



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2012 Volume I: Understanding History and Society through Visual Art, 1776 to 1914

Using Art to Develop Purposeful Talk and Enhance Writer's Workshop

Curriculum Unit 12.01.06
by Caterina Salamone

Introduction

There are 22 third graders in my classroom at King/Robinson International Baccalaureate (IB) Magnet School in New Haven, Connecticut. Our school is a Pre K–8th school. We are an IB World School accredited in the Primary Years Program and Middle Years Program (PYP and MYP). IB World Schools are a non-profit organization that was founded in 1968 in Geneva, Switzerland. Originally developed for elite families and ambassadors who travel from country to country, IB schools can now be found all over the world. At first the intent of the program was started to support mobile students preparing to attend a university to receive a common curriculum. The PYP program is aimed towards students in grade K–5th grades. As teachers, we work very hard to align the IB philosophy and the Connecticut Common Core Standards in order to develop inquiry-based units and lessons for our students.

Some of the assessments that we use to drive our instruction are the Degrees of Reading Assessment (DRA2), oral language assessment, Degrees of Reading Power (DRP), District level assessments, formative assessments, summative assessments and writing assessments. The DRA2 levels in my classroom range from 14–40. There are many areas in comprehension, mostly reflection and interpretation, which the students fall short on. The students who are falling below grade level are often the students who exhibit low oral language scores as well. Another area that I find my students struggle year after year is with their narrative writing. We have a strong emphasis on the traits of writing especially elaboration. This is one of the traits that the students in grade 3 struggle with. We spend many hours in school discussing adjectives and the five senses to help the students create vivid snapshot. This is when we tell the students to show, not tell. Two areas where snapshots are very important is when describing characters and describing a setting.

The unit that I plan on creating will enhance our current comprehensive arts program, which gives the 3rd graders the opportunity to visit the local Yale Art Gallery or the British Art Center twice per year. With each visit, the students are given a docent who guides the class to a few preselected images. The docents are familiar with the Nancy Boyles reading strategies (connecting, picturing, wondering, guessing, noticing and figuring out), which are used in the classroom when we build comprehension. These strategies work well when discussing the images because it guides the students with familiar language. The docents have copies of each strategy on hand and use them throughout the discussion of each image. In addition to the discussion,

students are given the opportunity to recreate an image, usually by drawing what they see.

Throughout this unit, I plan on exploring various images that will allow a third grader to build their oral language and elaboration in writing. In order to do this we will use and practice purposeful talk in the classroom. This is when the students are given the chance to turn and talk with another student. They will use our sentence starter anchor chart to guide them in our discussion of the pictures that I have carefully chosen. In our discussion, the students will be required to use adjective to describe what they see. We will then categorize each idea according to our senses. This will give the students the opportunity to see their thoughts organized on paper. Later on they will be able to use these anchor charts when they are writing their stories.

During our reader's workshop, we will use the reading strategies to make interpretations and reflections based on what we see within the pictures. We will need to use images that are moderately complex with multiple people or an action of some sort. The more captivating the image is will result in a better feedback from the students.

Common Core of Teaching

Writing–W.3.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

- Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences and events or show the response of characters to situations.
- Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.
- Provide a sense of closure.

Listening and Speaking– SL.3.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 topics and texts* , building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.
- Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
- Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
- Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

Teaching Strategies

In order to infuse art into the classroom we will use the following strategies:

- Discussions using purposeful talk
- Whole Group
- Small Groups
- Writing lessons

Lesson 1- Purposeful Talk:

Language is essential for human existence. Without it people would have a hard time making connections, understanding others ideas and thoughts, reading and writing. Students who come from privileged homes, eat dinner with their families while discussing their day, visit museums and parks and interact with others on a regular basis typically do not have a problem building their language skills. It's the students who do not have opportunities to develop their language skills appropriately and often times struggle with reading and writing that lessons around appropriate talk is extremely important. To help you get started you will want to hang up an anchor chart for the students to use while they are practicing. Below are the pointers that you will want to include on your chart.

Turn and Talk
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Make eye contact – Eye to Eye, Knee to Knee2) One person talks at a time3) Listen carefully as your partner speaks4) Switch

Be sure to model what this looks like in your classroom to build proper behavior management skills. Once the students know what turn and talk looks like they will be able to do this just by saying "turn and talk."

Once you establish what turn and talk looks like, it is important to teach the students the proper way to build and develop a conversation where the students are listening to each other and not just talking at each other. To determine if your students are really listening you can ask them "tell me what (partner) said." If the student replies with shrugged shoulders or says that they forgot, chances are they need practice holding on to other students' ideas and building on to ideas. You will now want to introduce the following chart to the students and be sure to model this as well.

Turn and Talk	
1) Make eye contact – Eye to Eye, Knee to Knee 2) One person talks at a time 3) Listen carefully as your partner speaks 4) Switch	
Agree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree... • I was thinking the same thing... 	Disagree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I disagree because... • I was thinking... • No, I don't think...
Agree and Add On <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I agree with you but I also... • That's true... • I think... 	Clarify <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I didn't understand... • Can you please repeat what you said...

You will want to make sure that you spend a lesson going over this chart with your students. Encourage them to also fill in some sentence starters that they can say or have used before. Each time a new phrase is said you can draw attention to it and add it to the chart.

During future lessons, be sure to focus the students on the chart by reminding and encouraging them to use it during their conversations. You will be amazed at how the students really rely and refer to the chart. They even begin to teach each other how to use it and when to use it.

Lesson 2 - Describing Using the 5 Senses

To introduce this unit to the students I would put up a picture of your choice. Something to spark lots of discussion and contains action. I would start with *Mabel Brady Garvan's The Grand Drive, Central Park N.Y.* (1869) and *Central Park, Winter The Skating Pond* by Lyman W. Atwater. Both of these paintings are located in the Yale Art Gallery and would be perfect for my students since many of them have most likely been to New York and Central Park. If you cannot find these images then you can use anything that would offer a great discussion around the students' initial reactions, feelings and what they see.

The students would be sitting on a rug facing one image. We would make reference to our turn and talk chart making sure that the students keep the sentence starters in mind and use them within their discussions. I would provide them with the following prompt and questions to get them started and to help them continue to build their ideas:

- What do you see?
- How does this picture make you feel?
- What do you think their conversations could be about?
- Tell me more?

I would be sure to keep this lesson to 15 minutes. You don't want the conversation to drag on and on. As the students are discussing the images in their small groups, you will monitor their conversations and roam the room giving prompts to the students who seem to be struggling. Keep track of the students' sentence structure. Simple sentence structure such as; "he's wearing pants, they are skating, I feel happy," will require more small group guidance dedicated to the use of adjectives and building more complex sentences.



As I look at *The Grand Drive, Central Park N.Y* image, I want to make sure that I draw my students into the lavish greenery. The trees are tall with strong trunks that are full of thick leaves. The families are walking along what appears to be stone walkways. The women are in lovely dresses almost too perfect for a Sunday stroll. The men are wearing top hats and bowties. Some are taking a horse and carriage ride. In the distance there is a large building. It could be a mansion to one of the wealthy families living in New York City. There is a lake where some people are looking at. It seems as if the families are all enjoying each other's company and are happy to see one another.



As I look at *The Central Park, Winter* image, I want to make sure that I draw my students into the lavish emotions of the people skating. They seem happy and excited to be outside on the ice. The women are wearing lavish dresses and coats. It seems to be very cold outside. They men are all in long jackets, hats and gloves. Some people are holding hands and some are chasing each other. There is a bridge in the background that looks so intricate and perfect.

Lesson 3 - Writing with the Five Senses

In order to get stories to come alive, authors appeal to the human senses. They do this by captivating their audience through the creation of their characters, and the description of the setting and plot as if the reader were there seeing, hearing, tasting, feeling and smelling for themselves. This is a very difficult task for students. In this lesson the students will use images and focus on one sense at a time. They will brainstorm adjectives and complete sentences that describe the images that are presented to them.

Some images that I have chosen for this activity are *Philippe Mercier's The Five Senses* (c.1740). This is a collection of 5 images located in the Yale Center for British Art. Each one describes one of the five senses carefully. The following activity can be used as a starting off point before students begin to write their own stories. The template that is attached is a great way to help students organize their thoughts as well as compare the senses and see which one they are more apt to using. This would be a great way to assess which students need more help and which students understand how to use their 5 senses.

The Five Senses				
Sight	Smell	Taste	Touch	Hear



Philippe Mercier -

The Sense of Taste 1744-1747

I see three men and two women. One of the men appears to be a servant. He is black and well dressed. The others are drinking the finest wine and eating exquisite peaches and figs. They are sweet and juicy. The wine is cool and bubbly. On the table, it appears that there are ice cream floats. It might be their dessert. The man and women to the right might be the hosts since they are pouring the drinks for the other two who might be the guest.



Philippe Mercier

The Sense of Hearing - 1730

There are four women in the image. All of them are playing an instrument. It seems like they are all playing the same song and they are looking at the book that is on the piano. The three women who are dressed in light colors look much younger than the woman in black. She's the oldest and is playing the heaviest instrument. Their song seems peaceful and sweet since their expression is very calm. The woman in the back is having a hard time looking at the notes and may not be able to keep in tune with the others. The woman on the piano doesn't need to read the notes. She may already know the song by heart since her gaze is off the page.



Phillipe Mercier

The Sense of Touch - 1689

In this image there are many various aspects of touch. The man is licking his finger, as it appears that the cat scratched him. The baby is feeling the cat's smooth fur. The woman is feeling sorry for the man who was hurt and is placing her hand on his shoulder. The two on the right side of the image are embracing each other and about to kiss.

Thoughtshots

When writers add characters in their stories, they can captivate their readers' attention and draw them into the story by using thoughtshots. These are the thoughts and feelings that the characters are feeling and experiencing as the storyline continues. The types of thoughtshots that are used in narrative writing are hopes, wishes and wonders. These tend to be a tricky concept for students when it comes to elaboration. Using paintings is a great way to get students into the minds of a character and develop the thoughts that

they may be thinking through the students' eyes.

Describing the Setting

The setting is another important aspect of a narrative. By using the five senses, students can paint a picture for the reader by showing with words rather than telling. It is important that the students elaborate when describing the setting because it helps the reader understand the plot of the story. By choosing the perfect image, students can create a story based on the setting of the image. They can use their five senses to describe the scene and paint the image using words.

Telling the Story

Another great idea is to use the images to tell a story. You can use all of the elements that were mentioned above to continue this next activity. Each child can work individually or in small groups. However you will want to model this activity before letting the students do this independently. Choose images that can tell a story. *George Stubbs* made 4 paintings entitled *Two Gentlemen Going A Shooting, with a view of Creswell Crags* , *Taken on the Spot* 1767, *Two Gentlemen Shooting* 1768, *Two Gentlemen Shooting* 1769 and *A Repose after Shooting* 1770. All of these paintings are also located in the Yale Center for British Art. I think these images would be a great way to teach how to write the plot of a story. They depict two men with their hunting dogs. Each scene shows a day's work hunting birds. The way these images are laid out would be perfect for a beginning, middle and end. Let the students be creative and think of a paragraph for each image. Later you can use this to teach editing and revising, but for now focus on getting the conversation and writing centered around the images.



Example:

"Charlie, today is a beautiful day to go hunting for those birds you have been wanting to get." Henry was always excited to start the day hunting. The weather was perfect. Not too cold and not too hot. The clouds were slowly making their way west as the sun rose higher and higher. You could hear the mill in the distances turning as the water splashed its way back into the river. The hounds were always ready for Charlie and Henry's call. They could not wait to get those birds. Especially the one that got away the last time Charlie and Henry took the hounds out to hunting. "This is the day Henry. We are going to come back home with not one but dozens of birds." Henry knew that Charlie was always very eager and ambitious when it came to hunting. Only time will tell what will happen on the trip out into the woods.

Reminders

This unit should be used to enhance your current objectives in the classroom. Please be sure to choose images that are appropriate for your class. If there is something that may cause a problem or uneasiness among the students, look for something else. You want to look for something that will grab your students' attention as well as create enough of a discussion to last about 15 minutes.

Appendix

Common Core Standards

Writing–W.3.3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

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Philippe Mercier, *Sense of Touch* , 1744–1747, Yale Center for British Art

Philippe Mercier, *Sense of Taste* , 1744–1747, Yale Center for British Art

Philippe Mercier, *Sense of Sight* , 1744–1747, Yale Center for British Art

Philippe Mercier, *Sense of Hearing* , 1744–1747, Yale Center for British Art

Artwork to use with thoughtshots

William Lowndas, *Auditor of His Majesty's 1771* , Man With Dog, Yale Center for British Art

Johan Joseph Zoffany, *Self-Portrait with his daughter Maia Theresa, James Cervetto and Giacobbe Cervetto* , 1780, Yale Center for British Art

Artworks to use when describing settings

John Constable, *Straford Mill– Boys near River Mill* , 1819–1820, Yale Center for British Art

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Artwork to use when describing animals

James Ward, *Eagle, A Celebrated Stallion* , 1809, Yale Center for British Art

Richard Wilson, *View near Wynnstay– The seat of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn BT*, 1770–1771, Yale Center for British Art

Artwork when describing change in scenes

George Stubbs, *Two Gentlemen Going A Shooting, with a view of Creswell Crags, Taken on the Spot* , 1767, Yale Center for British Art

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