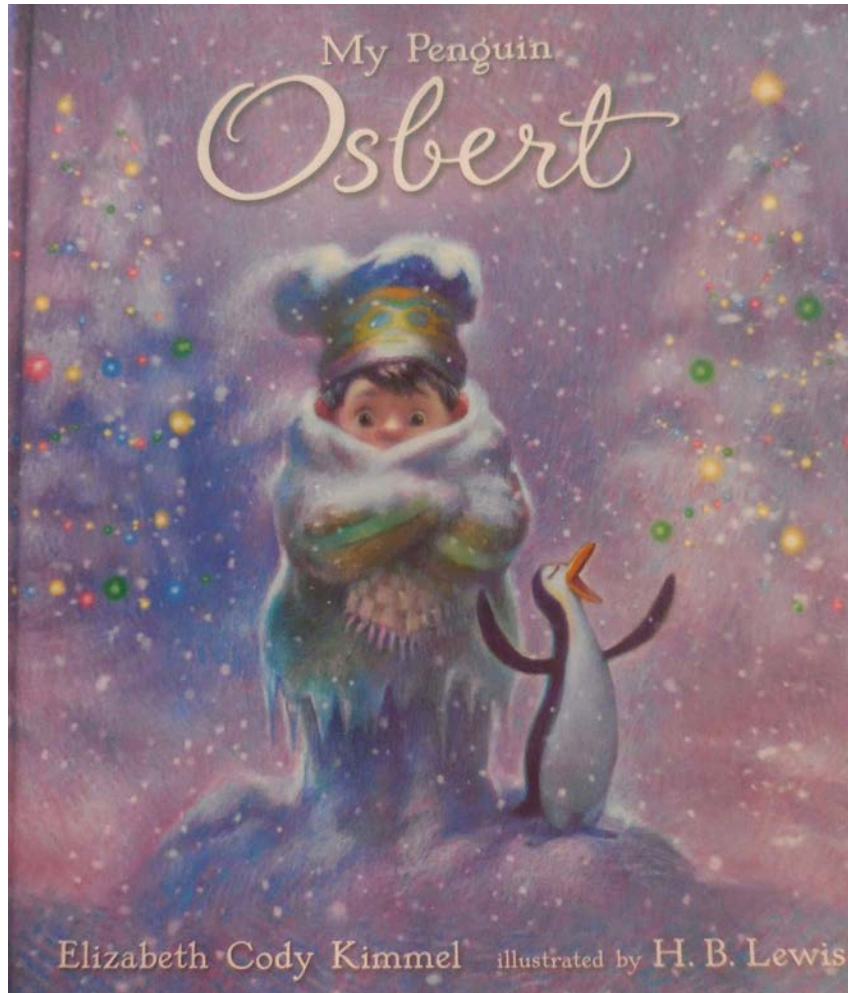
Triadic color schemes are quite vibrant, as we can see in the painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie* by 20th-century abstract painter Piet Mondrian.

This painting is an example of fully saturated primary colors, or a red-blue-yellow triadic color scheme.



Neo-impressionist Paul Signac uses a de-saturated, orange-green-violet triadic color scheme in this painting from 1900, *The Papal Palace at Avignon*.

In this example, the violet and green are desaturated to enrich the background, while the orange is intended to advance and provide contrast, resulting in an image that is full of energy but without a jarring level of intensity.



This popular color scheme comprises the three secondary colors: orange, green, and violet.

Since there is some sharing between the colors—for example, both green and orange share yellow—the scheme is harmonious but offers a range of color.

This desaturated triadic color scheme is used in a different way by illustrator H.B. Lewis.

Split Complementary Color Schemes

The split-complementary color scheme uses one base color and the two colors *adjacent* to its complement.



 Split-complementary

You will see this color harmony used often, both in fine art as well as in commercial art and design. It is simple to use effectively and has much the same strong visual contrast as the complementary color scheme, but without a lot of the uncomfortable tension



Contemporary illustrator Tomer Hanuka is known for complementing his expressive line work and interesting concepts with a limited palette of simple solid colors. These deceptively simple-looking palettes are carefully composed to support Hanuka's narrative.



Contemporary illustrator Tomer Hanuka is known for complementing his expressive line work and interesting concepts with a limited palette of simple solid colors.

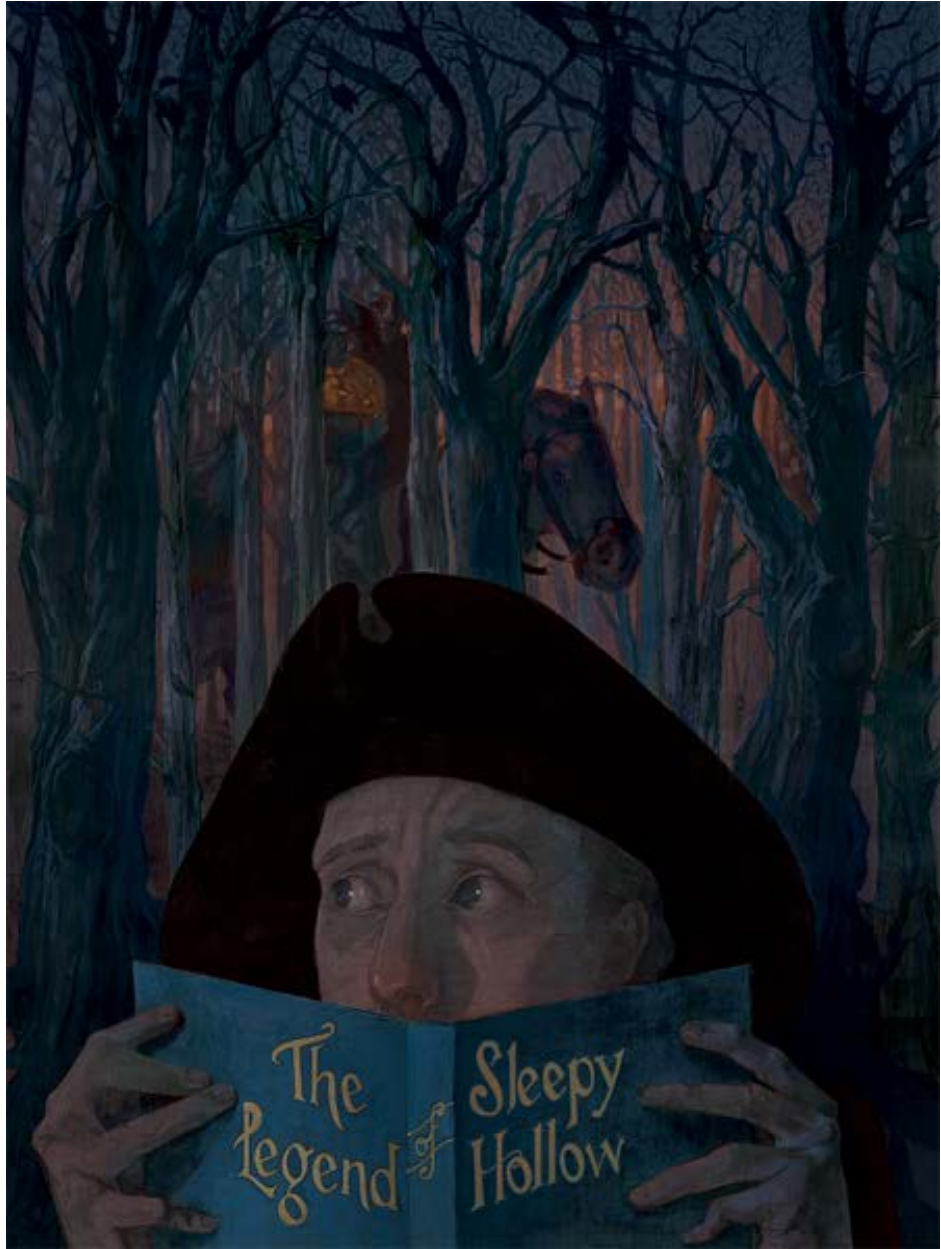
These deceptively simple-looking palettes are carefully composed to support Hanuka's narrative.

Color and Emotion



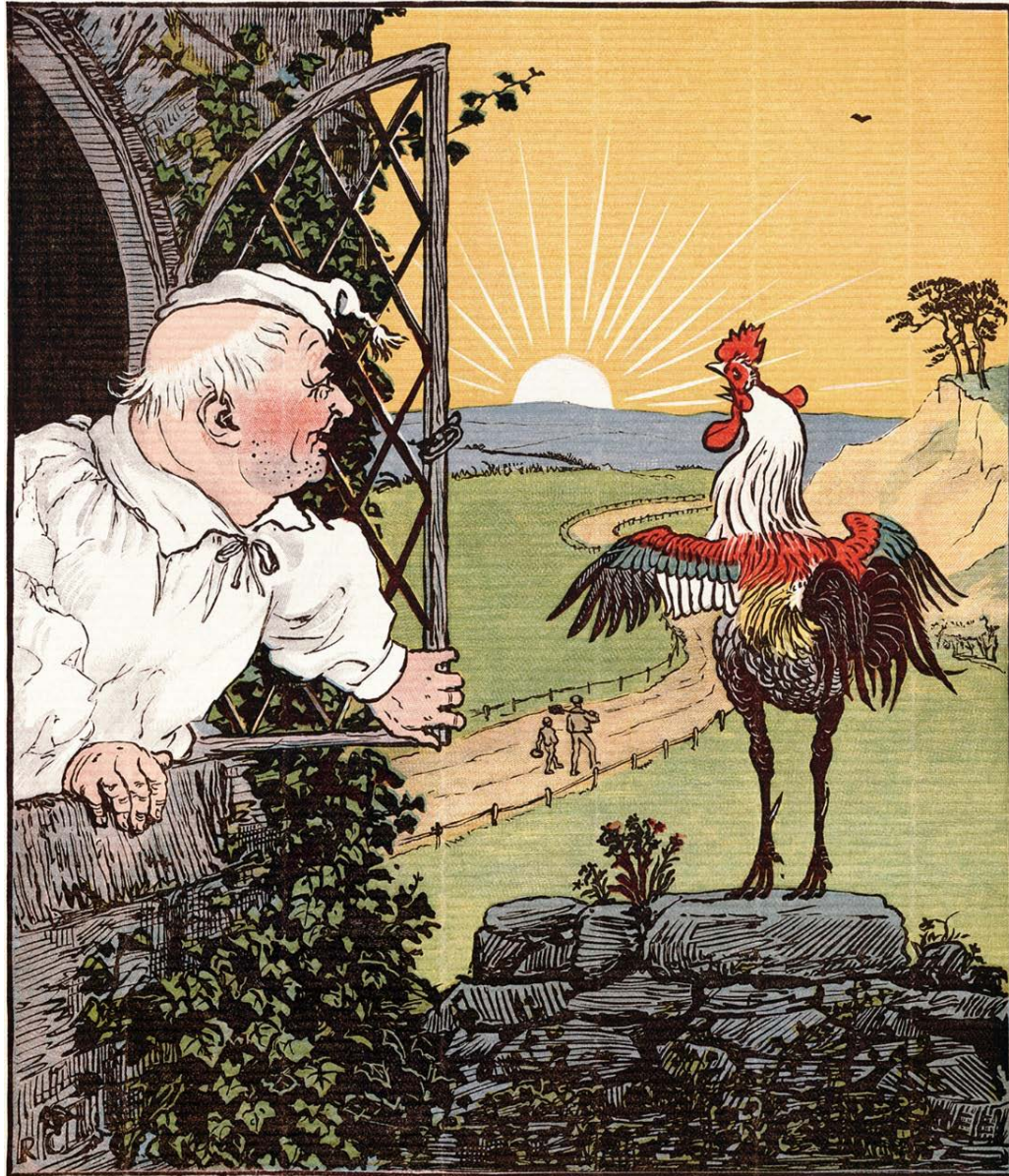
Our emotional reactions to color deeply influence the choices that are made by corporations in their advertising and branding.

Take a look at this color emotion guide.









THE K.I.S.S. THEORY OF COLOR

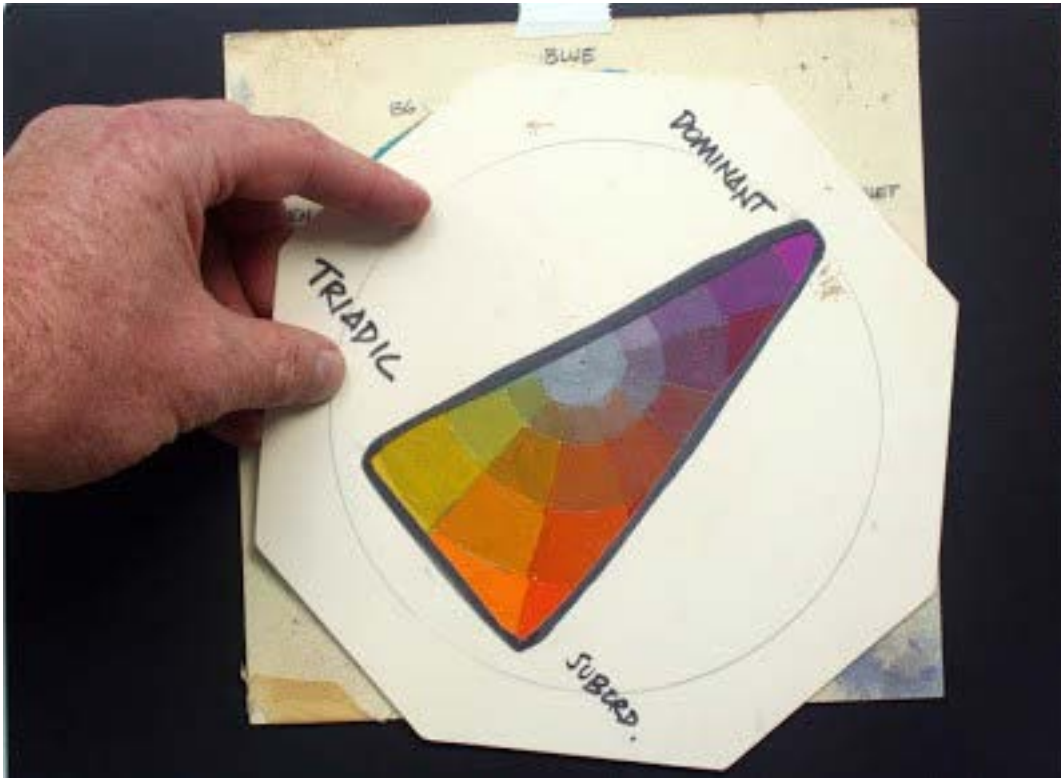
(KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID)



Many artists and designers choose to use a limited palette, meaning they deliberately restrict the number of colors they use in a composition.

There are clear benefits of painting using a limited palette in illustration.

Limited Palette



A limited palette may:

- create greater unity throughout your composition
- create easy color harmonies
- reduce the chance for over-mixing, if you are painting
- be a faster way to work
- force you to think about value and composition

LIMITED COLOR PALETTE SLIDESHOW

The lesson here is *less can certainly be more.*



Limited complementary palette

