



EVERY LITTLE PIECE

Introduction

"Our weaknesses are always evident, both to ourselves and others. But our strengths are hidden until we choose to reveal them - and that is when we are truly tested. When all that we have within is exposed and we may no longer blame our inadequacies for our failure, but must instead depend upon our strengths to succeed... that is when the measure of a person is taken."

- James A. Owen, *Here, there be dragons*

The Chinese dragons are often associated with water, rain, lakes, and rivers, and are seen as divine creatures that bring ultimate abundance, prosperity, and good fortune.

Unlike the more or less negative aspects associated with western dragons, most eastern dragons are beautiful, friendly, and wise. They are the angels of the Orient and instead of being feared, they are loved and worshiped, for they control the rain, rivers, lakes, and seas.

For this class we will look to these mythical creatures to shed light on one of the most challenging aspects of coloring - blending and shading.

One of the first challenges a colorist faces when starting a new page is how to shade things so that they look three-dimensional and how to blend colors so that they look nice and even.

The secrets of great blending and shading aren't difficult to master, and the truth is, there are really only five or six different techniques you need to know to do it well. We will cover them all in this class.

Copic Colors Used For Coloring The Page

(Refer to the color conversion chart for non Copic alternatives)

T0

T1

T2

T3

T4

T5

T6

T7

BLACK 100

B0000

BG11

Y00

YR14

YR24

RV00

RV11

R24

R43

R56

R85

E04

E29

E55

NOTE: Any range of gray will work for this class - you don't have to use toner (T) grays if you don't have them!

Chapter One:

Coloring The Dragon's Head



For this class I'll be using a black and white drawing printed on regular copy paper.

Note for colored pencil users: In an effort to cover as many coloring techniques as possible, I will render the head completely in this chapter but do extensive modification in a subsequent chapter. Please look over this book in it's entirety before beginning your work to decide which version you like best. If you like the modified version, be sure to leave enough tooth while applying your colors in this chapter.



I start by laying in a flat base color of Y00 on the eyes, upper eyebrows, side whiskers, roots of the teeth, and on the rows of hair extending down the dragon's back.

Notice the white paper still visible in the eyebrow and whisker section.



I lay in a base of RV00 on the lower portions on the brow ridge, along the contour line that indicates the back of the skull, and on the nose, upper lip, and cheek.

Again notice where the color stops and the paper shows through.

Note for colored pencil users:

I'm going to be creating a gradation from dark to light in these areas. I'll be using three different markers to achieve this effect, but you could use a single dark red pencil with varying pressure to achieve the same look.



I add RV11 to the brow ridge, furrow between the brows, and to the base of the skull, leaving some of the RV00 from the previous step still visible where the color meets the white areas of paper.



I do the same thing on the nose, lip, and cheek (RV11).

We are blending these colors from dark to the white of the paper, so be sure not to cover the original colors completely when you lay in your second and third colors.



I add a very strong medium-dark red (R24) to the edges of the forms and to the pupils of the eyes.



Now that we have our base colors in place, it's time to blend them together smoothly.

To blend, I work backwards laying RV11 over the edge of the R24.



RV11



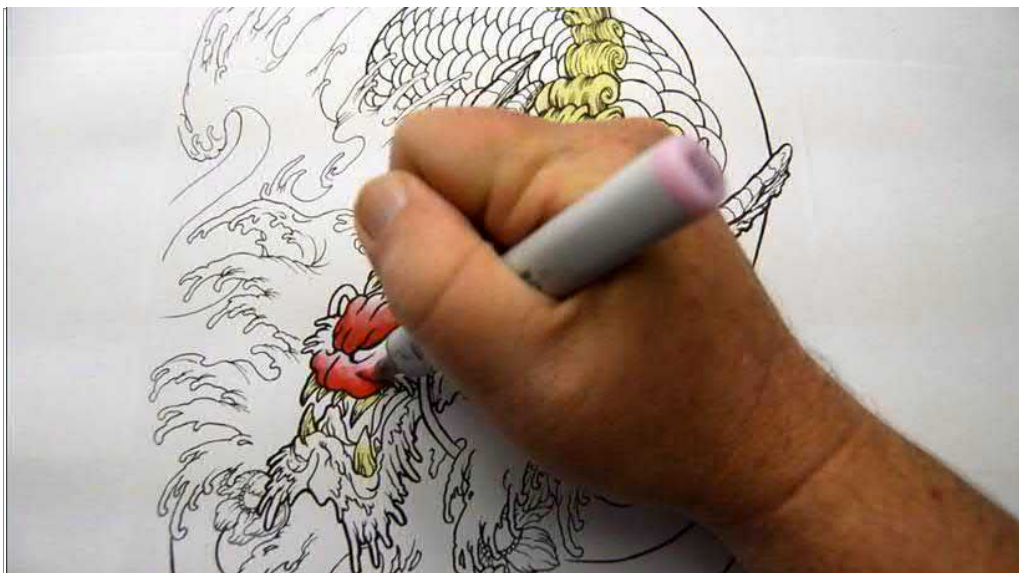
RV11



RV11



After the RV11.



I soften the edges of the RV11 with RV00



RV00



RV00



RV00.

Here I'm using a kind of "flick" technique where I'm putting pressure at the beginning of the stroke and lifting up and away as I get near the white of the paper.

Be sure to watch the video to get a full explanation of this technique.



I add RV00 to the wrinkles on the side of the nose...



You may notice the blend is smoother on the nose and back of the skull than it is in the other areas.

That's on purpose!

I'll show you different techniques for blending those areas later in this chapter :)



I add a layer of T2 to the outside corners of the eyeballs and eye sockets...



...to the wrinkles on the nose... (T2)



...and to the wings of the nose and nostrils to indicate shadows in those areas.



I add accents of T3 to the eyeballs...



...and eye sockets... (T3)



...to the nose... (T3)



...to the nasal wrinkles... (T3)



...and under the eyeballs. (T3)



I add darker accents with T4 behind the wing of the nose and on the nasal wrinkles near the inside corner of the eye...



...and on the underside of the cheek... (T4)



...to darken the top portion of the eye sockets... (T4)



I also use this color (T4) along the contour line of the skull, only in select areas.

Be sure to watch the video to see exactly which areas I hit!



I add T4 to the lower portion of the nostrils...



I then add T6 to the nostrils...



...lower portion of the eye sockets... (T6)



...and to the pupils. (T6)

Colored pencil users: Please use black on the pupils!



Wow! That really pops off the page!



I add T3 to the "holes" in the skull plate...



...then turn my attention to the eyebrows adding YR24 to the tips.



I also use this color (YR24) on the whiskers on the cheek.

Notice the exposed areas of Y00 in both the whiskers and eyebrows.



Continuing with the YR24, I color the bottom and top portions of each "roll" of hair...



...leaving a small band of Y00 exposed in the middle to act as a highlight.



I add YR24 to the roots of the teeth and to the outside edges of the eyeballs.



I then blend the YR24 with Y00...



Y00



Y00



Y00



Y00



Y00



Getting close :)



I use R24 to strengthen the red here...



...and here.



I also use this color (R24) to place small dots of color along the transitions between the strong, dark red (R24) and the lighter pink (RV11)



These color dots are almost invisible, but they help break up the "line" between colors which causes them to blend together visually, kind of like a pointillist painting!

This is actually one of my favorite blending techniques!



I soften the blend from the red gradation to the white of the paper with an additional layer of RV00 just on the edges...



...and again using a "flicking" stroke... (RV00)



...to make the transitions nice and soft.



I add color accents with B0000 to the nose...



...still taking care to leave some bare paper.



I add stronger color accents with BG11 to the same area...



...and to the brow ridges between and behind the eyebrows. (BG11)



I also add this color sparingly to the transition near the back of the skull plate... (see video)



...and to the cheek area around the side tooth. (BG11)



We are almost done with the top portion of the skull :)



I add a very dark desaturated red (E29) as a value accent to the hair rolls...



...the "divots" in the brow... (E29)



...upper eye sockets... (E29)



...shadow line of the cheek...
(E29)



...and roots of the teeth. (E29)



Time to address those horns :)



I add a base color of E55...



...and accent with E29 here...



...and here. (E29)



Notice that I've used the E29 on the lines that indicate the sections of the horns.



I add YR24, but only to the very edges of the E29.



YR24



Using M. Graham's Opaque White Gouache on a cheap brush, I add bold "scales" up and over the colors on the brows...



...and as texture dots between the brow ridges.



This is a good example of using "texture" to blend!

Not only does the white create a scale pattern on the brows, but since it connects to the areas of exposed paper in that area, it forces the eyes to blend those colors!



I add very large "decorative" spots... (white gouache)



...outline the undersides of the holes in the skull plate... (w.g.)



...and add small "blend dots"... (w.g.)



...to help visually tie the forehead together.

(Note: I also highlight the eyes!)



More scale textures...



..running across all the colors in the cheeks and up into the very light Y00 on the eyebrows helps everything look nice and smooth!



I highlight the wrinkles on the nose...



...add texture to the tip of the nose...



...and "spots" to the lip.



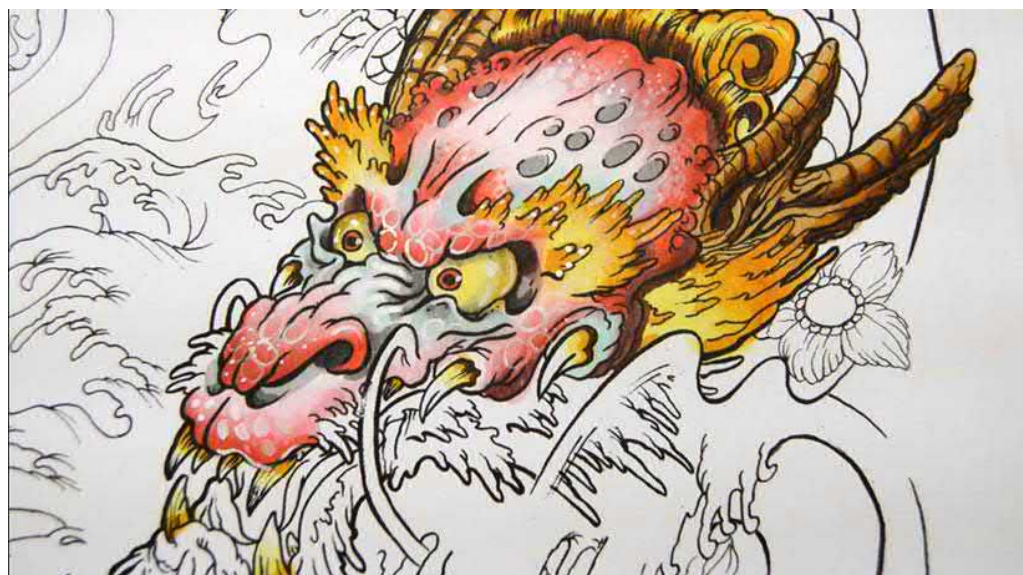
Highlights near the eyes...



...and on the tops of the eyebrows.



Here I'm using a small "scale" texture to help visually blend the colors....



...and finish off the top part of the dragon's head.



Now... let's take a crack at that bottom jaw!



I add R24 to the tips of the beard.



I begin to blend with RV11, softening the R24 into the white of the paper.



I add BG11 to the chin and jaw, layering it over the RV11 in some spots.



I add shadow accents with T3 here...



...here... (T3)



...here... (T3)



...and here... (T3)



...to help tie the color scheme of the jaw to the rest of the head.



I add YR24 to the mustache...



...on both sides. (YR24)



I color the tongue with R43...



...then add "texture scales" like I did with the white to the chin and bottom jaw... (R43)



...and to a small portion of the cheeks... (R43)



...to maintain visual continuity.



I add dark accents to the tongue with E04.



Getting close :)



I add BG11 to the bottom lip...



...then add dark shadows with T5.



I add an accent of R43 to the bottom lip...



...and touches of Black 100 to the spaces under the tongue...



...and to the nostrils... (Black 100)



Black 100 accents under the cheek...



...and in the top portion of the eye socket really helps pop the forms.

Be careful here no to overdo it!



I use RV00 on the tops of these weird-ass things to finish off the head.

In this chapter we blended a single color (red) from fairly dark all the way to the white of the paper by using color gradients, or varying darknesses of the color red. This is a primary blending technique we can use over and over on every coloring page we make.



We also learned to use texture to blend hard edges. This is a less common but no less useful blending technique. It works extremely well on all coloring pages. The reason this technique works is because the eye has trouble keeping track of a jagged broken line, so it follows the texture lines or dots and blurs the colors together. :)

Chapter Two: Coloring The Waves



Our goal for the waves is to create the illusion of depth. We want them to look deep in the center and to appear to radiate outward toward the viewer. If we are careful and apply our values correctly, we can make the paper appear to be stacked in layers and not at all flat!



I color the "eye" of each wave with Black 100.



I place a bold, heavy "line" to act as a cast shadow under the dragon's chin and jaw... (Black 100)



...and up and around the far side of the head. (Black 100)



Notice the different thicknesses of the black. it should not be a "line" of equal thickness.



I add T6 along the edge of the black and down and around the "fingers" of the wave.



I add T4 along the edge of the T6...



...and then T2, pulling out into the "body" of the wave.



I use T0 to blend the T2 towards the edges of the wave.

Colored pencil users should use white for this step.



I add T7 to the edges of the "spiral" right up against the line work.



I add T5 along the edge of the T7, working towards the center.



T3 comes next...



Then T1...



I blend them all together with T0...



...then add a T0 value shape to the corner.



I rework the transition between the T5 and T3 with T4.



Notice the small rim of white left at the edge of each "arm" of the spiral. Also take a minute to notice how very 3D it looks :)



I do a heavy over all blend with 0 Colorless Blender.

Colored pencil users use white for this step.



0 Colorless Blender



The result is a nice smooth value gradation from dark to light.



I add texture to the waves with T4.



Then, using very light pressure and quick strokes, I add a "glaze layer" of BG11 to add just a touch of color.



I add highlights and textures with white gouache...



...accentuating the edges of the spirals...



...and adding details to the body of the wave...



I apply heavy white gouache on the inner edges of the spirals...



...then pull it down to soften it with my finger.



Oh, that's nice :)



Let's...



...do it again :)



I add heavy white gouache to the "open" ends of the spiral...



...then blend with my finger...



...to make it transition naturally into the white of the paper.



More texture finished it off.

Note: I use so many different applications here that I strongly encourage you to watch the video to fully understand and replicate the technique.



I add T6 to the far left spiral and as a drop shadow under the waves and flower.



T5



T3



T3



0 Colorless Blender



After blending



I add a "drop shadow" under the "fingers" of the middle section of the wave with T2...



...then color in the "body" of the wave. (T2)

Notice how the T2 softened up the edges of the darker values near the head.



I add accents with T3...



...and color the body of the background wave with T5.

Notice how the darker background wave "pushes" the lighter wave forward. Neat huh?



I add T4 along the edges of the T5...



...then blend the hell out of the whole wave with 0 Colorless Blender...



...intentionally creating texture as I go. (Watch the video to see how it's done!)



The final result is natural and organic looking, and...



...a quick glaze with BG11...



...here...



...and there and everywhere...



...adds just the right amount of color.



I add details and textures with white gouache to the waves...



...and chin...



...and to the edges of the spirals.



Be sure to watch the video :)



I add dark accents under various portions of the waves with T6...



...to finish off the lower half of the waves.



Turning my attention to the waves at the top of the image, I color in the large space behind the dragon's body with Black 100. I also hit the lines in the upper left corner.



Continuing with the Black 100, I darken the space under the flower near the horn and mark the shadow line of the main spiral.



I add T6



T5



T4



T3



...and T1



I place a light shape in the corner with T1 to help push the leading edge of the spiral forward into space...



I then blend both the edge and the interior of the spiral with 0 Colorless Blender.



I soften the black in the left hand corner as well. (OCB)



It's rough and smudgy, but that's ok. A little white gouache will fix it right up.



I add T6 behind and under the finger wave.



I color the center section of that same wave with T3 to give it some separation from the wave in front of it.



I add T1 to the body of the wave.



BG11 add just the right amount of color.



I darkened the arm of the lowest spiral with T3...



...carrying it up and around and into the previous work.



T3 in the upper left and...



...TO on the middle spiral completes the basic color work for this area.



I add highlights, details, and textures with white gouache exactly as I did in the lower waves...

...to finish off the waves.



Note: There is no way your waves will look exactly like mine, nor should they. When coloring the top waves, your goal should be to make them harmonious with your waves on the bottom half of the image. Be sure to watch the video for this section to see where I place my white, but ultimately, I encourage you to have fun and explore. Waves are very organic, and nearly anything you do is going to look great.

In this chapter we learned how to blend from black to white in smooth gradations. We also learned how to "glaze" color over a grayscale, and how to create the look of three-dimensional elements that seem to pop off the page. These techniques can be used with awesome results on any page you make.

Chapter Three:

Coloring The Scales



In this chapter we will use the technique of "same value" blending to color the scales. Blending colors of same or similar values, that is colors of the same degree of lightness or darkness, is the easiest of all blending techniques and is sure to produce great results every time.



To begin, I outline the edge of each scale with YR24.

The 4 in the number indicates how dark this color is.

Colored pencil users will want to use medium pressure for this step. We won't be coloring over this color.



I color in the scales on the right side of the body with E04.

Notice that the last number of both colors is 4. That means they are more or less the same degree of darkness.



I add R85 to the scales on the left...



...then fill in the lowest scales with R56.



As I move toward the scales on the upper back, I use the R56 only in the upper half of each scale.



Continuing with the R56, I color roughly one half of each scale on the right side of the body.



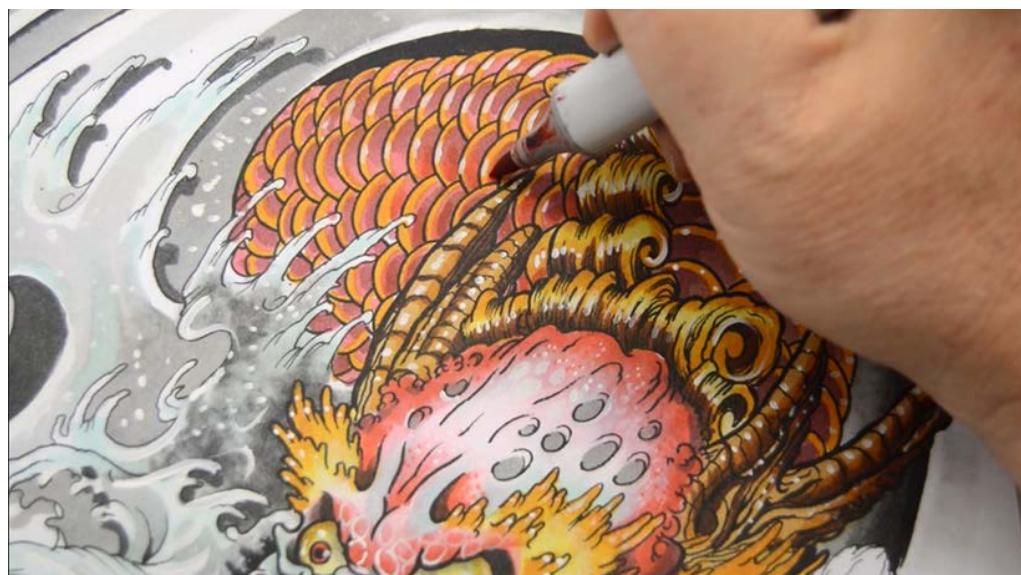
I add white gouache highlights to the horns...



...hair...



...and scales.



I add R24 to the lower portion of each scale to intensify the color.



R24...

...and done.



You may have noticed that every color we used for the scales ended in 4, 5 or 6. Keeping your colors close in value like this is the easiest way to blend. You can even blend very different colors together perfectly using this method. For example - blue and red of the same value, that is level of darkness, blend together perfectly creating a beautiful purple in the middle. Blue and orange of the same value will also blend perfectly together, but the color where the two meet will be a dull, muted brown. Dark blue and yellow are very different values and would be very difficult to blend. However, a very light pastel blue and yellow will blend together just right.

Chapter Four:

Flowers and Finishing Touches



I really want the flowers to "pop". That's one of the main reasons I used gray to color the waves. If I had used too much color in the waves, the flowers would "blend" in visually. This is one area where "blending" would be counter productive!



I color in the flowers completely with a very light Y00.



I add RV11 to the tips and center sections of the petals...



...and just to the centers of others... (RV11)

Because the Y00 and RV11 are similar in value, both being light, they naturally blend very well together.



I add YR24 to the center "seed" section of each flower and to the folds in the petals.



Try this - squint your eyes just a little and look at your flowers. See how all the colors blend softly together? That's because they're all similar in value even though they're different colors. The biggest key to any blending problem is to realize that color doesn't matter. When it comes to blending color, the only thing that matters is value. Any colors, no matter how different in hue, will blend perfectly when the values are the same.



I use RV00, the exact same value as the yellow base...



...to finish off the blend.



I add stronger, darker color accents with R85 around the centers and outside edges of the petals.



I add just a touch of T3...



...to finish off the flowers.

With the entire image more or less complete, I can now turn my attention to finishing touches. Your image may or may not need any of these. Take a good look at your own work and give it only what it needs.



I decide to add a bold, black contour line underneath some of my waves to help separate them from the surrounding water. (Black 100)



I darkened parts of the spirals... (Black 100)



...and add some "drop shadows" under the upper waves... (Black 100)



...and under the lowest flower. (Black 100)



Ahhh... that's better :)



I add Black 100 accents to the upper waves as well, but only where I think it will improve my drawing. You may or may not need to.



I add black accents between the waves and the dragon's body...



...and to the spirals.

Sometimes the small things make a big difference.



At this stage, the drawing could be complete! I actually really love how distinct the dragon's head is and how it appears to pop off the page.

But... I want to teach you as much as I can!

So... I'm going to do a final "blend glaze" on the head and completely alter the way the colors look!

You don't have to do this, but I wanted you to know how to do it!

Sometimes an area in your image may look great by itself, but not so great in the context of the image as a whole. More often than not, a quick blending glaze will solve that!



I color a light all over
blending glaze of Y00 on
the skull plate...



...nose... (Y00)



...lip... (Y00)



...and jaw. (Y00)



Notice how much prettier all those light blues and grays look now!



I darkened the holes in the skull plate with T6 to give just a bit more contrast...

It looks nice, and I could stop... but I'm not gonna!



I add a glaze of YR24...



...just in spots... (YR24)



YR24



I want to accentuate the previous glaze, not obliterate it!



A soft blend glaze of Y00...



Completely alters the look and feel of the dragon's head and finishes off the work!

The Finished Image



In this class we learned a wide variety of blending techniques, from basic blending to more advanced texture and glaze blending.

These techniques can be applied to any work you make and will immediately improve your coloring :)

But if you remember nothing else, remember this - if you ever have trouble blending, the problem is not with the color, but with the lightness or darkness (value) of the colors you are trying to blend. Any colors of the same value always blend perfectly! The problem comes when you are trying to blend colors that are too far apart in value!

If you must blend two very different colors (hues) together from light to dark, work out the values light to dark with gray first, then glaze your colors over!

If you follow the advice I've given above, you will never... ever... have blending trouble again!

I can't wait to see what you make!

Christopher Kerry