

The Art of Storytelling

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Independent Project
ARE 6148: Curriculum in Teaching Art
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Unit: The Art of Storytelling

Unit Overview:

Throughout the ages, human beings have been storytellers. We have developed language, originally in pictographs, for this very purpose: to communicate a message or story to our peers. This unit focuses on storytelling and how it is portrayed in the visual arts. Students will learn how artists represent various aspects of story in their work. The goal of this unit is for students to think about story and its significance to human culture and how artists portray story both literally and metaphorically through visual images.

Target Grade Level:

High School

Overarching Understandings and Key Concepts:

1. Storytelling is an important aspect of human culture, both historically and presently.
2. While writers portray story through verbal language, artists represent story through images.
3. Story can be expressed visually.

Essential Questions:

1. Why are stories important to society?
2. What kind of stories do people tell?
3. How can stories reflect ideas or moments in time?
4. How can language create visual imagery?
5. How does a visual image tell a story?

Students will be able to:

1. Recognize story in artwork.
2. Create story in their own artwork.
3. Understand the importance of storytelling in society.

Lesson 1: A Moment in Time

Introduction:

Students will study how a work of art can visually capture the story of a moment in time. Discussion questions include: How does a single image tell a larger story? How does previous knowledge of the setting of an artwork affect the interpretation of the piece? How can people create their own stories in a work of art? How do artists use medium and principles of design to convey their story?

Sunshine Standards:

1. Skills and Techniques: Standard 1: The student understands and applies media, techniques, and processes.
2. Creation and Communication: Standard 1: The student creates and communicates a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts.
3. Cultural and Historical Connections: Standard 1: The student understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture.
4. Aesthetic and Critical Analysis: Standard 1: The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.

Lesson Objectives:

Students will be able to recognize a larger story behind a single image, understand the context of a piece of work based on the still image and create their own work of capturing a particular moment of time using principles of design and watercolor techniques.

Tools and Materials:

Sketchbooks, graphite, eraser, watercolors, watercolor paper, set of 3 to 4 brushes of varying sizes, photographs or images of a significant event in the student's life.

Introduction:

Introduce key pieces of art in history that capture a story in their imagery. Introduce Norman Rockwell's *Jo Seated on the Old Sofa*. What do the students see? Do they know who this woman is? If not, what do they think about her? What is she doing and why? This is actually a story about a story. Rockwell is depicting Jo from Louisa May Alcott's famous book, *Little Women*. How does this knowledge of the subject change the story that students sense from the piece? How does this piece reflect the story of what is happening in the novel it represents? Jo is an avid writer, spending much of her childhood in her attic writing stories. These facets of the story are depicted in the details of Rockwell's image.

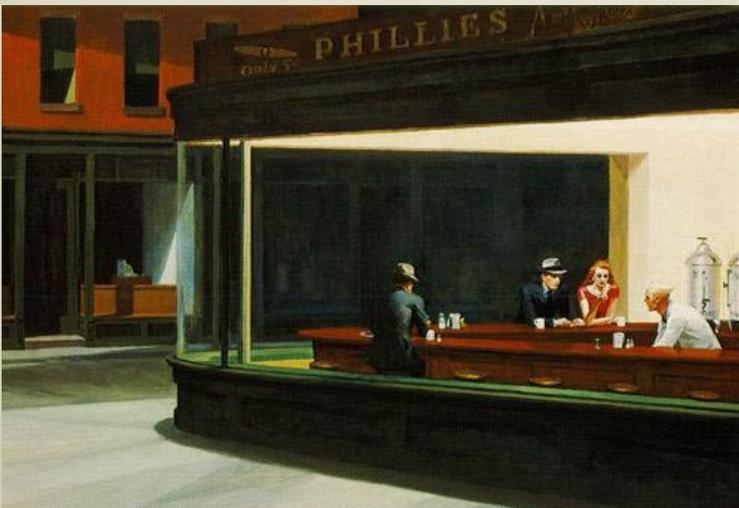
Introduce Edouard Manet's *The Bar at the Folies Bergere*. What do students see in this image? What is going on in this bar? The bar matron appears to be in a conversation with us, the viewer. What could we have been talking about? Does she seem happy, tired or bored?

Introduce Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*. This painting, in contrast to Rockwell's, does not have a specific narrative in its purpose. However, its use of empty spaces and stark lighting effects can create feelings of isolation or loneliness in many. Does this make the students wonder what is happening in the painting? If they were to step inside it, what would the patrons of the diner be talking about?

Introduce Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*. Without considering any previous knowledge of this photograph, what could possibly be going on? Now, considering its context, what does this single image tell us about the Great Depression and those affected by it?

Process:

1. After introducing works by Manet, Rockwell, Hopper, Lange and the stories behind their images, have the students think about stories in their own lives. This can be a special, particular event, or day to day activities.
2. Have the students bring in a photograph or take a photograph of one of the events or activities they came up with in their own lives.
3. The students will then write a brief narrative about this story in their sketchbook.
4. Students should also sketch in their sketchbooks in graphite thumbnail drawings of this activity.
5. Teach basic watercolor techniques. Include composition, shading and basic elements of design that students should be familiar with.
6. Have each student choose their favorite story composition from their thumbnails and draw it on a larger sheet of watercolor paper.
7. Apply watercolor techniques to complete their narrative paintings.
8. Once students are finished, display their paintings and have each student discuss their narrative and how they portrayed it in their finished piece.



Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks*.

Assessment:

Formative: Monitor student discussions of the four featured artists as well as their discussions about their personal narrative paintings. Monitor work in progress from essay writing to sketches and painting.

Summative: Assess final paintings from a rubric based on understanding of the narrative assignment, understanding of design elements and effort towards learning watercolor techniques, taking into consideration that this could be a new medium for many.

Artists:

Edouard Manet, Norman Rockwell, Edward Hopper, Dorothea Lange

References:

“Telling Stories: Norman Rockwell from the Collections of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg.” Smithsonian American Art Museum. Oct. 2010.

<<http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/tellingstories/>>.

“The Bar at the Folies Bergere.” Edouard Manet the Complete Works. Oct. 2010.

<<http://www.manetedouard.org/The-Bar-at-the-Folies-Bergere-1882.html>>.

Edward Hopper. Oct. 2010. <<http://www.edwardhopper.info/>>.

“Nighthawks.” Edward Hopper. Oct. 2010. <<http://www.edwardhopper.info/Nighthawks.html>>.

“Dorothea Lange.” The History Place. Oct. 2010.

<<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/lange/index.html>>.

The Art of Storytelling. Oct. 2020. <<http://www.artofstorytelling.org/>>.

Lesson 2: Illustrating a Story

Introduction:

Students will study how artists can illustrate pieces of a narrative and work with other types of storytellers such as writers. Discussion questions include: How can artists and writers work together in telling a story? How can words create images in the imagination? How can artists create a visual image from a story?

Sunshine Standards:

1. Skills and Techniques: Standard 1: The student understands and applies media, techniques, and processes.
2. Creation and Communication: Standard 1: The student creates and communicates a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas using knowledge of structures and functions of visual arts.
3. Cultural and Historical Connections: Standard 1: The student understands the visual arts in relation to history and culture.
4. Aesthetic and Critical Analysis: Standard 1: The student assesses, evaluates, and responds to the characteristics of works of art.
5. Applications to Life: Standard 1: The student makes connections between the visual arts, other disciplines, and the real world

Lesson Objectives:

Students will learn how to derive visual images from narratives and create images to tell a story. Students will understand the significance of a piece of art to its corresponding story. Additionally, students will understand the aesthetics of illustration styles and how to employ pen and ink techniques to create these styles using hatching, cross hatching and stippling.

Tools and Materials:

Sketchbooks, graphite, eraser, micron pens, drawing paper

Introduction:

Study illustrations or visual representations associated with common stories. Introduce John Tenniel's illustrations of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. Most students may be familiar with this story and its characters and some may also recognize Tenniel's illustrations. Consider the well-known image of Alice gazing up at the Cheshire Cat. The text of this scene reads, "The Cat only grinned when it saw Alice. It looked good-natured, she thought: still it had very long claws and a great many teeth, so she felt that it ought to be treated with respect." How does the Tenniel image reflect what is happening in this narrative? The cat is grinning with its many teeth and Alice is poised politely in conversation. Additionally, how is this image stylistically different than the paintings we have studied? Tenniel used a wood-block printing technique, which must employ hatching and stippling in order to create form and shading.



John Tenniel, from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

Introduce the works of John R. Neill. His illustrations for the Oz series employ similar techniques as Tenniel and relay similar types of narration. Neill, however, often uses pen and ink techniques. Compare and contrast these drawings to the prints of Tenniel.

Look briefly at Edvard Eriksen's mermaid statue in Copenhagen. In contrast to illustrators studied, Eriksen uses three dimensional sculpture to represent the story of the famous fairy tale, *The Little Mermaid*. How has he conveyed this story? How does the representation of a famous story vary between the two very different mediums?

Last, introduce a contemporary artist, Mary GrandPré, illustrator of the world famous Harry Potter books. How does she employ techniques of past illustrators to bring to life a very well-known story? How has illustration changed?

Process:

1. Have the students choose passages the before mentioned books or fairy tales, specifically those passages that do not have illustrations accompanying them.
2. In their own words, students will describe what is happening in their chosen passage. What details create a setting in their mind? They should write these notes down in their sketchbooks.
3. Break into small groups and discuss these passages with their peers.
4. In their notebooks, sketch ideas that came to mind during writing and discussion processes that represent their passage of story.
5. Introduce micron pens and how to use them to employ stippling and hatching techniques to build form and shading.
6. On drawing paper, illustrate their chosen passage from one of the books using pen and ink techniques.
7. On small sheets of paper, have the student write down verbatim their passage. Do not put their names on the paper, and hand them to the teacher.
8. Display the finished drawings.
9. Pass out the papers with the book passages on them anonymously so that no student has his or her own passage and have each student match the narrative with the illustration.
10. Once this activity is complete, lead a discussion about how the students have illustrated their narratives.

Assessment:

Formative: Monitor class discussions, writings and work in progress as students are sketching ideas.

Summative: Assess final drawings with a rubric based on understanding of narrative illustration, craft, use of materials and understanding of illustration design.

Artists:

John Tenniel, John R. Neill, Mary GrandPré, Edvard Eriksen

References:

Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*. New York. International Collectors Library.

Baum, L. Frank. *Ozma of Oz*. New York. Ballantine Books. 1907.

Baum, L. Frank. *The Emerald City of Oz*. New York. Ballantine Books. 1910.

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York. Scholastic. 1997.

John Tenniel. Oct. 2010. <<http://www.johntenniel.com/>>.

John R. Neill. Oct. 2010. <<http://www.johnrneill.net/intro.html>>.

The Little Mermaid. The Partnership of Sculptor Edvard Eriksen's Heirs. Oct. 2010. <<http://www.mermaidsculpture.dk/>>.

GrandPré. Oct. 2010. <<http://www.marygrandpre.com/>>.



John Tenniel, from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

Lesson 3: Book Cover

Introduction:

Students will learn how the representation of story can be applied to the purposes of creating book covers in today's society. Discussion questions include: How exactly does a cover say about a book? How can an image on the cover of a book represent the story within it? How are designers important in continuing to tell the story of a book? What roles have books and their stories played within our society?

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4. Applications to Life: Standard 1: The student makes connections between the visual arts, other disciplines, and the real world

Lesson Objectives:

Students will understand a practical purpose in creating visual narrative. The cover of a book is in many ways an advertisement for the content of that book. Students will understand how an artist's role is important to reflect the story to the public. Additionally, students will learn basic techniques on Adobe products such as Photoshop and Illustrator, basic rules of typography and elements of design.

Tools and Materials:

Sketchbooks, Adobe Create Suite, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie

Introduction:

To begin this lesson and use the knowledge students have gained thus far on visually representing story in artwork, have each student bring in their favorite book cover. Students should choose a book based on how well the cover visually represents the story inside. Break the students into small groups to discuss their choices and why they feel the cover is strongly designed in accordance with the story.

Process:

1. Once students have gotten to thinking about book covers and their designs, have them read *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* by Salman Rushdie. This is a fairly short children's novel and should not take too long. Students should keep in mind the visual elements that make up this story as they are reading it.
2. Once the story has been read, brainstorm the visual elements important to this story in the student's sketchbooks.
3. Brainstorm as a class the various visual elements the students came up with.
4. Have the students write a brief synopsis of Haroun. This will be used for their back covers.
5. Introduce the tools on Adobe Create Suite that designers would use to create book covers. Talk about titles and text and rule of threes for font usage.
6. Students will then create their own book covers, front, back and spine, of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* that represent the book based on their knowledge of storytelling, the source material and elements of design.
7. Once students have completed their projects, display each one and have the students write a brief essay on a book cover other than their own and how it portrays the story of *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*.



Tammy Warner, book design project on *Last Chance to See* by Douglas Adams.

Assessment:

Formative: Monitor class discussions about their favorite book covers, brainstorming sessions from their reading and work in progress.

Summative: Assess final projects with a rubric based on craft, understanding of the assignment, portrayal of story using visual design, progress and effort in learning Adobe Create Suite. Assess brief final essay with a rubric based on ability to look critically at other artworks and understanding of storytelling through visual art.

Artists:

Students will bring in their own artists to discuss

References:

Rushdie, Salman. *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*. New York. Penguin. 1990.

“Another Dangerous Story From Salman Rushdie.” *The New York Times*. Oct. 2010.
<<http://www.nytimes.com/books/99/04/18/specials/rushdie-haroun.html>>.

As a result of this unit, students will know:

1. How artists reflect story in their work.
2. The significance of story in human culture.
3. Art presents story visually.

As a result of this unit, students will be able to:

1. Understand story in visual artwork.
2. Represent and create story in their own work.

Teaching strategies:

1. Present and discuss artists that demonstrate story in their work.
2. Share resources, books and websites that support these artists.
3. Encourage questions and discussions about storytelling and art.
4. Share new mediums and ideas to coincide with big ideas.

