**5-in-5 Experience**

This design challenge was technically demanding, and challenged my imagination and perception in interesting ways. Initially, the flexibility of guidelines given left me anxious and unsure where to start. However, after starting my first project I found that the constraints could serve as a powerful creative tool—while initially perceived as a barrier, I found that the constraints are actually paths into a different imaginative space. The word constraint is misleading for its semantic value—each constraint actually provided me with more options as a designer, not less.

**Familiarity of Elements**

Interesting to note is that for each constraint, I developed a partiality for and familiarity with the defining element. In my rectangle-based game, I became more proficient in designing bounding-box-based collision and was able to utilize a single element (the rectangle) in a multitude of different ways—As the player, the enemy, the basis for the point system, and the basis for win/loss conditions.

In my moth illustration, I found that being constricted to one element forced me to embody it more in my design. Though a circle is simple and seemingly lackluster as an element, it has more properties than I initially thought—Size, position, color, stroke color, opacity, and of course relative position and proportion. Even though I only used one basic element, the notion of hierarchy, space, and color theory still remain present.

**Daring to Explore**

Perhaps my biggest barrier as a design student is my fear of criticism and failure. Because of the imposed constraints, my anxieties were somewhat alleviated. Knowing that I was supposed to work within a challenging constraint “gave me permission” to make bold design choices that I would not have been otherwise comfortable with. I am reminded of the TED talk shown in class highlighting the fear of criticism and inhibition with respect to creative process.

The short story, *Dubious Douglas* was exemplary of this desire to explore. Though the dialogue and diction is bizarre, I allowed myself to make unconventional word choices because of the constraint (not using the letter ‘E’). Phraseology that would appear unseemly and inappropriate was substantiated by my constraint, and allowed me to produce a unique creative work. I’ve become somewhat endeared with the idea of *Dubious Douglas* and might even continue writing!

**Discipline**

This challenge reminds me of the iconic scene in *The Karate Kid,* where the young disciple is instructed to “wax on, wax off.” Left confused and frustrated, he continues the training only to find that he has unwittingly developed a formidable command of martial arts.

In the same way, it was unclear what I was doing at parts of the design challenge. However, I emerged with a greater understanding of the space of possibility in design, and even refined technical skills in the process. I found myself asking more “what if?” questions during my compositions and also found a greater willingness to break conventional rules of design. I now see that constraints garner mastery in a given realm. A Bruce Lee quote comes to mind: *“I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.”*

As a student, I would recommend the 5-in-5 challenge or similar exercise to anyone seeking to enhance their creative abilities.