Autumn Thaumatrope:
Two-Face String Spinner

Create your own autumn-themed thaumatrope! Trace and decorate autumn leaves, then spin your creation using strings to see how the two images come together.

What is a Thaumatrope?
A thaumatrope is a simple optical toy that creates an illusion by combining two pictures into one when spun quickly.
Each side has a different picture. When the thaumatrope spins, the images appear to blend together, creating a surprising new picture!

Materials:

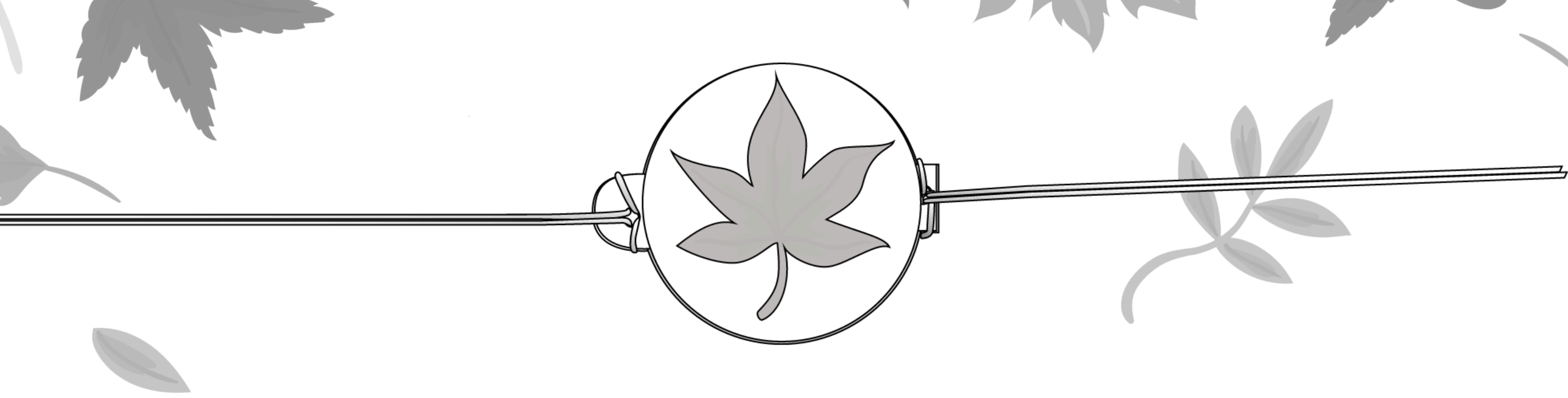
- Printed Two-Face Thaumatrope Template
- Scissors
- Coloring pencils
- Glue stick / Clear tape
- Autumn leaves (real leaves or digital leaf references to trace)
- Hole punch
- String (two lengths)

Preparing Your Workspace
Gather all the materials and tools you need.
Work on a clean, flat surface with enough space to cut, color and assemble your thaumatrope.

Preparing Your Thaumatrope Faces:

1. Cut out the two faces of the thaumatrope template.
2. Label the tabs to help you keep track of the correct positions when assembling your thaumatrope.
3. Choose some autumn leaves to use as your designs.
4. Trace the leaves onto the designated faces of your thaumatrope.
5. Color and decorate your leaves using coloring pencils. You can use different autumn colors to make your designs unique.

This Month™ STEAM Maker Lab™ | Autumn Thaumatrope: Two-Face String Spinner
Grades K–2 · 30–45 minutes · Makes one string-spun thaumatrope
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Assembling Your Thaumatrope:

- Use a hole punch to make holes in the designated spots on each face.
- Align the two faces of your thaumatrope.
- Glue or tape the faces together, making sure the punched holes remain clear.
- Thread a piece of string through each of the designated holes, leaving enough string on either side to hold and spin your thaumatrope.

Spinning Your Thaumatrope:

Hold the strings on either side of your thaumatrope and twist and pull them to make it spin. Watch as your two autumn leaf designs come together!

After making your thaumatrope, try these experiments:

- Spin it slowly: Can you see the two pictures separately?
- Spin it quickly: What happens when the pictures come together?
- Try new designs: What other pictures could you combine?
- Change your colors: Does your design look different when you use brighter or darker colors?

A little history of thaumatropes

The word thaumatrope is often translated as "wonder turner". It is a fun way to explore how our eyes and brain work together to help us see the world.

The thaumatrope became popular in England during the 1820s. These early optical toys helped inspire people's curiosity about moving pictures and the technology that eventually developed into cinema!

How does it work?

When a thaumatrope spins quickly, the two images appear to overlap. This happens because our eyes and brain process the changing pictures so quickly that we perceive them together as one image.

This is an example of an optical illusion – something that tricks our eyes and changes how we see an image!

The same fascinating ideas about seeing images quickly helped scientists and inventors explore how moving pictures could be created.

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