

Oliphant Science Awards: Profile on Josephine Oehler



Josephine Oehler is a senior student at Seymour College. She has placed entries in the Oliphant Science Awards every year since 2015. During this time Josephine has discovered an interest in photography and illustration that now has her placing multiple entries in multiple categories. Here Josephine outlines a little about what motivates her; describes the background to some of her Oliphant entries; and give some tips on poster making.

I have always been very inquisitive, always wondering how things work even when I was very little. I have always been the person who wonders why and how – always analysing every situation possible. I think that is why I have such a deep interest in science. As for my interest in illustration, I just love to be able to express myself creatively and think a bit differently.

I really developed my creativity as I was quite a shy kid, if I can be honest, and public speaking is not really my strong point, so I have found that my creativity has been a way for me to express myself.

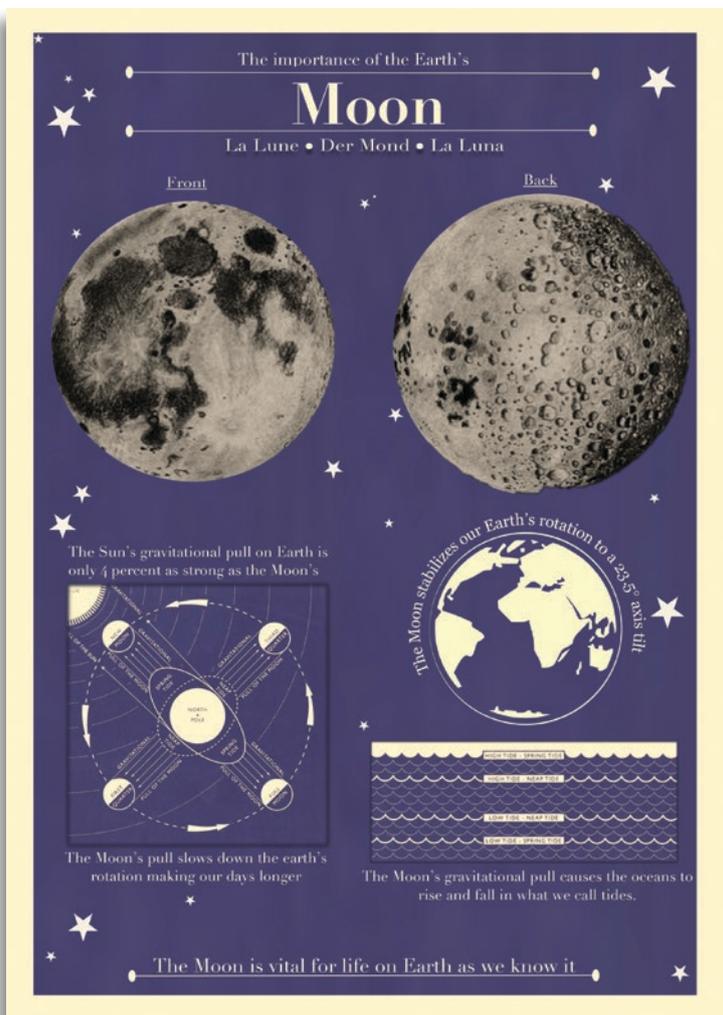
I first really got into illustration and photography in combination with science through the Oliphant Science Awards. The first time I entered the Oliphant Science Awards, I just entered in the photography category. Though I did not win anything it gave me a drive and really allowed me to understand my passion for science. As the years have gone by, through the Oliphant Awards, I really developed my photography and illustration skills with each new topic posing new challenges.

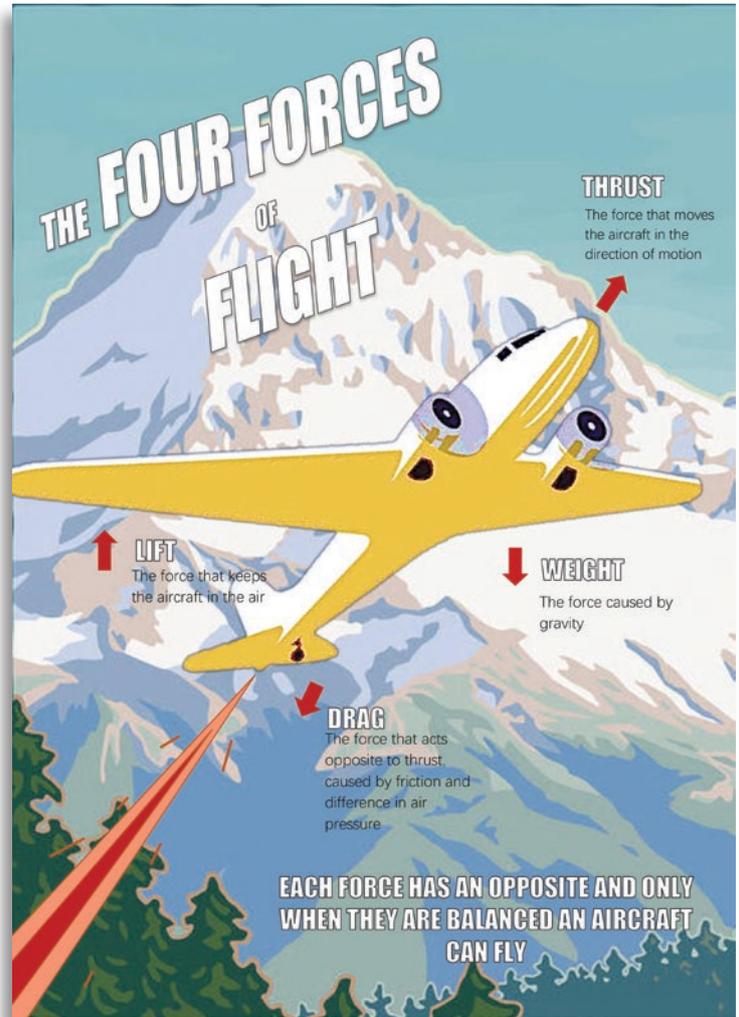
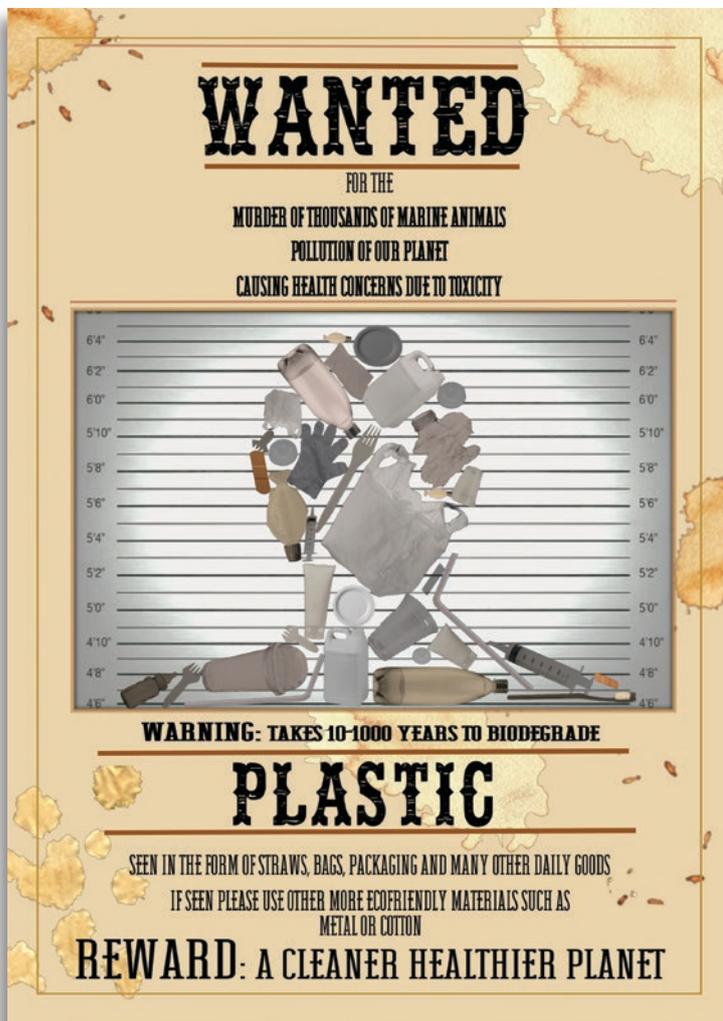
La Luna (moon poster)

When coming up with my design for 'La Luna', I was inspired by the French vintage poster culture and the style on vintage botanical posters. Therefore, to convey the theme of the importance of the moon I structured the poster around the images of the moon. The aspect of this poster which I enjoy most is the use of dark blue in the background as the contrast allows the information and moon to be distinguished easily.

Wanted Plastic

For this poster I already had a bit of background knowledge around plastic and what it does to the world around us. When I started thinking about creating around plastic, it took me a day or two to think of a way to create an interesting way to display the information as there are quite a few posters on plastics. However, at some point it just clicked and I was inspired to make a Western-style 'wanted' plastic poster. I think this is one of my favourite posters that I have created due to its uniqueness. My favourite aspect of the poster is the mug shot of the plastic arranged to make a human silhouette.



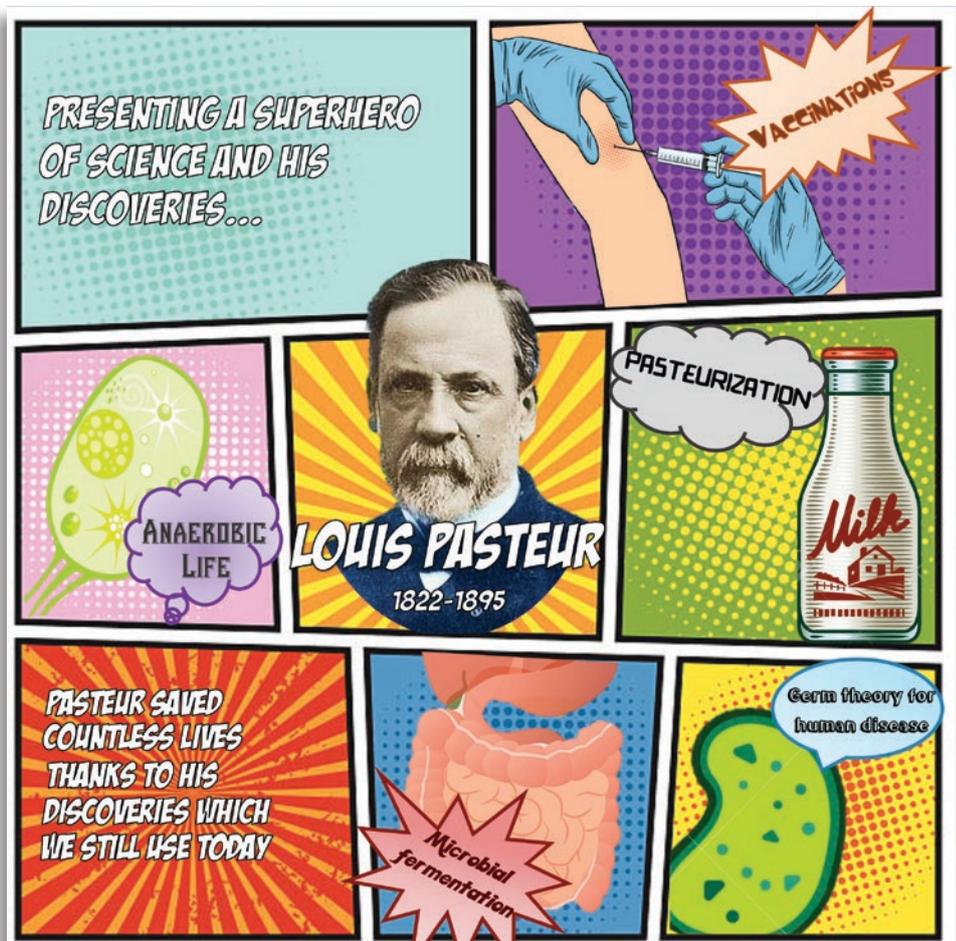


The Four Forces of Flight

I was really inspired by the bold colours and style of retro 50's posters when making my Four Forces of Flight poster. For this particular poster, I began with the background and layered from there. My favourite aspect of this poster is the muted yet bold colour scheme.

Superhero of Science

Out of all of the posters I have created, this is most likely one of my most time-consuming pieces, having taken me a couple of days. For this one, I was really inspired by the characterisation of comic book superheroes and aimed to create a page of how Louis Pasteur would have been portrayed if he were a comic book superhero.



Josephine's tips for poster making

1. Don't pressure yourself into coming up with an idea right away. I often find that my best poster ideas come to me when I am doing something completely unrelated to making posters, and this may be hours or even days later.
2. Start off with the message: each poster should have a particular message whether it is scientific or not. The message should drive the design of the poster and determine how much writing goes onto the poster
3. Be a bit experimental. There is not a right or wrong way to do a poster nor is there a set of rules for how a poster should look. Play around with different colours and fonts – what ends up looking good may totally surprise you.
4. Start with the background. This is my personal preference, but I find that the backgrounds of posters are often overlooked and yet the background can have one of the greatest impacts on a poster
5. Sometimes with colour, less is more! Some colours are driven by bold and busy colour schemes whereas some look best with a very limited use of colour. For most of my posters, I start with near to no colour and as I continue to format them, I add more – however when I do so I try to keep the colours within the same tone; e.g., for the plastic poster, I used muted brown tones and for my Superhero of Science I used bright vivid colours so that Louis Pasteur's picture would juxtapose the background.
6. At the end of making any poster, I like to step back, look at it and think: Would I like to look at this poster any longer (is it aesthetically pleasing)? Do I understand what it is trying to tell me? If not, I go back and rework it; sometimes that means removing something, making a font bolder or changing the shape of a graphic.



Oliphant Science Awards entries

Here is a summary of Josephine's entries in the Awards:

2019

Science of flight (poster)
– 1st prize

The moon (poster)

Wanted: plastic (poster)

– Encouragement award

Tessellations in nature (photography)
– 1st prize

Biofuels fuelling our future (science writing)
– 2nd prize, RACI sponsor prize

2018

Colours of the earth (photography)
– Encouragement award

The golden ratio in nature (photography)
– 1st prize

Superhero of science: Louis Pasteur (poster)
– 1st prize

2017

Nuclear energy friend or foe (poster)
– 1st prize

Crystal investigation
– 3rd prize

Biodiversity (photography) – 3rd prize

2016

What colour means (photography)
– 3rd prize

2015

Insects rule (photography)
– Highly commended, Nature Foundation sponsor prize