

An Exercise in Creativity through Story and Community

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Introduction

“When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking.” — Albert Einstein

I find Einstein’s words above to be very true of myself, and my method of thinking. I have always been creatively inclined by natural disposition. It has been in the past five years that I have discovered how to truly utilize my creative thinking skills. The last year and a half of my life has changed my state of mind and current understandings. I have transitioned from being a learner-thinker to a teaching-learner. As a student, or learner-thinker, I was strictly open for intake of new ideas and concepts different from my own. Now transitioned to the teaching-learner I am expressing all knowledge that I have collected over my entire life, as well as taking in more insights and ideas daily from my students. I view my position as an art educator as a quest to never stop learning and sharing my knowledge. In this switch from college student to full-time teacher I have been able to watch as my education files itself permanently into different corners of my brain. In August 2013 I accepted my current position as the art teacher at William B. Keene Elementary in Newark, Delaware. I uprooted the 23 years of Main Line Pennsylvania ties and moved to New Castle County Delaware. The culture shock has been quite interesting.

I walked into this adventure in the oral tradition with an open mind and a creative thinking process. Along the way my students and their needs were always the forethought as I explore these new ideas. It is not without severe mental struggle that I have finally arrived at this current endeavor. I struggled to find the one concept that would help my students the most.

Keene Elementary is located in Newark, DE. Contrary to its suburban home, Keene is a Title-1 school, meaning a high percentage of our population is of unstable or struggling financial means. The students come from a drastic range of lifestyles and situations. Some life realities that my students are forced to live with includes: managing personal hygiene alone, coming home to an empty house, living in a shelter and not having food outside of school. All of these realities come into view when my students arrive at my classroom door. Serving grades K-5, the staff gives their all to accommodate the many students. Averaging 700 plus students a year, Keene is a bustling hive of education,

socialization, and culture. Each team of core classroom educators works diligently to meet the individual needs of each student. The mix of economic and cultural backgrounds proves to be stressful on student and staff alike.

Rationale

I have the exciting benefit of being the art teacher. As the art teacher, my time is limited to once a week with my students, due to scheduling. I am one of the few teachers who will be actively involved with each student for the six years they are at Keene. My classes are my chance to create an atmosphere of freedom and creative thinking for years to come. My goal is to sculpt an environment where my students will know they are free to think and peruse their ideas. Far too often I see my students crush their own creativity or ideas because they fear criticism from their peers, when often the idea is brilliant. There will always be a desire to be “cool” or fit in with the crowd, but that too often assimilates to the art and creative thinking ability of my students. I have seen first hand a days worth of work be erased and a mediocre version turned in. Why does this happen?

Aside from peer situations, I have noticed a population struggling with “outside of the box” thinking. Students are lacking the ability to fabricate ideas and find solutions. In discussing this coincidence with several other teachers, we noticed that there is rarely a reason for students to fabricate their own ideas. In today’s classrooms, students are tested and stressed to be correct or incorrect; everything is black and white. They are missing the opportunity to develop their own theories and answers, always having multiple choices presented to them. I have seen students ask questions that are easy to answer themselves. I account the availability of technology as a partial reason; along with the fast paced lifestyle these children lead. There is no reason to come up with solution when there is an already existing idea five minutes away on the Internet.

Through my research and professional development in my field, I have chosen to follow a new trend in art education: “choice”. Choice based art education is manifesting itself as a valid method of instruction. The focus of my new curriculum will be on the mental process of art and creativity, as opposed to the production of art. My classroom will be open for children to choose what medium to work with and when to use it. It helps to view one’s creativity as a muscle, instead of a mental process. This style of teaching will increase two abilities within my students, creativity and visual literacy. Just like lifting weights makes you stronger, behaving creatively makes you more creative. Visual literacy is a critical thinking ability that allows for the meaning and use of images to be used and understood fluently.¹ Visual literacy today is an imperative skill for children who are bombarded with constant imagery. It is even more important that I teach it in school because the socio-economic status of many of my students suggests that they lack the opportunity to fully develop their own visual literacy. The Toledo Museum of Art states “...if you're a child from a lower income family, you have been read to on average about 100 hours by the age of five, but if you are from an upper-income or middle-income family you've been read to over 1,000 hours by the age of five, so you're

are ten times more advantaged going to school. Visual literacy is essential because we need to be able to construct meaning to make sense of everything that we see.”ⁱⁱ I need to work with my students on increasing their visual literacy up to the level at which they see images in their mind. To these 21st century students living in an image-saturated world without proper visual literacy ability is like living in a foreign land, being able to speak a language but not read or write it. Students today are bombarded by images everywhere they turn; most of these images are designed to influence them, mostly to sell a product. My goal is to help my students read and extract the images they see quickly and effectively. Visualization in the brain is a skill that needs to stay honed. I have found that children are lacking in their own created mental images because there is always a prescribed image for them to reference. The prescribed images have been designed to accomplish a goal and often appear in the mind of the thinker with certain connotations left over from advertising. To increase the creativity level of my students, I want to help them build a strong visualization in their mind, so they can see and test out ideas before committing to them in the world around them.

This school year my focus will be to establish a community where each student understands that they can have their own questions and opinions. I aim to expose my students to the endless world of art through their own ideas. It is this exposure that will fill in the gaps. I can easily see those who have never been exposed to markers before, and those who don't know how to use paint. Once this community has been established and is trusted, I can work with my students on a higher level.

A very important part of art is being able to present your ideas. Many of my older students encounter stage fright when I ask them to get up in front of the room to explain their idea. The fear of being in front of a group has not yet manifested itself in the mind of a kindergartener, and by using story telling in my classroom, hopefully it never will.

Where does the concept of story come in? Story is going to do three things for my classroom: aid in improving creativity, help students develop their visualization skills, and build a community.

“(T)he oral tradition-stories told aloud-goes right back to the tribe and it's communal life. When children become a community of listeners, they lay aside their own egocentricity and become a tribe.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Story Telling

Story telling has been used for centuries as a means of entertainment, to share information, to teach morals and more. Through the use of story, character, and costume, students will assume new roles, play on their strengths and secretly be able to test out their questions. The fairy tale style is the flagship of my story-based exercise in creativity. Historically used for thousands of years as an educational necessity, the fairy

tale is the perfect fit for my classroom and students. What is more exciting than goblins, witches, dragons and giants?

My overall idea is to capitalize on the natural story telling of my students' minds and the aesthetic distance that story creates. I need to provide my students with a community-style learning environment, which will foster their individual and group catharsis, breaking down inhibitions and paving the road for freedom of creativity. Aesthetic distance is a frame of reference where the artist creates a gap between the viewer and reality.^{iv} I have seen this gap create a sense of confidence and security among students and their peers. It is a "puppet" for students to express their thoughts and opinions about something without the pressure or judgment, without being directly tied to it personally.

The idea of catharsis is something very attainable for children: "using the concept of catharsis is to suggest that it can be useful to understand the structure of the private and public behavior of children watching a play: it provides an opportunity to share one's feelings within a protected environment at an artistic event and among peers."^v I have previously witnessed the moment in a child's discovery which Schonmann discusses in his book *Theatre as a Medium for Children and Young People: Images and Observations*. It is this moment that I am seeking to craft my community. To develop emotional understanding of classroom situations, student need to first understand their emotions. The idea of teaching, or rather the inability to teach, emotions to children has been addressed through story historically. With story children can identify with characters and use them to synthesize their emotions. The book *Stories in the classroom: storytelling, reading aloud, and role-playing with children* discusses several ideas of using story to "teach" emotion. The author states that stories help students gain a better understanding of their emotions and reactions. Characters help an individuals understand the complexity of emotions through expression Teaching children emotion is impossible because the child needs to discover their emotions inside themselves.^{vi}

In a choice-based classroom, the opportunities present themselves. When a student begins to tell a story, whether it is real life or fiction, my job as a teacher will be to provide those students with other examples of the same type of stories. Such stories as *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, *The Grouchy Ladybug*, and more hold so much relative potential as students make their own characters and work through similar plot lines. We will look at the characters, how they developed, and what they did to overcome their situations.

The book *Harold and the Purple Crayon* is a new age fairy tale about creating and imagining. In the book, Harold draws himself into the plot line he is making up as he goes along. Starting with a simple setting, and elaboration on it, Harold adds spur of the moment decisions to his story. Having to draw his way out of precarious situations, Harold is a character, which children can relate to; problem solving is skill that requires creativity and quick thinking. By listening to my students' tales and working with them, I can keep my students' minds active and creative. "A great deal of children's play is

performance art in which they star... art can be about adding oneself to the object world, providing not just movement and voices to any figure, but investing art with oneself.”^{vii}

An excerpt from a recent book I read about learner directed art education. Using story and assuming characters is a natural part of children’s play, by encouraging this behavior I aim to help children access their creativity, think independently, problem solve and get the most out of the art room, as a community.

Fairy Tales

The fairy tale is one of the most ancient teaching tools. In ancient Egypt the fairy tale was used to educate the children of royalty. In ancient India students of the priesthood would listen to stories for moral guidance. During the Middle Ages, fairytales were adapted to follow religious agendas and were use in church sermons.^{viii}

There is much debate about a finite origin of the fairy tale structure, most of which diverges from the differences in the two schools of thought: oral tradition and literary evidence. The oral tradition of story telling outdates written language by thousands or years. The stories of cultures were passed down from storyteller to audience via entertainment and educational settings. Ancient stories are still rather well known today, due to their structure and lure. These stories are *The Two Brothers*, which dates to ancient Egypt, *Gilgamesh*- from Babylonia, and *The Argonauts*- of ancient Greece.^{ix}

There is a strong tie between fairy tales and Germany, any decent web search of fairy tale is sure to land you on something Germanic. German folklore follows fairy tale structure quite often. The märchen is a German fairy tale style. Märchen often start off with phrases such as “once upon a time” and have no definitive time of origin or existence. The characters in the story are often of the lower class and the plots deal with drastic situations. The plot line on marchen reflects the society of their origin, often matriarchal and agrarian. The main character is almost always poor financially and or socially. Märchen are naturally of the oral tradition but various people have transcribed many into literature. Two of the most well know are the Grimm brothers of *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*.

The Grimm brothers were born in Hanau, Germany toward the later end of the 18th century. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were the oldest of 6 children. Five of the children were boys, and one girl. They were born into a German Calvinist household, which was strong and sober. Their father died when the boys were 11 years old, leaving the brothers to assume family roles, their life and upbringing was far from lavish. Later, the boys were granted admittance to the University of Marburg to study law, while dealing with the economical discrimination. Soon after attending the university the brothers became librarians in the Margrave Castle, this was a very definitive time. Caught up in the German Romanticists movement of the time, the brothers explored their native folklore. They focused on recording, literarily, and the oral story tradition of their local.

In seminar we reviewed *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, discussing similarities of plot lines, mapping against the dramatic structure graph, and searched for other cultures versions of the same stories. The stories were very useful as we discussed fairy tales' ability to create community and teach a lesson. Professor Reidel describes fairy tales structure as journey from darkness into light.

The Oral Tradition

The oral tradition is the first and most well known form of human communication. Having deeper meaning than just civilian conversation, the oral tradition refers to the oral to aural passing of knowledge, story telling, and passing of ideas. For thousands of years, the oral tradition was the only means of communication, until literacy developed, but written language is a mere recent inventions when contrasting to oral communication.

What is known about the oral tradition is not from written documents, because otherwise it would be literary history. All formal knowledge has been derived from first-hand interactions and observations from primitive peoples who depend on oral communication.^x The work of Folklorist and Anthropologist has derived that the ancient storyteller had highly systematic ways of expressing emotion, standardized story structures. The systems and structures used orally were an aide to help the storyteller memorized the many vast tales that they told. Today the story style/structure holds traces of the performers technique, movements, mind set, and motive. The telling or singing of stories can be traced to aboriginal cultures, which use verses called song lines to navigate the Australian landscape. In the United States, patrons and keepers of the under ground railroad used song to send messages and directions to slaves wishing to escape. Communicating orally through structured song or story is well woven into history.

Dramatic Structure

In seminar we spent a lot of time devoted to studying dramatic structure. We discussed the traditional bell-curve style structure and how it is not the most accurate theory. Professor Reidel asked us to adopt a new style structure, one that is modeled after Aristotle's theory of dramatic structure. This new structure is more accurate to describe what makes a good story. The introduction leads us into the story with a little bit about the characters. Quickly following the intro is the inciting incident, the first problem; this is what keeps the reader/listener interested. Following the inciting incident is the rising action. The rising action is the main chunk of the story. Video games are all rising action^{xi}; the game keeps building so the player never feels satisfied. The audience is kept in a state of tension as more and more happens to the characters. The story builds and builds until it cannot go further, and something must happen. The story has now reached a crisis, nothing more can build, something has to bust. The crisis is the moment when the character is at a turning point in the story. After crisis, the story climaxes, it bursts into the opposite direction. Once the climax is reached, there is a transition to the

resolution. The resolution ends the character's journey, and sends the audience home feeling fulfilled and content.

During seminar we discussed several styles of stories, including: myth, fairy tale, fable, epics and folk tales. We discussed the style of myth intensively, looking into Joseph Campbell's *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, and his idea of a "monomyth". Campbell takes the reader along his breakdown of every story ever; he categorizes the various journeys into several stages. The stages can be related to any heroic style story. See appendix?

Fairy Tale Structure

In order to be considered a fairy tale the story must meet a few qualifications. There is always some sort of journey involved. This journey can be from place to place, bad to good, transformation or epiphanies, etc. The journey is the course to which the reader/listener can follow and identify with. The sequence of events usually is as follows:

Bad situation ⇒ worsens ⇒ lowest low ⇒ magic/enchantment ⇒ things look up ⇒ happily ever after

I derived this organization of fairy tale structure to use in my classroom after viewing Kurt Vonnegut's lecture on the shapes of stories. In his lecture, Vonnegut covers a story shape he calls "man in a hole". This shape is plotted on an X/Y axis graph similar to a mathematic equation. The horizontal, or X axis, represents the time line of a story, beginning to ending. The vertical, or Y-axis, represents the move from ill fortune (bottom) to good fortune (top).^{xii} Fairy tales follow this same structure. The characters in a fairy tale are often not having great fortune to start, however it is sustainable, but their luck soon slides down toward ill fortune. Once the characters have reached the lowest low, then magic happens, and things turn upward. This style story is timeless; audiences are ever attracted to it.^{xiii}

There must be enchantment. All fairy tales have some sort of magical, supernatural, or enchanted elements, not limited to fairies alone. Some magical elements are often: personified animals, dragons, giants, goblins, and trolls. The use of enchantment is very commonly found in traditional fairy tales. Intertwined in the plot line is a moral or lesson for the listener to take with them. Fairy tales by origin were used to pass along important life lessons to children. The stories are designed to address the instinctual fears that are in children. The traditional use of magic in fairy tales still convey the same message, but today it achieves its goal under a different light.

Historically the fears of dragons, giants, goblins and etc. were very real in the eyes of children as a possible explanation for natural or strange occurrences. Today, however, children under modern thought are not necessarily afraid of the monsters in the stories.

Monsters, today, are used in the story so children can identify their own giants and dragons within their life and relate them to the plot line. “The child needs a personification for its anxieties and the dragons, giants, witches is etc. represent problems that the child has to come to grips with, and in the end overcome. It is the graphic nature of the fairy tale that makes it easy for children to grasp these lessons.”^{xiv}

Why use fairy tale in Art?

Nearly every fairy tale begins with a family or character in conflict, coping with conflict is a skill that every child needs to develop.^{xv} Fairy tales were solely made up to help educate children; they are easily relatable and comprehensible. It is the primal nature of the fairy tale that makes it the perfect medium to connect with students. The characters are metaphorically far enough away from the student that they don’t need to openly identify with them, yet the connection between “once upon a time” and real life is still attainable today. Every character in a fairy tale is the base line skeleton of people and their attributes. Characters are often designated with one major characteristic or personality, making it easy for children to identify them. If a character changes in the story from good to evil, or poor to rich, it is highlighted by enchantment, allowing for easy identification of transformation and what it took to change as a person.

Resolution

The resolution of the fairytale is what leaves the audience fulfilled and allows for new beginnings^{xvi} Fairytales allow children to identify emotion and witness their escalation and resolution. When all conflicts have been resolved through the story, the sense of catharsis begins to overcome the audience. Catharsis through the resolution of a story is the reason I chose to use fairytale in my classroom. The resolution will help my students vicariously live out their inhibitions and wonderings.

Strategies

Choice Philosophy- Individualized Learning

I run my classroom under the student centered choice-based system. Students are free to choose what they want to work on, how they are going to do it, and when it is finished. As the teacher I step in to show students images of artists or cultures, encourage work to continue, and share my thoughts on their ideas. During class, students are responsible to set up and break down their workspace. I have four main centers: drawing, painting, collage, and sculpture. The centers function as a base-camp for materials and techniques. The students have an array of supplies to express their idea. Each idea goes through what I call “ The Art Process”.

The art process is illustrated on a large poster for students to reference. Everything

begins as an idea, and then moves to the sketching stage. Students are encouraged to sketch for as long as they need to, to make their idea come across to the viewer. When finished sketching students are at “approval”, they must show their sketch to me and quickly explain it. This is when I grab my laptop and show students artist that relate to their drawings. After being approved students move onto layout, here they enlarge and finalize their sketch on quality paper with pencil. Now and only now, after they have thought, sketched, reviewed approval, and laid-out their design may students choose to use paint, marker, pastel, colored pencil, etc. After an artwork is finished students are at the feed back stage. During feedback, students are to ask a neighbor for their opinion of their artwork, and finally me as their teacher. If we decide the artwork is finished, students fill out a reflection form, a nametag, and display their artwork in the hallway. Then the process starts all over again.

I chose to design my classroom and teaching methods in this way after being confronted with the lack of personal voice and creativity within my student population. Students think up their own projects either outside of art class or during using one of the multiple helping stations. As their idea develops they create problems for themselves, sometimes I step in and offer help, other times I stay away and watch as they solve their self-created problem. This style of learning allows for children to develop their own methods of problem solving.

Elements and Principles

In the art room we study how to create interesting visual composition, construction techniques, symbolism, and aesthetics. I teach my students to break down their art and other images into the elemental form. In art there are two categories of visual construction. The elements of art are the building blocks of images. The elements can be assembled in any number of ways to create an image. All visual things can be broken down to the elements (Appendix B). In my art room students learn how and when to use color, line, form, shape, texture, and value. The arrangement and techniques of how these elements are used are the principles of design. The principles of design are methods of construction within an image. The main ones I focus on with elementary age students are balance, contrast, emphasis, proportion, rhythm, and unity. (Appendix B)

I teach all of the elements and principles to students as they come across a need for better understanding of a particular one. Due to the community environment of my classroom students often work along similar lines, and often need the same explanation of ideas. A quick conference with students as they work through their ideas and creativity helps refine their visualization skills. Visualization, or mental imagery is a skill that can be built. I address the challenge of increasing a student’s visualization through creative/critical thinking. When a student comes up with their own idea, it exists in their brain as the creator, not in mine as the teacher. It is up to the student to either illustrate with images or words to get their idea across to me for help. Mental imagery is very

familiar to most individuals, however some claim to rarely or never see images in their mind.^{xvii}

Visual Literacy

Mental imagery or visualization has been a human concept for thousand of years. Pre-scientific evidence of mental image and how human use it can be found in the writings of Aristotle.^{xviii} The concept is natural to the human brain. Aristotle refers to mental imagery as phantasma, and his study of it linked with the imagination is one of the first writing accounts of mental image.^{xix}

As an art educator I am constantly looking to increase the visual literacy of my students. “Visual literacy is the ability to construct meaning from images. It’s not a skill. It uses skills as a toolbox. It’s a form of critical thinking that enhances your intellectual capacity.”^{xx} By studying the elements and principles of art, my students gain a better understanding of how to be visually literate, and how to properly intake all the images around them. Teaching visual literacy is just as challenging as teaching other critical thinking skills, but it is absolutely possible. I address the Delaware state visual art standards in all that I do. The standards suggest that the elementary years are spend constructing a foundation of general understanding of the elements of art and principles of design, as well as exposing students to a range of cultures, artist, techniques, aesthetics, meaning making and more.

Activities

Each student will create his or her own fairy tale following dramatic and fairytale structure. This begins the exercise in creativity. Encourage students to make up something completely new. For students who struggle with this task, allowing the to use some sort of helper would be a smart idea. One such “helper” I use in my classroom is POP-sicle sticks. I have a jar of popsicle sticks with ideas on them; students pull sticks until something pops into their mind. One set of sticks is just for drawing, while the story sticks are divided into categories. Think of the sticks as a three-dimensional mad-lib, student pull ideas until they have a good fit. The fairytale pops are divided into four categories: setting, characters, character adjectives, and events/problems. Many more sections could easily be added. The setting section contains sticks that say things like underwater, outer space, in the refrigerator, under the couch. Students can pick more that one setting pop to create a very interesting place; i.e. “in the underwater refrigerator”.

Character and character adjective pops go together. The one needs the other to make the story interesting. In the character section there are pops that say man, woman, boy, girl, frog, owl, shark, plant, vacuum, and so on. Characters are not limited to the alive, or commonly personified subjects. Character adjectives can be smell, old, bald, young, rich, poor, evil; really any adjective will work. The goal or all these silly combinations is to

make the student visualize the story in their mind.

The events and problems section contains the crisis and resolution of the story. In this sections there are things like: lactose intolerance, the princes ball, no electricity, allergic to people, Fourth of July, birthday, car accident, winning the lottery... Students may choose a few pops to get their story rolling, but ultimately they should design their own story. These pops may only start a problem or finish it, but never both.

Once students have come up with a story, whether they used to pops or not, they will quickly write it down in their notes, focusing on each section of the dramatic structure. Once their basic idea is on paper they may proceed to choose from the following options.

Storyboard

The storyboard is technique used by animators and authors to visually display a sequence of event. To create a storyboard, students will first draw small frames on their paper, bigger paper works best. The frames should be no smaller that three inches square. The advantage of using the smaller frame is it allows the artist/student to focus on the whole scene, rather than just the character or detail. Each storyboard will have a frame for each part of dramatic structure; introduction, inciting incident, rising actions, crisis, climax, and resolution. The rising action section should have more that one frame, and any section may have more than one frame if needed. Students should focus on telling their story visually, without words. The storyboard should be a visual for the oral story telling. Each storyboard should be completed in pencil first, then in full color with the artist's choice of medium. Upon completion of storyboards, each student will present his or her fairy tale to the class, using the images as visuals during the story.

The storyboard links to the Common Core focus on literature and plot. Students are learning about literature by creating their own. This activity will gives students a reference point to think about when they are deconstructing texts in the future.

Mask

Mask making and wearing is an ancient tradition of self-alteration and expression. Masks have been used for thousands of years to assume new personas, hide identity, or express emotion endlessly. Students, who choose to make a mask agree to design, construct, finish, and perform as that character they have designed. After they have composed a basic fairy tail students may choose one of their characters to make into a mask. Students should sketch that characters head and face several times, at least 3 times. Draw quick small sketches at first, culminating with a final drawing.

Once a final drawing is completed, in full color, students must decide what material is best for constructions. Paper mache is commonly used for mask making due to its inexpensive, quick, lightweight, and simple properties. Other materials may include fabric, felt, paper, cardboard, and clay. Each mask should express the core values and emotions of the chosen character. If the character is evil it should be apparent in the expression of the mask. To help children with expression have them sit in front of a

mirror and make faces. While making faces they should look at their entire face in detail and as a whole; feel their eyebrows, lips, nose, cheeks, and forehead to note their shape and texture. While looking in the mirror, students should sketch what different expressions look and feel like, taking visual notes.

One expression is chosen and understood; students should construct their mask. In paper mache, the use of a crumpled paper armature, or skeleton, is very helpful. Students can crumple newspaper into the shape of the characters face and begin to layer on a base, building features and emotion as they go. When constructing the mask, students should paint or color it. Once totally done, each student will perform a short cameo for the class to express how their character would act in the story. Students will preface or conclude their performance with an explanation of the character and its significance to the fairy tale.

Snapshot

The snapshot is an in-depth artwork of a character or characters in a specific scene from their fairy tale. The snapshot should look like a real life snapshot with lots of movement, expression, and action. Students who choose to do the snapshot will explore the details of the character/characters and the setting. The finish artwork should be on a large scale, so the artist has the room to include lots of detail. Students should think about their fairy tale in their head and try to visualize as best they can what that scene looks, feels, and sounds like.

Through a series of thumbnail sketches (small quick gesture drawings) students will work out the composition of their scene. Each student should make no less than five thumbnail sketches. In each sketch, students should make changes to the composition, and the viewpoint. What does this scene look like from above, below, inside looking out, outside looking in, and so on. The goal of the thumbnails and the snapshot is to convey a much of the story in one flash as possible.

Students who are completing the snap shot need to focus on composition. The finish work should fully utilize all elements of art and principles of design. The background of the scene should not be an after thought. Sketching is extremely important in this option. Each student should sketch out the character and the background separately to really push their ideas and abilities. Once each sketch is complete, the student will make a final sketch on the characters in the scene. After a final sketch, students will be given final copy paper to layout their design. Students may choose to complete the snap shot in any medium available.

Performances

After students have completed the visual aspect of the project they will all present their projects. Students will address the class as a storyteller and use their body language, tone, diction, and expression to tell their fairy tale. The performer will be free to tell the story in any way they see fit. Pre storytelling, I will show students some videos on storytellers,

highlighting different styles of performing. Students should make note of the videos and pull some techniques from them.

As an audience member, students should make note of the dramatic structure of their classmate's stories and scenes. After each performance the audience will participate in a quick critique of their classmate. Audience members should be able to identify dramatic structure and key fairytale elements. During the critique ask questions like:

- What did the storyteller do well?
- What do you know about the characters?
- What was the problem? And solution?
- How were the issues resolved?

These questions will feed the room discussion and community of the classroom.

Appendices

Appendix A

(All Common Core standards listed are for 3rd grade)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.2 Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.3 Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.3.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.A Establish a situation and introduce a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.C Use temporal words and phrases to signal event order.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.3.3.D Provide a sense of closure.

The above standards will all be addressed through the creation, writing, and telling/performance on each student's fairytale. Students will be required to use a range of literacy skills to effectively produce a fairy tale and perform it. Each student will be coached and versed in the oral tradition through the teacher's knowledge of the oral tradition and fairy tales. Whether a student is the storyteller or the audience, they will be required to participate in the deconstruction of dramatic structure within the fairy tale.

National Art Standards

Anchor Standard #1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

-Students will create their own fairytale and complete one of 3 projects based on their idea

Anchor Standard #2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

-Students will sketch out their ideas and refine their composition.

Anchor Standard #3. Refine and complete artistic work.

- After sketching, each student will complete their design in a variety of mediums

Anchor Standard #5. Develop and refine artistic work for presentation.

-All students will present their artwork to the class upon completion, as well as act out or tell their story

Anchor Standard #6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

- Students will explore character emotion and how to display it; each artwork will have a visible outward expression.

Anchor Standard #10. Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

- Students will pull from their past to create interesting characters and situations, these will be illustrated through the projects.

Appendix B

Elements of Art

Line: A mark that spans a distance between two points.

Shape: A two dimensional space defined by edges e.g. square, circle, triangle...

Color: Made when light is reflected and meets the eye. Variables include saturation, hue and value

Value: The change or appearance from light to dark.

Form: Three-dimensional shape.

Texture: How an object looks like it would feel.

Space: The distance in and around objects in a work of art, can create illusion of perspective.

Principles of Design

Balance: Addresses the visual mass of objects e.g. a large red dot next to a small blue dot is imbalanced.

Contrast: The difference between two objects

Emphasis: Highlighting one object or subject

Rhythm: direction and repetition, pattern

Unity: All elements of the artwork come together in a visually pleasing manner.

Notes

- ⁱ Kennedy
- ⁱⁱ Toledo Museum of Art
- ⁱⁱⁱ Barton and Booth, page number.
- ^{iv} Encyclopedia Britannica.
- ^v Schonmann p.69
- ^{vi} Barton and Booth 1990
- ^{vii} Jaquith p.69
- ^{viii} Rohrich

- ^{ix} Bottigheimer
- ^x Foley
- ^{xi} Reidel
- ^{xii} Vonnegut
- ^{xiii} *ibid.*
- ^{xiv} Rohrich p. 208-209
- ^{xv} Rohrich, et al. 2008
- ^{xvi} Reidel
- ^{xvii} Thomas
- ^{xviii} *ibid.*
- ^{xix} *ibid.*
- ^{xx} Kennedy

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Curriculum Unit
Title

An Exercise in Creativity through Story and Community

Author

Robert Graham

KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

Creativity: this unit focuses on developing student creativity through the use of fairy tale. Students will be challenged with developing a story that fits the fairy tale criteria. All elements in the story are to be imagined by the student, if they struggle there are a few helpers. Creativity is an essential skill for today's students; they need to know how to construct their own answers as opposed to researching for them.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

What do emotions look like?
How do characters in a story function?
What does it mean to be creative?

How do fairy tails relate to you?
In what ways can stories teach?
What does it take to be more creative?

CONCEPT A

Mask

CONCEPT B

Story Board

CONCEPT C

Snapshot

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

What do masks do?
What is identity?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How does the plot in a story move?
What can affect the plot?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

What does emotion look like?
How to individuals show expression?

VOCABULARY A

Mask, identity, emotion, expression,
conceal, forced emotion, character,
mindset

VOCABULARY B

Story, plot, dramatic structure, events, time,
progression, conflict, resolution, moral

VOCABULARY C

Snapshot, emotion, setting, background,
event, character, expression

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

Through the creation of their own fairy tales, students will constrict a classroom community of creativity and expression. The community in which an individual is surrounded by can heavily influence his or her ability to perform.