

# Middle and High School Language Arts Lessons

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## 1. pARTners

Essential Question: What's in a name?

## Summary:

Sometimes titles seem to perfectly match their art; other times we're scratching our heads in confusion. As we learn each other's names, we'll try learning the titles of some art as well.

#### Materials:

Printout of art, titles on separate handouts

Time: 20 minutes

#### Procedure:

- 1. Each participant will get either the name of a piece of art or a picture of a piece of art from the exhibit.
- 2. Students have to find their mate in the class.
- 3. Discuss art "correctly" and "incorrectly" matched.
- 4. What do we see in the art that would connect art and title?

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

ELA11LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.

ELA11LSV2 When responding to visual and oral texts and media (i.e., television, radio, film productions, and electronic media), the student:

b. Analyzes visual or aural techniques used in a media message for a particular

audience and evaluates their effectiveness.

The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal

## 2. Art Armor

ELA11LSV1

Essential Question: Why is art important?

interactions.

## Summary:

All of us have art that sticks with us: quotations we remember years after reading; songs we turn back to time and again; photos and paintings we frame and display in our homes. Students may or may not have this background. By demonstrating the art that is special to us, we may encourage them to realize how much art they already treasure, whether or not they know it yet.

#### Materials:

• At least three pieces of art to which the teacher has a personal connection

- Art "Armor" which may include cardboard shields with song lyrics taped on; a toy sword with a poem wrapped around it; DVDs as epaulets
- Slips of paper for each student with negative emotions or experiences written on them (melancholy, stress, traffic, rain, etc.)

Time: 30 minutes (with options for additional take-home assignments/presentations)

#### Procedure:

- A) Teacher struts around in Art Armor, explaining to the class the significance of each piece
- B) Students read aloud the words on the piece of paper in front of them, then crumple the paper into a ball, and on the count of three, hurl them at the teacher
- C) Teacher protects him or herself with the armor
- D) Students think/pair/share ideas for their own armor
- E) Student armor is discussed, demonstrated, and/or written about (teacher's discretion for length of assignment)

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

- ELA11W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres. The student produces expository (informational) writing to explain an idea or concept and/or convey information and ideas from primary and secondary sources accurately and coherently.
- ELA11LSV2 The student formulates reasoned judgments about written and oral communication in various media genres. The student delivers focused, coherent, and polished presentations that convey a clear and distinct perspective, demonstrate solid reasoning, and combine traditional rhetorical strategies of narration, exposition, persuasion, and description.
  - d. Delivers oral presentations that incorporate the elements of narration, exposition, persuasion, and/or literary analysis.

#### 3. What is Art?

Essential Question: What is art? Who gets to define art? How is art valued?

#### Summary:

Everyone has been with (or been) the cranky friend in the museum who says, "That's art? A five-year-old could make that!" Modern art in particular often seems too abstract or irrelevant to us. This is an issue that should be confronted, not avoided, when discussing art with students. When does a pile of trash become art? When does a sentence become a poem? Why are some pieces of art worth so much money?

#### Materials:

- 5 images 3 of actual museum art, 2 which are teacher-created fakes
- 5 prose passages 3 of which are actual poems simply written in paragraph form
- Film clips from school library, 1 documentary and 1 fiction
- Print and web resources on the valuation of art for auctions, the most expensive art ever sold,
   and on famous literary publishing advances and sales figures

• A certain number (5?) of paper clips or counters for each student

## Time: 2 hours Procedure:

- A) Introduce the cranky friend mentality, then ask students to write down which of the following five images are actual museum art
- B) Discuss the results of this activity was there a consensus? Is there room for debate?
- C) Hand out the prose passages and ask students to write which are poems, and why they think so
- D) Discuss the results
- E) Show the film clips 1 documentary, 1 fiction and ask students to take notes on artistic components (or lack thereof) of each
- F) Discuss the results of this; symbolism, imagery in film (Hitchcock is great for this); the framing effect of a documentarian (every picture is excluding something students can roll up a piece of paper, or use their hands to make their own frame or camera eye, and see how they can picture their friends and environment in different ways to create different effects)
- G) Share the sources on art valuation what makes some pieces of art so valuable?
- H) Distribute paper clips/counters to students; they may use these to bid on pieces of art
- Display some of the most expensive pieces of art ever sold; allow students to bid to own these pieces
- J) At the end of the auction, show students the actual prices of their art; let them see who "bought" the greatest value
- K) Discuss whether or not they feel the most expensive pieces are the best; whether or not the most popular art (music, books, movies) is the best

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

- ELA11LSV2 When responding to visual and oral texts and media (i.e., television, radio, film productions, and electronic media), the student:
  - a. Recognizes strategies used by the media to inform, persuade, entertain (i.e., advertisements, perpetuation of stereotypes, use of visual representations, special effects, language).
- ELA11LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.

#### 4. Remix

**Essential Question**: How important is structure and content to a work of art?

Summary:

Heard a remix of an old tune lately? Seen Stephen King's *The Shining* as a family comedy on YouTube? **Part One**: Use examples of music and film remixed as introduction to importance of structure and content to art. Provide participants with the background of paintings and, as puzzle pieces, the objects from the paintings. Students will place the objects on the paintings to create an effect: harmony, disharmony, conflict, etc. Then divide poems as puzzle pieces and apply the same procedure for the placement of stanzas.

**Part Two**: Teacher displays a piece of art. Then the teacher changes one element—background color, color of clothing, etc. What kind of effect does this change have on the art? Apply this same concept to literature. Take a poem and change one word—"Stopping by Starbuck's on a Snowy Evening," for example. Discuss effect on work.

#### Materials:

- Examples of remixed music, film
- Selected works of art and literature

Time: 60 minutes

#### Procedure:

- 1. Part One: Listen to example of a musical remix
- 2. Watch a clip of a film remix (i.e., *The Shining* as a family comedy)
- 3. Provide students with a handout that is just the background to a work of art. Examples: Calder's Flying Saucers, Picasso's Green Still Life, Matisse's Goldfish and Sculpture, Miro's Still Life I, II. Give students the objects in the paintings as separate handouts to use as puzzle pieces.
- 4. Students are to place the objects on the background to create different effects.
- 5. Teacher will recreate student placements on the screen as students describe their reasons for placement and the effect the placement creates.
- 6. Teacher will then give students poems which have been divided by stanzas into puzzle pieces.
- 7. Students will arrange the stanzas of the poems and be prepared to discuss their reasons for placement.
- 8. Teacher will solicit responses from students in a discussion of the effect of stanza placement.
- 9. Part Two: Introduce content change with mad libs.
- 10. Display art.
- 11. Change one element in the art. Teacher might change the color of a garment in the art or remove one of the pieces of a still life.
- 12. Discuss the effect this one change has on the work as a whole.
- 13. Choose a poem. Change one word in the poem to show the importance of diction in the work.
- 14. Apply to other pieces of literature: titles of works (i.e., "The Pink Letter" rather than "The Scarlett Letter"), poems, short stories.
- 15. Discussion of structure and content on works.
- 16. Students will produce a remix: film, music, literature, art.

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

ELAALRL1 The student demonstrates comprehension by identifying evidence (i.e., examples of diction, imagery, point of view, figurative language, symbolism, plot events and main ideas) in a variety of texts representative of different genres (i.e., poetry, prose [short story, novel, essay, editorial, biography], and drama) and using this evidence as the basis for interpretation.

The student identifies, analyzes, and applies knowledge of the structures and elements of American fiction and provides evidence from the text to support understanding.

d. Analyzes, evaluates, and applies knowledge of the ways authors use techniques and elements in fiction for rhetorical and aesthetic purposes.

The student identifies and analyzes elements of poetry from various periods of American literature and provides evidence from the text to support understanding a. Identifies, responds to, and analyzes the effects of diction, tone, mood, syntax, sound, form, figurative language, and structure of poems as these elements relate to meaning.

ELA11W3 The student uses research and technology to support writing.

## 5. Perspectives

**Essential Question**: How is art interpreted by different people?

#### Summary:

Do you remember Magic Eye paintings from the 90s? Or those optical illusions – is it a vase, or two women's faces? Sometimes we literally see different things in a painting or piece of art, and sometimes we have different emotional responses because of our varied experiences. Students will experience this among themselves, and then be encouraged to make a literary jump, in order to better appreciate the potential value of thoughts besides our own.

#### Materials:

- Excerpt from "Picasso at the Lapin Agile" by Steve Martin (or another similar excerpt/film clip from school library about multiple people interpreting a piece of art)
- Piece of High Museum art of your choice

## Time: 30 minutes

## Procedure:

- A) Have students read aloud (or watch) the excerpt on interpreting art; in the case of the Steve Martin piece, the emphasis is on different interpretations: one character gives a sort of teacherly, "deeper meaning" interpretation of the painting; one takes it at face value; one has a personal connection to it
- B) Discuss whether or not there are right and wrong, or better and worse, interpretations for art; is it all totally subjective?
- C) Display a piece from the High's exhibit and ask students to give an interpretation either a deeper meaning, a personal connection, or a face value description
- D) Share
- E) Now ask students to choose from a list of real and literary figures (for example: the President, Holden Caulfield, Tina Fey, Hester Prynne, LeBron James), and have them imagine what that person's interpretation of the painting might be.
- F) Share and discuss

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

ELAALRL3 The student deepens understanding of literary works by relating them to their contemporary context or historical background, as well as to works from other time periods.

#### 6. Portraits

**Essential Question**: How does 20<sup>th</sup> Century art/literature reflect the emphasis on the individual? **Summary**:

Emphasis in this lesson is what does this portrait say about the subject and how does the artist accomplish this? Picasso says, "The paintings are the pages of my diary." How does the artist translate those pages to the viewer? The teacher introduces this idea with selected film clips that emphasize character.

#### Materials:

- Selected film clips
- Examples of self-portraits in visual art
- Examples of self-portraits in literature

Time: 30 minutes

#### **Procedure:**

- 1. Teacher introduces this lesson with film clips which focus on character development
- 2. Students use a graphic organizer which focuses viewing on shot/trait/method director uses/effect on viewer
- 3. Discuss what the scene says about the character? How does the filmmaker accomplish this portrayal?
- 4. Teacher transitions to visual art examples of self-portraits. Examples include: Picasso's Self Portrait and Girl Before the Mirror; Warhol's Self Portrait; Brancusi's Double Exposed Self Portrait; Calder's Marian Greenwood and Portrait of a Man
- 5. Discuss elements artist uses to create the portrait.
- 6. Teacher introduces self-portrait in literature. Examples include: Sexton's Self in 1958; Graves' Face in the Mirror; Walker's Lineage, Cisneros' Abuelito Who
- 7. Discuss elements the writer uses to create the portrait
- 8. Student creates one of the following:
- 9. A portrait in choice of mediums (screen play, visual art) with 250 words explaining how he/she creates the shy self, the intelligent self, the arty self, the public self, etc.
- 10. A portrait in the style of the Sandra Cisneros' poem Abuelito Who

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

ELA11LSV2 When responding to visual and oral texts and media (i.e., television, radio, film productions, and electronic media), the student:

c. Develops and applies criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the presentation, style, and content of films and other forms of electronic communication.

ELA11W2 The student demonstrates competence in a variety of genres.

ELAALRL2 The student identifies, analyzes, and applies knowledge of theme in a work of American literature and provides evidence from the work to support understanding.

The student

b. Evaluates the way an author's choice of words advances the theme or purpose of the work.

## 7. The Human Connection

**Essential Question:** Why do we connect to art? How can we encourage connection in others? **Summary**:

Recently, photography has been used to encourage cultural connections. Pictures of American national parks were distributed to citizens of Afghanistan in an attempt to show a side of America that foreign men and women may have never seen before. Another photographer then took pictures of Afghan citizens holding these photos. In the future, pictures of Afghanistan's natural wonders may be distributed to Americans, and so on, furthering the idea that we can appreciate more about each other and each other's countries than we thought. Similarly, we all have art that is special to us or resonates with us. This lesson will demonstrate strategies by which students might get others to understand what makes a piece of art special to them.

## **Materials:**

- "Wilderness Diplomacy" article from Sierra Magazine, or comparable resource
- A piece of challenging literature
- Handout or PowerPoint with visuals and supporting text related to 2.
- High exhibit slides
- Dustjacket and promotional photos of writers and artists

Time: Multiple days

#### Procedure:

- A) Finding the Connections
  - a. Teacher displays "Wilderness Diplomacy" photographs, or ones that he or she has created along the same lines
  - b. Discussion of wilderness diplomacy and how art might be an anti-terrorism tactic
  - c. Students choose one of the High museum pieces that for some reason makes an impression on them
  - d. Students have take-home assignment to bring in a picture of them holding the art; the picture, either through its background or other elements in it, should somehow capture what it is about the art that connected with them (for instance, "Interior with a Violin Case" made a girl think about her cello; she takes a picture holding the picture with her cello)
  - e. Students share and discuss the pictures
  - f. A new take-home assignment to interview someone in the student's life and find out one piece of art which is special to that person; take a picture of that person with the art (if possible a printout, the CD case, etc.); the picture again should capture the meaning
  - g. Students share and discuss these pictures
- B) Sharing the Connections
  - a. Teacher reads a piece or excerpt of literature that is important to him or her; ideally it is a difficult piece with complex language presented as drily as possible
  - b. Teacher then gives explanatory visuals and information to illuminate the piece defines difficult words, explains allusions, shows visuals to complement the imagery in the text
  - c. Teacher rereads the piece discussion of whether or not the information helped

- d. Link to art a piece of High museum art is displayed; students are encouraged to free associate and write down all the words that come to mind, images they see, etc.
- e. Class creates one giant list of words and associations for the art
- f. Discussion of how the words illuminate the visual (we may see or think new things), just as visuals illuminated the words
- g. Teacher changes the environment and rereads the original piece of literature again (change in lighting, addition of music, scented candle, change of scenery, change of seats)
- h. Discussion of how experience with art may be changed by the environment in which we experience it is there an "ideal" way to see Mondrian's "View from the Dunes"?
- i. Students have take-home assignment to illuminate (find supporting visuals, words and definitions) and situate (imagine or create the perfect environment for) a piece of art, either one from the High exhibit, or one that is personal to them

## C) "Selling" the Connections

- a. Teacher displays a piece of art, with no title or artist attributed; asks for reactions to it
- b. Teacher reveals information about the creator of the art (for instance, this piece was made by a 9/11 widow; this is an original Warhol; this artist used only his left foot to paint); asks if this information affects reactions to the art
- c. Students are shown images or artists and writers used on dustjackets and other marketing materials; students write five adjectives to describe the person based on the photograph, and list what demographic they think is being targeted by the photo
- d. Discussion of how artist might become branded, or brand themselves, in order to find the right audience for their work; what are the pros and cons of branding?
- e. Students are given time to create marketing material for the art they have illuminated and situated
- f. Students attempt, finally, to "sell" the piece of art to the class to have them experience it and like it as much as they do
- g. Students may vote on which pieces of art they were most "sold" by; these results can be tallied or shared or analyzed

## **Georgia Performance Standards**

ELA11LSV1 The student participates in student-to-teacher, student-to-student, and group verbal interactions.

ELA11LSV2 The student formulates reasoned judgments about written and oral communication in various media genres. The student delivers focused, coherent, and polished presentations that convey a clear and distinct perspective, demonstrate solid reasoning, and combine traditional rhetorical strategies of narration, exposition, persuasion, and description.

When delivering and responding to presentations, the student: b. Evaluates and uses different effects (i.e., visual, music, sound, graphics) to create competent presentations or productions. ELAALRL3 The student deepens understanding of literary works by relating them to their contemporary context or historical background, as well as to works from other time periods.

ELA11LSV2 When responding to visual and oral texts and media (i.e., television, radio, film productions, and electronic media), the student:

a. Recognizes strategies used by the media to inform, persuade, entertain (i.e., advertisements, perpetuation of stereotypes, use of visual representations, special effects, language).