



Art and Conflict: The Visual Struggle

Curriculum Unit 12.01.08

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Rationale

Teaching can be a balancing act. The need for routine and a consistent pattern of learning is a vital aspect of classroom management and conveying student expectations. While it is important for students to know is expected of them, a teacher also must have the ability to break away from the routine to further spark their student's learning. As students begin to settle and grow complacent with their assignments and tasks, their behavior, focus, and engagement in the lesson tends to waver. It is at this time when excellent work becomes good work, collaboration becomes copying and progress becomes slowed. Thus, the teacher must break from the tried and true routine, and use a new way of learning to spark their students. To balance what the students know and are comfortable with and new forms of learning and expression can be the most difficult yet effective way to teach students, and in turn have the students develop new ways to think. Tim Barringer's seminar will enable me to implement new forms of teaching, which will open up new forms of learning, expression and communication from the students.

I teach English 1 & 2 at New Horizons, in New Haven. New Horizons is an alternative school for students who struggle in the traditional classroom setting and who cannot succeed in a regular classroom, due to poor attendance, disruptive behavior, crime, or emotional disabilities, as well as other obstacles. The challenges these students face can make for a trying and difficult learning process, but there are ways to be successful in these classroom settings. These students are often times defiant and oppose any kind of authority as well as frustrated by their own inability perform the most simplest of tasks: reading, writing and thinking. To many of them, an English class represents the root of their academic struggles, the place where they might have first felt unskilled, slow, or intellectually inferior. It is our job as alternative educators to break through those thick walls of failure to bring out the love of learning and the pattern of productivity to make these students successful in class and eventually, in life. The knowledge I will gain from Tim Barringer's seminar will give me a basis to implement the use of art analysis as a learning tool. After speaking with Mr. Barringer, the concept of conflict, both internal and external in art, would be the best unit to develop. The idea of conflict, the eternal struggle inside man as well as challenges he may face in the outside world is one of the most universal feelings.

With new lessons, there must be new groundwork established for the students to build upon. For example, to use art for America's westward expansion as a means to open up the avenues of written expression, I have to

give the students background knowledge and context for them to start from. This would be in the form of a timeline, to understand how far back in our country's history we are learning about and a map to show where this growth took place in relation to us. Whole lessons will be centered on the students having a basic knowledge of when westward expansion took place and where exactly it happened. The students will know how far away this expansion happened, in relation to their own environment and homes. History is better taught in the form of a story instead of dates, years, and encyclopedic details. If the student learns about the people involved in history, (their fears, hopes, wants, goals, and pains) they can develop higher levels of learning and cognitive growth.

With Tim Barringer's seminar I can build my own working knowledge on how to look at art from a historical perspective, how to view art as a means to develop in the language arts classroom. Along with the students' knowledge of when and where the American westward expansion took place, the students need to be comfortable making inferencing skills to further develop their own observations.

Often times students at New Horizons find that reading a passage, story, or any piece of literature can be boring and they cannot connect with the content. However, with the use of art analysis, the same literacy goals can be reached, yet in a more colorful way. While most of my students cannot read on their current grade level, they all can see and process with great skill and accuracy. The use of art in class can open up even the most reluctant student because all they really need to do is look at the image and comment on it. The art will allow them to make all the same required literature related responses, without the student ever reading a passage. I think this unit will be an extremely useful learning experience for the students because it will "level the playing field" between the strong and the struggling readers. Any student can thrive in this unit because they only have to provide an emotional reaction to an image or response to a piece of art and they are suddenly a student who in not only engage and focused, but productive and successful. This is exactly what eludes many of the students at New Horizons. Often times the students are ill equipped to meet the expectations given to them and classwork has such a negative connotation to them that they usually give up before they even try. With this unit, the students will enjoy the eye catching visual aide and not even realize that they are learning as well. The students will learn not only about how our country was formed from a historical perspective, but they will view the internal and external conflict and challenges that so many settlers faced in a way that literature sometime fails to reveal to them.

Conflict

In literature, one of the most important elements of fiction is the use of conflict. Conflict, in all its forms is a universal concept in any culture society or environment. In order for the students to fully grasp the concept of conflict they will need to know and understand the different kinds of conflict, seen in literature, art and in life. This unit will not only teach the students about the types of conflict that exist, but also build off of prior knowledge gained from making inferences and drawing conclusions, the development and expansion of our nation in the 1800's, and what it means to be an American.

One thing that my students know well is confrontational and difficult situations. As a teacher, building positive and trustworthy relationships is vital to effectively managing classrooms. As I speak to my students in class and throughout the year, they share stories and experiences from their lives that are examples of what conflict is, how it impacts our lives and changes who we are, as well as help shape our character and

personality. I will introduce this unit by having the students write down the basic meaning of conflict, and then write 2-3 sentences about the time they were involved or saw a conflict of any kind.

Once the students have shown that they understand the different types of conflict, as evidenced in their exit slips and student work, we will progress into the use of looking at art as a parallel means to understanding conflict in literature. As I stated in my rationale/prospectus, looking at art can generate the same kind of thinking as reading fiction or non-fiction. A large majority of my students test at below reading at grade level, however looking at art is a creative way to reach the same cognitive and learning goals, and master the various aspects of conflict.

The major objective for the student is to be able to look at a piece of art, either visual or in literature and to be able diagnose what kind of conflict is being used. In order for the student to effectively succeed in this unit they will have to be able read for information, make inferences based on their observations and to make connections from the piece of art or text to their own experiences.

Looking at Art

After learning about the concept of conflict in our world, my students will begin to understand what art is, and what it means to look at art. Many people are intimidated or resistant to the thought of looking at art, and most of my students have never been inside an art museum, so it is vital to begin this process with a simple, streamlined approach. This part of the unit will begin with a pre-assessment, to judge what the students' prior knowledge consists of, and to examine their interest and engagement levels in what they think art is. The students will be given a sheet with the image of the Mona Lisa, and a few short questions as to what they see. Then, they will read two short quotes from Pablo Picasso, and give feedback. Then, they will copy down short definitions for art, perspective and tension. Much like the students did when elaborating on the types of conflict; the students will give examples of art, tension, and perspective as an exit slip and as a form of checking for comprehension and understanding.

Following the art pre-assessment and the vocabulary building, the students will begin to incorporate their previously learned skill of making inferences and apply it to viewing art. The students will be given a template that helps organize their thoughts on what their eyes see as well as provide a scaffold to help them analyze the art. The most important step in the art analysis is to have the students feel comfortable and confident in making and sharing observations. With this in mind, we will begin to look at art by using an LCD projector in the classroom. This learning begins with their ability to make simple observations and make conclusions on what their eyes can process. Once they get into the routine of this approach they can begin to learn how to look at art work and not feel intimidated and uncomfortable with looking at fine art. The YouTube clip of Richard Murray, senior curator at the Smithsonian American Art Museum analyzing "**Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way**" by Leutze, provides a good starting point for the students. Murray explains to trust what your eyes see, and that the process of viewing art, especially western art can be educational and enlightening.

The next step in this process would be to actually look at images and begin to express their thoughts and views. The student's observations will be better served from the foundation given, the previous lessons in the unit of when and where, as well as an understanding of people's motivations to endure such hardships and

challenges for the ability to live free. The students will look at paintings done by Frederic Remington, and American artist who captured the vastness and unpredictability of the American Frontier wonderfully. These lessons will contain a number of Remington's works that illustrate many forms of conflict as well as giving the viewer a unique perspective and understanding of the people who lived in America in the late 1800's. Remington's 'Sioux Warriors, a.k.a. The Attack' done in 1889, shows understand the American Indian's feelings towards the oncoming settlers as well as the feeling of terror felt by the Americans in foreign land that did not belong to them. Then, they will look at Remington's piece titled 'Twenty-five to One, a.k.a. The Last Stand' that shows how American soldiers faced great odds when facing a Native tribe that would die to defend their land. It is a concept both universal and applicable in today's world. There are a number of other pieces by Remington that will be shown to the students to further their own cognition and understanding of the types of conflict and its impact on literature and life.

When introducing a new concept or trying to get students positively engaged in a lesson, it is important to find material that they would find interesting or appealing.

Showing Frederic Remington's 'Twenty Five to One, a.k.a. The Last Stand' would interest my mostly young male classroom population for its violence, gun play and detail. Once the students see the piece they will be asked to share their observations, views and opinions on the work. Using the art analysis template, the students will record their observations, make an inference and classify what they see into the three categories (Objects/activities, colors, expressions/emotions). Once these steps are completed, the students will be able to choose which types of conflict apply to the art, from what they learned in the earlier lesson.

Utilizing the Art and Conflict Worksheets and Templates

The use of the worksheets and templates is a vital component to the students learning the new content and material. Most importantly, showing the students how to use these sheets will contribute greatly to the students' new knowledge.

- "Lesson Starter:" This sheet will be given in the beginning of the unit. The first part of the assignment will be for the students to answer the questions about the image/painting of a famous or iconic image, for example, The Mona Lisa. This will serve as the art pre-assessment, which is designed to judge the students pre-existing knowledge and opinions pertaining to art and looking at art. Once the students complete the front side, they will continue to the backside. Share the quotes with the students, and ask them what they think it means and if they have any background and activities that they enjoy that could be considered "art."
1. Try to have a class discussion on what art means to the students, what can be considered art, and what they think is powerful and effective art. The topic of hip-hop and stylized images seen in music videos is an effective way to engage the students in the use of art as a means of communication, expression, and conflict. Following this, I will show the students the work of Kehinde Wiley, an artist who uses images of familiar hip hop artists and blends more traditional settings in his work to my inner city students, which will serve as vehicle to viewing more art and student analysis.

"How to Look at Art:"

When using this sheet to introduce the basic concepts and approach to art, it is essential that the students already have mastered the skill of making inferences and drawing conclusions.

When showing an image on the LCD projector, have the students write three observations on the template (1., 2., 3.). The short, rapid

2. tempo of this activity is an effective tool in student engagement, as well as an introduction to a higher level of viewing conflict in art. Within the students observations will contain their thoughts about the significant feelings and implications of the piece. This routine can be used frequently, the students look forward to learning the skill, and inquisitive about the piece they are analyzing.

"Art and Conflict:"
This template should be used while looking at art, either on a LCD projector or at the Yale Art Gallery. The prompts and questions are designed to have the students give their opinions and thoughts on character and the type of conflict that is seen. The last question will provide the student a chance to write about if they were one of the people in the image or painting, which works on their perspective writing.

3.

"The Five Types of Conflict:" I will use this sheet to teach my students the five different types of conflict: Man vs. Man, Man vs. Himself, Man vs. Nature, Man vs. Society, and Man vs. Technology or Fantasy. The student will also be taught the difference between internal and external conflict, and will produce examples. It is important for the students to understand the different types of conflict, so I will have them pair off, or go into

4. small groups and think of 1-2 examples of each type of conflict. This addresses two examples of active student learning: synthesizing or creating samples of conflict from the lesson to check for understanding as well as improving peer and collaborative cooperation (It is possible that with some of my students might not work well with their peers, and a very real example of conflict would take place, for the class to use as an example).

Lesson Starter

Notes for Teacher: To introduce this unit, use a famous or iconic image of a painting to introduce the concept of looking and analyzing art, i.e. the Mona Lisa.

1. What or who is this
2. Have you ever seen her before?
3. How would you describe her? (at least 4 words)
4. Would you like this hanging in your house?
5. Create a name or title for this image, with 2 supporting sentences.

"Painting is just another way of keeping a diary." -Pablo Picasso

"Art is the only way to run away without leaving home." -Twyla Tharp

Art:

1. The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture.
2. Works produced by one's personal skill and imagination

Perspective:

Tension:

Step 2. Making an Inference:

(Based on my observations from the painting or image, I can infer that...)

1st
inference: _____

2nd inference: _____

3rd
inference _____

Art and Conflict

Title of piece: _____

Artist: _____ year: _____

1. Briefly describe the piece and give your reaction in complete sentences:

2. Which of the five types of conflict do you see? Is it internal or external, or both? Explain your reason with supporting sentences:

3. Imagine if you were the artist who did this piece. What is the message, mood or feeling he/she is trying to give?

The Five Types of Conflicts

1. Man Versus Man

The conflict between two characters is generally considered a conflict between one man and another man. This is the most common and most obvious literary conflict.

Example:

2. Man Versus Himself

Internal conflict is another common conflict in literature. This is often portrayed by a character fighting against his/her own conscience or moral beliefs, or struggling to make a difficult decision.

Example:

3. Man Versus Nature

This conflict is portrayed when man fights against the forces of nature. This can be represented in several ways, possibly as man fighting an animal, or a natural disaster.

Example:

4. Man Versus Society

The conflict of man versus society is often represented by a person who is an outcast or by a character who tries to break the normal rules society has established.

Example:

5. Man Versus Technology or Fantasy

This conflict encompasses several spheres, such as man fighting against technological advances, man fighting against monsters, aliens and man fighting against supernatural forces.

Example:

What is the difference between internal conflict and external conflict?

Example of Man v. Man

The Death of Lucretia, by Gavin Hamilton 1763–67. This piece, by Scottish artist Gavin Hamilton, shows the virtuous noblewoman Lucretia committing suicide after being raped by Tarquin, the son of the King of Rome. Seen are examples of conflict such as man vs. self, man vs. man, and man vs. society, as well as the different levels of conflict that take place between man and woman. This can be seen at the Yale Center for British Art.

Example of Man v. Himself

The Deluge-by John Martin, 1834. This piece, by British artist John Martin addresses man's struggle with sin as well as the catastrophic destruction of human kind. This piece can address conflict in the form of man vs. nature, man vs. society, and man vs. himself. This can be seen at the Yale Center for British Art.

Example of Man v. Nature

Man Struggling With a Boa Constrictor-J. Ward, 1803. Also known as 'A Study for Liboya Serpent Seizing Its Prey,' by British artist James Ward, who was known as 'the Mammoth of Animal Painters,' shows examples of conflict in the forms of man vs. nature, and possibly, man vs. society. This can be seen at the Yale Center for British Art.

Example of Man v. Society

Hamlet Play Scene by Edward Austin Abbey, 1897. This piece by American artist Edward Austin Abbey shows conflict in many ways. Prince Hamlet watches Claudius' reaction to his play, which implicates the new King in Hamlet's father's murder. The possible examples of conflict are man vs. man, man vs. self, man vs. society, and the struggle between interior and exterior conflict. This piece can be seen in the Yale University Art Gallery.

How the Unit Relates to the Common Core State Standards

RL.9–10.1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

This unit asks students to analyze the message of the painting. They will have to make inferences that are based off of their observations of the pieces.

RL.9–10.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

This unit will ask students to understand the five basic types of conflicts and identify the conflict within a specific piece. They will have to use contextual evidence (their observations) to support their claim.

RL.9–10.3. Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

This unit will allow students the opportunity to learn that conflict is often the driving force to the overall plot or story.

Bibliography

For Conflict:

1. *Elements of Fiction Writing – Conflict, Action & Suspense* by William Noble, Writer's Digest Books, by 1999.
2. *Elements of Fiction Writing–Conflict and Suspense* by James Scott Bell, Writer's Digest Books, by 2011.

For Making Inferences:

1. *Inference (Reading Passages that Build Comprehension)* by Linda Ward Beech, Teaching Resources 2006.

For examples of Conflict in Art:

1. *Frederic Remington Art Museum Collection* by Brian Dippie, Remington Art Museum, 2001
2. *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness* American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery, September, 2008
3. *The American Navies of the Revolutionary War* , by Nowland Van Powell, G.P. Powell's Sons, 1974

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