







# Yayoi Kusama

*“I, Kusama, am the  
modern Alice in Wonderland.”  
– Yayoi Kusama 1929 - present*

**This lesson plan is relevant to all grades and homeschooled students studying biology.**

*Photo by Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert*

## **Objective:**

Students make the connection between science and creativity as they create exciting abstract art inspired by avant-garde artist Kusama’s My Eternal Soul Series.

## **Materials:**

*FC Triangular Colored EcoPencil School Pack*

*FC Creative Studio Goldfaber Wooden Color Pencil Classpack*

*FC PITT Artist Pens– black*

*Richeson Drawing Paper Pack– 11x14 in. white, 400 sheets*

*Tru-Ray Construction Paper, 12x18 in. assorted color, pack of 250*

*Pencils scissors, glue*

## **Vocabulary:**

*avant-garde, abstract, irregular, biomorphic, amoeba, dominant, microorganism, artistic licence*

## **National Core Art Standards—Visual**

**Creating** – #1: *Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work*  
#3: *Refine and complete artistic work*

**Presenting** – #5: *Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation*

**Responding** – #9: *Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work*

**Connecting** – #11: *Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding*



In this lesson plan, we focus on Yayoi' Kusama's iconic My Eternal Soul Series, exploring works of art that build on her signature style of dots and spots. This series of paintings abound with imagery of biomorphic forms, along with hieroglyphic-like patterns of peeping eyes, faces and flowers– all meant to offer a very artistic impression of worlds as seen through a microscope; worlds exploding in powerful color and line.

Students studying biology will tie their learning in with producing artwork of beautiful and abstract biomorphic shapes and designs using colored pencils.

Turn your classroom walls into a gallery of My Eternal Soul inspired student artwork! Tie in the actual biology study by including student's notes and diagrams mounted among the artwork. This would surly be an impressive and fascinating presentation for open house night!

### **Approach for younger students:**

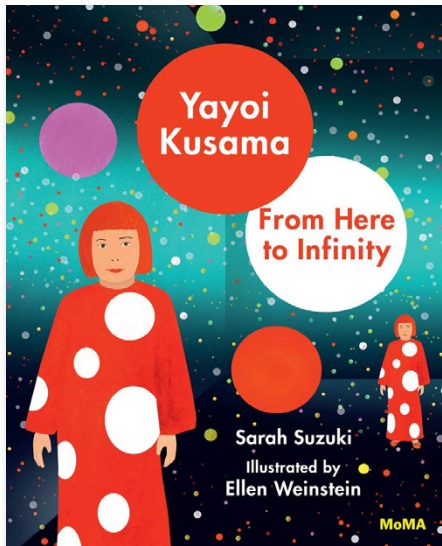
Begin by sharing the picture book *Yayoi Kusama– From Here to Infinity* with your students. Discuss the artist's passion and obsession with painting dots and pattern, and how it evolved into her very creative My Eternal Soul series of paintings which is based on variations of dot and circle shapes. Follow the basic steps presented here, or focus on creating a piece of art with fewer organisms. Young students could also use crayons. Keep things simple and fun!

### **Approach for older students:**

Refer to the book *Yayoi Kusama– All About My Love*, or create a presentation of Yayoi Kusama using online resources.

Here, students could design their images with more detail, and focus on colored pencil skills, including blending and layering color. There could be more talk of what makes up a bold color palette as you refer to examples of Kusama's work.

*Recommended reading on Yayoi Kusama, “The Princess of Polka Dots”*



**Yayoi Kusama *From Here to Infinity***

*By Sarah Suzuki, Illustrated by Ellen Weinstein*

***Yayoi Kusama: From here to Infinity*** is a beautiful children’s picture book biography following the life of one of the most exciting artists working today.

This biography begins with Yayoi Kusama growing up in Japan, and mesmerized by dots— seeing them everywhere in nature. As a young girl, she rejects her parents’s wishes to practice the ways of the traditional Japanese culture, and instead, wants to be an artist, spending much of her time painting in nature. Later as

a young adult, she makes her way to New York City, where she experiences complete freedom to live her life and pursue her art.



**Yayoi Kusama *All About My Love***

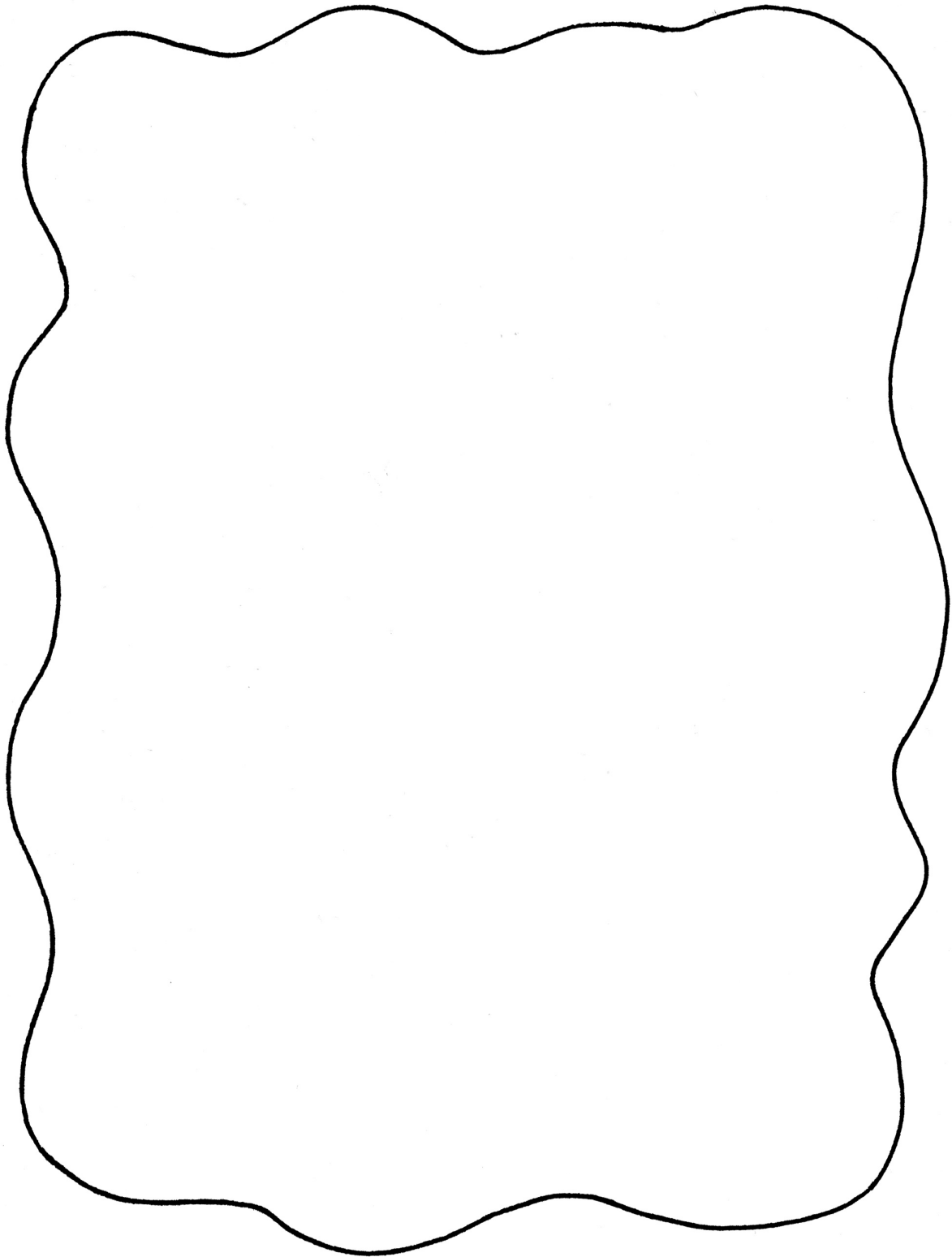
*By Akira Shibutami and Yayoi Kusama*

***Yayoi Kusama: All About My Love*** showcases Kusama’s work, and tells her personal story of her life and art.

This avant garde artist is recognized worldwide, with her work covering several categories including Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Feminist Art and Performance Art. *All About My Love* features 350 stunning pieces of art while explaining Kusama’s fixation of dots and repetitive patterns, born of the artist’s many decades of struggling with mental illness and hallucinations.

Kusama has been living as a voluntary resident in a mental hospital in Tokyo since 1977, and continues to create artwork out of her nearby studio.

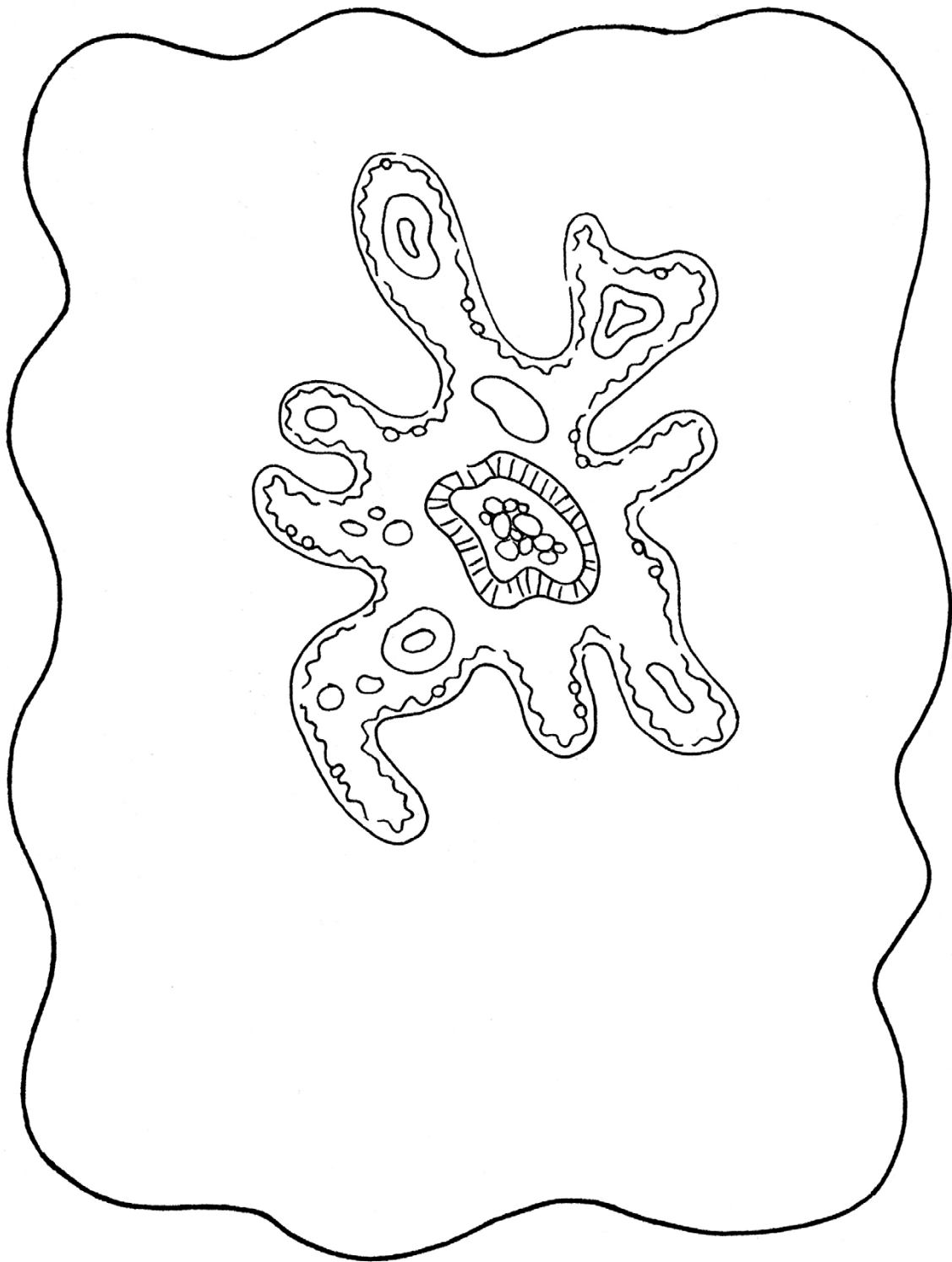




## Begin

Instruct your students do the following drawing steps first in pencil. They will later go over it in black pen. Begin by demonstrating how to draw an **irregular** curvy line within a 11x14 sheet of paper. This is the border that will contain all the **biomorphic** images.

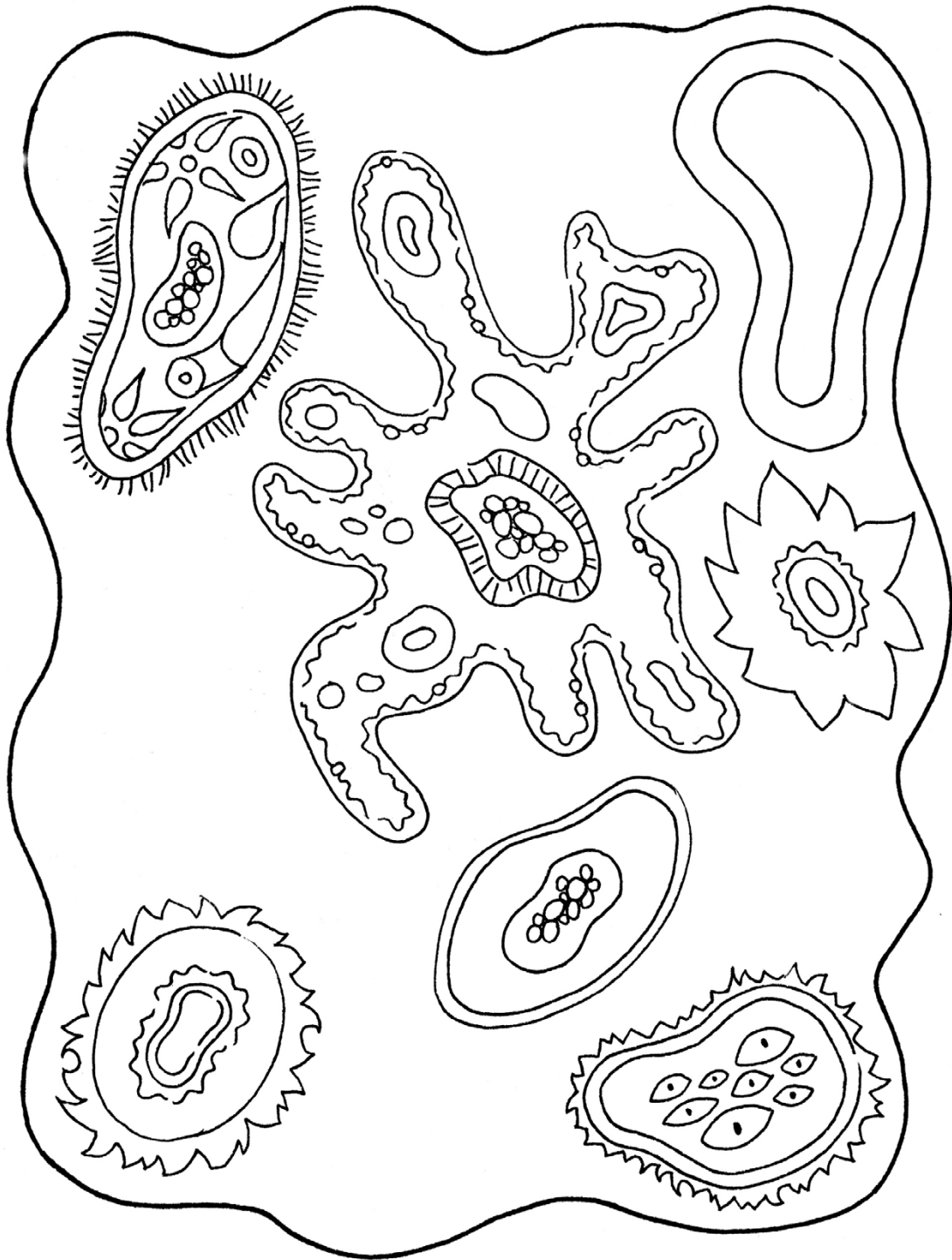




## Amoeba

Next, have students draw their **amoeba**, one of the most familiar organisms when studying biology. It should be their **dominant** (largest shape) in the design.





## More microorganisms

Now have students add about 5 medium sized **microorganisms**, thoughtfully balancing each other and fitting snugly within the curved border. Students can not only refer to biology resources for this, but also take **artistic licence** by using their imagination to create fun and interesting shapes and patterns.

Remind students at this point, to be sure to leave space for the next step—drawing the smallest images.









## Color

Tell your students to begin coloring the background first. All other colors will be chosen by what looks good against the background color. Encourage students to choose bold colors for an exciting effect (this is not a time for pastels!)

Show your students how to take their time and really color well, achieving a smooth, solid finish. Show more advanced students how to blend and layer colors.

Have your students create an interesting, boldly colored border around their art.



