



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Integrating Printmaking and Literature: A high school art curriculum

Curriculum Unit 88.04.05
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My primary involvement is the role of being an artist. I am also a teacher in the secondary schools where I teach the fine arts. The process of printmaking is what I have been doing for the past twelve years. I believe that we teach best what we do best. Because much of my own work is either motivated or inspired by the use of poetry or literature, I have decided to design a high school curriculum around the integration of literature, poetry, and printmaking. In it we will integrate techniques in printmaking with readings in poetry and literature. There has always been a close affinity between prints and the written word which is evident by the collaboration between printmakers and writers. The resulting books and folios are strikingly handsome. This new popularity has helped prompt my choice of subject as well. There are objectives I wish to achieve in this unit. Some of these are carried over from my days as a student in the High School of Music and Art. One of these is an atmosphere promoting self expression. In the late fifties, when I attended the school the priorities were to be daring, different, and expressive of ourselves. Even though few traditional skills were learned, that sense of freedom remained alive for many years. I hope to keep alive a similar freedom in this unit. By opening up all the senses through the sounds and imagery of poetry and literature, I hope the student can be motivated this way to explore his own responses by means of techniques in printmaking. Sometimes certain processes are combined equivocally with particular writings. We will see how this occurs through the development of the curriculum. One art, I suspect, will feed the other, along with demonstrations and a carefully selected assortment of readings each week, a blossoming and ease at uniting both art and literature will occur. Through the effort of integrating the two arts, the senses will be nourished doubly and twice as much learning will occur. A goal which is important as well is a concern with the eloquence of words to elicit responses. Literature is to be held as a muse for the art students as well as to be treasured for its own merit. Hopefully such appreciation will come through. With the help of phrases and words, I hope a sense of meter and rhythm will be able to develop in the students. Development of musical responses can be another objective. These are wide and valuable objectives to achieve. Perhaps the most important ones are about making art. This is the active part of the artistic expression which develops intuitive response, Appreciating, learning, and doing are goals to achieve.

The physical layout of the art room needs to function as an integral part of the curriculum. It has to have an open and unencumbered quality. In one corner are the printing inks, brushes, and rollers. In another closet are various and assorted papers which lend themselves to printing. At the sink we are stocked with plenty of empty cans, sponges and paper towels. Newspapers are needed to line the tables with when printing. The tables themselves need not be grouped but are better when separated from each other so as to accommodate

two or three students at a time. Little work stations can be set up at each four foot table. This will include a 20" x 20" piece of plexiglass at each station, also rollers, tubes of water soluble printing ink and assorted corrugated papers and styrofoam trays for printing.

The plan for structuring the unit will be as follows. The classes will consist of two hourly meetings each week so as to keep a semblance of continuity. The student may choose this as his "choice" art class. This means that it will meet twice as long as a regular art class. There will be a selection of xeroxed readings given out every other week. The students will have a week to review them before they are asked to pick out a reading which they can read aloud to the class. Poems and short stories will be included in the readings. The short stories will be found in a text called, *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, published by W.W. Norton and Company, while the poetry will be found in the text, *To Read Poetry*, by Donald Hall, published by Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Only a segment of the short stories will be read to the class.

An important strategy is to elicit responses from the student about the literature. These responses are going to then be further translated into the art. How is this to be done? The readings from the books will be broken into seven themes. The themes shall be: Children's Fantasy, Life and Death, Nature Animals, People and Places, Comedy and Satire, Sports, Religion, and Patriotism. The themes cover a broad span and so will the styles in which they are written. They will offer themselves to diverse interpretations. For example, in the first theme concerning death and life, there are various interpretations of death and life. The poem by William Carlos Williams called "Spring and All" suggests the power of nature and rebirth, while the poem "Home Burial" by Robert Frost is a deeply moving encounter between a man (poet?) and his wife upon the death of their infant and their misunderstandings—On the other hand, Emily Dickenson internalizes her impressions of what she supposes death to be in "When I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died." The power of suggesting death through sound and imagery is powerful here. In Faulkner's story titled "Barn Burning" a young boy breaks from his father's destructive ways. In a sense he confirms life in opposition to his unfeeling father. Because these readings offer diverse interpretations, the students can bring their own experiences to them. Their own bias is important. Because there are twelve readings in each theme, there is a better opportunity for the class to make their responses. The student may respond to Frost's poem which is a tense dialogue and an inner dialogue. His choice will indicate his point of view of death. His mental interpretation will aid him in rendering the artistic responses. If he recognizes his feelings about death, he learns about himself and he grows intuitively. Later I will discuss how this response will be applied to printmaking techniques. Also in using printmaking and familiarizing himself to repeating them he will grow more comfortable as the semester progresses. When the challenge of each theme confronts him, he will ask himself what piece of literature he responds to and why? For example, does he respond to the experience, to the setting, or to the mood? Does he respond to the rhythm or to the sounds? Making the art from these responses will be discussed later.

The demonstrations provide another aspect of the unit. They will be offered during the first five weeks of the unit so as to guide the students into possible approaches of printmaking. They will be demonstrated at the second meeting of each week. By this time the readings will have been introduced and the demonstrations will offer an opportunity for the students to try them out. Their adaptation to the techniques will be very individual. Certain techniques will appeal to certain students. The five demonstrations of relief methods in printing are:

1. PRINTING CUT OUTS
2. LINEAR PRINTS IN STYROFOAM
3. PRINTING WITH FOUND ITEMS AND TEXTURES

4. THE MONOTYPE (the painterly print)
5. COMBINING POP UPS AND COLLAGE WITH RELIEF PRINTS

1ST DEMONSTRATION—PRINTING CUT OUTS

A. Objectives

1. How to make a cut out print
2. How to print the cut out
3. How to print the negative
4. How to print the positive

B. Materials

printing inks, water soluble
rollers
matte medium
plexiglass plate
styrofoam, other cut out materials
brushes
paper towels
cutting tools
water jars and sponges

C. Process

1. Set up for inking

At first we will talk about the set up for printmaking. Working with clean implements is important. Rollers, plexiglass, styrofoam plates, etc. are needed. We roll a small amount of ink out on the plexiglass. We add some thickening agent for better consistency.

2. Cutting a print

We start by cutting out a shape. This is done with a matting knife directly into styrofoam. The image may be drawn beforehand into the styrofoam. We cut out the shape carefully so as not to destroy the surrounding styrofoam. This is a chance to make the negative print. We can push out the cut outs and put them back when we have finished printing the shapes. This is demonstrated. Then we incise some line into the styrofoam with a sharp tool for detail. A nail or blade may be used for this purpose.

3. Printing a positive shape

This is done by simply pushing out the shape you desire to print, rolling the color out onto the plexiglass. Then, roll the color on the cut out shape. In order to transfer the image, turn it over, ink side down on the paper and with a clean roller press down until the ink has been transferred to the paper. This process is observed by the class. Sometimes, if the image isn't transferred properly, it is necessary to ink the piece again and print it again.

4. Printing a negative shape

Push out all the shapes from the styrofoam plate. Again, check the edges of the styrofoam so they are not ragged or sloppy. Roll ink carefully over the entire surface of styrofoam, turn it over onto paper, and with a clean roller, press down on the styrofoam so that the negative print is made. Instead of printing all the shapes together, it is possible to cut out the negative shapes from their fixed pattern. This allows greater freedom in printing them individually. Questions and suggestions from students are welcomed.

After the demonstration, the students can cut out different shapes and print them. They can interchange their shapes with each other. They learn the correct way to print by repeating the process many times. They will learn variations of their own by exploring the technique again and again. They will familiarize themselves with certain variables: the correct amount of ink that is good to use, the amount of pressure that will allow them to get the image properly printed, the kind of space that they need for different compositions. Another matter to stress is good work habits. This includes keeping marks off the paper while printing and working. Also, avoiding over-inking, washing up the materials carefully, and wiping the plexiglass until there is no ink on it. Since we will be using water soluble ink there is no need to use solvents.

After the basic techniques are learned, more artistic and meaningful decision making can take place. Then the relationship of working with new tools becomes comfortable and more natural work rhythms start occurring.

2nd DEMONSTRATION—LINEAR PRINTS IN STYROFOAM

A. Objective

1. How to engrave a drawing into styrofoam?
2. What are the characteristics of the drawn image?
3. Compare the linear prints to the cut outs.
4. Reversing the image.

5. Adapting the visual image to the printed word.

As in the earlier demonstration, there is a concern for craftsmanship and good work habits. The manner used to incise the line is demonstrated. Some tools are more successful than others to get an Incised line. The angle at which you hold the tool facilitates the drawing.

B. Materials

cutting tools, nails, blades, wires
pencils
materials to cut into (styrofoam)
printing inks
paper towels
newspapers
sponges and rollers

C. Process of engraving The demonstration begins by cutting a line into a piece of styrofoam. Then make a mark into the styrofoam. Different tools make different lines. Explore different line qualities.

D. Printing the drawing

1. Roll ink over drawing
2. Place the paper over a moderately inked surface
3. With a dry roller, press back of paper
4. Peel off paper to see print
5. Hang up print to dry or lay flat E. Clean up

3rd DEMONSTRATION—PRINTING WITH FOUND ITEMS AND TEXTURES

A. Objectives

1. How to prepare the objects and textures for printing (finishing with matte medium)
2. How to add and combine several techniques in one design
3. Accepting the natural irregularity of the printed image

B. Materials

corrugated cardboard
scissors
matte medium
rollers
printing ink and matte base
newspaper and paper towels
printing ink, plexiglass, styrofoam, and other cutting tools

C. Process—Preparing the found items or textured

1. Coating the corrugated cut out shapes with matte medium by painting it on front and back
2. Waiting for the medium to dry before printing (follow printing directions in Demonstration 2)

4th DEMONSTRATION—THE MONOTYPE (the painterly print

A. Objectives in teaching

1. How to introduce a new printing painting technique.
2. How to make multiples by changing the print gradually.

B. Materials

tubes of printing ink
matte medium for mixing inks

soft rags, paper towels, rollers
sheet of plexiglass for each student
individual palettes or styrofoam trays

C. Process

1. Mixing inks—we need to achieve the proper consistency for the ink so it will facilitate painting and then printing. It should be the consistency of sour cream.
2. Painting the image. With one color and a brush or soft rag we can paint directly onto the plexiglass (the additional approach). With an inked roller we can cover the plexiglass in one color. Then we can remove the ink in some area with a rag.
3. Some do's and don'ts
 - Be careful to wipe out areas entirely before repainting in the same area.
 - It is preferable to use one color at first so that the processes of additive and subtractive approach are emphasized.
 - Rags are good substitutes for brushes.
 - The time element is important. Work fast, you don't want the paint to dry.
4. Printing the image. When the image is satisfactorily completed, we place the paper over the painted plexi (the paper can be dampened if it is heavy) Also, 100% rag paper is best, undampened rice paper is good. With a clean roller lightly apply pressure against the back of the paper, the image will be transferred that way.

5th DEMONSTRATION—ADDING POP UPS AND COLLAGE TO PRINTING

A. Objectives

1. To incorporate this technique with printmaking methods.

2. To increase the ways to use space for the print.
- B. Materials scissors, rulers, pencils bristol board matting knives

C. Explanation of process. This is a non printmaking demonstration. It needs additional explanation to be handed out. (Page 96) Three folding paper methods will be demonstrated. During the demo we will practice the paper folding, and not add printmaking techniques until each student has done a folding technique. Later, techniques of folding and printmaking will be integrated.

(figure available in print form)

The next effort is to adapt the readings for a piece of visual art. Until this point, we have made an effort to design both lessons and readings as a basis of deriving appropriate responses from the students. The themes were chosen by reviewing the books carefully and selecting which were the most prevalent subjects. Donald Hall, for example, in his eagerness to spread his own enthusiasm, makes a selection of the best poetry that will appeal to young people. The same with the short fiction anthology. The first group of readings are handed out. The students are instructed to choose one reading which they will read aloud and then use for their print. Reading the literature aloud is the first step in eliciting responses from the students about meaning and sounds. How do they first respond? Do they respond to the experience, to the setting, or to the mood? In the first group of readings, Kipling's *Just So Stories*, the animals and their relationships are important. In the story by Kipling called, *How the Camel Got His Hump*, there are four animals, an ox, a dog, a horse, and a camel. They are concerned about the camel's laziness. Each one can be described through their relationship with the other. They can also be interpreted through color and shape. In the first group of writings, keeping the methods simple along with the writings is important. Learning techniques in printmaking allow emphasis to be placed on the job of integrating both literature and art.

Making the art requires other awareness. Another means of interpreting literature into art is by way of sound. When the poems are read aloud, the students become acquainted with the sounds of the words. Their response is subconscious and they begin to relate to the written work that way. The artwork is often based on responses that the sounds evoke. The readings are chosen with regard to appealing to all the senses. This includes the visual capacity for sight, the hearing capacity for sound, the sense of smell and the sense of touch. Let us examine some poems where the words are used to elicit sensory responses. William Carlos Williams has a great capacity to elicit visual responses through sound. In the poem, *so much depends . . .* Williams emphasizes the importance of the visual response in the first line of the poem. This line insists on the importance of what is to follow. To isolate the following three lines—by pass and spaces—is to emphasize the singularity of the individual units and draw closer attention to the redness of the wheelbarrow, to the wetness of the rain, to the whiteness of the chickens. The poem's arrangement releases sounds which grant us a pleasure in sight, in seeing red, rain, and white. Then too, the sounds give pleasure to the mouth. The "w" sounds against the hard consonant sounds make the mouth feel like a musical instrument when saying, wheel barrow, "rain water", and "white chickens".

Other poems by Williams which evoke the senses include *Nantucket* and *this is just to say* both in the Hall volume. *The Snow Man* by Wallace Stevens is about sound and sight. *Sea Rose* by Hilda Doolittle is about touch and smell. Combining the "pop ups with these poems could be useful to emphasize the images.

Finally, let's compare two narrative prose poems for their interpretations of death. We will then see how differently they lend themselves to artistic interpretation. One is called, "A Dead Seal Near McClure's Beach," by Robert Bly. This is a real experience. It is about the poet's encounter with a seal who is struggling for life and finally succumbing to death. The other poem by Russell Edson is, "Bringing a Dead Man Back to Life." It has the macabre about it and the unreal. In terms of form, the first poem is told in two paragraphs to designate two single days in time. The second one is broken by phrases which seem disjointed. In Bly's poem, the theme of death is conveyed through natural description; the seal lies in his natural environment on the beach and his death is a gradual return to the world he knows. Bly uses prose for the details of the world, yet like a poem he leaps across spaces of thought to see inside things. In Russell Edson's poem, he reveals the most fearsome elements about death. The dead man is anything but in his element. He is floundered around at a country fair or a round of night parties. He is not relating to a real life environment. He is a skeleton wearing society's tragic mask. The poets convey two different interpretations. How can we interpret the two poems in regard to space? The Bly poem has a good deal of order and balance, while the "Dead Man" is erratic and unbalanced. Working with the whole space of the paper gives a different sense of order than concentrating the image to the center. Other means of conveying order are through variations of light and dark. Less contrast affords less drama. Changes in size can give more movement and depth.

The element of time allotted to each theme is two weeks. At first, with the newness of printmaking techniques, the receptive adaptation to the written material may be slow. Primary colors are used. Black is not introduced. Growth in the technical abilities is very individual. Sometimes the creative drive to interpret literature is stronger than the skill will allow, but the irregularity of the print can sometimes enhance the end result.

The plan to divide the semester into seven themes is purposeful. It allows enough time for the students to digest the readings and translate them into art. It allows them the opportunity to work with the techniques until a complete print is made or until two versions are complete. They must read all the readings before they make their choices. The outline of themes and readings follow:

THEME I CHILDREN'S FANTASY

Texts— *Alice In Wonderland* by Louis Carroll
Scholastic Book Services, N.Y.C.
Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
McMillan London Ltd.
Wynken, Blynken and Nod by Eugene Field
Hastings House Publishers

READING page WRITER

How the Camel Got his

Hump 15 Rudyard Kipling

The Sing Song of old Man

Kangaroo 79 Rudyard Kipling

The Elephant’s Child 59 Rudyard Kipling

How the Leopard Got his

Spots 42 Rudyard Kipling

Wynken, Blynken &

Nod Eugene Field

Down the Rabbitt Hole 5 Lewis Carroll

A Pool of Tears 16 Lewis Carroll

A Mad tea-Party 78 Lewis Carroll

The Mock Turtle’s Story 107 Lewis Carroll

TEXTS FOR THE FOLLOWING SIX PARTS OF THE UNIT ARE:

A. FOR SHORT STORIES: *THE NORTON ANTHOLOGY OF SHORT FICTION* R. V. CASSILL

B. FOR POETRY: *TO READ POETRY* DONALD HALL

THEME II: LIFE & DEATH

POETRY page WRITER

Spring and all 243 William Carlos Williams

The Dead Seal Near

McClure’s Beach 99 Robert Bly

Home Burial 140 Robert Frost

Bringing a Dead Man

Back to Life 200 Russell Edson

I heard a Fly buzz

When I died 232 Emily Dickenson

Proust’s Madeleine 56 Kenneth Rexroth

Merlin 347 Geoffrey Hill

We Real Cool 295 Gwendolyn Brooks

Spring and Fall 226 Gerard Hopkins

To an Athlete dying Young 227 A. E. Houseman

The pasture 140 Robert Frost

SHORT FICTION

Barn Burning 439 William Faulkner

Bliss 964 Katherine Mansfield

Rocking Horse Winner 869 D.H. Lawrence

THEME III. NATURE

Nantucket 27 William Carlos Williams

Above Pate Valley Gay Snyder

Birches Robert Frost

After Apple Picking 143 Robert Frost
Sea Rose 247 H.D.
The Snow Man 239 Wallace Stevens
The Rain 312 Robert Creeley
Reapers 261 Jean Toomer
Voyages 265 Hart Crane
October 306 Denise Levertov
Paring the Apple 323 Charles Tomlinson

SHORT FICTION

Kew Gardens 1519 Virginia Woolf
Hills like White Elephants 641 Ernest Hemingway

THEME IV. PEOPLE AND PLACES

Chicago 237 Carl Sandburg
That is just to say 243 William Carlos Williams
Marriage 343 Gregory Corso
A man writes to a part of Himself 312 Robert Bly

For My Mother;

Genevieve Jules Creeley 313 Robert Creeley
In the Suburbs 309 Louis Simpson
Careers 353 Imamu Ameri Barak
Virgo Descending 356 Charles Wright
Poem 358 Tom Clark
Mr. Bleaney 302 Philip Larkin
Aubade 303 Philip Larkin

The River Merchant's Wife,

A letter 245 Ezra Pound

Short Fiction

Sonny's Blues 16 James Baldwin
Bartleby the Scrivener 1031 Herman Melville

THEME V. ANIMALS

The Flower fed Buffalos 238 Vachel Lindsay
The owl 238 Edward Thomas
The Groundhog 270 Edward Eberhart
The Bear 325 Galway Kinnell
The Heaven of Animals 304 James Dickey
The Fish 282 Elizabeth Bishop
The Wild Geese 354 Wendell Berry
The first Dags 329 James Wright
Lobsters in the Window 322 W.D. Snodgrass
Still, Citizen Sparrow 301 Richard Wilbur

Short Fiction

The Bear 454 William Faulkner
 Heart of Darkness Joseph Conrad
 In a prominent Bar
 in Secaucus One Day 334 X.J. Kennedy
 On the debt my mother
 Owed to Sears Roebuck 332 Edward Dorn
 April Inventory 321 W. D. Snodgrass
 Salami 329 Philip Levine
 next to of course god, america 260 e. e. Cummings
 The Emperor of Ice-
 Cream 239 Wallace Stevens
 The Love Song of J.
 Alfred Prufrock 251 T. S. Eliot
 Why I am not a Painter 320 Frank O'Hara
 Counting the Mad 310 Donald Justice
 Walt Whitman at Bear Mountain 309 Louis Simpson
 The Dover Bitch; A criticism of Life 305 Anthony Hecht

Short Fiction

Rape Fantasies 8 Margaret Atwood
 The Owl Who was God xxvi James Thurber

THEME VII. SPORTS, RELIGION & PATRIOTISM

A Deserter 260 Charles Reznikoff
 Poem, or beauty hurts 259 e.e. Cummings
 Mr. Vinal America 316 Allen Ginsberg
 Poems for Black Re-location Centers 352 Etheridge Knight
 Watergate 353 Imamu Amiri Baraka
 To an Athlete dying Young 227 A. E Houseman
 Dulce et Decorum Est 258 Wilfred Owen
 On the Move 333 Thom Gunn
 Ode to the Confederate Dead 617 Allen Tate
 The Man He Killed 224 Thomas Hardy

Short Fiction

Young Goodman Brown 617 Nathaniel Hawthorne
 Coach 1298 Mary Robison

RESOURCES

I. Bibliography for Teachers

Berger, John. *About Looking*. New York: (1st American Ed.), Pantheo Books, 1980.

Steiner, Wendy. *Images & Code, Ernest H. Gombrich* . Ann Arbor Michigan: Horace H. Rackham School of Grad. Studies, 1981.

Williams, William Carlos. *Imaginations* . New York: New Directions, 1970.

II. Reading List for Students:

Cassill, R.V. *Norton Anthology of Short Fiction* . New York: Norton & Company, 3rd edition.

Hall, Donald, *To Read Poetry* . New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1983.

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland* . New York: Scholastic Book Services.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Just So Stories* . London: Macmillan, Ltd., 1980.

Field, Eugene. *Wynken Blynken & Nod* . New York: Hastings House.

III. Materials for Classroom Use:

Gauguin, Paul. *Noa, Noa, Voyages to Tahiti* . London: Reynal & Co.

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