

HOW TO BUILD A HOBBY HORSE

a step-by-step guide and template

About Hobby Horses

Hobby Horses are a rare sight in Newfoundland and Labrador but they have been a long-standing part of the mummering tradition. The hobby horse is a peculiar breed. With their menacing eyes, and crooked hobnail teeth, the mummer's hobby horse has been terrifying people for centuries. It harkens back to the days when our not-so-distant ancestors would save the skins of animals, dry them, drape them over their bodies, and chase people around at festive times of the year.

Also referred to as "Horsey Hops", "Flop Jaws," "Horse Chops," "Hobby Hoss," and "Lop Jaws," the hobby horse has been known to follow people into churches, pull tablecloths off tables, turn off ceiling lights by pulling the string with its mouth, and to swallow oranges, apples, and caplin when tossed its way. They often dance around in a rather awkward and grotesque manner. But most of all, they tend to chase people.

In some extreme cases, hobby horses have peed on floors (with the help of a water bottle), ripped the sleeves off of shirts, and they almost always get dogs howling. They like to lurk in dark places, hide behind doors, or around the corners of houses. There haven't been too many accounts of serious harm inflicted by the hobby horse, but they have been known to push boundaries and the expression, "you're as bold as a hobby horse," speaks to their mischievous side.



The hobby horse has always been a do-it-yourself project. Pieced together with whatever was around, and often in secrecy, the hobby horse often came to life in sheds, barns, and basements around the province. Because the hobby horse accompanied mummies, the builders would

take precautions to keep it a secret so as not to reveal the mummers' identities by association. Hobby horses have been made out of junks of wood, giant blocks of styrofoam, leftover plywood, stitched-together cardboard, and the skulls and skins of horses, moose, cows, and pigs. It's rumoured that an albino hobby-moose is lurking somewhere in St. John's.

What they all tend to have in common, besides their creepiness, is a snapping lower jaw, usually attached with a hinge, a piece of leather, or rubber. The sound of the hobby horse's jaws "snocking" together are known to bring a chill up the spines of people who grew up with the tradition. A string gets knotted on the lower side of the jaw, goes up through the tongue and the roof of the mouth, and along to the back of the head where the carrier can pull the mouth open and closed. A blanket or sheet ties onto the back of the head to cover the body and a stick or broom handle acts as a third leg and supports the head. With a bit of ingenuity, anyone can piece together a hobby horse.

The head can be covered with fake fur, moose hide, fabric, or paint. Eyes have been made with ping pong balls, tennis balls, jar lids, and bottle caps. And when the crooked hobnail teeth are lined up just right they've been known to make sparks!



You Will Need:

- a piece of cardboard (at least 3 x 4 feet)
- a printed template (pages 4-17 in this guide)
- a marker
- a yardstick
- a box cutter
- a pair of scissors
- a broom handle, hockey stick or other long stick
- duct tape
- two pieces of wood (about 3" width x 5" length x 1/2" height)
- scotch tape
- jar lid, bottle caps, or other round objects for eyes
- a drill and drillbit
- an old stuffed toy for animal fur
- any other decorations
- a hammer
- a dozen 1" roofing nails
- 3 metal washers
- 3 feet of string or twine
- fabric (3 x 8 feet is ideal)
- glue gun
- hot glue sticks

Template Set Up

1. Print out the template, tape together, and cut along outer edges
2. Place template on cardboard and trace with marker.
3. Remove template and cut out cardboard using yardstick and box cutter.
4. Draw in fold lines on cardboard using the template as a guide.
5. Label cardboard with letters (A,B,C, etc) to match template.
6. Place yardstick on fold lines and bend.

Folding and Taping

7. Fold tab F on top of tab K. Use duct tape to stick together.
8. Fold tab A and D into the box. Then fold tab E into the box.
9. Tape together the edge of tabs L and M (leave tabs R and S free of tape).
10. Tape together the edge of tabs N and O (leave tabs T and U free of tape).



Time: 2-3 hours

Age: 10 years and older (with adult supervision)

Video: visit mummersfestival.ca to find the instructional video for making a hobby horse

11. Tape together the edges of tabs L and Q.
12. Tape together the edges of tabs O and Q.
13. Bring together tabs B and C to make a diamond. Tape together.
14. Massage tabs R, S, T, U. Tape together to make a rounded horse muzzle.
15. Mark an X on the bottom of tab K (in the middle of the tab). Cut through with box cutter.

Mouthpiece and Jaw

16. Drill hole through both blocks of wood.
17. Hammer nails into wood blocks to make "teeth"
18. Glue washers onto the upper woodblock on both sides ("roof of the mouth").
19. Using hot glue and staples, attach the upper woodblock to the cardboard edges of tabs L and O.
20. Using hot glue, attach the lower woodblock to the cardboard tab P.
21. Run string through bottom woodblock, then top woodblock and out the back. Tie a knot or a washer to the end of the string and tape to bottom of tab P.

Decorating

22. Using hot glue, attach fabric to the top of horse's head. Once anchored continue to add hot glue until the fabric is fully attached on all sides of horse.
23. Glue on eyes, nostrils, fur, or other decorations to give your horse personality.
24. Push stick through hole on the bottom of tab K and let it rest in the crown of the horse head (where tabs B,C, H, and I meet).

About the Hobby Horse Workshop

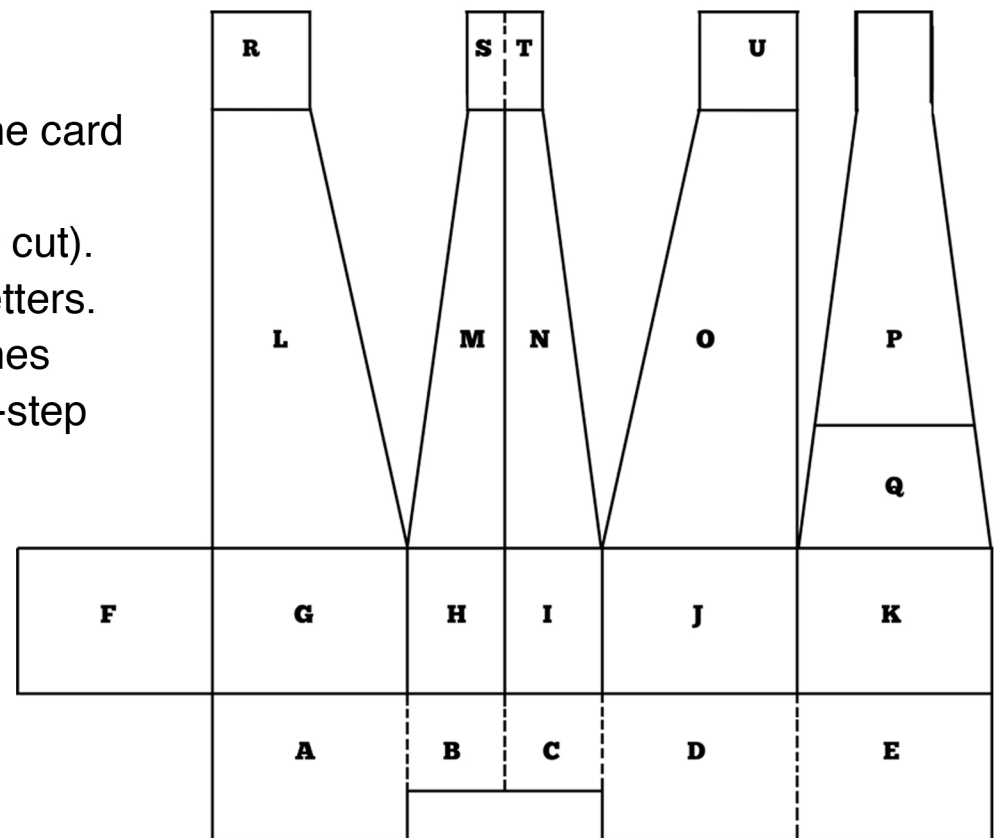
The Mummers Festival has been running Hobby Horse Workshops since 2009. We turned to archival materials and conducted interviews to learn more about this tradition. Our template is modelled after mid-1900s hobby horses located in the Memorial University Folklore Archives. These horses now turn up at the Mummers Parade and are used during the traditional Christmas-time house-visiting tradition of mumming. The Festival has successfully repopulated the province with this nearly-extinct and most peculiar breed.



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HOW TO USE THIS HOBBY HORSE TEMPLATE

1. Tape template together as shown in this diagram.
2. Cut along outer edge of the entire template.
3. Place template on cardboard and trace.
4. Using a ruler, draw the remaining lines onto the cardboard as shown on the template (solid lines will be folded & dotted lines will be cut).
5. Label the cardboard with the corresponding letters.
6. Using a ruler, bend cardboard along all fold lines
7. Follow along in the video and use the step-by-step guide to continue.



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A

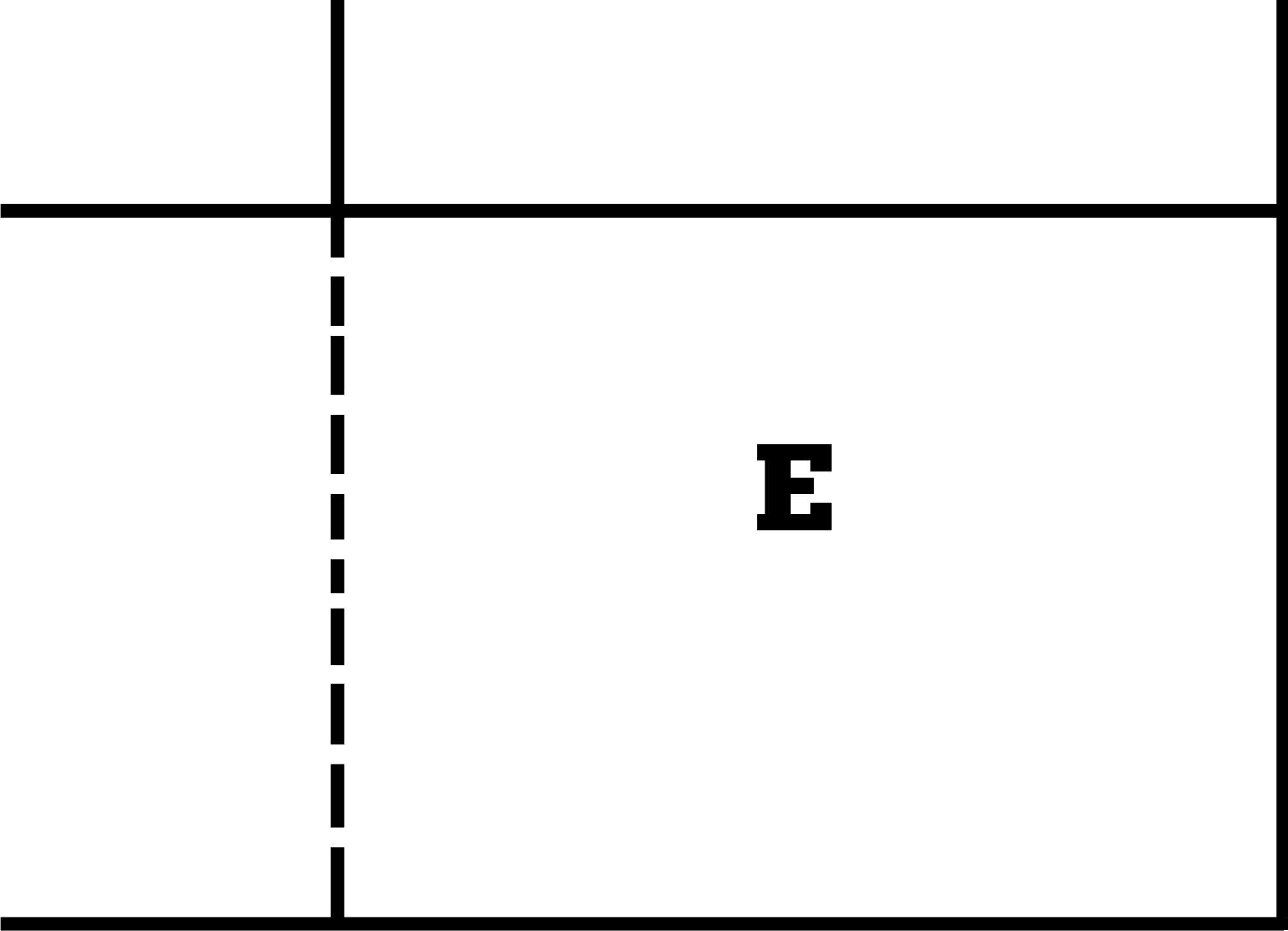


A diagram showing three regions labeled B, C, and D. Region B is on the left, bounded by a solid horizontal line at the top and a solid horizontal line at the bottom. Region C is in the middle, bounded by a dashed vertical line on the left and a dashed vertical line on the right. Region D is on the right, bounded by a dashed vertical line on the left and a solid horizontal line at the bottom. The top boundary of the entire diagram is a solid horizontal line. The bottom boundary is a solid horizontal line that is broken into two segments by a vertical solid line at the position of region C.

B

C

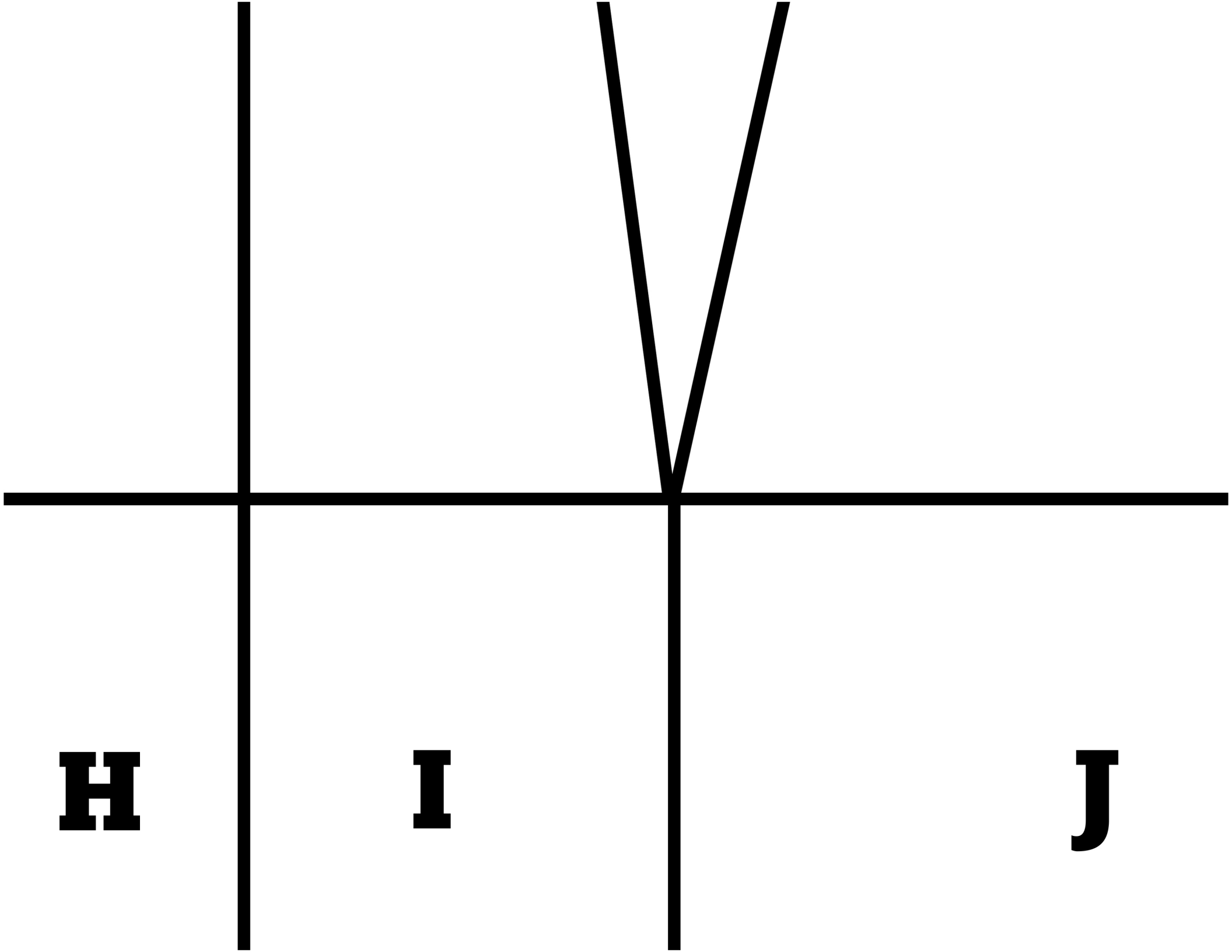
D



F

G

V



H

I

J

Q

K

L



M

N

O



P



R

S

T

U

