

Who Am I? An Inquiry Into Names



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Teacher's Guide.

This project is used as a way for students to inquire into their names. This activity is highly engaging and integrates Aboriginal Perspectives with ELA, Social Studies, and Art. You may use pieces of the project or use it in its entirety.

The story I usually use to introduce this project is called: "Name Giving" by Basil Johnston. This story can be found in The Anishinaubaemowin Series The Gift of The Stars published in 2010 by Kegedonce Press.

The end goal of this project is for students to create a visual representation on a cardstock diamond that represents who they are. Once students diamonds are completed students may put all of their diamonds together to create a classroom community star quilt. Note: Students may create other visual representations or shapes with their diamonds if they would like to.

Here is an example paper star quilt which I made with grade fives:



The students will also have a work book to work through to help explore who they are. What students will need:

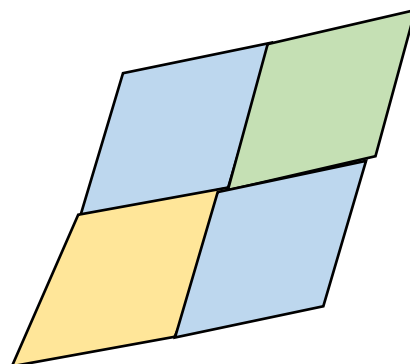
- Booklet (instruction sheet, The Who Am I Graphic Organizer Sheet, rough draft diamond sheet, a card stock diamond (for good copy), reflection sheet)
- Crayons, markers and other art supplies to decorate the diamonds.
- Glue sticks

The Teacher will need:

- Big poster board paper (for students to glue the diamonds onto to create a giant star)
- The Name Giving Story (optional but incredibly helpful to introduce the topic)
- Template to cut out card stock diamonds
- Background knowledge on the star quilt

Note: A power point to go along with this lesson is uploaded for free to my store.

Please read the instructions sheet for exact instructions for the students. Once it is time to glue the diamonds together you may want to calculate how many diamonds you will need to complete the star. The star in the picture is the standard size which is for 32 diamonds. The quilt can always be modified to be bigger or smaller. For the 32 piece star I pieced the diamonds together in sets of four. The next page has a template which can be used when cutting out the card stock diamonds. I used standard Sized poster paper (2-4 sheets) to glue the diamonds to however, diamonds could also be stapled to a bulletin keep things simple.



The History of The Star Blanket (Brief Overview)

Star Blankets were originally made out of buffalo hide. However, upon arrival of the Europeans and the extinction of the buffalo, Aboriginal peoples were forced to switch over to fabric and other materials. Star blankets can come in many colors however, black is usually not used in star blankets due to it being considered a sacred colour for some Aboriginal peoples. Other colours may be used such as those colors found in the medicine wheel (except for black) as representation of the cycles; day and night, birth-life and death, the seasons. The medicine wheel also represents the passage of the sun.

Traditionally the Star Blanket is used in protection and honouring ceremonies because the symbol of the morning star represents the beginning of a new day/another day of life from the creator.

It is also important to note that the Star Blanket is usually given as a gift and created by a group of people.

Links to Identity and Names

In different cultures names are given differently and Star Blankets are typically made with a specific person in mind. Often times the patterns and colors are determined based on the specific person who is receiving the quilt. Since quilts often times are made in groups every person is considered a valuable member of the community with their own gifts, talents and ideas. Therefore, create a paper blanket with ones classroom community lends itself nicely to open the topic of names and the giving of names. Students can first examine who they are, what their names mean and what specific gifts and talents they bring to the community. Their individual piece of the quilt (the diamond) will be a representation/

/symbol of what they bring as an unique individual to the greater classroom community. The piece of literature that is strongly suggested to use with this project tells the story of a parent struggling to bestow a name upon her child because she/he realized the important of naming a child- the idea that whatever they name their child is how they will begin to be known to the world. In other cultures names are though of very differently than in Western European cultures. For example in Africa certain tribes do not name their children until they are one years old so the child can get to know the world without a label. In Aboriginal culture sometimes children are named by Elders or given several names based on the meaning of their names.

Often times in Western European culture we do not question our given names to provide any insight into our emerging identities. With identity being at the heart of most social studies curriculums in Canada, this project allows the discussion and investigation of ones individual and collective identities in a safe and engaging manner.

Note: This project is a task that came out of a 2 year collaborative research project. For more information please feel free to contact me.

References:

"HISTORY OF QUILTING." Emporia State University. <https://www.emporia.edu/cgps/tales/quilte~1.html>.

Joseph, Bob. "Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples®." What is an Aboriginal medicine wheel? <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-is-an-aboriginal-medicine-wheel>.

"Kalispell Regional Healthcare Foundation." History of the Star Quilt www.krh.org/foundation/champions-of-healthcare/donor-recognition/history-of-the-star-quilt

Kapoun, Robert W., and Charles J. Lohrmann. Language of the robe: American Indian trade blankets. Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1997.
Lakota Star Quilt

Mi'kmaw Culture - Spirituality - The Medicine Wheel.

The Original Star Quilt Story

Paskwaw Mostos had a relationship with his brothers, the humans. It is said: one day man was weak. He had eaten his fill of roots, herbs, and berries, but he was weak, and though he wrapped himself in grasses, he was cold. He was desperate for winter was coming.

In his desperation, he fell face down onto Mother Earth, and he prayed. His prayer was heard and out of the mist his brother, Pakwaw Mostos, came toward him. Pakwaw Mostos spoke 'Listen to me. We are all children of one Creator, we share with each other. I see you are weak and I am strong. You are cold and I am warm. Your whole body is pitiful; your fingers cannot help you dig for food.'

'Listen, my brother, I will make you a sacred promise. I will take care of you. I will do what Creator expects from us who are related, and from now on do as I tell you.'

'For your food, I will give you my flesh. Take it. For your clothing and covering, I will give you my skin. Take it. For tools, I will give you my bones. Take them. Only remember that Creator, the Maker of us all, is watching that you use all things right and with a blessing. 'When you need me, stand on a high hill and call, I will come. When you have taken what you need from me and from my other brothers, stand on the same high hill and give thanks. Do not give thanks to me or to us, because we do what is required. Give thanks to Creator who makes all of us healthy and gives all of us a promise of happiness. Leave a mark there on the hill to show that you have given thanks, and everyone will know that you and your family are worthy people.'

And so it was. Before the hunt, the camp leader stood on a hill and called to Paskwaw Mostos. 'Listen, brother, We are here and we need what you have to share with us. Come! Let us take your strength into us'. And Paskwaw Mostos came. When the hunt was finished and the first flesh was lifted up in a ceremony of public thanks. The hide was tanned and made into a covering. The covering was given at the important times of life, at birth, at puberty, at marriage and death. It was painted with earth colour into a bright star, Creator's eye. When the Creator is with you, covering you, watching you, you are forever safe.

Today, Paskwaw Mostos is gone. Women now have only cloth with which to make the Creator's Eye. But they have not forgotten their power to make a blessing nor to bring Creator onto their children and their family.

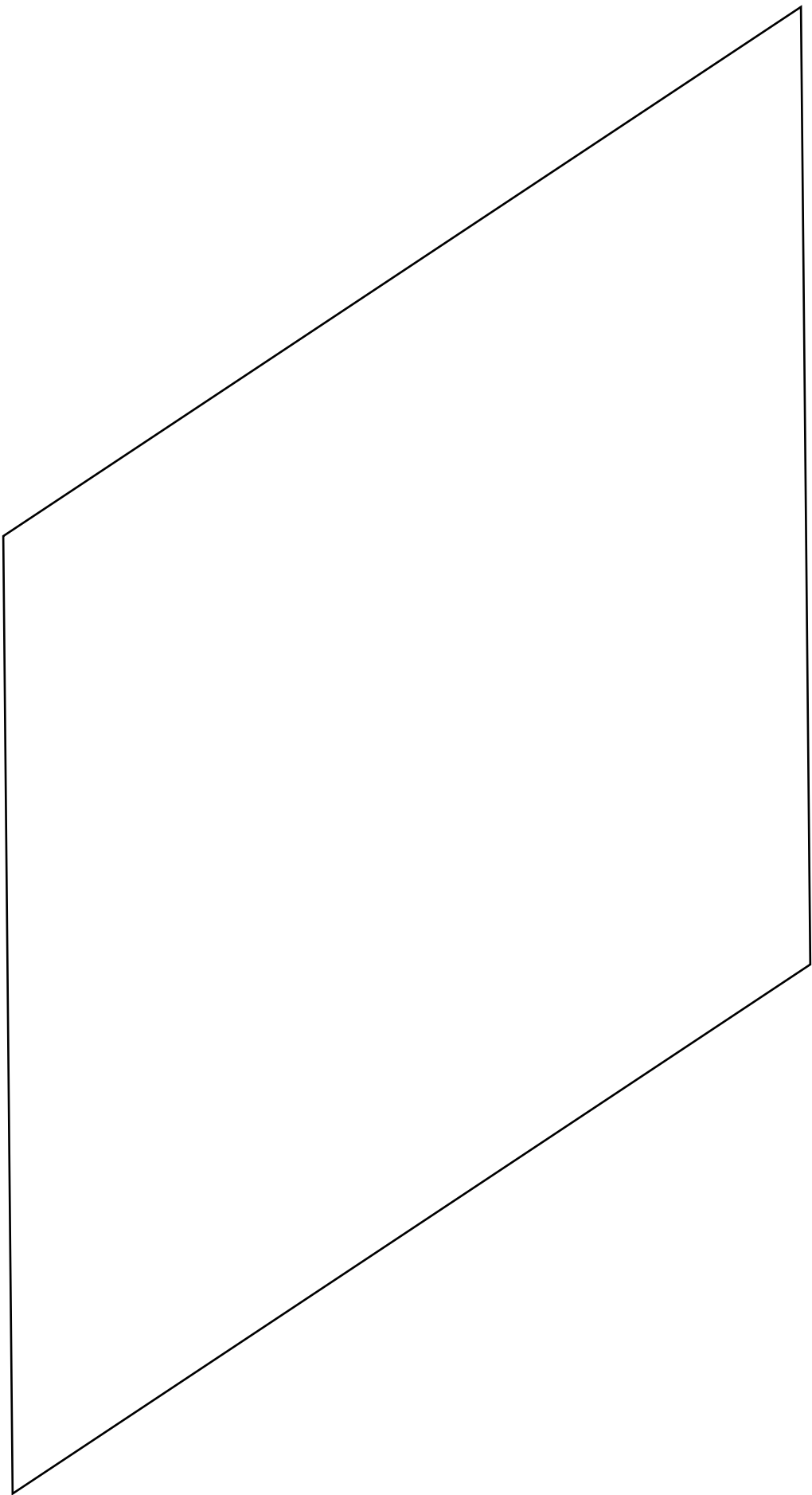
The pride of every Native home is the Creator's Eye- the Morning Star Quilt.

It lies folded to wait as a gift. It covers the bed, and it wraps the dead. It makes sacred whatever it covers. It is sacramental. It is a visible image that holds an invisible reality. 'It will not leave you orphans''

("Star Blanket", January 2001) [7]

Reference:

[7] "Star Blanket." NorQuest College. Accessed December 02, 2017. <https://www.norquest.ca/resources-services/student-services/indigenous-student-services/rbc-indigenous-mentorship-program.aspx>.

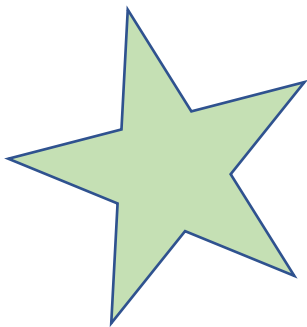


Creating a Star: Who am I?

Each one of us was given a name. Considering the *Name Giving* story we just read, what does your name tell others about you? On the board will be your name and its meaning. You may use the meaning of your name as inspiration for your creation. Later you will be creating a visual representation of yourself, so it is important for you to answer the questions: *What does my name mean to me? Who am I? What do I want others to know about me?*

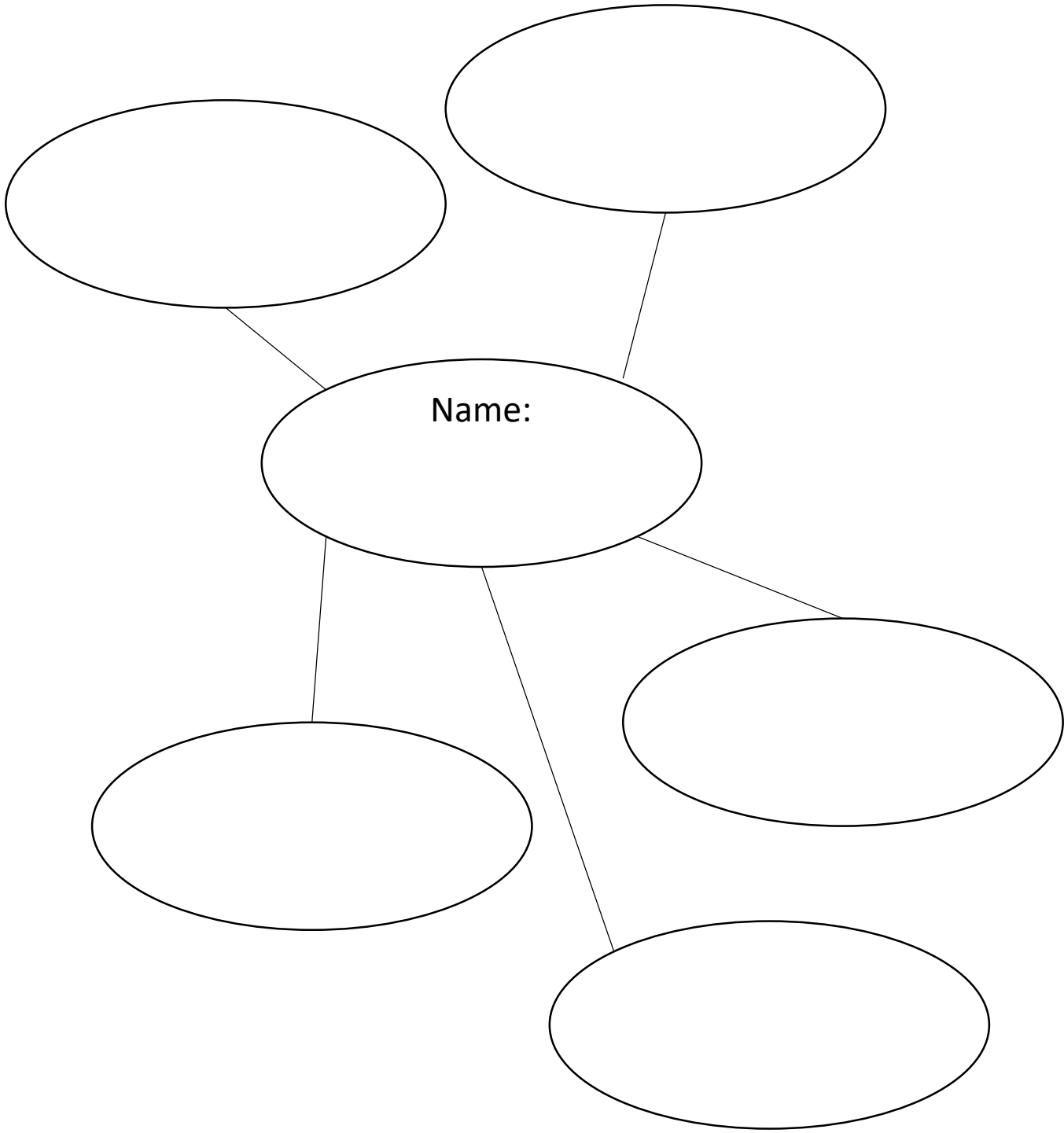
Steps:

1. Fill out the graphic organizer on the next page to help organize your thinking around who you are. You may include anything you want (as long as it is appropriate) in the graphic organizer. Consider the following questions to help start your brain storming process:
 - What activities do I like doing? (gaming, sports, dancing etc....)
 - What is my favorite color? (blue, green, pink, black etc.....)
 - How would I describe myself? How would my friends describe me? (playful, kind, happy, curious etc....)
 - What do I like?
2. Rough Draft Design Your Diamond
3. Decorate A Diamond for the Star
4. Reflection: Tell Me More.



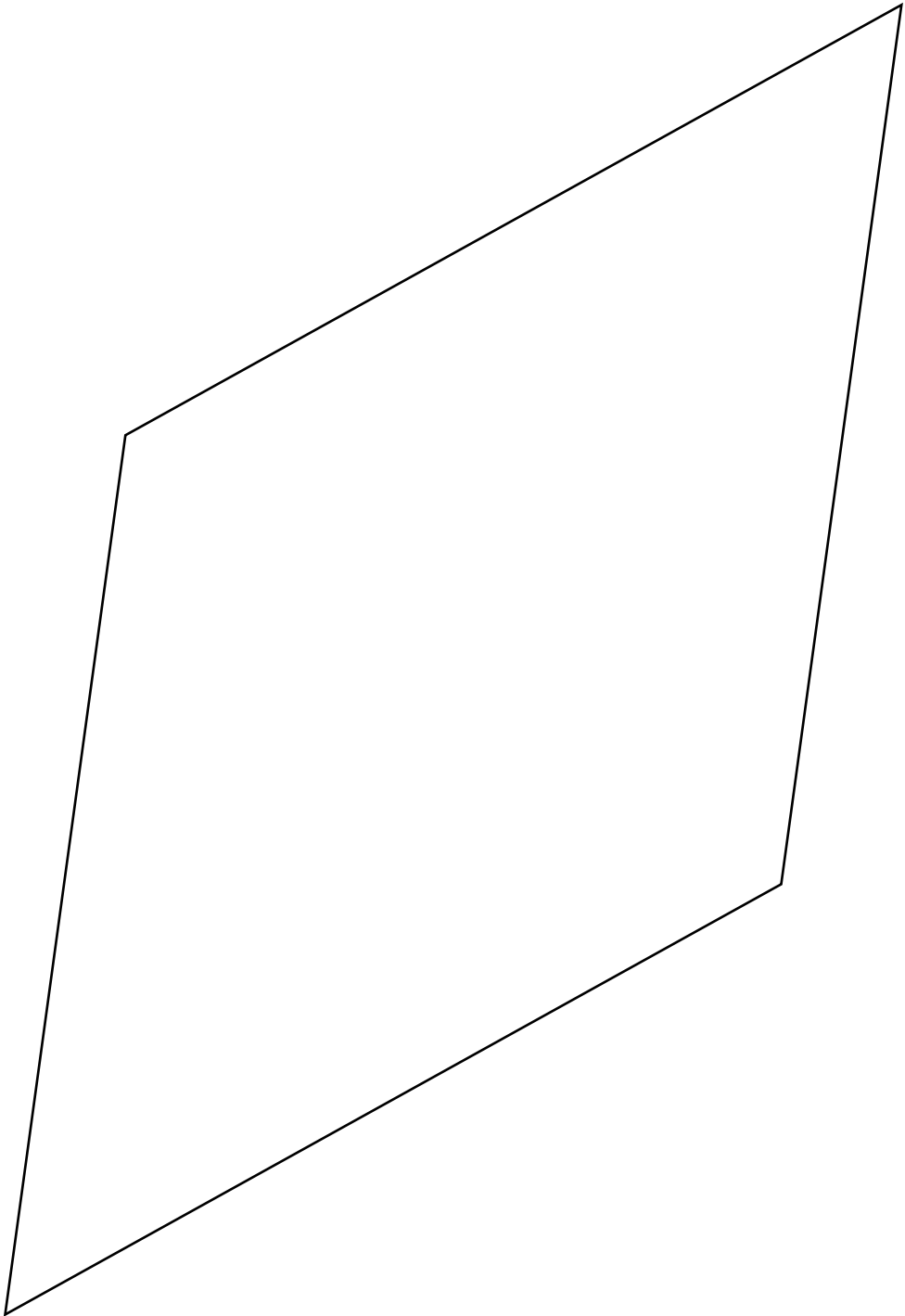
1. Who am I?

Use the graphic organizer below to brain storm who you are.



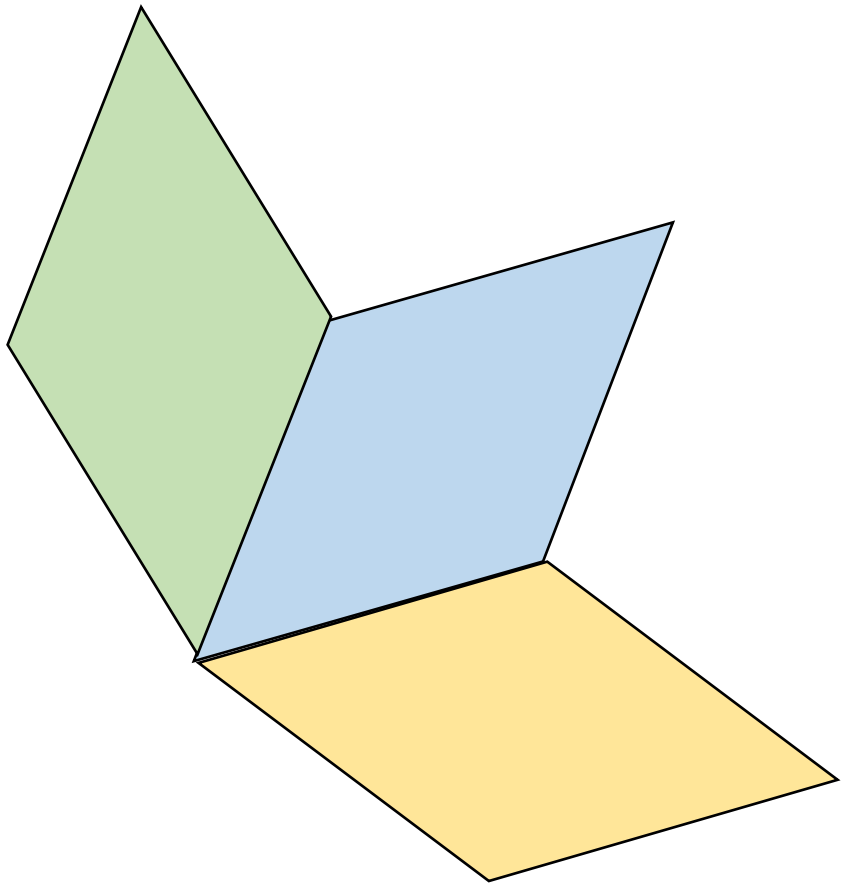
2. Sketch Out A Design! Be Creative.

Create a design on the diamond that represents you. This should be a rough sketch before moving onto your good copy (your piece of art). Decide colors, pictures and a design. Be sure your name is incorporated into your design.



3. Decorate a Diamond for the Star

Show the teacher your rough draft to receive your card stock diamond to decorate.



Thank You For Your Purchase!

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