



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
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## **Using Art to Encourage Effective Speaking and Writing Skills with ESL Students**

Curriculum Unit 09.01.08  
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### **Introduction**

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This unit is designed to address several areas of concern to me as a teacher of middle school in New Haven, Connecticut. First and foremost, it is the carrot that is needed to bring my bilingual/ ESL students to the place where the clarity of thought they possess as Spanish thinkers and speakers can be expressed in effective written English. Pedagogically, it will provide me with opportunities to apply a range of strategies so that my students will have opportunities to see, hear, read, speak, and write in a safe, stress-free environment by exploring the question, "What is art?" As a teacher of seventh and eighth grade Language Arts at John S. Martinez School, I am charged with the responsibility of ensuring that my students have every opening possible to increase their writing fluency. Demographically, my students are predominately Hispanic. Although they come to school rich with heritage, they lack basic language and writing skills in English.

The purpose of this unit, then, is to provide a change of pace, a different venue for learning. Students will not be engaging in language in a vacuum but rather as a vehicle for something that interests them. Art will provide ways to respond using language, creative skills, and critical thinking. Because the emphasis will be placed on the piece of art and not language as it is typically taught, students will feel a sense of freedom. Their writing will not necessarily be under the microscope. Their ideas about the piece will be. Students will also explore an artist's life, thus seeking answers through a biographic search using computer technology. The more opportunities my Spanish students have to experiment with language, the better their chances are at success with fluency and proficiency.

This unit is divided into two parts. Part One uses photographs from 9/11 to reinforce language proficiency as well as art understandings. These ideas are then used in Part Two to develop an art gallery. The expressed purpose of both is to use the vehicle of art as a means of arriving at effective language skills.

## Rationale

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Teaching literacy and composition is a high priority in the inner city. It is also one of its greatest challenges. Add in the fact that in my school, large majorities of the population are either bilingual or ESL learners, and the demands and complexities become even more daunting. And this does not even take into account the various intellectual ability groupings. The concerns can be overwhelming.

First, as a teacher, I face the challenge of students who speak Spanish as their primary language. Many of them have begun their English language learning after the age of four. This compounds the difficulty of acquiring a second language. Spanish is the language they speak as well as think. It is dominant. Some students are transient, making their continuous exposure to English intermittent. Some are in the country illegally, so they try to stay "below the radar," doing as little speaking and writing as possible, so that no attention will be paid to them. Spanish is spoken at home; television programming is viewed in Spanish. Their exposure to English occurs only during school hours and only in classes. The students speak Spanish to each other during class changes and during lunch breaks. Because speaking is easier than writing in my English class, my students are much more willing and comfortable when they are speaking English. Some of them do very well using this modality; others become self-conscious about their ability because they realize they have issues with the language; a third group believes that their English usage is just fine when, in fact, it is anything but.

Second, for any middle-school, Spanish-speaking population, becoming proficient in English is often a very difficult transition. Students are not only learning a new language but they are also in the throes of becoming adolescents. They need a great deal of support because the complex experience of adolescence, coupled with school and an emerging language, can be frustrating, embarrassing, and painful, especially at this age.

Third, inexperienced teachers sometimes hold the attitude that these students are not capable of reading and writing on grade level, so expectations and assignments are greatly reduced. Many of them are initial teachers with only a few years experience. It is essential that there be consistency across the disciplines in my grade level team when dealing with our students. Because most of our students are normal cognitively and bring the same rich set of feelings, experiences, and ideas to the classroom as their native-speaking peers, I must resist the attitude that low English-speaking proficiency or lack of knowledge of the classroom culture is a sign of uncooperativeness. Coupled with high expectations and activities, the necessary language support must be provided. This is a prevalent mistake and misconception among my peers.

Fourth, social networking, emailing, facebooking, blogging, twitting, texting, and listening to Ipods are activities on which my students want to spend their time. Dr. N. Katherine Hayles calls this cognitive style "hyper attention": students "switch focus rapidly among different tasks, preferring multiple information streams, seeking a high level of stimulation, and having a low tolerance for boredom."a1a There needs to be an educational answer for the chasm that exists between what they want to do and what is necessary. Students need to spend time hearing language, seeing and reading language, writing language, and speaking language in ways that excite them.

A fifth concern worth mentioning is that often students, even native speaking ones, just do not want to spend the time reading as a way of understanding the nuances of the language. My students lack this motivation to read-- hence, to critically think and write. Their understanding at times seems limited. They see these academic pursuits as too hard and not worth the effort. They are inexperienced readers partly because they

have trouble deciphering meaning or purpose while reading texts. Lack of adequate vocabulary sometimes gets in the way. They cannot grasp the difference between my oral explanations of any assignment and the written, explanatory handouts that I provide that also act as a rubric and timeline. Their parents often cannot assist them with these understandings because they themselves have the same issues. Terms such as analyze, synthesize, and critique are standard requests in my directions, yet they hold fuzzy meaning for my students, so the desire to read and complete their assignments is greatly diminished. As a result, their work is often incomplete or off task and their focus is unclear or even lost. This lack of focus is not only indistinguishable in terms of words, sentences, and forms of address, but the presentation sounds different as well. Their writing syntax is not one of a native speaker. Their writing "sounds Spanish." Because they think in Spanish, they write that way. Syntactical errors and misuses of vocabulary lead to awkward sentence patterns and structures.

Novelist James Canon, in an essay entitled "How James Canon Learned English While Writing a Novel" writes, "The more I wrote and revised, the more I noticed patterns of mistakes in my English and began to avoid them. Doing this helped me reduce the accent that still appears in my writing as well as in my voice. In the process of writing my novel, I realized that writing can only be as advanced as your reading level. And so I started reading more and more, and by doing it I acquired an extensive vocabulary and learned many idiomatic expressions, proverbs, sayings and the correct use of the complicated but essential English phrasal or 'two-words' verbs." Many of my students realize that their writing lacks this fluency and includes a Spanish voice.

Finally, the New Haven School District uses a whole language approach to language and literature in which stories are read, guided questions are asked, and responses are recorded, most often in journals. This format of read and respond is repeated over and over again. Many questions are introspective - "How would you feel or respond to this situation?" Also included in the recommended considerations are the recognition of figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, and personification. There are even attempts at the denotative (literal definition) and connotative (associative or symbolic) meaning of certain words, phrases, or paragraphs. Unfortunately, these ideas are not reinforced to any degree in the current curriculum, so they do not "stay" with my students. For my Spanish-language students, there is very little concrete meaning to such words. They are flash-pan mentioned and summarily forgotten. There is no long-term understanding acquired. There are exceptions, though. When one of these stories chronicles a tale of human interest especially about kids their own age, our discussions about them are sustained and significant. The students remember the irony and symbolism of the story. To a degree, this approach is successful, but just like the grammar instruction of memorization of parts of speech and diagramming that I received, it does not necessarily translate into effective writing. Psychologically, students consider these stories just English lessons or homework, not areas of interest, because they are assigned to read them. Questions are not generated by them, and they have no input into their outcome.

## Objectives and Goals

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To respond to some of these concerns, my classroom will be designed as a language-rich environment in which students are actively engaged in language-related activities. Face-to-face interaction during hands-on activities will produce a wonderfully rich oral vocabulary and understanding, also providing students with the constant and changing stimulation that they need. Class discussions will be plentiful, and they will address the

issues of sustained English speaking and build upon the desire of the students to socialize as part of their adolescent development. A grade-level team goal will be put in place, safeguarding against confusing low English proficiency with low intelligence or lack of experience. Expectations will remain high. A wide variety of activities that incorporate a range of experiences will, hopefully, satisfy the needs of my students as they seek the continuous stimuli they crave. Reading and writing will play a part in this unit in an effort to expose my students to proper English syntax. Photos and art pieces that draw the attention of my students will be utilized to grab and maintain their interest as they move through this unit.

It is my intention to help my students develop interpretations of a piece of art, make connections between reading about the life of an artist and their own, make judgments about the quality and theme of the piece, and, finally, write about the piece effectively and correctly.

## Strategies

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The strategies in this unit are designed to help my students as they become more fluent and successful writers. The learning strategies included address such areas as time management, behavior, speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary building. These strategies are intertwined on all levels. They focus on the variety of learning styles in my classroom as well. Analytic learners will be comfortable with the step-by-step time table presented at the beginning of the unit in which goals are set and explained. They will also find pleasure in the various activities that require them to consider, investigate, and evaluate certain photographs and art pieces. Auditory learners will benefit from the discussions about the 9/11 snap shots and the investigative reporters sections. Kinesthetic learners will enjoy the opportunities to set up an art gallery and a bulletin board of people lost in the World Trade Center after 9/11. Tactile learners will appreciate the rendering of a cityscape after our discussion of the elements and principles of drawing and design, and visual learners will treasure the entire experience since our focus is directed at all things visual.

### **Time Management Strategy**

My students are typical adolescents. They march to their own drum, and it often does not include education in its beat. Nonetheless, they must be in school. As a strategy, I always provide my students with a monthly coursework sheet outlining all assignments, both written and oral, homework, due dates, and the point value of everything listed on the sheet. Each exercise or requirement is explained in as much detail as possible, but allowances are always made for changing school circumstances such as unexpected meetings or school closing during winter months. My email address appears at the top of each sheet so students can reach and question me when they are at home. A requirement for my class is to place this sheet in their English binder. This strategy provides a sense of security to some students who need it, and it also provides parents of interested students an opportunity to get more involved in their children's education. Parents can view what and when assignments are due and often email me with questions or inquiries about the progress of their child. I also provide the students with a blank monthly calendar so they can place their assignments on it and use it to keep track of other class assignments as well. My homework board reinforces these strategies and is updated daily.

### **Behavioral Strategy**

Classroom management is paramount in the education. Knowing that my students come to school with behavioral issues mentioned in my rationale, my lessons need excitement, high interest, and dramatic subject matter using hands-on activities. This focus needs to be sustained throughout the unit. As an educator, I teach Socratically, challenging my students to get them to answer their own questions by making them think and drawing out the answer from them. This rapid and repeated questioning plays into their hyper-attentive, high-tech world. Yet, in my classroom, my students aren't always willing to stay focused on the topic at hand and respond to the questions being asked. They would rather be socializing or drawing, and they hate being called out for these behaviors. Thinking it over, I needed a strategy that got their heads "back in class" without calling them out. My approach is simple. I encourage on-task behavior by repeating the last student's answer as I continue questioning. "Jose just said....Do you agree with his statement, Larissa?" This is a very valuable method of instruction to remember and employ as I begin this unit. It does not embarrass the student who has not been listening, restates the ideas that he or she need to consider to get back on task. Giving students these avenues of redirection and thought encourages the low-threat, high-challenge environment that is sorely needed by my students. They have quietly and without fanfare been given the ideas to think and write about, thus removing the deer-in-the-headlights look so many students have when asked to reflect on a certain topic when their attention has been waning.

### **Speaking and Listening Strategies**

Adolescents like to talk, a lot. Most teachers do not have problems getting them to engage in this type of activity but often take issue with off-task talking in the classroom. The fact is that students are not given enough time to voice their opinions on anything. Part of the problem is that teachers do not set up rules for discussion so the classroom quickly turns into a cacophony of noise in which no one hears anything anyone is saying and the activity ends in failure. Students need to hear language spoken correctly in order to become effective speakers and writers. Yet some teachers of middle school give up far too easily after a few sessions like the one just mentioned. There are several ways around this. One idea that works is giving the student who has the floor a soft object of some kind. The object is passed to the next speaker when he or she is finished. Another way that is effective is to insist that the current speaker repeat the main idea of the last speaker before he or she begins his thought. A third strategy is to have small groups discuss the issue then report back as a whole. In this way, the somewhat expected, off-task behavior is not offensive to the teacher. The old-fashioned raising-of-the-hands strategy also works wonders if established from day one in the classroom. It is important to take the time necessary to establish these behaviors at the beginning of the year as students need and want to understand the boundaries and expectations of the classroom.

On the part of the teacher, it is fundamental that correct syntax be reinforced. When a student uses language correctly, it should be repeated and reinforced by the teacher. If, on the other hand, a student uses incorrect sentence structure, a teacher should repeat the idea of the student using the correct pronunciation and grammar. A teacher must provide incentive for listening and speaking. Having students listening for specific information as an answer to some fundamental questions, keeps students focused. These questions should appear in print either on the board, on an overhead projector, or on paper, so students can refer to them from time to time.

There is another issue in this mix - participation in discussion. Simply put, teachers need to choose topics that the students will want to discuss. Designing discussions around exciting topics will ensure that students pay attention. Allowing plenty of time for the discussion will signal to students that their voices and opinions are valued and respected. Their input also signals the recognition of the diversity of the opinions held by every student in the class. When possible, students should have the opportunity to choose their own topics. Having

students understand that participation in discussion is an integral part of their grade might attract those reluctant students who seem to remain invisible in the classroom. My unit is crafted to include these ideas in the many opportunities to speak and listen that it offers.

### **Writing and Grammar Strategies**

The Spanish language is different in form from English. This holds true for both thinking and speaking. Since writing comes from thought, my students' writing takes on the "Spanish" form. Writing with an accent results in syntactical errors and misuse of vocabulary, though not through any fault of the writer. Bilingual and ESL students are simply following the Spanish patterns of writing. In Spanish, for example, adjectives are placed after nouns as a general rule. As with any language, there are a few exceptions. In English adjectives describe nouns and generally precede them. Spanish verbs change their form in each tense in agreement with the subject. There are several areas where my students seem to commit errors in syntax, verb issues being the most predominant: singular/plural verb forms, verb tenses, verbs followed by gerunds/infinitives, verbs and prepositions, passive voice, articles, and adjectives. If these patterns are allowed to set in, my students' writing and speaking language habits will become ingrained and resistant to change. The activities in my unit provide direct help through recognition on graphic organizers of some of these issues. There are many writing exercises and partner editing opportunities that will further their skills in these areas.

Additionally, since exposure and usage of evolving language increase vocabulary and more complex sentence structures, the more my students use language, the better they will be able to handle its nuances. Through the use of more complex, motivating and appealing topics and texts, they will experience language configurations using graphic organizers that I hope my students will also begin using in their writing. It is then that my students might feel comfortable enough to make meaningful inferences and connections as they explore topics in writing.

But herein lies the problem. My students are doubtful of their writing ability. They are not comfortable or secure about it. They feel they need a security blanket. A simple example of this problem involves the persuasive essay. When they address a persuasive writing assignment, they want to remain within the comfort zone of the "formula writing" referred to as the five-paragraph essay. This form of writing was introduced to my students in the lower grades. It was a very effective, introductory writing tool. As the result of continuous practice using this method, my students can develop a reasonable essay staying within the confines of the formula. But it is a formula. Not that this is a negative in writing. It certainly addresses the idea of defining three reasons in defense of an argument and their sequencing, but it is an immature writing form when considering what will be expected of them in years to come. In essence, this form becomes a crutch. Each writing piece looks just like the last. Students become prisoners to this form and become unaware of what an argument looks like in academic writing. Without reading, they are not exposed to more complex language proficiencies, so this writing form becomes their consistent and steadfast model. Because they are held prisoner to this writing form, they do not come into their own voices, and they continue to use the same format over and over. It becomes formulaic, in essence, comfortable, and safe. It is a fill-in-the-blank writing structure, and it represses their voices.

A practice that I've found useful as a method for developing appropriate uses of language is writing a school newspaper. The skills involved in putting together a newspaper are the same skills I will employ in my unit as we prepare for the opening of our art gallery. The idea is to put into practice "on the job" training. Verbal interaction with peers displays more frequent use of language because students are able to generate meaning out of their own experience as editors, writers, reporters, and artists. The interpersonal collaboration

necessary to develop a framework for a newspaper or, in this case, an art gallery, requires an extensive use of vocabulary in a situation controlled by them. From the start, my students are heavily involved in the "process" of creating this gallery; from the ideas for the art work, to the assignments in defense of their piece of art, to the actual set up of the gallery. These literacy-based activities encourage the use of correct English because each student understands that opening an art gallery requires many eyes before it becomes a reality.

### **Vocabulary Building Strategy**

Effective writing has as a fundamental component expanded vocabulary. At every opportunity, I will present my students with its advantages. From the opening lesson when they are asked to describe what they see in photographs of 9/11, to the introduction and/or refresher of terms used in art, to the research they will pursue in an attempt to persuade their fellow classmates that their art piece is the best one included, I will encourage the use of increased vocabulary. Dictionaries are always on hand in my classroom. Websites with the definitions of art terms will be provided. Word walls that list and sometimes define our current words are constantly updated. Requiring students to incorporate words from these sources in their written assignments will, hopefully, imbed them into their vocabulary.

### **Using Art as a Strategy**

Initially, I asked myself what authentic, hands-on activity involves a low threat with high expectations, provides concrete experiences and active processing, all while getting my Spanish-thinking teenagers to critically think, then to write English more effectively and correctly. For my students, art seemed to hold the key. Most of my students truly enjoy art. They do not feel cornered or trapped by art. It's just fun. They feel comfortable exploring the different media as well as discussing what they see in an art piece. They feel free to comment on whether they like it or not. Although Martinez is not an art magnet school, with an extensive art focus, our art teacher does a great job introducing the understandings of art. This information is key to the success of my unit.

The next question, then, was, "How can I successfully use works of art to teach language and writing to urban youth?" As the old saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Responding to art will be very stimulating and agreeable because it is not a direct frontal attack using written language as the centerpiece. There is a picture to act as a buffer. And there is no reading of words in text. The picture is the great equalizer. Yet the picture must be read. Richard Estes, in an article entitled "Visualizing Composition: Close Reading" encourages students to make "observation about the details in the text(image) that you find engaging and memorable, and then draw reasonable inferences from those observations... . It is the basis for analyzing a text, for figuring out exactly why and how it works."a3a This skill encourages focused seeing: what you see is what you learn. Emphasis will, initially, be put on oral fluency, expressing what students see visually. Later, when asked to respond in writing, they will find that the exercise will not be focused on grammatical correctness but on clearly expressing thoughts and ideas using effective and clear language, a seeming shift away from mechanics to content. In other words, writing becomes clearer and more effective when there is understanding behind it.

Because my students are not often hyper-attention learners, they are initially going to need highly specific guidance when it comes to observing the images in this unit. Their seeing is related to what they believe and what they already know. They will need the practical skills of observation and inference, the language of description and narration, and finally the application of exposition and argumentation. But I cannot see or think for them. Keeping them on task will be a high priority. Structured activities need a clear learning objective and expected outcome. Commenting on a particular piece of art enhances the art of writing

opinions, for example, and it can also be used to build vocabulary, both in terms of art but also in terms of general knowledge. Knowing that attacking syntax head on could bore students and turn them off at the same time, teachers can use art to teach language rules by asking that students suggest the dialogue they imagine a subject in the piece might be using or listing adjectives and adverbs that best describe the piece. Presenting segments of language in this manner is likely to be beneficial for my Spanish learners since it may enhance comprehension, retention, and cultural awareness.

## A Consideration

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Before, during, and after the use of this unit, my students will need to consider the answer to the question, "What is art?" But art seems to escape a definitive definition. One definition of art is that it is the process of deliberately arranging elements in a composition using specific principles that appeal to the senses or emotions and even explain the human condition. This definition is concrete and emotional, elements accessible to my students. The Dadaists claimed that anything a person drew or painted was, in fact, art. My students will have to grapple with the definition, come to their own conclusions, and defend a piece of art based on their findings.

Today, the elements and principles of art that still have a place in its definition also form the basis of our understanding, recognition, and acceptance of a particular piece as art. The terms shape, line, direction, size, texture, color, and value are fairly easy forms to identify within a composition. Content is an area in which uncertainty arises: What was the artist's intent when he painted? How do we know? Was there any influence on his decision? Did he succeed? How do we react when we encounter the piece? The responses to these questions and many more are why the answer to the query "What is art?" is so elusive. The heart of art depends on the word feeling. An art piece becomes seductive and captivating when the feeling transmitted by the artist is clear, individual, and sincere. The more the viewer is affected by these three conditions of a painting, as expressed by the artist, the higher the quality of the piece in terms of the content.

Art, today, encompasses painting, drawing, sculpture, architecture, music, weaving, literature, dance, photography--and the list goes on and on. For our purposes, we will be considering a small slice of the vast landscape we call art. So to begin the unit, my students will spend twenty minutes playing with the definition of art. Their responses will be recorded in a new section of their binder entitled, "What is art?" I am sure that these ideas will not be at all clear as students begin this unit. It is my hope, however, that as we move through it, they will come to understand just what makes one piece good art and another great.

## Classroom Activities: Part One, 9/11 Images

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The hook of this unit will center on a consideration of journalistic and, sometimes, amateur photographs documenting the 9/11 attack on New York City. These images are dramatic, shocking, and powerful: the perfect hook for opening class periods. They evoke immediate and, sometimes, divisive responses. No introduction is necessary. In fact, it would actually be beneficial if nothing is explained ahead of time. In this way, students would have no preconceived ideas or prejudices to bring to bear on the discussion. Although



some may not consider these photos art, in the finer sense of the word, they certainly can be used to develop correct syntax, to describe and demonstrate the elements and principles of design, and to show the human condition that is a large part of art.

Teachers will need to decide how to present the first photo. Will everyone get their own photograph? Will it be shown on an overhead projector? Will students use laptops to view it online, or will the picture be placed in the front of the room, large enough for all to see? It would probably be wise to use a combination of these presentations. If students have their own copies, they will be able to reflect on them at home. In this way, the alternative lessons suggested below could be real possibilities.

### **9/11 Photographs: Image One**

The first shot I envision using is one in which firemen, policeman, and just average people are all working together heroically in an effort to save anyone they can. The image-one exercises should take two to three days. There are wonderful series of images from which to draw. The website <http://911.navexpress.com> offers one such group. Another site, <http://nymag.com/news/articles/wtc/gallery/2.htm>, has a sequential photo gallery entitled Days of Terror: A Photo Gallery. In a perfect world, I should be able to just ask my students, "What do you see?" much as Linda Friedlaender, from the British Arts Museum at Yale University, does when she conducts tours for students. In my inner-city class, however, students pay much less attention, so guided questioning might initially be needed. As my students view the image I have chosen, I will ask them to consider the first two questions below. These introductory questions will encourage them to observe only what they actually see in the picture. I will explain that no interpretation, conjecture, or analysis will be accepted. These questions will be a direct attempt to get them to name objects and people in the photo. If necessary, the remaining questions listed below will be used:

- What items do you see in the photo?
- Who are the people in the photo?
- Where are they?
- How are they dressed?
- Why are they dressed the way they are?
- Why are they in the photo?
- What emotions are expressed in their faces?
- What has happened to them?

Initially this exercise will be a whole-group, oral discussion. Then, after recording their answers to these questions in a journal, my students will be able to discuss their thoughts about the story within the photo. Because this image will portray a story with such raw human emotion and since my students love drama, I know they will connect with the subjects and then be able to write about the heartbreaking scenes that they see. Through the step-by-step process of observing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating the image as a group, my students will begin to see how to construct concrete meaning and extend their understanding of the image and the event. Teaming with a partner will encourage discussion and editing of their attempts at describing what they see. These skills are in keeping with both New Haven Goals and Objectives and the Connecticut State Standards.

### *Extended Activities: Optional*

A secondary exercise that I might consider is having my students walk in the shoes of someone in the first photograph. Taking this first-person look might really strike home for some of my students. Here, I would ask my students to choose one of the people in the photo and imagine what his life was like before and after 9/11. Partnering can again be used. Connecting to a real-life situation in this way may help with the higher-order thinking questions on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) that ask students to make personal connections and reflect on a story. There are many personal memoirs of survivors and people who helped during this tragedy. The following websites contain a few of these stories, and they are well worth having my students read as they begin editing their own stories:

<http://invisiblog.wordpress.com/2006/09/11/a-short-memoir-of-911/>

<http://www.memoryarchive.org/en/Category:9/11> These personal stories might provide insight into the thoughts and actions of the victims and their families, also giving students a broader use of descriptive words and phrases as they search for ways to express tragedy and grief.

A third option would be to discuss the differences brought to bear on the various ways in which the picture can be presented. What are the benefits or drawbacks to viewing the photo on line or on the overhead? Does having an individual copy of the photo have any impact on the interpretation of the image? Does the image capture the real story of the day? Are there differences in the quality of the shot? Would this have any influence in the discussion of its meaning?

### **Image Two**

The next image I will present will be of a plane as it struck one of the Twin Towers. This activity should span a day or two. Using the organizer below, I will ask my students to list as many actions as they imagine the photo suggests. My belief is that they will choose strong action words because of the content of the image. Next, I will ask them to describe the action. The intention is to generate a list of adverbs to accompany the verbs listed. A third column will ask that students now put the two words into a meaningful sentence. After completion of the sentence, I will try to get my students to focus on verb tense. Because our world language teacher spends time on exercises of verb tenses and agreement, my students will understand the concept and recognize it as reinforcement of the correct syntactical placement of two parts of speech: verb/adverb.

Action	Descriptor	Sentence
crashing	violently	*The plane was violently crashing into the Tower.

### *Extended Activity: Optional*

An extended and stimulating activity would be to ask my students to act as reporters and eyewitnesses to the event, describing the sounds, sights, and actions they heard that day. This might actually be a very powerful experience for the class. They might even do a local evening-news broadcast, reporting on the horrors of the day. The exercises using this second image have my students seeing, speaking, writing, reading, and editing, all skills necessary for employing English by using appropriate syntax.

### Image Three

A third photo will be one chosen for the complexity of its composition. The exercise I envision will require that my students list as many items (nouns) as they can find in the picture. Once they are finished with the list, I will ask them to then place descriptors (adjectives) beside each item listed. A simple graphic organizer similar to the one above would help in doing this exercise because, again, it will highlight the difference between the placement of adjective and noun in Spanish and English. It must be noted that the nouns appear in the middle column, the adjectives in column one. Hopefully, students will "see" and then understand the difference in adjective placement.

Descriptors (Adjectives)	Items (Nouns)	Sentences
toppled	building	The toppled building acted as a tomb for many people.

This photo will also afford my students the opportunity to complete the following prompts:

- It is crucial that ... why?
- It is important to remember that... why?
- It is recommended that... why?
- It would be a good idea that... why?

It is my hope that these prompts will lead them to generate a series of reflections and questions on their own. The question why following each of the prompts above, is crucial. The why must be answered with evidence from the photograph. It will be my hope that some of the students may actually do some independent research and report back on their findings.

The final use of this image will be to provide impetus for creating a makeshift bulletin board of random items that were so often seen in the hours and days after the attacks as family members looked for any sign of their loved ones and pictures of those missing were pinned up in hopes of finding them. These bulletin boards arose on every corner in New York. This activity encourages an authentic learning experience. Perhaps I will bring back our "reporters" from the previous exercise to continue our journalistic experience. The time frame for this exercise will be two days.

### Final Images

The final images in this section will be a series of photos showing the sequencing of the events of 9/11. These lessons will span approximately six days and will act as a way of introducing the elements and principles of art and design as well as parts of speech and syntactical usage. The elements of art -- shape, line, direction, size, texture, color, and value--are easily observed in these photos. The first photos I will use will be of the skyline of New York including the World Trade Center before the attack. It will be necessary to conduct a teacher-guided lesson as students complete this assignment because these terms will either need to be introduced or information about them reinforced. Developing a word wall with removable Velcro-backed strips will greatly assist in this process. My students will be asked to describe the shapes they observe in the photos, shapes such as squares, circles, rectangles, and triangles. It should be noted that these shapes are two dimensional in

the photos. They are flat. In real life, these shapes become three-dimensional figures such as cubes, spheres, cuboids, cylinders, and cones. Having two-dimensional shapes drawn on paper as well as three-dimensional shapes available for the students to observe would facilitate understanding.

In an effort to understand line, I will direct my students' eyes to areas where line can be observed. Lines can define a space, create an outline or pattern, imply movement or texture and suggest mass or volume. I will present both color and black-and-white versions of the same picture so as to help students understand value or luminance, a term used by Dr. Margaret Livingstone, noted Harvard neurophysiologist, to describe this element. Again, consideration will have to be given to the presentation of these photos. In this case, I will show these photos on an overhead projector so that a pointer can be used to guide the students' eye to the specifics of line, shape, and direction.

When introducing texture, it would be very helpful to have different cloth and building materials of different textures available for my students to feel. Local fabric stores freely give out swatches of material, and home improvement stores will supply scraps of building materials for this purpose. Listing the names for the different textures would expand students' vocabulary. We can then point out the different surfaces present in the buildings. Again it would be worth noting that in my school these elements are discussed in our art classes. If they are not taught in other school systems, more attention and time can be spent on this activity.

Next, the principles of design will be presented. Balance, gradation, repetition, contrast, harmony, dominance, and unity can be easily understood if my students are asked to do a city rendering using the photo and the definition page as a guide. A simple and effective reference sheet with definitions can be found at <http://www.johnlovet.com/test.htm>. Graphite, charcoal, or pastel can be used as the medium to complete this exercise. The "artists" in the group can complete these series of city renderings. After the completion of this exercise, I will ask my students to label their drawings using the "vocabulary of art terms," then ask for volunteers to explain what they have done, encouraging them to use the new vocabulary they have just learned. In this way, students have not only been introduced to these principles, but they have used them in a drawing and commented on them in their description of their picture. Because the focus will be on describing their drawings and not correct syntax, it should be a safe, low-stress activity. Again, these exercises are directly correlated to one of New Haven's CMT (Connecticut Mastery Test) Goals and Objectives: "Forming a general understanding; understanding the text's general content." It is important to note that the understanding here comes, not from written text, but rather from the image. It is my belief that if my students can "read" the images, ones which make impressions on them, they will be more likely to want to write about them. An added assignment might be to choose a favorite photo and write a reflective piece defending their thoughts about the image.

## **Part Two - The Opening of the Art Gallery**

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The second part of the unit will require that the students to be involved in the opening of an art gallery. The art understandings as well as the observation and language skills developed in the first section will be integral to the exercises in this one. Again, I will pose the question, "What is art?" It is here that I hope my students begin to suggest that art not only consists of elements and principles but also crystallizes the feelings of the artist in a clear, individual, and sincere way so as to impress the viewer. It will be explained that our job moving forward is to act as museum curators with the express purpose of choosing a select group of paintings

for our soon-to-be-debuting art gallery. Acting as the artist of their chosen piece, they will have to research the artist's life and the actual painting, then persuade their fellow students that their piece should be chosen for display in the gallery.

Students will be divided into four groups, each representing one of the following art history periods: Renaissance, Impressionism, Post Impressionism, and Twentieth Century art. These periods have been chosen for their easy recognition and the readiness with which my students will be able to discuss the value of the pieces. This is not an attempt to teach art history. Rather this endeavor is simply a means to get my students to read, speak, hear, and write about familiar and/or interesting pieces. Certainly, any periods or even pieces chosen by the students can be used. The number of students in each group will depend on the number of students in the class, which will also determine the initial number of art pieces needed to be considered in each time period. The walls in the classroom will be divided into the four time periods, in which six different, numbered paintings from the period will be displayed. Each student will then randomly pick the name of one of the pieces from a basket. I have chosen the following pieces for consideration:

### Renaissance Period

*Mona Lisa*- Leonardo DaVinci  
*The Creation of Adam*- Michelangelo  
*The Burial of Count Orgaz* - El Greco  
*The Night Watch* - Rembrandt  
*Paul III and His Grandsons* - Titian  
*The Girl with the Pearl Earring* - Vermeer

### Post- Impressionism

*Fruit Bowl, Glass, and Apples* - Cezanne  
*Bathers* - Seurat  
*The Potato Eaters* - Vincent Van Gogh  
*I and the Village* - Marc Chagall  
*The Purple Robe* - Henri Matisse  
*Portrait of Dora Maar* - Pablo Picasso

### Impressionism

*Prima Ballerina*- Edgar Degas  
*Water Lilies, Giverny*- Claude Monet  
*Young Mother Sewin* - Mary Cassatt  
*Starry Night* - Vincent Van Gogh  
*A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* - Manet  
*Le Moulin de la Galette* - Renoir

### Twentieth Century

*One* - Jackson Pollack  
*Senecio* - Paul Klee  
*Cow's Skull* - Georgia O'Keefe  
*M-Maybe* - Roy Lichtenstein  
*Three Folk Musicians* - Bearden  
*Fifth Avenue* - Childe Hassam

Once their piece has been chosen, my students will have to defend their piece from the perspective of the artist. As a group, the question will be posed, "What do we, as the artists, want others to know in order to persuade them that our piece is the one that should be hung in the gallery?"

This section will obviously require research on the part of my students. The Connecticut Standards for Reading require students to use computer technology as a resource for information. This is how the majority of students will glean their information, although our art teacher would also be a wonderful resource. The standards also indicate that that students should comprehend and respond in literal, critical, and evaluative ways to various texts that are read, viewed, and heard. Using the following questions as a guide to inquiry will help my students interpret, analyze, and evaluate the information in order to extend their understanding and appreciation of the works of art. They must be reminded to employ descriptors and adverbs as they develop

their defense of the art piece they have researched. Within their individual groups further questioning will be developed, specific to the pieces in the time period.

- Who is the artist?
- Who hired him/her to produce the piece?
- Do you recognize any of the elements and principle of design in your piece?
- Would you consider your piece good art? Why? Why not?
- What is the point of the piece?
- How does this piece compare to the art of your country?

Since rubrics are a standard requirement with our district, a rubric should be developed by each group, listing the expectations about the information to be gathered, the presentation of that information, as well as the credit given for responses provided. This is a simple sample of one that might be used.

## Evaluating the Artist's Presentation

	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Advanced</b>
<b>Design Elements</b>	Little inclusion of elements	Most elements are used in piece	All elements are significantly represented
<b>Interpretation</b>	Doesn't offer any interpretation	Offers some understanding of the piece	Uses unit understandings to arrive at interpretation
<b>Oral expression</b>	Displays little confidence in the explanation of the artist and his story	Modest oral presentation skills in the explanation of artist's story	Display confidence in delivery of information about the artist
<b>Written expression</b>	Brief, but clearly written, using good mechanics	A solid essay that shows care and efficiency in writing	A well crafted essay that persuasively argues in defense of the artist and the piece
	<b>15 points/area</b>	<b>20 points/area</b>	<b>25 points/area</b>
<b>Student totals</b>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Each student will need to invent the story behind the painting. What is the intended message? What problems arose as the artist designed/painted/ sculpted the piece? Where did the inspiration for the piece come from? I imagine that my serious students will probably provide very thought-provoking background answers, while others with a flare for the dramatic will present more light and humorous responses.

Once research is completed, each "artist" will have to defend his or her piece, extolling the virtues of the art piece to the small group. Here the Connecticut Standards are again relevant: students will be able to clearly express, develop, and substantiate their ideas using standard language structures and diction appropriate to audience and task. The group will then vote, using their designed rubric as a guide, on which two pieces from each period actually make it into our art gallery. Finally, as a class, there will be a debate on the most creative name for the gallery.

*Extended Activities: Optional*

- Design a banner for the gallery, then arrange for an opening so parents can come to view the display created by the students.
- Plan a visit to the Yale art galleries, having students view several selected pieces using the art appreciation skills they have just acquired.
- Debate the question, "Should our government use tax payers' money to purchase works of art for public places?"

## Appendix:

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### The Connecticut Mastery Test Goals and Objectives

The Connecticut Mastery Test Goals and Objectives are the basis of sound teaching. These goals are universal in their application as teachers begin thinking about developing curriculum. My summary is as follows:

- Forming a General understanding; understanding the text's general content: Students will experience this objective when they are asked to "read" 9/11 photos as well as the biographies of their chosen artist.
- Developing an interpretation; interpreting and/or explaining the text. These interpretations occur throughout the unit.
- Making reader connections; connecting or associating the text with life outside the text. Students are asked to identify with someone in the photos from 9/11,

and they are also asked to read personal memoirs in an effort to make such connections.

- Examining the content and the structure; elaborating on the text and making judgments about the quality of and themes in the text. The entire process of choosing a picture and then defending it fulfills this goal for my students.

Considerations for Improved Grammatical Style and Correction (to be use when working with a partner) and reminders of teacher involvement.

- Where possible, encourage verb choices which express strong action.
- As often as possible, avoid passives as well as forms of the verb to be.
- Find and name the "who" in your subject as well as the action in your verb.
- Expletives, a construction beginning with the word there or it, followed by the verb to be, often weakens what you can state more forcefully.
- Do not repeat unnecessarily.
- Compress - use economy of words.

By no means should I rework or rewrite every passage for my students. They readily accept such dependency as many gladly will forfeit a letter grade or two to let me correct their spelling for them. Alternatively, I might persuade a few dedicated students to write several versions before they actually submit a paper. Unfortunately, if they dicker aimlessly, their results will be erratic at best, and sometimes they will revere their complicated version more than their direct and forceful one.



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Katherine Hayles. "Hyper and Deep Attention: The Generational Divide in Cognitive Modes." *Profession* 2007, 187.

<sup>2</sup> "How James Canon Learned English While Writing a Novel." <http://beatrice.com/wordpress/2007/03/14/james-canon-guest-author/>. 4 March 2007

<sup>3</sup> Richard Estes, "Visualizing Composition: Close Reading." In *Seeing and Writing 3*, edited by Donald McQuade and Christine McQuade (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006), 73.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Livingstone, *Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002), 37.

## Resources - Teachers

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Ascher, James. "TPR: After Forty Years, Still a Very Good Idea." <http://www.tpr-world.com/JapanArticle.pdf> accessed May 1, 2009. A quick article highlighting TPR (Total Physical Response) by Dr. James Ascher. A brief description of how the brain acquires a second language and steps to follow in helping students move from "fact" to comprehension.

Cardenas, Diana; Kirklighter, Cristina; Wolff Murphy, Susan. *Teaching Writing with Latino/a Students: Lessons Learned at Hispanic-Serving Institutions*. SUNY Press, 2007.

An in-depth look at how well we know about student population, how we change our perceptions and ultimately our practices in teaching inner-city Hispanic youth.

Carlo, M.S., August, D et al., "Closing the Gap: Addressing the Vocabulary Needs of English-Language Learners in Bilingual and Mainstream Classrooms." *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39, (April 2004), 188-215. The intervention study showing the feasibility of improving comprehension outcomes for students in mixed ELL-EO classes, by teaching word analysis and vocabulary learning strategies.

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Fortune, Tara. "Maximizing Language Growth Through Collaborative-Creative Writing."

[http://www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol6/bridge-6\(2\).pdf](http://www.carla.umn.edu/immersion/acie/vol6/bridge-6(2).pdf). Accessed May 10, 2009. Article discusses how to maximizing language growth through collaborative-creative writing. Language varies and increases in lexical specificity, grammatical complexity, and structural sophistication as students move from orally produced text to written text. Sample lesson plans and assessment.

Hart, Leslie. *Human Brain and Human Learning*. Kent, WA: Books for Educators, 1999.

This book explains Brain-Compatible Learning.

[http://wwwFOUNDERSOFAMERICA.com/sept11\\_.htm#Inmemoriam](http://wwwFOUNDERSOFAMERICA.com/sept11_.htm#Inmemoriam). Accessed June 6, 2009. Website for posters of 9/11.

". "accessed March, 2007. <http://beatrice.com/wordpress/2007/03/14/james-canon-guest-author/>. Article on how James Ca-òn learned English while writing a novel; the process of removing his accent while writing.

Livingstone, Margaret. *Vision and Art*. Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2002. This book describes the relationship between art and science. A great source of visual representations and explanations of her findings.

McGeehan, Jane. "Brain-Compatible Learning." *Green Teacher* 64. <http://www.greenteacher.com/articles/McGeehan.pdf>. Accessed May 18, 2009. Excellent article on how the brain learns.

Nagy, W.E. *Teaching Vocabulary to Improve Reading Comprehension* Rockville, MD: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills; Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English; Newark, DE: International Reading Association. 1988. This research-based, practical book shows how to use vocabulary instruction more effectively to improve reading comprehension. Classroom teachers and reading specialists in the upper elementary grades and beyond will find it especially helpful for its many practical approaches -- mainly pre-reading activities -- that can be adapted to meet the needs of individual students.

Peyasantiwong, Patcharin. "The Six-Trait Model and Middle School ESL Instruction."

<http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/sod/car/abstracts/323.pdf>. accessed May 1>, 2009. A teacher's conversation about the challenges teachers face when confronting the cross-section of issues in teaching writing to ESL students.

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"Teaching ESL Students To Write Effectively, Not Just Correctly." <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/pubd/teacheff.html>. accessed May 10, 2009. Helpful ideas about student correction of written work.

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## Resources - Students

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"9/11." <http://911digitalarchive.org/guide.php?content=memorial>. Accessed July 13, 2009. A website that provides memorials to those who were involved in 9/11.

"September 11<sup>th</sup> A Memorial Tribute." [http://www.foundersofamerica.com/sept11\\_.htm#Inmemoriam](http://wwwFOUNDERSOFAMERICA.com/sept11_.htm#Inmemoriam). Accessed June 6, 2009. Website for posters of 9/11.

"Incredible Art Department." <http://www.princetonol.com/groups/iad/lessons/middle/ageof.htm>. Accessed July 6, 2009. This website has valuable information for students looking for information about art and artist to be used in their research about their art piece.

"In Memoriam.", 2009. A site to access personal stories of the victims and survivors of the events of September 11, 2001.

## Classroom Materials

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Please refer to activities in the text of this unit.

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