Pencil Lip Drawing: Contour and Shading Steps

Original tasks 1, 2 / complete keys

Task 1

On a blank sheet, mark two corner points 5 cm apart on a faint horizontal axis. Mark the center point and draw a lip seam that dips 0.8 cm above the axis at the center. Then sketch an upper lip contour and a lower lip contour using the convention that the lower lip is fuller at the center. Describe how you check symmetry.

Answer: A contour with corners on the axis, a center dip about 0.8 cm above it, a thinner upper lip, and a fuller lower lip. Symmetry is checked by comparing the distance from each corner to the center dip and the left-right height of the contour at matching points.

Reason: The landmark order fixes the corners and center before curves are added, so symmetry can be measured rather than guessed. The 5 cm and 0.8 cm values are hypothetical examples.

Check: Measure the two corner-to-center distances and confirm they are equal within your pencil width; compare left and right contour heights at two matching points.

Task 2

A drawing has a light base tone over both lips, a dark seam, and a shadow under the lower lip, but no highlight. The base tone and the shadow look almost the same value. List the next three shading actions in order and explain what each changes.

Answer: First lift graphite from the planned highlight area on the lower lip to make it the lightest value. Second, darken the seam slightly with a fine point so it remains the darkest value. Third, adjust the shadow under the lower lip so it is darker than the base tone but lighter than the seam.

Reason: The value order must be seam darkest, highlight lightest, lips and shadow in between. Fixing the highlight first prevents over-darkening the whole drawing.

Check: Squint at the drawing: the seam should read darkest, the highlight lightest, and the shadow should separate from the base tone.

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Original tasks 3, 4 / complete keys

Task 3

You have drawn a lip contour with corners at the same height, but the seam is blended until it is barely visible. State two repair steps that preserve the contour, and explain how you will check the repair.

Answer: Erase back to the contour if needed, then redraw the seam with a fine point using short strokes and keep it unblended. Blend only the outer turning edges. Check by comparing the seam value with the highlight and base tone; the seam should be clearly darker.

Reason: The seam carries the lip structure, so it must stay crisp. Blending only the turning edges keeps volume without losing the seam.

Check: Look at the drawing from a short distance and confirm the seam is the darkest line and the outer contour is softer.

Task 4

A learner shades a lip drawing and finds the lower lip looks flat. They have a base tone, a seam, and a highlight, but no shadow under the lower lip. Describe the missing step, where to place it, and how to check that the lower lip now reads as fuller.

Answer: Add a soft shadow just below the lower lip, following its curve and keeping it lighter than the seam. Then compare the lower lip highlight with the shadow: the highlight should be lightest, the shadow should separate the lip from the skin, and the seam should remain darkest.

Reason: The shadow under the lower lip creates separation and volume. Placing it below the contour, not on the lip itself, keeps the lip surface mid-tone.

Check: Check that the shadow is darker than the base tone but lighter than the seam, and that the highlight on the lower lip is still the lightest area.

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Source rubric / reflection

- [ ] Contour uses a horizontal corner axis and a clear lip seam.
- [ ] Upper and lower lip proportions follow the chosen convention and are checked for symmetry.
- [ ] Shading follows the order: base tone, seam and crease, shadow under lower lip, highlight.
- [ ] Seam is the darkest value and the highlight is the lightest value.
- [ ] Outer contour is softer than the seam and corners.
- [ ] Valid alternative lip shapes are accepted if the landmark order and value order are clear.

Reflection: What did you check, what did you change, and what will you try next?