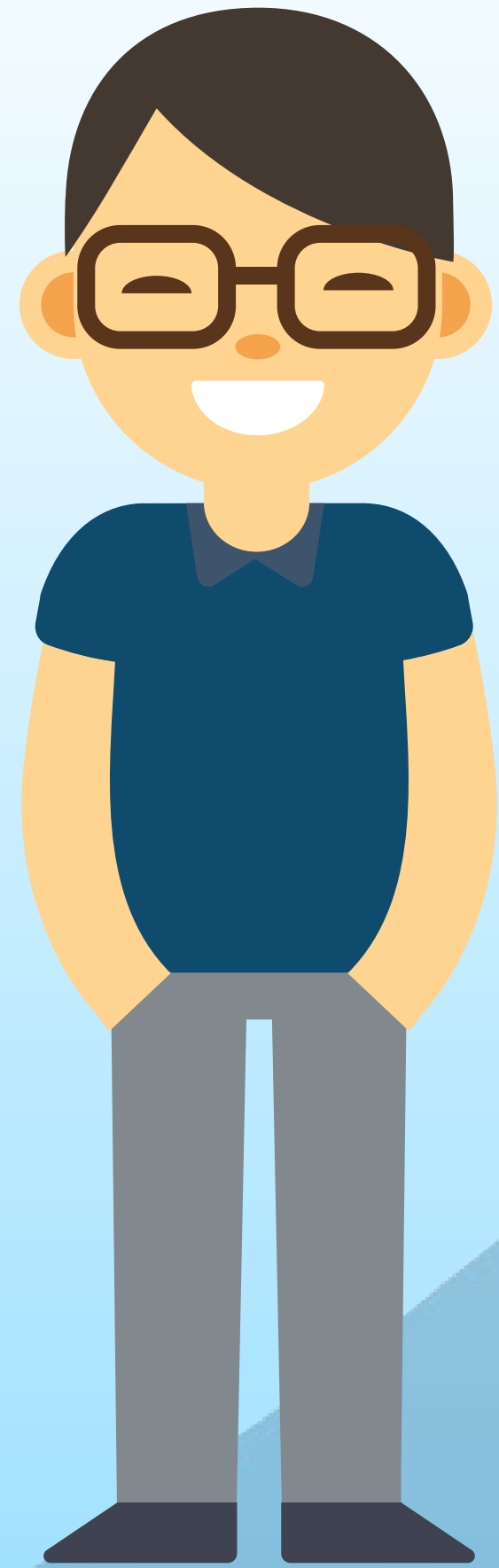


# Japanese Art

## Learning Objective:

To know about the importance of light and dark in artwork



Notan is a Japanese design idea which focuses on the amount of light and dark space within an artwork, and where these areas are placed in relation to each other.

The word 'notan' literally means 'light-dark balance'.

What do we mean by 'space' in a piece of artwork?  
Think, pair, then share your ideas.

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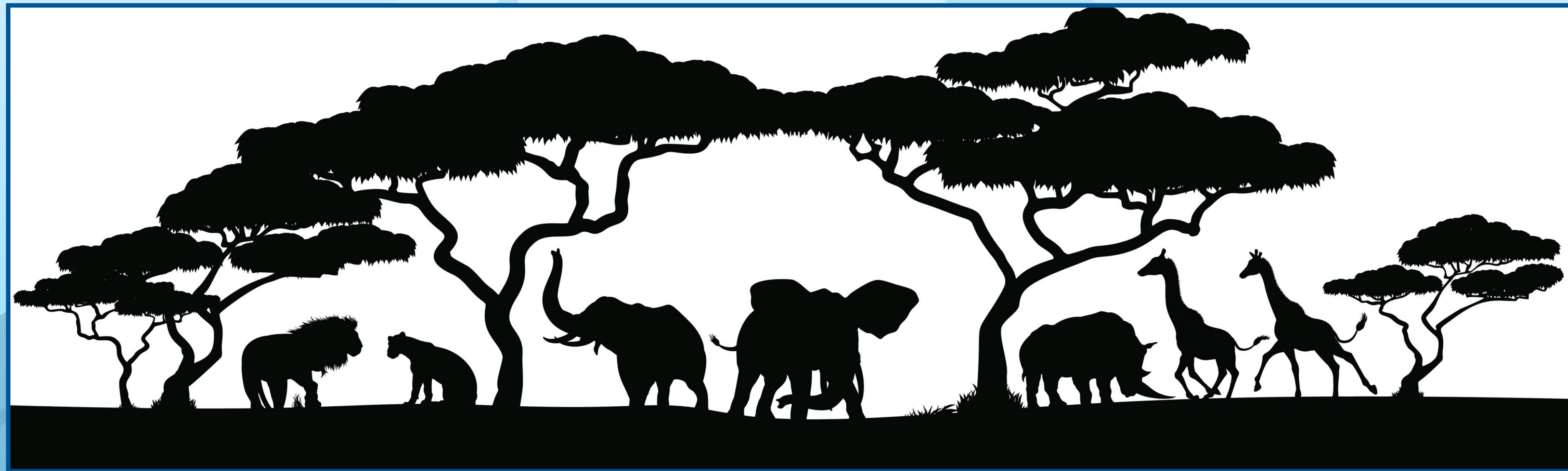
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Space is the area above, below, between, within and around the objects in an artwork.

The space within the shapes or forms in an artwork is called positive space.



The space around the shapes or forms in an artwork is called negative space.

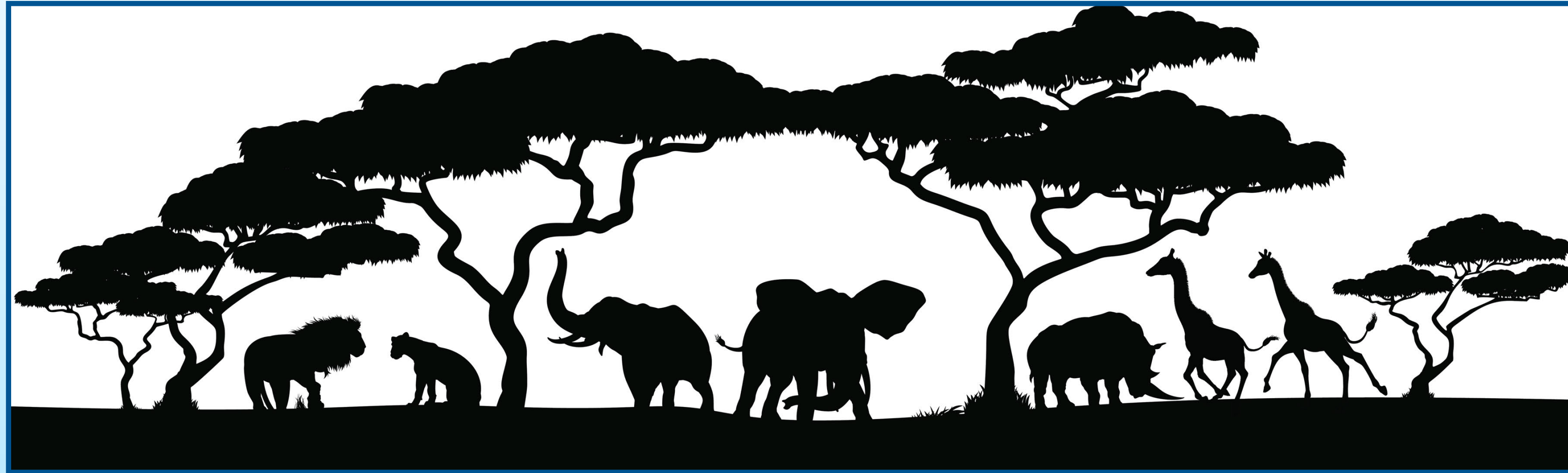


Can you identify the positive and negative spaces within this image?

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In this image, the positive space consists of all the black areas, and the negative space consists of all the white areas.



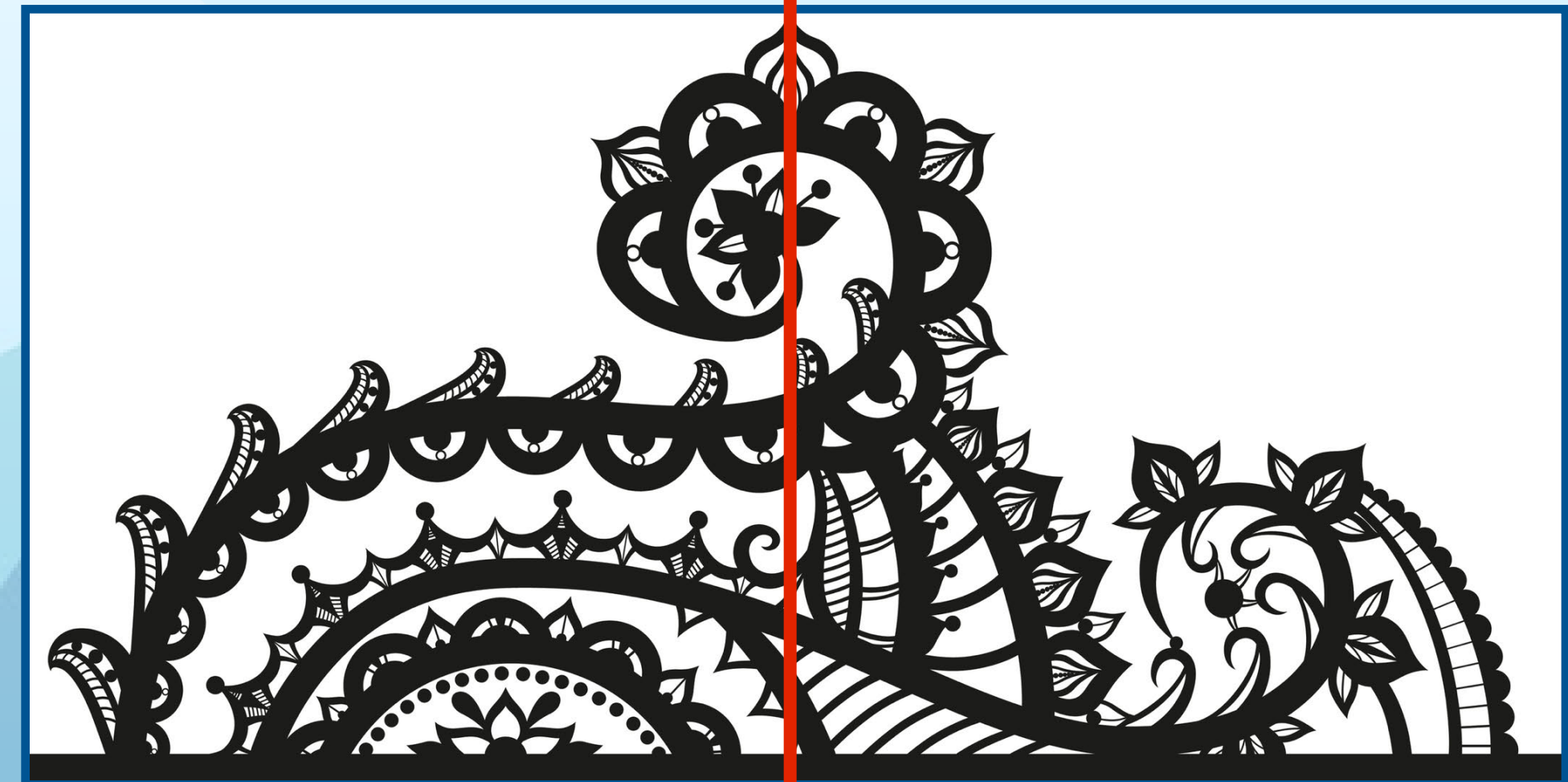
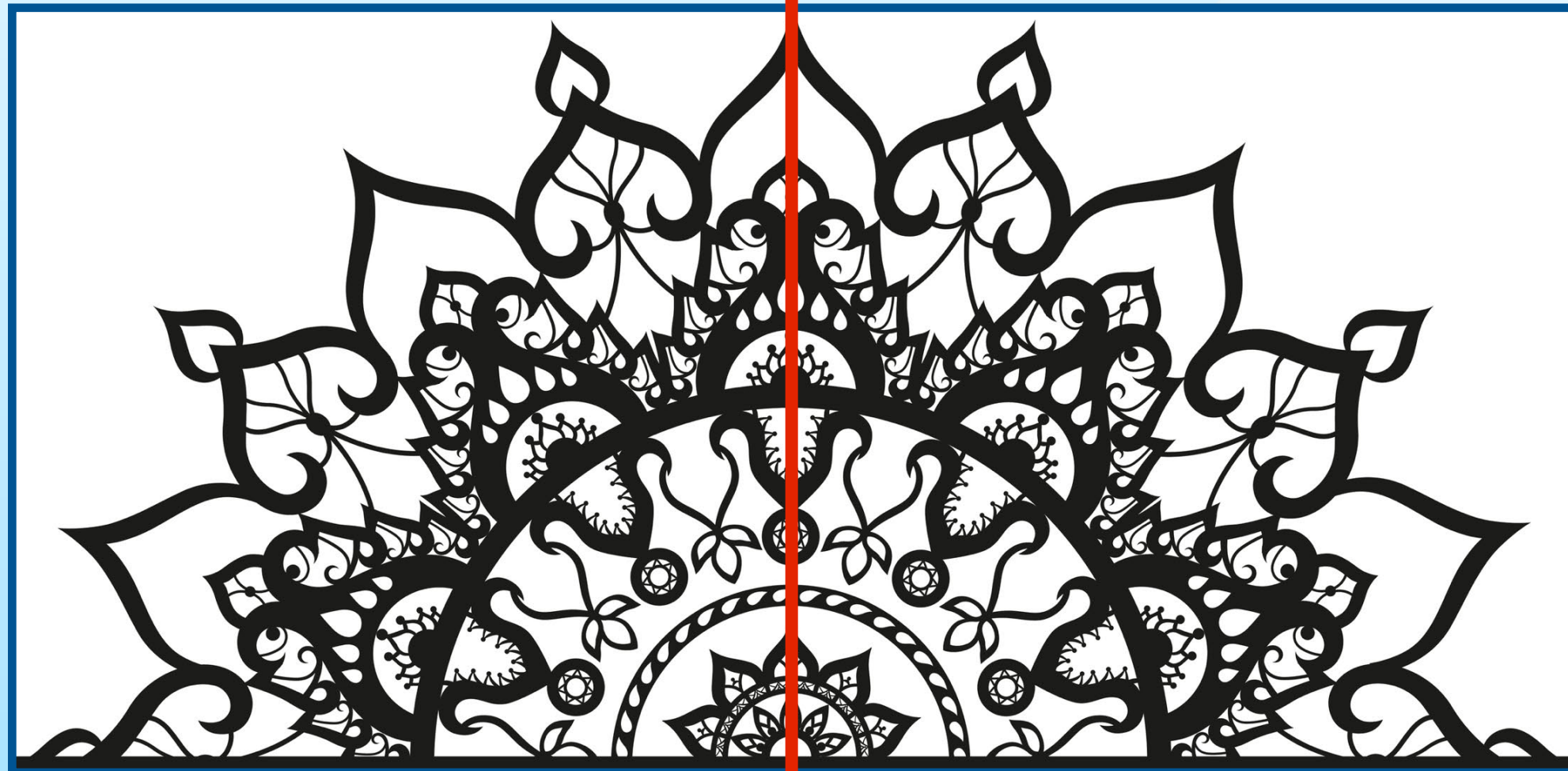
In Notan, positive and negative space, or dark and light, should have equal importance within an artwork. They should complement each other, with neither dominating the other. There needs to be a feeling of balance.

Do you think the above image is balanced?

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The placement of light and dark areas in an artwork is an important element of Notan. Balance between the positive and negative spaces can be achieved through a symmetrical or asymmetrical design.



This is a symmetrical design.  
The pattern is the same on both sides of the line of symmetry, and the positive and negative space is balanced.

This is an asymmetrical design.  
Although the pattern is not the same on both sides, the overall amount of positive and negative space is still balanced.

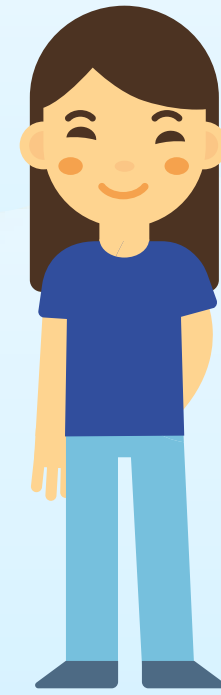


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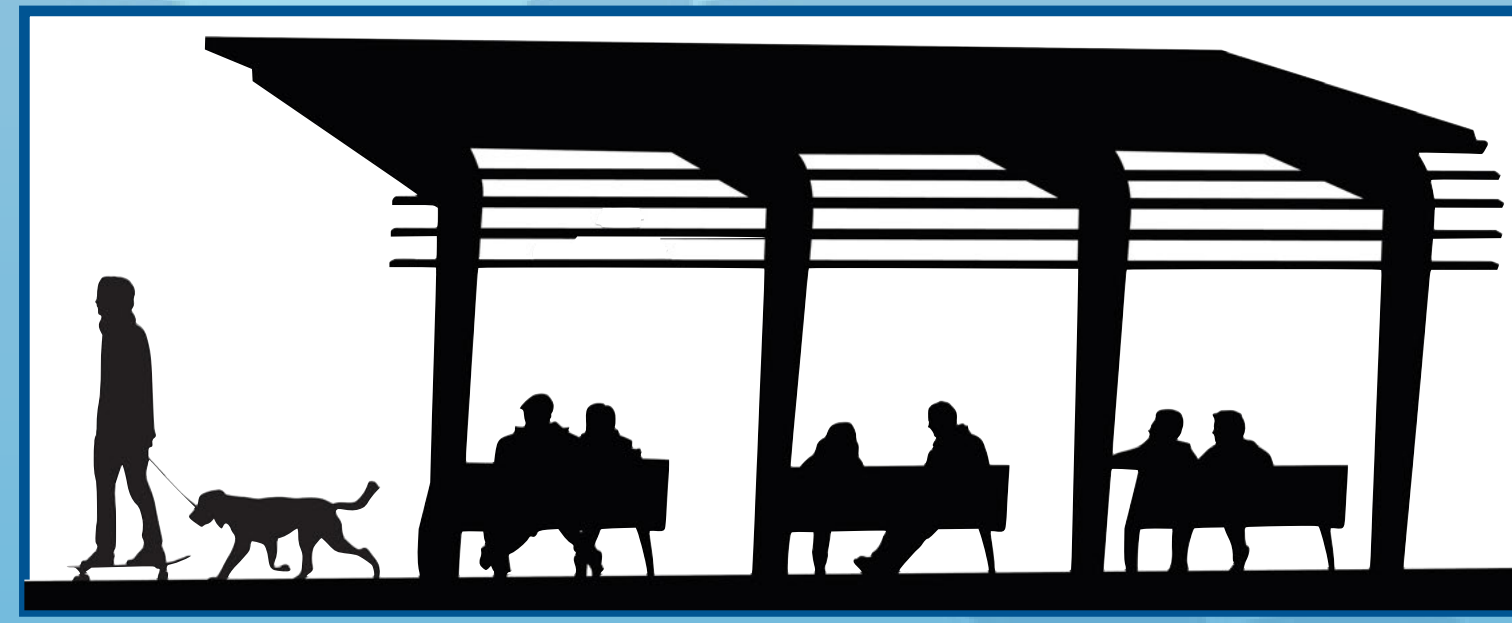
Notan focuses on two of the visual elements of art -  
lines and shapes.

The shapes can be geometric (usually consisting of straight lines and corners; these shapes do not occur naturally).



The shapes can be organic (they are free-form and flowing in appearance, and are associated with the natural world).

Look at the images below. Can you identify the geometric and organic shapes within them?



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So, what have you learnt  
about the Japanese concept  
of Notan?



Tell your partner everything you  
can about Notan design!

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# In a Notan design...

...there are areas of dark and light (or positive and negative space).

...positive space is dark (black) and negative space is light (white).

...positive space is the area within the shapes in an artwork, and negative space is the area around the shapes in an artwork.

...shapes can be geometric or organic.

...the areas of light and dark should be balanced. This can be achieved with a symmetrical or asymmetrical design.

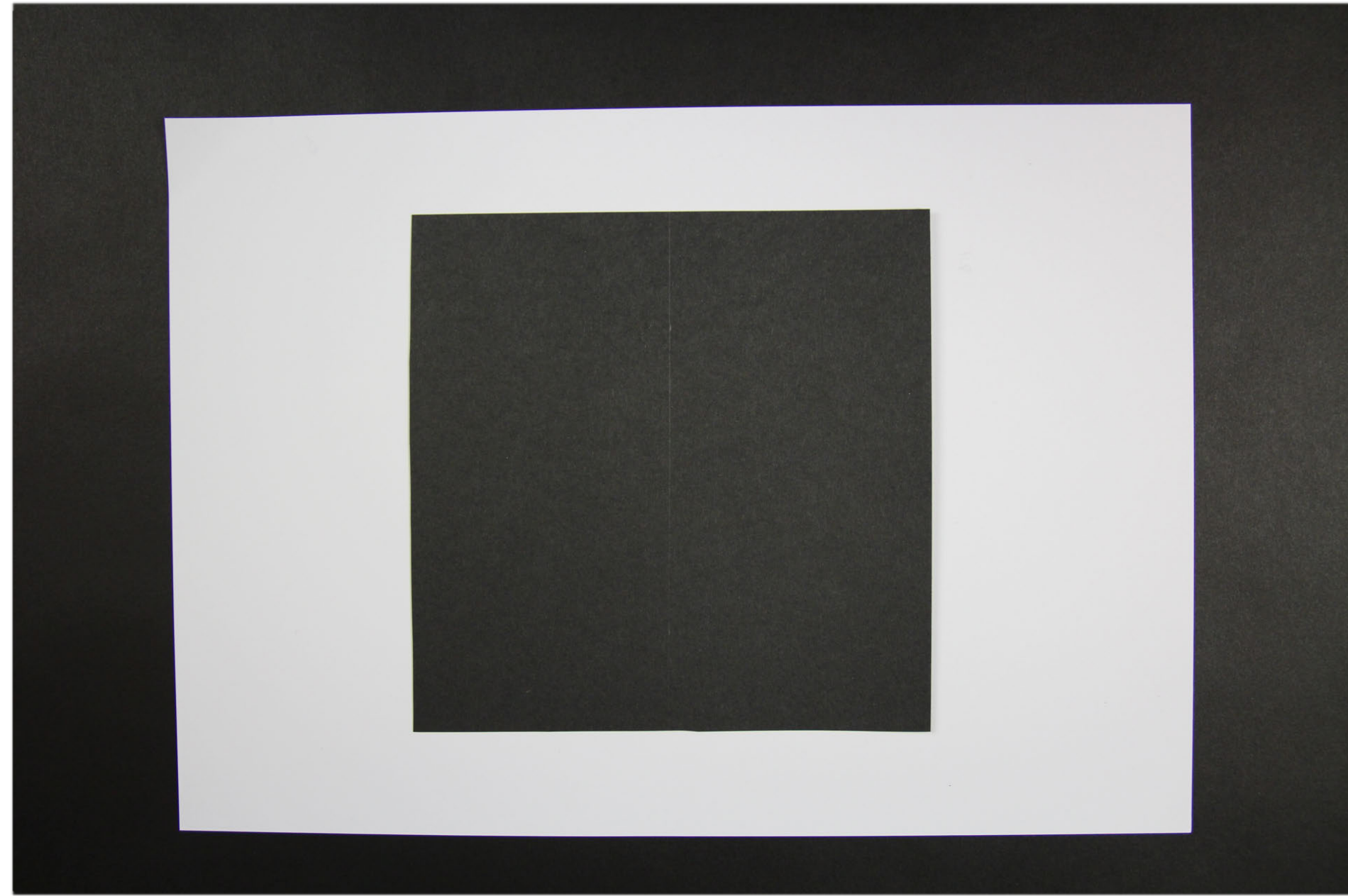
How many of these aspects of Notan did you remember?

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The 'Expansion of the Square' is an exercise which helps artists to study the interaction between positive and negative space. Here is how to carry out the exercise:



1. You need a black 15cm square of paper and an A4 white piece of paper. Draw a faint line of symmetry in the middle of the black square (this can be vertical or horizontal).

2. On either side, draw a selection of shapes. Each shape must begin and end at the edge of the square that is parallel to the line of symmetry. It must not touch the line of symmetry.

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3. Carefully cut out the shapes. They must each be cut out as one single piece. Aim to keep your edges as neat as possible, and try not to tear the paper.

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4. Keep each shape you cut out somewhere safe until you have finished.

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5. Match up all of the shapes you have cut out with the area of the square they came from (just like completing a jigsaw puzzle!).

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5. Flip over all of the cut out shapes and align them with the edge of the black square. Stick all of the separate pieces onto the A4 white paper to complete your Notan design.

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Do you think you could make a Notan design using the Expansion of the Square exercise?

It's time to find out!

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## Plenary:

This is a poem by Lao Tzu, an ancient Eastern philosopher:

Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub; it is the centre hole that makes it useful.  
Shape clay into a vessel; it is the space within that makes it useful.  
Cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes which makes it useful.  
Therefore profit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there.

How does this relate to the design concept of Notan?  
Think, pair, then share your ideas.

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