



## **Things That Make You Go Hmmm: The Elementary School Artist Acting as a Contemporary Art Historian**

Curriculum Unit 11.01.10

by Melody S. Gallagher

### **Introduction**

---

As an elementary art teacher in an urban magnet school, I am faced with many challenges, from the day-to-day problems that may arise in the classroom to the overall goals of developing a wide variety of skills within these young artists. A major challenge I have found is being able to teach about contemporary artists, those who are making art now within and for our rapidly changing society. Because contemporary artists often weave historical themes within their artworks and because they are responding to these historical moments in the present, I strongly believe that students may be able understand these themes on a holistic level as well as connect to the artwork itself. However, over my course of time as a teacher, it has been difficult to find lessons that utilize these types of artists and that are geared to the young and developing elementary artist. Another challenge of mine has been to be able to authentically integrate strategies used in other disciplines into my art lessons. Often I am asked to help prepare students for the upcoming standardized tests that they take annually by integrating information from other disciplines. I wanted to create a unit that would introduce students to contemporary artists while utilizing strategies from the language-arts curriculum without losing the authenticity of the art curriculum. In addition, because I have chosen to use contemporary artists who use historical themes, this unit asks students to act as art historians while learning about the process of art, making yet another interdisciplinary connection between the visual arts and history. The last challenge that I face and that this unit addresses is to develop within my students the ability to see themselves as members of their community, ones who have a voice and who may be able to ask other members of the community to question and rethink the world in which they live. The visual arts are a medium that often allows a viewer to take a moment and think, question, and wonder. It is a medium that makes a viewer go "hmmm," pondering what the artist is trying to say while looking at an artwork, standing with crossed arms tapping a finger against his or her lips. In this way the visual arts can be extremely powerful and can act as catalysts for the ways in which we as a community may hold views on a particular topic. Throughout this unit students will learn about artists who make artworks that make a viewer go "hmmm," create art that makes their fellow classmates go "hmmm" and finally, curate an art show that makes their community go "hmmm."

## Addressing the Age-Old Word-Image Problem from the Perspective of an Elementary Art Teacher

---

It was Aristotle who said: "Without image, thinking is impossible." By linking image to thought and comparing the two, Aristotle has been considered as one of the first philosophers in the history of the critical analysis of art. Because he drew comparisons between visual arts in relation to the literary arts, he was one of the first to dive into the age-old "word-image" problem. <sup>1</sup> In his comparison between painting and poetry and the representation of subjects in these art forms, he began to make the argument that future Aristotelians held, that "image and idea ought... to pass freely from one art to the other." <sup>2</sup> When reflecting on this example of the age-old "word-image" problem, visual thinking, therefore, can be thought to be an automatic reflex of one's mind when one is reading verbal text. In this sense, words and images go hand-in-hand and coexist when thinking occurs. Similarly, just as words conjure up images in the brain, visual art can lead the viewer to express his or her analysis with verbal dialogue and written words.

Art historians deal directly with this "word-image problem" as they analyze visual art to verbally describe both the content of the art itself and its place in reference a given context. David Thelden said, "the challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present." <sup>3</sup> I would go further in saying that the challenge of the art historian is to uncover the past and interpret it for the present. If this is true for the art historian, then one of the challenges for the contemporary artist is to reinterpret the historical past as it has been presented in written text and imagery to provide the viewer with a more holistic view of an event, time, place, or peoples.

As a K-4 Art Teacher in New Haven, Connecticut, I am asked to begin to develop these critical thinking skills within my students. Being able to express one's opinions, views, observations, and interpretations are important parts of the K- 4 curriculum for the Visual Arts. Of the three components of the curriculum for the Visual Arts in the New Haven Public Schools (creating art, connecting art to other disciplines, and responding to art), critical thinking is a skill that is most developed during the Responding to Art component. However, the skills involved in critical thinking affect the students' ability to create art and critical thinking is a skill that can be enhanced by connecting art to other disciplines. Over the course of my teaching as an elementary art teacher in an urban magnet school, I have found that my students' verbal and written abilities to express their observations and interpretations of artworks need development. What, then, is the best way to develop the skill of responding to art within my students? How, as their teacher, can I develop their written and verbal ability to respond to artworks while connecting art to other disciplines to strengthen their art making skills? Within this unit students will learn how to use reading and writing strategies, normally used in their language-arts classes to strengthen their ability in the planning, creating, and reflecting processes of the art curriculum.

### Rationale

---

Ultimately, I would like students to create new narratives in art history. Why is it important for students to learn these skills? Central to my pedagogy is that students should be able to become critical thinkers of their world and continually question information (in any form) that is presented to them while, as their art teacher, creating authentic interdisciplinary units of study. Currently there is a strong debate in education about the

history curriculum and the information (both verbal information and accompanied visual imagery) that it should present to students, as recently noted by Diane Ravitch in her book, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*.<sup>4</sup> When reading information in a textbook, one could do little to question it to assume that it presents "facts," that are "true," and ultimately to accept its account as all there is to a particular time period. It is important for students (and teachers) to remember that these texts were written by a group of people who hold particular views of what is important and inherent to history. Having students draw upon multiple sources of information, historical accounts in addition to both literary and visual works of the time, allows them to draw their own conclusions and "reinvent history". Therefore, this unit will make interdisciplinary connections to both history and literary works while having students view these materials through the lens of an art historian.

The New Haven District, as part of all of its devised curricula areas, has students answer what are called essential questions within each unit of study. For this unit, students will answer the following questions: What is the language of art? How does the analysis of a visual artwork compare to the analysis of a written text? How can an artist utilize written text in their visual artwork to communicate meaning? How does a contemporary artist reflect upon a historical event versus an artist of that time? How can an artist challenge and disrupt our conventional understanding of written history? How can an artist become a "change-agent" to encourage change within a community by presenting information in a new or different way?

## Objectives

---

The objectives for this unit are as follows:

After this unit, students will be able to use and understand art vocabulary.

After this unit, students will be able to understand that a contemporary artist may draw on the historical past in his or her artworks.

After this unit, students will be able to write written responses to artworks.

## Process

---

It was John Berger who said, "Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak"<sup>5</sup> For instance, many times a viewer may look at an artwork and suddenly feel a particular way, yet he or she may not be able to find the words for this emotional response. This "seeing" or, better yet, observation is the first step in responding to art through art criticism and in the process of making art. It is also the first skill students must learn to develop their ability to view an artwork or object. So what comes first? As in the writing process, the first step in making art is planning. Through a variety of strategies, students will learn how to develop ideas for their work during this step by making careful, detailed observations about artworks both in writing and through verbal discussions. Students will be presented with the idea that visual art and literary art may share similar analytical qualities to introduce this concept. The philosopher Horace has said: "A picture is

a poem without words," a concept that in a sense views these two art forms as belonging to the same "family" treating painting and poetry as "sisters." While doing this, students will be able to strengthen and build their art vocabulary. By developing an art vocabulary, students will begin to build a base for their skills in responding to art throughout the unit.

After building a strong basis for their responses through vocabulary and analyzing art, students will move to the second step in art making, creating art. During this portion of the unit, students will create detailed artworks based on the observational skills that they have learned. Students will be asked the question: "How does a written description of an artwork or object change, enhance, or confuse the viewers' understanding or interpretation?" Students will begin to see how written descriptions can alter a viewer's interpretation. In some cases the artist him or herself has included textual elements into their artworks that may alter a viewers interpretation. Other times, another viewer, sometimes an art historian or art curator has written a description of the artwork and may accompany the artwork in a museum in the form of a wall label. Throughout this activity, students will learn how to make observations that go beyond the obvious and how to look deeper into the meaning of an artwork to formulate an interpretation and opinion of the artwork.

Finally students will learn how to incorporate writing into the reflective portion of art. For this portion of the unit, students will work as art gallery curators in creating an art show. Acting as art curators and art historians, students will write about art and put together an art show based on what they have learned. . This student-run show will be based upon a central theme that will allow the students to attempt to redefine art history. They will practice their skills of art historians by writing about the artworks with the aim to of beginning to solve the "word-image problem." The hope is that students will be able to curate this show and present it to the public by hosting it within the community either within a gallery space or at a public business, thus making them change-agents within their community.

## Strategies

---

### Making Connections Between the Analysis in the Writing Process and the Analysis in the Art-Making Process

This first strategy allows students to see the correlations that exist between the visual and verbal arts, and it will be used throughout the unit in various ways. Artists and writers share similar ways in which they move through the process of making their work as they plan, make, revise, and reflect upon their work. First, both the visual arts and the verbal arts have their own vocabularies used to discuss and make works within these disciplines. During the planning stages both the visual artist and the writer view and analyze examples of works related to the work they plan to make and generate ideas through various similar forms. While making works, both the artist and the writer consider the form in which they will make their work, consider their audience, and make revisions. Both the visual artist and the writer can reflect upon works using similar critical analysis techniques. Throughout this unit and at the beginning of each of the three portions of this unit (developing an art vocabulary, making art, and responding to art), the aim of this strategy is for students to recognize the idea that the skills that they have learned in their language-arts classes may transfer over to the skill which they will learn in the art classroom.

For the first portion of the unit, students will focus on developing an art vocabulary. They will learn to describe artworks in a variety of ways: through the tools an artist uses, the surfaces he or she work on, the materials

used, and the elements an artist incorporates. Students will draw upon comparisons between the vocabulary of a visual artist and that of a writer. This activity will familiarize students with these terms and to see the connections between the visual and the verbal arts by having them create Venn Diagrams as a whole group.

### *Tools*

Both visual artists and writers use tools to create their work. Whereas an artist uses a paintbrush, chisel, loom, palette, exacto knife, tape, modeling tools, a pen, and various resource references, a writer uses pencils, pens, computers, paper, dictionaries, and resource materials. <sup>6</sup>

### *Surfaces*

Both visual artists and writers work on particular surfaces. Whereas an artist may work on a canvas, paper, stone, a metal plate, or a wood panel, a writer may work on paper or a computer screen. <sup>7</sup>

### *Materials*

Both visual artists and writers work with materials. An artist may work with various paints, dry materials such as charcoal or pastel, clay, metal, stone, or fabric; a writer may use graphite (pencil), ink, or printed characters such as with a printing press or with a keyboard. <sup>8</sup>

### *Elements*

Both visual artists and writers employ a variety of elements to compose their works. Visual artists use the elements and principles of design: line, shape/form, space, texture, and color/value. Writers use nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and a variety of punctuation. Both the visual artist and writer use the elements as the basis for their work. <sup>9</sup>

### *Composition and Structure*

Both the visual artist and the writer will then take these elements and apply structure to them to complete their compositions. A visual artist may apply design principles such as repetition/pattern, emphasis, unity, balance and contrast. A writer may consider word choice, sentence structure and punctuation choice.

Arranging the elements and structuring them help both the visual artist and writer get their point across. <sup>10</sup>

For the second part of the unit students will learn how a visual artist and a writer may share a similar process in creating their works. Both the visual artist and the writer make plans, chose a form, try to maintain the interest of the viewer, and make revisions to their work. During this portion of the unit, students will learn how artists brainstorm, plan, choose a particular form to present their ideas, consider their audience, and make revisions to their work.

### *Brainstorming*

Both a visual artist and a writer must first brainstorm ideas as part of the process of making their art. Both the visual artist and the writer can formulate ideas by thinking about how to answer a series of questions. For the visual artist these questions include: "What do I want to make? What person, place, thing, or idea do I want to show? What message do I want to convey? What is the function or purpose of this artwork?" <sup>11</sup> The writer may answer the questions: "What do I want to write about? What person, place, thing or idea will I write about?"

What message do I want to convey? What is the function or purpose of this writing?" <sup>12</sup>

### *Planning*

After brainstorming, both the visual artist and the writer begin to plan their work. The visual artist may make sketches, lists of ideas, or use various graphic organizers to help plan out his or her work. The writer may make an outline, lists, or may also use various graphic organizers to help plan out his or her work. <sup>13</sup>

### *Form*

Both the visual artist and the writer must create their work in a given form. A visual artist may make a painting, sculpture, photograph, print, drawing, collage, textile, or installation artwork. For the writer, forms may include: a novel, short story, play, poem, essay, or report. <sup>14</sup> There are two forms in visual art that can be directly compared to two forms in verbal art. Whereas the self-portrait in visual art can be compared to an autobiography in writing, a portrait can be compared to a biography. <sup>15</sup>

### *Audience*

Both the visual artist and the writer must consider their audience. The visual artist may answer the questions: "How can I get someone to notice my work of art? How can I maintain the viewer's attention?" <sup>16</sup> The writer may consider: "How can I attract a reader? How can I keep the reader engaged, interested, and involved?" <sup>17</sup>

### *Revising*

Both the visual artist and the writer make revisions as part of the process of making their work. An artist may redraw, modify shapes, build up or remove material. A writer may add or remove: nouns, verbs, or adjectives they may make corrections to punctuation, change paragraph structure or indent spaces. <sup>18</sup>

### Art Dominoes

After students have learned about vocabulary and the process of making art, a major strategy of this unit is to utilize contemporary artists to help guide students in understanding how an artist may interpret history and use historical context in their artwork. There are six artists whose work I use during this portion of the unit: Michael Ray Charles, Kerry James Marshall, Ellen Gallagher, Glen Ligon, Pepon Osorio, and Dawoud Bey. After being introduced to the vocabulary of an artist, students will play the game "Art Dominoes." For this activity, I will have students make connections between selections of laminated artwork reproductions-- connecting the works of art through their similar themes. For this activity students will work in teams of four and each group will be given the same set of artworks by the artists. This will be an open-ended activity with the aim of having students learn unfamiliar concepts while having fun. It will allow students to see a variety of similarities between artworks based on how different groups of students choose to connect the artworks. This strategy will not only familiarize students with art terminology but also with the artists on whom they will focus within the unit. Also during the Art Domino game, students will learn how to analyze an artwork utilizing reading strategies. The aim of this portion of the unit is to have students transfer the knowledge learned in language arts and apply it to another discipline- the visual arts. The New Haven Public Schools System uses a variety of reading strategies with students in elementary grades, including the reading strategies developed by Nancy Boyles. In her book *Constructing Meaning*, Boyles describes metacognitive strategies used in reading such as: connecting, questioning, determining importance, and inferring, among others. <sup>19</sup> Students will be asked to

connect the art reproductions of the artworks by the artists through these various themes.

### *Using Reading Strategies to discuss the Artists and Artworks during Art Dominoes*

#### Connecting

Is there anything familiar in the artwork? Can you make connections to the people or objects depicted? Are the people depicted like you in any way or like other people in one of the other artworks? Do these artworks look similar in some way?

#### Questioning

What questions would you ask the artist about his or her artwork? Think about asking questions that begin with: who, what, where, when, or why.

#### Noticing

What do you notice about this artwork? What is the title? What materials did the artist use to make it? Do you notice any similarities between two artworks?

#### Important parts

What do you think is most important in this artwork?

#### Inferring

What do you think this artwork is about? What do you think the artist is trying to say?

#### The Artists used in Art Dominoes

During the Art Dominoes activity students will be introduced to a variety of artists. Students will play Art Dominoes and focus the connections they make on Nancy Boyles' reading strategies. After this open-ended activity, I will discuss with students each individual artist and his or her artwork. After this whole group discussion, students will play Art Dominoes again taking into consideration the newly learned information about the artists and their artworks and will draw comparisons between artworks based on this new knowledge.

#### *Glenn Ligon*

Glenn Ligon is a contemporary artist who uses text within his images. Sometimes he uses text as his image--recycling and reusing found advertisements- at other times he uses coal dust to stencil words or quotations over his images. Not only does he reference historical moments such as the Million Man March but he also references his own personal history in relation to historical events. Of the artists who are the focus of this unit, his work uses text in the most literal sense and therefore will be the first to be introduced to students.

#### Ellen Gallagher

Ellen Gallagher is a contemporary artist who, like Ligon, often uses advertisements as found objects in her mixed media collages. Her work also makes many connections to literacy and to written work. She utilizes

techniques that can be linked to literary techniques used by poets-- repetition and revision. It is through her use of repeated advertisements of similar theme, size and color and her reworking of these images to change their meaning that she is able to ask the viewer to rethink history. In reflecting on her own work, Gallagher realized that it was not the images she was drawn to but the related text on the pages that made her want to use them in her art. This textual element allows her visual work to act as a "narrative." She is also an artist who is influenced by the connections between visual and verbal artworks. She cites the visual paintings by the artist Agnes Martin as well as the repetition in the written work by Gertrude Stein as influences for her own work. Her work can be viewed critically both through its formal structure as well as through the content of the narrative historical story that she tells.

#### Kerry James Marshall

Kerry James Marshall is a contemporary artist who draws upon African-American pop culture, makes historical references and draws upon personal memories and reflections in his work. Like Gallagher's, his work can be discussed on two levels: both the formal structure of his work and through the social statements he asks his audience to contemplate when viewing his work. Marshall is an artist who actively considers his audience. He believes, "you still have to earn your audience's attention every time you make something."<sup>20</sup> His work, like Gallagher's, makes connections to literary form. "RYTHM MASTR" takes the form of a comic book, reinventing the histories behind the African gods of the Yoruba tradition. Part of the motivation for this work, according to Marshall, was to address the issue of the failed black super heroes presented in traditional comic books who are unable to attract the attention of young black readers. Through his work in "RHYTHM MASTR" he hoped to address the need to present young readers with strong models of super heroes while telling the stories from African tribal traditions. He says, "I am trying to find a way to make our knowledge of African history, our knowledge of mythology, and our love fantasy and super heroes and things like that all come together in a vital and exciting way by connecting it to a story that is meaningful, historically and culturally, and that says something about the way in which we can carry these traditions into the future so that that don't have to dissipate and die."<sup>21</sup> In this way, Marshall is able to bring history to the present and allow it to stretch into the future.

#### Michael Ray Charles

Whereas Marshall considers his audience before he makes his work, Michael Ray Charles' work has been considered "very controversial" and has evoked strong responses from audiences. He states, "I didn't think about this component. I didn't envision myself going out on the road, and talking about my work as much as I have. And now that I look back, I think a lot of people react to those images; there's a lot of emotion. They've reacted to these images based on gut emotion."<sup>22</sup> His work speaks to audiences on a whole yet has the ability to evoke a personal response, as well as a personal relationship among the viewer, their personal history, and his work all wrapped up in one. His work draws comparisons to Ellen Gallagher's in that they both use historical advertisements and ask the viewer to think about these images in the context of the present moment.

#### Pepon Osorio

Whereas Ligon, Gallagher, Marshall, and Charles reflect on the past within their artwork, Pepon Osorio reflects upon the present to create new narratives in history by recreating moments that a viewer can connect to his



or her own lives. He says, "I borrow from the past to deal with the present, and present tense." <sup>23</sup> Like Michael Ray Charles his work is known to evoke strong, uncomfortable reactions in people. And like Marshall, he hopes that his work may provoke social change. Similar to Gallagher, he considers the formal qualities within his work: the colors, forms, and the repetition of these elements. Osorio introduces the element of space in his work through his medium: installation. With these constructed spaces Osorio is able to transport a viewer into a space and time- a space with which the viewer may or may not be familiar, but one that is present within his or her community, somewhere, nevertheless. He is able to show viewers a piece of his or her community. If an audience member happens to make a personal connection to the piece, if it seems familiar to him or her, Osorio's work has the ability to connect the viewer to art itself. On the other hand, if a viewer is unfamiliar with the created space he has constructed, his work has the ability to ask a viewer to reflect on this type of space and to consider it a space that exists within his or her community.

### *Dawoud Bey*

Dawoud Bey is the final artist students will learn about. Bey is a photographer whose work focuses on high-school students. His large-scale portraits are juxtaposed with written text, a personal narrative written by the student. By presenting a visual portrait with the student autobiographical writing, Bey's work asks the question: To what degree does one's interpretation of an image change after reading the text, if at all? His work is an example of how students can act as change agents within their communities. Not only can their portraits/autobiographical writings ask viewers to question the stereotypes they may hold, but they also allow an artist (Bey) and a subject (the students) to work together in creating new narratives in history. His work acts as personal narratives that may become examples of the ways in which art can act as a historical document to reshape the ways in which a particular time, people, or place is viewed.

### The Curated Art Show

Last, I will present students with a selection of the artwork from the curated shows of Thelma Golden, who runs the Studio Museum in Harlem. Through the ways in which she curates her shows and displays work, she is able to present the viewer with central themes that question our notions of history and how people may be defined. Students will create an art show for this portion of the unit. They will select a theme, choose artworks to include, and write written descriptions and wall labels to accompany their work. The ultimate aim of this portion of the unit is to bring together all that had been learned throughout the unit and for students to be able to present their own new view of art history to an audience and to their community.

## **Sample Lesson Plans from within the Unit**

---

### Lesson 1 Art Dominoes and Art that makes you go "Hmmm"

#### *Lesson Overview*

This lesson falls within the body of the unit and introduces students to using Art Dominoes. Students will use reproductions of a variety of artworks and make connections between the artworks through various themes.

#### *Duration*

For the purpose of this unit this lesson will last for two forty-five minute sessions.

### Materials

This lesson will use reproductions of works by Glenn Ligon, Ellen Gallagher, Michael Ray Charles, Kerry James Marshall, Pepon Orsario, and Dawoud Bey.

### *Teacher Preparation*

Collect, copy and laminate reproductions of artworks. Make one set per table of students.

### *Lesson Objectives*

After this lesson, students will be able to make connections between artworks through various themes.

### *Instructional Plan*

First, I will introduce the reading strategies and model how to create a domino effect with the art reproductions. I will model how to verbally state the connections between the artworks as I am making them. Students will then work in groups of four to create a domino effect with the artworks. As a whole class we will discuss each groups' interpretations and the connections that they have made. Next, I will introduce the artists and their themes within their artworks. Students will play Art Dominoes making connections based on the information learned about the artists and the artworks.

### *Assessment*

Students will be assessed on their ability to work as a team, make authentic connections, and engage in whole group discussions.

Lesson 2 Self-Portraits that make you go "Hmmm"

### Lesson Overview

For this lesson students will create self-portraits using photography as a medium. They will study the work of Dawoud Bey as motivation for the lesson. They will learn how to crop a photograph, create a triptych, and write a written piece to accompany their artworks.

### *Duration*

This lesson will take approximately four forty-five minute sessions to complete.

### Materials

The materials used will be: reproductions of Dawoud Bey's work, pencils and paper, one or more digital cameras, computer printer (or if one is not available, printing can be completed at a local store offering digital printing).

### *Teacher Preparation*

To prepare for this lesson the teacher should: collect works by Bey, make a teacher exemplar of the final product, make examples of photographs that show interesting cropping as well as cropping that does not work as well, make a few examples of written work, collect digital cameras, check with school that computer can print from camera.

### *Lesson Objectives*

After this lesson, students will be able to crop a photograph.

After this lesson, students will be able to create a triptych self-portrait.

After this lesson, students will be able to describe themselves in writing.

### *Instructional Plan*

To introduce this lesson, students will view and discuss Dawoud Bey's artwork. As a whole class we will discuss how he created triptych photographs of close-up cropped portions of his subjects. Students will be given a brainstorming sheet with question prompts to write their written descriptions of themselves. Students will then write a written description of themselves. Students will then work in pairs to make their self-portraits. Prior to this day, students will be instructed to consider what they will be wearing and what they want to show about themselves in their photographs. After creating their portraits, student will write a second description discussing what the photograph reveals about them that was not in the first written description. Last, students will present their work. The photographs will be displayed separately from the written descriptions. Students will then participate in a "matching game" in which they will attempt to pair the written description with a set of photographs.

### *Assessment*

Students will be assessed on their ability to create an interesting composition through cropping, on their two writing assignments, and in their participation in classroom discussions.

Lesson 3 Curating an Art Show and Making Others Go "Hmmm"

### *Lesson Overview*

This lesson will fall at the end of the unit. The purpose of this lesson is to allow students to show their artwork within a community space. Throughout this lesson students will be asked to consider: "Who are the youth of New Haven?" What similarities do students share and what differences make them each unique?

### *Duration*

This lesson will take approximately three forty-five minute sessions to complete.

### *Materials*

The materials for this lesson will include: previously made student work, writing materials, and frames and hanging materials.

### *Teacher Preparation*

To prepare for the lesson I will collect a variety of frames for student work and gather hanging materials. I will view Thelma Golden's TED talk. I will find a local organization that will be willing to host a curated art show by the students.

### *Lesson Objectives*

After this lesson, students will be able to curate an art show within their community. Students will be able to hang and display works of art.

Students will be able to create a written description of the art show.

### *Instructional Plan*

To introduce the concept of curating an art show, students will be shown Thelma Golden's TED talk. Hearing Golden speak directly to an audience is a powerful way for students to gain inspiration for this activity. As a whole class we will discuss how she views curating a show as having the ability to pose questions to a particular community. I will present students with the question: "Who are the youth of New Haven?" As a whole class we will discuss a theme for the art show. After a theme is chosen, students will select work of their own to include in the show. Students will then write written descriptions of their artworks to include in the art show. They will work in pairs to interview each other for the writing pieces. Students will then work as a whole class to create a press release for the show to send to local newspapers. Students will then learn how to frame and hang their own artwork. Upon completion, students will attend their own art show.

### *Assessment*

Students will be assessed on their ability to work within the group. They will be assessed on their ability to frame and hang their work, on their written descriptions of their work, and on their participation and input in creating a press release.

## **Implementing Connecticut State and New Haven District Standards for the Visual Arts**

---

This unit will allow me to address all NHPS standards for the art while helping to prepare me to specifically address two different strands of the content standards for the visual arts for the State of Connecticut in creating an interdisciplinary unit of study.

All three NHPS standards for the Visual Arts will be addressed within this unit. Students will create art, connect art to other disciplines, and respond to art.

Connecticut State Standards for the Visual Arts addressed within this unit:

Standard #4: History and Cultures

Students will-

-recognize that the visual arts have a history and a variety of cultural purposes and meaning

- identify specific works of art as belonging to particular styles, cultures, times and places
- create artwork that demonstrates understanding of how history or culture can influence visual art

#### Standard #6: Connections

Students will-

- Identify connections between characteristics of the visual arts and other arts disciplines
- Identify connections between the visual arts and other disciplines in the curriculum (history, language arts)
- Describe how the visual arts are combined with other arts in multimedia work (text and image)

## Annotated Bibliography

---

Art: 21. *Advertising and Art*. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/charles/clip1.html>.

This webpage is an interview conducted with Michael Ray Charles and Art: 21.

Art: 21, *Biography*. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/marshall/>.

This webpage is a biography on Kerry James Marshall and includes quotes made by Marshall.

Art: 21, *RYTHM MASTR*. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/marshall/clip2.html>.

This webpage is an interview conducted with Kerry James Marshall and Art: 21.

Art: 21, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)*. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/osorio/clip1.html>.

This webpage is an interview conducted with Pepon Osorio and Art: 21.

Berger, John. *Another Way of Telling*. Vintage, 1995.

In this book Berger works with photographer Jean Mohr to critique the ways that photographs may tell a story. He uses both words and images to defend his arguments as an art critic. This book is especially relevant to this unit in its discussions on photographer and subject, photograph and viewer and between a "moment" and a "memory". This book applies directly to the work of Dawoud Bey.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

This book, written by art critic John Berger helps a viewer to understand the context of an artwork—in the time it was made, its placement in an art museum, through the text it may be accompanied with, and asks the viewer of artworks to reconsider the interpretations that he or she may make when viewing an artwork.

Boyles, Nancy. *Constructing Meaning*. Florida: Mapin House, 2004.

Nancy Boyles book describes reading strategies to use in the elementary classroom. Although used primarily in regular classroom settings, these strategies may be employed in the art education classroom.

Charles, Michael Ray, Spike Lee, and Calvin Reid. *Michael Ray Charles*. Tony Shafrazi Gallery, 1999.

This book is an overview of Michael Ray Charles' artwork.

Gallagher, Ellen. *Ellen Gallagher: Exelento* . Gagosian Gallery, 2005.

This book is an overview of a selection of Ellen Gallagher's work.

Gonzalez, Jennifer A. *Subject to Display: Reframing Art in Contemporary Installation Art*. The MIT Press, 2008.

This book discusses Pepon Osorio's artwork in terms of contemporary installations.

Hagstrum, Jean. *The Sister Arts*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press. 1958/ 1987

Hoder, Jennifer. *Moved to Write: Using Objects as an Inspiration for Student Writing*. Wadsworth Athenaeum.

This book gives good examples of using artworks as inspiration for writing assignments. It includes two posters that compare the verbal artist to the visual artist.

Marshall, Kerry James. *Kerry James Marshall: Momentos* . The Renaissance Society, The University of Chicago, 2000.

This book is an overview of a selection of Marshall's work.

Quote Garden. *Quotations about History*. <http://www.quotegarden.com/history.html>.

This webpage has history quotes including one by David Thelden.

Ravitch, Diane. *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*. New York: Basic Books. 2010.

This book is good for educators of any subject and details Ravitch's view of the American Education System.

Reynolds, Jock, Taro Nettleton, Carrie Weems, and Dawoud Bey. *Dawoud Bey: Class Pictures*. Aperture, 2007.

This book describes Bey's photography work with high-school students.

Rothkopf, Mr. Scott, *Glenn Ligon: America* . The Whitney Museum of American Art, 2011.

This book is an overview of a selection of Ligon's artwork.

Walker, Sydney R. *Teaching Meaning in Art Making* . Art Education in Practice Series. Davis Publications, 2001

This book is a good reference book for art educators to aid in applying theory to practice in the art room.

## Endnotes

---

- 1 Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1958 and 1987), 5.
- 2 Ibid., 8.
- 3 The Quote Garden, *Quotations about History*, <http://www.quote garden.com/history.html>
- 4 Diane Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System* (New York: Basic Books, 2010), 237.
- 5 John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 7.
- 6 Jane Hoder, *Moved to Write: Using Objects as Inspiration for Student Writing* (Wadsworth Atheneum), 11.
- 7 Ibid., 11.
- 8 Ibid., 11.
- 9 Ibid., 12.
- 10 Ibid., 14.
- 11 Ibid., 12.
- 12 Ibid., 12
- 13 Ibid., 13.
- 14 Ibid., 12
- 15 Ibid., 13
- 16 Ibid., 13.
- 17 Ibid., 13.
- 18 Ibid., 13.
- 19 Nancy Boyles, *Constructing Meaning* (Florida: Maupin House, 2004), 6
- 20 Art: 21, *Biography*, <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/marshall/>
- 21 Art: 21, *RYTHM MASTR*, <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/marshall/clip2.html>
- 22 Art: 21, *Advertising and Art*, <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/charles/clip1.html>
- 23 Art: 21, *Scene of the Crime (Whose Crime?)* , <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/osorio/clip1.html>

---

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>