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#ColorOurCollections

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

Joaquín Torres García was born in Montevideo, Uruguay in 1874. When he was 17, his family moved to Spain, where he first studied art. He traveled widely for his work and his education, spending more than 40 years of his life in the United States and Europe. He was a teacher as well as an artist and believed strongly that children learn through play. In fact, he designed wooden toys as an extension of his teaching.

In both his art and in his toy design he used simple forms to make complex constructions. He was a master of balancing opposites; the old and new, reason and feeling, classical and modern, natural and plastic. The art work you see here uses a kind of grid into which both geometric and symbolic objects are drawn. Torres García felt that symbols, like the star and fish, anchor, and key were a universal language that everyone could understand. These simple objects represent ideas, emotions, impressions, or messages. Together they tell a story.

## **LOOKING CLOSELY**

Look carefully at the total composition of this piece. Where do you see simple geometric shapes? How are rectangles used throughout the piece? Where do you see examples of contrast? How many of the symbols and shapes can you identify? What words or ideas might you associate with them? Torres García tried to balance his “constructions” much like a building is balanced. He used color as well as shape and form to achieve that balance. Color this line drawing using the colors of Torres García or try using just black, white, and shades of grey. Or color one or two shapes brightly and leave the rest neutral, or use all warm or all cool colors. Experiment! How does that change the feeling of the piece? Try adding a symbol or shape significant to you, or if you like, recreate the entire piece using symbols, colors, and shapes that tell your story.

