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Conjuring Sight--Evoking Images in Prose Fiction

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by Timothy A. Grady

Introduction

Nearly everyone who reads has had the experience being transported to another world--of becoming so engrossed in a narrative that he becomes almost unconscious of the act of reading. In these cases, the prose an author constructs becomes so vivid as to replace, in a small way, reality in a reader's mind for a time. We see Chekhov's gun and Faulkner's dilapidated antebellum mansions. We, as readers, cherish these vivid interactions with text and measure the soundness of other works through them. Consequently, the successful evocation of images is a hallmark of well crafted fiction.

Over the course of the last five years I have taught the craft of fiction in the Creative Writing department at Cooperative Arts & Humanities High School in New Haven, CT, and helping students to evoke image in the fiction they create has been a continual goal. Aspiring writers struggle to produce successful works of fiction due, in large part, to ignorance as to how to evoke mental images through prose. Contrary to what one might expect, it is not the rich or central images that students struggle with--it is their more mundane cousins. Students struggle with basic settings, character description, and action. Where an experienced writer might write, "John, staring at his old threadbare converse sneakers as he shuffled down Kensington Avenue, walked right into a woman, making her spill her coffee all over her crisp, tan raincoat," a student-writer is more likely to write, "he bumped into her." As the example illustrates, student-writers omit the sort of commonplace visual details that make a story vivid in readers' minds. The above example compounds itself in the works of student-writers, creating another problem of continuity, in other words, their works are not only devoid of visually descriptive detail, they are consistently devoid of it. While these two issues, lack of visual detail and consistent lack of visual detail, may seem similar, they are radically different. To clarify, the consistent lack the visual detail means the stream of various mental images necessary for a narrative to flow event to event, scene to scene, is missing. Further, their initial works, lacking the consistency and power of descriptive visual detail, often omitting entire visual aspects (i.e. setting), that help to captivate a reader, fail to transport readers to the fictional world of the story. For instance, say a student writes a story about a man who falls down a manhole while reading the obituaries; rather than spend time setting up the visual aspects for the narrative (physical details pertaining to setting, time, character--never mind accentuating the images to emphasize the cosmic irony in the story), the student spends a good deal of time writing about the man's history, stray thoughts, or the sports article in the paper the man is reading; and if any of the narrative evokes images, they happen to be about something incidental and relatively unimportant such as the man's hat. The

student-writers difficulty with evoking mental images through prose creates problem after problem for successful narrative.

The unit, *Conjuring Sight*, addresses those problems student-writers have when trying to evoke image in fiction. It fills in the missing pieces about how to write that typical books on writing fiction leave out. Over the years of study, creation, revision, and publication, I have found that success or failure lies in the construction of the prose--not in exercises or anecdotes, nor in passion or vision. The word-by-word labor of crafting prose is king in the writing game. Unfortunately, it is just that word-by-word instruction that is missing from most texts dealing with the creation of fiction (and thus about evoking image). For beginning writers, directions like, "make it more visual" or "try to establish a sense of setting," are essentially useless; such imperatives produce the barest of cursory changes to students' works. If one is lucky, a student might change "he fell" to "the man walked into the hole." While such improvements are laudable, they do not really qualify as the sort of deep understanding or skill that teachers hope for in their students or that successful fiction demands. This unit avoids those sorts of broad exercises; rather, it lays out word-by-word guidelines that helps student-writers to thoughtfully experiment with evoking image and ultimately to crafting captivating fiction that flows.

While the unit rests on the work of several educational theorists and writers, the overall guiding vision for its construction comes from my practical experience as a writer of fiction. In teaching my students, I have become aware of the price I have paid to develop the instincts for the working of prose; I would spare them the years of self-instruction, study, and reflection I found necessary because no practical guide existed. I experimented and experimented; always trying to emulate techniques I found in the works of others. When I became a teacher and studied several theorists, I discovered that I had unknowingly engaged in a inquiry-based learning process. Inquiry-based learning is a "strategy that actively involves students in the exploration of the content, issues, and questions surrounding a curricular area or concept...The activities and assignments...[are] designed such that students work...to solve problems." ¹

As I had experimented, trying to solve problems in crafting prose fiction, the inquiry-based learning process had allowed me to discover for myself the deep guiding principles of fiction. As such, the general framework of the inquiry process, moving from knowledge through experimentation to creation, is a theoretical support for the unit's sequence.

In the course of the unit, it is tempting to fall back on hackneyed adages, like "it takes practice," but that is ultimately an evasion of the question: how does one teach a beginning writer to effectively evoke mental images through prose? Considering the question when teaching fiction to teenagers, who are sometimes reluctant, self-conscious writers, it is critical to remember that the processes beginners uses to think, do, and perceive are different than those of established practitioners. This unit is laid out in distinct stages and promotes writing predominately as a craft (composed of techniques and principles), with less focus on the inspirational, intuitive aspects of writing. While such an approach is artificial to how most writers write, it promotes an environment conducive to learning as it sets up what the educational theorist Robert Gagne refers to as the the necessary "conditions of learning"--nine discrete, sequential instructional stages ranging from "gaining attention" to "enhancing retention and transfer" ². These stages, implemented in this unit via Arts PROPEL, a instructional framework for teaching art from Project Zero at Harvard, provide beginners the safety and support of concrete, step-by-step, instructions while still allowing immense creative freedom. In addition to these foundational design sources, this unit also uses John Gardner's *Art of Fiction*, Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, and Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe's *Understanding by Design* as major supports for teaching students the effective evocation and use of mental images in the works of fiction. Each of these sources will be discussed in more detail as the arise within the unit.

Objectives

While the general problem this unit deals with is students' difficulty with the evocation and use of mental image when writing fiction, the problem itself is unwieldy to think about. Without elaborating upon its nature, it would be all too easy to slip back into familiar pedagogical ruts such as more practice, more models, and more discussion. Sound unit design first requires careful statement of the learning goals one wants their students to achieve--"what should students know, understand, and be able to do...What enduring [deep] understandings are desired" ³. Again, it would be easy to summarize on this point, to jot down four or five goals, but, "Unless we begin our work our design work [curriculum planning] with a clear insight into larger purposes, it is unlikely that students will understand...the goal is far too vague: The approach is more 'by hope' than 'by design'" ⁴. Consequently, it is useful to break down the larger problem of the evocation and use of mental image when writing fiction to the smaller root causes that create that challenge, and then to derive clear, valid objectives based on those causes. Chief among those root causes are: 1) the lack of an accepted paradigm about how words evoke image in a narrative, 2) the novice writer's confusion between reading fiction versus creating it, 3) no understanding of how image affects the audience, 4) the lack of understanding about the role of continuity in a prose narrative, and 5) the difficulty in teaching art. Ultimately, it is these root causes that serve as the justification for the design (sequence, objectives, assessment, etc.) of this unit.

The Lack of a Paradigm

There are countless writing manuals, by authors of note and of obscurity, that touch upon the evocation of image in fiction, but few offer a guiding paradigm towards which instruction can be aimed. Writers and scholars have known for a long time that a relationship where, "certain transitory images are attached to certain words: the word is merely as it were the button of an electric button that calls them [the image] up" ⁵, but how that effect occurs is still up for debate. Perhaps this is because the exact relationship between how language, concept, and image work in the mind is still unclear, and "there exists a good amount of scholarly debate about it" ⁶. While it helps to have some background about the scholarly debate, for the purposes of the emerging practitioner, hoping to write fiction effectively, having the exact relationship is unnecessary. In fact, "no amount of intellectual study" will tell the young writer what to do ⁷, but too often these truths promote teachers and students of writing to take a wild-west-anything-goes attitude to the problem. In the end, this leads to a hundred different bits of advice from a hundred different writers--difficult at best to wrap into a clear, effective course of instruction.

Confusion between Reading and Writing

For a young writer, taking his or her first initial stabs at fiction, the difference between writing fiction and reading fiction looms large. The student, seeking to create gripping verisimilitude but uncertain how to, falls back on their most powerful experiences with narrative in their personal life and other narratives they have read. Unfortunately, most of these are primarily concerned with feeling and emotion ⁸. They recall some expressive or affective quality that they experienced when engaging in life or fiction, and then try to whip that feeling up within themselves while setting pen to paper; they hope with all their might that the magic will happen and award-winning narratives will spill from their pens. The young writer's confusion between consuming and producing stories, most of this simply inexperience in thinking about narrative. The concept that fiction is a construction, an artifice, is a new, and therefore, a difficult one for them to grasp.

Understanding How Image Affects the Audience

Born out of young writers' inexperience in thinking about fiction as artifice is their lack of understanding about how image affects the reader. The distinction between making students aware of fiction as artifice and how to engage in artifice may seem subtle, but it is critical. In a sense, understanding how image affects the reader is the flip side of young writers' lack of awareness of fiction as artifice--in the former, students don't read like writers; in the latter, they don't write like readers. They have not yet learned to write with a reader's point of view in mind; they don't anticipate how prose constructions (its content, sequence, and shape) will unfold the story in the readers mind. Having consumed narrative passively for most of their lives, they are ignorant of its techniques and effects. Even after they come to recognize fiction as a carefully constructed simulation for a reader, they don't know how to do it because they have not thought about how they, themselves, have been affected.

Lack of Understanding about Continuity

For fiction to be effective, it must not only be vivid, it must maintain continuity in its vividness. Again, this may be a subtle distinction, but it is vital. The young writer may learn to effectively evoke image in a description or a scene, but unless he or she develops a sense for how a narrative uses a sequence of images to affect the reader, the race is only half won. It is the continuity of vividness, the sequence of images the words evoke, that helps to create what the literary theorist Richard Gerrig calls captivation. Attention, emotion, and construction (of image, detail, etc) are vital according to Gerrig to an effective narrative, and he notes that once those three elements emerge in a narrative, they must continue functioning to maintain captivation⁹. It is the continuity of vividness that produces the dream-like flow of consumption by a reader that every writer, at points, seeks.

The Difficulty of Teaching Art

It might go without saying, but teaching art is not quite the same as teaching math or English. Teaching students to become fiction writers is about cultivating their artistic sensibilities, instincts, thinking processes, etc. There are times when a particular student work is a total failure, but their performance on the unit was a stunning success; and vice-versa. As a teacher of creative writing, I find myself challenged to find ways to evoke, train, cultivate, and assess my students that would never work in my time as an English teacher. The act of the scholar and the act of the practitioner are fundamentally different, and while they may join together at times (and often to great effect), trying to fit any sort of learning into the standard progression of Bloom's taxonomy or neatly assessable, scaffolded exercises is fraught with difficulty. Art is messy; learning art, messier. While this specific aspect of the unit is not particular to the unit's content, it is key to its aim--producing better writers of fiction.

From Problems to Objectives

Due to the sometimes complex nature of teaching student-writers to create fiction, as demonstrated by the list of root causes above, the unit focuses on achieving several things at roughly the same time so that student-writers can experience authentic inspiration and learning. For instance, while the student-writers must become deeply aware of how language evokes imagery in themselves while reading a narrative sequence before they can begin to consciously employ those techniques in creating effective fiction, it is neither necessary or particularly useful to force the aspiring writers to master their ability to recognize how image is evoked through language before moving on to creating it--in fact, such attempts tend to destroy any sense of

enthusiasm or personal connection a young writers have to the process. Utilizing a workshop model that encourages self-directed study, practice, and reflection, the unit tackles five objectives (born of the five difficulties outlined above). Specifically, the unit objectives are: 1) students will understand a paradigm for successful evocation of mental image in fiction, 2) students will understand and utilize the difference between reading and writing fiction, 3) students will be able to apply techniques to evoke image through the text, 4) make students perceive the need for continuity when evoking image and be able to do it, and 5) students will experience an environment that cultivates artistic learning and growth.

Strategies

Each of the five strategies listed in this section address one of the five root difficulties students have in creating fiction, and thus align with the five objectives of this unit.

Establishing a Paradigm: Gardner's General Principle

As there is not a clear, simple paradigm one may borrow from psychology, cognitive science, or literary theory about the relationship between how words evoke images, how they interact with abstract ideas, and how all of that integrates into a narrative, it is fitting that we turn to the paradigm offered by a writer, not a scholar. John Gardner's simple, powerful statement, "The important single notion in theory of fiction I have outlined...is that of the vivid and continuous...dream" is enough for the purposes of teaching the craft of fiction, especially in regard to how it evokes image ¹⁰. Gardner's principle, or "notion" as he calls it, that fiction is essentially a vivid and continuous dream, can act as general, abstract paradigm to present the ideas of this unit to students, ask them to reflect upon, assess and critique each other, and so on. The simplicity of this paradigm avoids the debate of more precise theories while also being more practical to the aspiring writer--it is clear, concise, and adaptable to nearly infinite different situations that might arise in the prose.

For clarity when dealing with students, one additional concept might be added to Gardner: the mental image. All one needs to know is that mental images (the type that arise from fiction) are a "quasi-perceptual experience" in the absence of "appropriate external stimuli" ¹¹. In other words, the right language evokes a simulation of real visual experiences in the mind. This is what John Gardner refers to as "vividness".

The Difference Between Reading and Writing: Collaborative, Social Learning

Despite the deficit of experience young writers face in crafting fiction and evoking image, they usually have a wealth of experience in reading/viewing fictional narratives, exploring amongst themselves the relationships between the words and images in those narratives (both made by others and themselves) offers a great opportunity to help heighten the young writers awareness of art as artifice and the readers point of view. Utilizing the classic word-image dichotomy, in a collaborative, social learning environment where students create narratives using words and images, while also reflecting on narratives created by their peers, the unit provides a means to deepening students' awareness of the how words can conjure images. Through comparing and contrasting, combining and deconstructing, their respective exploratory creations, the students gain a means to think about themselves as creators and an awareness of audience. Further, the students begin exploring the idea of technique and effect--that what they do as a creator/writer has specific

effects on the audience/reader.

Techniques to Evoke Image Through the Text: McCloud's Classifications

Gardner writes, "we discover that the importance of physical detail is that it creates for us a kind of dream, a rich and vivid play in the mind," but for the aspiring young writer, the question is: how does one present those "physical details" so that they create a "a rich and vivid play".¹² Again, it would be easy to fall back on old artistic adages like "practice more" or "take risks", but that is obviously insufficient for effective teaching and learning. What the student needs is specific directions and techniques that they can experiment and practice with. Building off the work students will do in this unit by creating narratives with words and images, the classification of word-image combinations laid out by Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics* provides an excellent starting point. McCloud outlines seven ways that words and images can be combined in the narrative form of the comic; amazingly, his classification of techniques works equally well with narratives that use only text: The ways McCloud outlines are 1) "word specific", where pictures show what the text deals with but don't add to it, 2) "picture specific", in which the pictures do most of the work and words are only accents to meaning, 3) "duo-specific", in these combinations words and images both send the same message, 4) "additive", where words amplify the image presented, 5) "parallel" combination that have words presenting one message but pictures presenting something completely different, 6) "montage" combinations that integrate the words into images, and vice-versa, and finally, 7) "interdependent", in these combinations word and images are paired up in such a way that they create a composite meaning that neither one achieves on their own¹³. With the slight alteration of his word-image combinations to non-imagistic-text paired with mental image, his classifications hold and act as a beginner's tool box of techniques on how to evoke image. The combinations, based on McCloud's work, are by no means complete; they offer a concrete starting point for the beginning writer.

The Need for Continuity When Evoking Image: Peer Critique

Helping students to learn specific ways to use words to evoke image--to achieve "vividness"--is only half the battle. To stay true to the guiding paradigm this unit uses, that fiction is essentially a vivid and continuous dream, it is still necessary to help students develop continuity in the presentation/evocation of mental images in the fictions they create. This unit will use an arts studio-workshop model (as laid out in the next section on Cultivating Artistic Learning), a part of which is regular peer and teacher critique, both at the individual level and class-wide. The students will read and critique their peers work for clarity and continuity. They will approach each with questions such as "what is confusing or vague in the physical details", "where does the images evoked heighten or recede", "how consistent is the evocation of images" and so on. This method, capitalizing on student's various comprehension skills, ferrets out any potential weaknesses in continuity (students become easily lost, bored, or angry when the evocation of image drops off or is confused). It also helps to reinforce the critical distinction in the students' minds between themselves as writers of fiction and readers of fiction.

Cultivating Artistic Learning and Growth: Arts PROPEL Workshop

Though the twentieth century has seen the emergence of a wealth writing programs, most authors continue to learn their craft without discrete curricula. They write, share what they write, succeed or fail, receive criticism, and then write some more--all the while studying the works of other writers. While that seems relatively straight forward, it does not meet the sort of criteria that many curriculum units today demand: a sure-fire progression of operations that any teacher can methodically scaffold, and any student can master, to

generate a common output. In response, unfortunately, a number of writing teachers have developed and proposed formulas for students to learn and follow; these formula are nearly always flawed, limiting, and kill much of the inherent joy of creating fiction (and not single highly successful author that I know of ever has anything good to say about them.)

The young writer, unsure of his abilities, uncertain of how to progress, seeks, as John Gardener notes in *The Art of Fiction*, a set of rules that will insure them success. No such hard and fast rules exist--none that can be absolutely relied on in any case. As soon as one writer tries to make a rule, another finds a way to break it successfully. Writing fiction is not like performing a math operation; each time an aspiring student encounters a mathematical problem requiring summation, he can turn with absolute assurance to the set rules for performing such an operation—not so with writing.

In response to this difficulty of how to train a student to create better fiction via the more skillful evocation of images, this unit will use a studio art format. Though examples are still used and techniques still taught in this model, the format encourages open experimentation and seeks to cultivate the learners' skills through critique. In many ways, the studio format, is a recreation of the master-apprentice method of old where the student learns to appreciate a certain seemingly subjective set of aesthetics and creative principles.

Assessing student performance in the studio format can be difficult, especially because there are subjective aspects to art. This unit will utilize the PROPEL methodology developed by Project Zero at Harvard as a means to accurate assessment. PROPEL focuses on student growth, reflection, and conduct as exemplified through a portfolio created in the process of learning. PROPEL recognizes the subjective nature of artistic creation, but also bolsters contemporary education's need for hard data; the methodology proposes sixteen different dimension by which to measure student growth in an art studio and a portfolio.

In general, PROPEL proposes four major areas that all of its dimensions of measurement and activity fall into: *production* (the ability of the student to create), *perception* (the student's handle on formal knowledge), *reflection* (the facility of the student in thinking about art in general and specific pieces), and *approach* (the affect and behavior of the student when engaging in the learning and work). The activities of a unit run through the PROPEL methodology flow from the four areas it works with: students make drafts or practice a technique (production), students analyze a famous work for literary elements (perception), students critique their own and others work (reflection), and students strive to collaborate and be resourceful (approach).

The structure and sequence of the classroom activities in this unit are based in the PROPEL methodology. There are periods of focused work, critical analysis, peer review and collaboration, and finally, space for students to demonstrate their independence and resourcefulness. Teachers using this unit should establish point scales and rubrics for each of the four areas of PROPEL, and then more refined scales and rubrics for the dimensions that they would like to use in each area. Practical experience using this methodology does offer a few important suggestions.

When using the PROPEL methodology, it is most useful to use small scales, say 1 through 5, to measure both dimensions of measurement and areas of learning. The simpler the rubric attached to each scale, the more likely it will be that students will understand, internalize, and use the measures and rubrics. To help students grasp the complexity involved with all these multiple areas, dimensions, rubrics, and scales, It is extremely useful to have students self-assess themselves with them and to write up explanations of their assessments; likewise, peer scoring is also incredibly powerful.

Classroom Activities

The lessons provided below are the series of lesson plans that illustrate the basic layout of the course as it plays out in a classroom. Every single day is not covered but these provide a general overview that can be customized for the individual classroom. For more information about the way these lessons play out, refer to the last section of the Strategies part of this unit, the section concerning Cultivating Artistic Learning and Growth. The PROPEL methodology outlined there will aid in understanding the unit's workshop design; for more information see *Arts PROPEL: An Introductory Handbook* by Project Zero at Harvard.

The lesson outlines follow:

Section:1(Introduction) Lesson: 1-2	Unit: Conjuring Sight
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>The initial lessons are designed to construct a base for project-based nature of this unit on evoking image in fiction writing. It gets the students to begin thinking like writers in regards to mental images (observing, crafting, reflecting), while also introducing the basic concepts that the unit will work with. Overall, the introduction is designed as an evocation that will spur student curiosity and motivation.</p>	<p><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students will explore aspects of image in prose fiction• Students will create rudimentary lists of descriptive visual detail based on observations of pictures.• Students will reflect on their knowledge and experience with the introductory work, discussion, and teaching on characterization.

Resources	A series of photos or paintings, Writing Journals, Processfolios
Lesson 1	Introduction to words and images: Students view several different photos or paintings, writing down visually descriptive details in their writing journals. Students are advised to go beyond the simple details and to really “dig in” to them for meaning. Students are advised to look at setting,, clothing, actions,, emotional clues, etc. Students then discuss what they think the photos are portraying and why. Students spend last ten minutes reflecting on their own experience of capturing visual detail in their project-process log.
Lesson 2	Introduction to Mental Images: Students are asked to discuss experience of capturing visual detail and then predict what this has to do with creating mental images in fiction, how we might use this, etc. Review the basic concepts/goals of the unit for students: 1) the vividness and continuity paradigm, 2) the difference between reading and writing, 3) the importance of continuity, and 4) the seven techniques to create mental images in text.. Students use list of visual details from yesterdays exercise to write short scenes, and then they share them. Students spend last ten minutes reflecting on how the day's activity changed how they look how mental images are evoked from prose. At the end of class, inform students they will be on an intensive creative research/learning project on evoking image for the next two weeks; explain that they will create several scenes that evoke mental imagery and that these will be used for a story they will create at the end of the creative research/learning period.

Section:2(Key Concepts) Lesson: 3-11	Unit: Conjuring Sight
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This section is a writing workshop based around teaching and practicing the key concepts of the unit. Students are reminded that these are building blocks that we must first learn, so we can use them to create prose later. Aside from the initial lesson, each lesson is based on a workshop model (PROPEL): A short lesson followed by an intensive hands-on workshop where students (with help of teacher) craft their own projects; finally, each session is concluded with a period of artistic reflection on the work.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students will understand the vividness/continuity paradigm for judging mental imagery in fiction ● Students explain and apply the difference between reading fiction and writing it. ● Students will apply seven techniques for evoking mental images in fiction.

Resources:	Key Concepts Handout, <i>The Art of Fiction</i> by John Gardner, processfolios, project-process logs.
Lesson 3-4	Vividness and Continuity: Class reads selection from <i>Art of Fiction</i> on the theory of fiction (chapter 2). Divide students in to groups of 4 or 5 with different short passages of fiction. Students read and discuss how the passage display vividness and continuity and asked to judge the success of the fiction. Groups then present their pieces and their findings to the class. Students spend last ten minutes reflecting on their own experience and briefly think about how they might apply vividness and continuity in their own stories; students record this in their project-process log.
Lesson 5-7	7 Techniques: Students review clouds seven techniques and generate examples of word/mental image pairings that can illustrate each. Then, in seven different groups, the class creates seven word-image pairing for each of McCloud's techniques--students may draw or use others images to create. Students present these to each other and explain why it illustrates McCloud's techniques. Students spend one day crafting a first draft, a second day in peer editing and third day presenting. Students spend the last ten minutes of each class reflecting on the pairing they made, how it is successful, and what they might do different next time.
Lesson 8-11	Reading vs. Writing: Students view several different comics and are asked to write and illustrate (in a rough way--i.e. like a storyboard) a short 1 page story. Students spend one day crafting a first draft, a second day in peer editing and third day presenting. Students must critique each other's work in peer editing and then finally during the presentations. Students are reminded to note what the author is doing (7 techniques) and judge their success (vividness and continuity). The Students spend the last ten minutes each day reflecting on how they used words and images, and what they might do different next time.

Section: 3 (Mental Image) Lesson: 12-13	Unit: Conjuring Sight
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This section is a writing workshop focusing on moving students from using words and images in their narratives to using words to evoke mental images. This is section where the student experiments with what they have learned. Finally, each session is concluded with a period of artistic reflection on the work.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students evoke mental images in fiction using • Students create fiction that is visually vivid and has continuity.

Resources	Pen/paper/ computer, processfolios, project-process logs.
Lesson 12	<p>Evoking Mental Images: Teacher explains how McCloud's techniques can be used with words as well. Students convert their one page stories that used words and images into a 500 word, text only narrative. The students must still use the same techniques that McCloud outlined. Students spend last ten to fifteen minutes reflecting on how each technique shapes is different in text-only narrative in project-process log.</p>
Lesson 13-15	<p>Practice and Peer Review: Students engage in peer review, critiquing each other's work in the same way they had when they had made narratives with words and images. As the class progresses, the whole class moves into class-wide critiques of how students are using the techniques and judging their effectiveness via Gardner's paradigm. Students spend last ten minutes reflecting on the critiques, their strengths, weakness, etc. Have them predict how different choices might have changed how the story would be perceived by a reader.</p>

Section: 4 (Writing) Lesson: 13-20	Unit: Conjuring Sight
<p><u>Summary</u></p> <p>This section is a writing workshop focusing putting together all we have learned into the construction of a story. Each lesson is based on a workshop model (PROPEL): Students have a variety of activities they may engage in but must record them in their logs each day as they reflect at the end. During this part of the unit, the teacher must continually move through the room helping students one on one, and facilitating peer review and critique.</p>	<p><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students apply all they have learned to craft successful fiction.

Resources	Pens and paper/computers, Processfolios, Project-process logs
Lesson 16-25	<p>Drafting to Publication: Each class session here has several activities students may engage in, but the students must list what they are doing at the beginning of class in an initial class-wide “check-in”; at the end of class students must list in their reflections for the day what they achieved, what they didn’t, and what they might change for tomorrow. The activities are listed below.</p> <p>Brainstorming: This includes making outlines, sketches, focused “idea generating” discussions, etc</p> <p>Research: This includes re-reading Gardner’s Art of Fiction, McCloud’s Understanding Comics, reviewing past lessons/exercises, or studying a work of fiction for models of how to evoke image.</p> <p>Drafting and Revising: This includes the writing and rewriting of their stories. Rewrites must be focused and should only happen after peer review/critique.</p> <p>Peer Review/Critique: This includes the students reading and commenting on each other’s work, class-wide critiques, or intensive teacher-student conferences.</p> <p>Editing and Proofing: This includes students make changes to sentence style, word choice, correction of grammar and spelling, and any other necessary changes before publication. It does not include major alterations of the story.</p> <p>Publication: This includes sharing the finished works with the class, school, local community, or literary community. This stage is the culminating step in the process and helps the student to transfer their learning and achievement to real world contexts.</p>

Conclusion

This unit wrestles with a complex, deep concept in the creation of fiction. While I, like every teacher, would like to believe that there exists some perfect unit that will teach something so well that a student will forever after have mastered it, it is important to remember that learning is an iterative process, and that mastery

develops over years. The goal of this unit is not mastery--it is growth. If by the end, a student is better able to evoke images in the fiction he or she creates, then it will be an overwhelming success.

As you use this unit, keep in mind the inherent mystery that lies at the heart of creation. It will be tempting at points to create hard and fast rules to help yourself as a teacher manage the wide variety of work students will produce; in general, this is a good practice, just be careful to limit rules to procedural activities, rather than creative ones, whenever possible.

Annotated Bibliography

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Notes

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