Reading about, Drawing about Houston, Our City

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In Houston the bottom line is the datum. Currency (or the anticipation of currency) dictates that the physical, the stable, the real, be modified, manipulated and transformed relentlessly. Change, therefore, is the constant. The skyline downtown, the innumerable new suburban skylines, strip development along freeways, shopping malls, condominiums, subdivisions: these contribute to what has been described as a landscape of becoming; one that in its continuous transformations bewilders natives as much as it does newcomers.
~ Stephen Fox

INTRODUCTION

During the past twenty years of living in Texas, rarely did I ever stop and ponder what the landscape must have been like before skyscrapers, oil refineries, elbow-to-elbow beach houses, freeways, and the plethora of billboards scaling the backdrop of the city and the larger Texas Gulf Coast. Certainly, I was not ignorant about the preservation efforts of Galveston's Historical Foundation, the individual homeowners of the East End, the Strand, and the University of Texas' Old Red (Ashbel Smith Building). Houston, on the other hand, does not give one the impression that historic preservation, the keeper of history's physical and visual past, commands much respect. One does not have to look very far to witness the dwindling evidence of Houston's architectural treasures. On any given day, a walk, a drive (on freeways or surface roads), or a bicycle ride through Houston's streets will reveal buildings bulldozed and trees and other landscape uprooted, only to be replaced later by towering structures, inappropriately dwarfing existing houses and low-lying commercial properties and, finally, eliminating of our precious green spaces.

Because I am a veteran teacher, I have witnessed the creation and implementation of educational reform: laws aimed at strengthening student performance at the state and federal levels. Some evaporate, while others are repackaged or renamed. However, since the clocks ushered in the new millennium, one law in particular has had a resounding effect on the practice of teaching. The federal mandate, No Child Left Behind, is changing and challenging the public school culture. This law is designed to bridge the achievement gap of low-performing students, specifically in reading, mathematics, and science.

At the onset of this school year, I transferred to a low-performing school (prior years have been spent in a high-performing district-recognized vanguard school in a high socioeconomic neighborhood). The school I teach in today exists in a neighborhood northeast of downtown. The school's profiles are as follows: 96% Hispanic; 3% African American, 1% Anglo; 42% of the students are Limited English Proficient; 58% are at-risk; and 100% of the school is Title One. The school has been targeted by the state as deficient in reading. As such, the students and teachers will rigorously participate in the district initiative, Closing the Gap, designed to improve

TAKS objectives that have been identified as deficient. Finally, the campus participates in Project GRAD (Graduation Really Achieves Dreams). Project GRAD enrichment ensures the students consistent exposure to music (band, choir, and strings programs) and the visual arts; the Move It Math program; Success for All reading initiatives; and a behavior concept called Consistency Management. Students remain in the feeder pattern school and upon graduation from high school qualify for college tuition allowances, reduced tuition at state universities, and opportunities for matching college expenses.

As the art teacher at this predominately Hispanic school, I would like to guide my students through a learning experience that will strengthen their understanding of the historic changes and movements that have made their city, Houston, the environment it is today. My goal is to give them opportunities that will enable them to appreciate their hometown and their immediate neighborhood, the North East Side, while simultaneously increasing their reading and comprehension skills, opening their view to Houston's history, increasing their appreciation of architecture, and providing hands-on projects that will utilize their fine-arts skills.

The title for my teaching unit is "Reading about, Drawing about Houston, Our City." The target group I have chosen for this unit is a fourth grade English as a Second Language class. I have decided on this group in an effort to improve their English comprehension and speaking skills (the project will give them a variety of opportunities to excel). And furthermore, the fourth grade Social Studies text centers on Texas History, and my unit will provide strength to the existing curriculum. The geographic areas of study will be Houston in general and the North East Side in particular.

UNIT BACKGROUND

Beginnings

"The richness of the soil, healthfulness of climate, [nearness] to the sea, [promise] a reward which few spots on the globe could furnish." (Boyd iii) In 1821, Stephen F. Austin proclaimed this description of the land he observed that one day would be called the city of Houston. It is quite difficult to imagine these same words today in an effort to characterize any of its parts, or the sum total of Houston as we now know it.

Geographic Sprawl or Urban Planning

At the onset of the twentieth century, Houston's growth progressed with lightning-bolt speed. The concept of urban planning was widening due to Houston's population growth and geographical sprawl. Certainly the dramatic events of the 1900 Galveston Storm and the 1901 Spindletop oil gusher added unexpected elements to Houston's growing pains. Elected officials emphasized expansion of the city's business opportunities downtown instead of financing projects within already established neighborhoods. The focus of the city's power club was directed at securing outside capital to meet the demands of the area's growing oil and shipping interests.

An influx of displaced people from Galveston after the 1900 storm resulted in an increase in land values, a skyrocketing of rents and a city populated by strangers, gun toters, gamblers, and rowdies (Platt). In his book *City Building in the New South*, Harold Platt says:

> Led by Mayor Oran T. Holt, the metropolitans strove to enact a far-reaching program of reform that closely emulated the national enthusiasm for a "politics of efficiency" in public administration. Progressives everywhere attempted to apply new techniques of "scientific management" to the business of government, by replacing corruptible politicians with professional experts. To divorce politics from administration required extensive changes in institutional structures. Houston's reformers freely incorporated the

> model plans of the National Municipal League in a completely new municipal charter. The metropolitans, moreover, called in a nationally renowned accounting firm to impose centralized budgetary practices on the bureaucracy. By the end of the mayor's two-year term, an impressive catalog of institutional adjustments and franchise settlements defined a public program that fit comfortably within the broad outlines of municipal reform in the United States.
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> The Holt administration also adopted the new South strategy of cooperation in government-business relations … followed regional approaches to achieve the full integration of their city into the national mainstream of urban-industrial development. In Houston, the city council vigorously pursued a course of accommodation with the Northern-owned utility corporations. To the metropolitans, the resolution of the city's long-standing disputes with the franchise holders was an essential step in securing a steady flow of Northern capital to underwrite Houston's oil industry, shipping facilities, and other public works projects. Without appearing to violate platform planks for municipal ownership, city officials reached compromises with every established firm owned by outside investors. (183)

The lack of cohesive leadership of the city had earlier played a significant role in Houston's inability to progress and expand along with other cities in the state (1870's, 1880's, and 1890's). Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio were weighing in as potential rivals.

Harold Platt continues:

> In large part, a metropolitan vision of Houston was a logical outgrowth of the urban crisis and the ensuing struggle to resolve the problems of rapid growth over a sprawling area. According to one scholar, urbanization inherently involves a "dynamic of conceptual change," which is fueled by social, economic, and political processes as well as by spatial transformations. During the pivotal decade of the 1890s the redefinition of the Texas community in metropolitan terms accurately reflected its metamorphosis from a compact city to a fragmented patchwork of urban neighborhoods and suburban districts. At the same time, the spread of a national matrix helped to place these local patterns of urbanization within a broad context of interdependence. Internal growth and external influences combined to evoke new ways of looking at the city. Newspaper editor Rienzi Johnston succinctly described this holistic viewpoint: "Houston is no longer a town to be operated along lines that prevailed ten or twenty years ago. It is now the metropolis of a great state." Of course, perceptions of change often lag behind reality. What was obvious to such cosmopolitan leaders as Johnston and timber baron John Kirby in the late nineties remained obscure to the more provincial Houstonians until much later. But in this case, the dramatic events of 1900-1901 sharply accelerated the dynamics of conceptual change. They acted as catalysts to consolidate the new metropolitan imagery of the city among the business and professional classes, who become infected with the same sense of pressing urgency to end the crisis as the commercial-civic elite had held since Mayor Brashear's reelection. To Houston's most cosmopolitan leaders, political disorder—Brashear's aggressive assault on outside corporations in particular—represented the main stumbling block on a golden highway to regional preeminence and national standing. (184)

Political infighting, the initiation of poll taxes, Jim Crow laws, business interests versus improvements in city infrastructure all contributed to the growth and or slump in the progressive development of Houston. Perhaps too, these same kinds of divisive elements exist today in Houston as in many other cities. However, due to the insular situations we tend to place

ourselves in, these issues remain veiled and come to the forefront only after diligent investigations and broad media exposure.

Bayou Water/Gulf Water

The nearness to the sea and the casualties of the 1900 Galveston storm give prominence to the effects of water on Houston and its surrounding land. Be it fresh water or salt water from the sea, it acts as both an opportunity and a force to be reckoned with.

Recently, and within a span of four years (2001-2005), residents of the Texas Gulf Coast have witnessed first-hand the effects of two major hurricanes (Katrina and Rita/2005), numerous floods, and a major tropical storm and flood (Allyson/2001).

The following quotation, written by Barrie Scardino, appears in the book, *The Ephemeral City:*

> So it was with good reason that Houston's founders greatly exaggerated its water features. In the famous *Telegraph and Texas Register* advertisement of August 30, 1836 (six months before there actually was a town), promoters audaciously claimed that Houston was situated at the "head of navigation" on Buffalo Bayou and went on to say that "tidewater runs to this place and the lowest depth of water is about six feet. It is but a few hours' sail down to the bay, where one may take an excursion of pleasure and enjoy the luxuries of fish, fowl, oysters and sea bathing."
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> In fact, Harrisburg, at the confluence of Brays and Buffalo bayous just east of Houston, was the closest thing to the head of navigation, if indeed Buffalo Bayou could have been considered a serious navigable waterway. Today, the turning basin of the Ship Channel is near Harrisburg, not downtown Houston. The Allen brothers initially tried to buy the site of Harrisburg, founded in 1822, but were unable to complete a land purchase there.
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> At the time of its Anglo settlement, Harris County had a substantial watershed from the San Jacinto River and 22 natural streams that included 44 miles of bayous, in addition to uncountable gullies. Once part of the ocean floor, this part of Texas is not sufficiently elevated above sea level to promote effective runoff, and dense clay soils exacerbate poor drainage. The elevation in Harris County rises from zero feet above sea level to barely 100 feet at the northern tip of the county. Rainfall in the Houston area, while not excessive (on average, there are over 100 days per year with some rain, for a total of 48 inches) is problematic given the makeup of the vast watershed. (19)

From its inception, the city leaders were determined to use its water resources to advance Houston's commercial offerings. With this in mind, plans began as early as 1840 to widen and deepen the channel of Buffalo Bayou. That same year, the Texas Congress meeting in Austin granted the city's request to build and maintain wharves. The following year saw the birth of the Port of Houston (at the intersection of Buffalo and White Oak bayous).

During the Civil War, Houston became an important resource for blockade running. Since Galveston was occupied by Federal troops and Houston was not, many Houston pockets were lined in green by supplying inland troops. Both financial resources and the absence of destruction by war left Houston in a good position to forge onward with plans to dredge and deepen Buffalo Bayou. After the dredging of 1870, the federal government established a customs house and Houston became a port of entry.

With the establishment of an important railroad network, coupled with the successful use of the deeper port, Houston's commercial industry prospered. In 1899, the United States Congress approved additional construction to improve and deepen the ship channel.

In 1900, the great hurricane of the Gulf Coast financially and physically crippled Galveston Island. However, sixty miles up stream, the city of Houston was prepared to step in with the aid, ironically, of its greatest natural resource: water. Backing up the shipping industry, and by no means less important, was the area's extensive network of rail lines.

Again in *The Ephermeral City,* Scardino states:

> After the founding of the Texas Company in Beaumont in 1902, its president, J.S. Cullinan, began looking along the Texas coast for the best site for his headquarters and refineries. What he wanted was large acreage, fresh water, deep-water shipping, and protection from storms and floods. He chose Houston, convinced that a sufficiently deep channel was under construction in Buffalo Bayou and that the threat from flood and hurricane was a thing of the past. This 1908 move to Houston of the oil giant that became Texaco is considered critical in the establishment of Houston as the oil and gas capital of the nation. In 1908 redredging of the Ship Channel was completed to a depth of 18 feet, with a turning basin just above Harrisburg.
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> Influential residents had decided long before Spindletop that a channel with a depth adequate for large oceangoing vessels was a must for Houston. As oil companies settled themselves along the bayous, advances in marine technology produced vessels that required deeper drafts, making Houstonians once again question the sufficiency of their Ship Channel. They created a navigation district to control the water course and issued bonds to finance an even deeper channel. With the approval of Congress, the federal government matched local investment, and construction began in June 1912. (35)

With the addition of the new 25-foot-deep channel at the turning basin, the relocation of the Texas Company to the Houston area, and oil flowing with no end in sight, Houston's future as a stable, lucrative economy appeared just beyond the horizon.

ART AS ARCHITECTURE

Viewing architecture through the eyes of a child is perhaps most relevant when viewed through its most basic, most common structure: the house, a home, one's shelter. Early drawings by my students most often include a primitive A-frame house, a shelter to keep one safe from weather and outdoor life. On a 1984 cover of *Arts + Architecture* a young blue-eyed, blonde-haired girl poses, right arm overhead, holding a paintbrush. Framing her image are five child-like brush strokes. These five strokes form a house. The title of the issue is: "Housing, Private Space, Common Space." Our homes are also the place where we live with our families and meet with our friends" (Sibrell 1).

Looking back on my own awareness of architecture, I can honestly say it germinated as I approached my teens. I recall visiting the home of a friend whose family was both artistic and well traveled. Their Colonial home was perhaps the most creative space I had ever seen. The four siblings had rooms of their own. Antique furniture was thoughtfully placed in every room, ante-room and hall. The walls were painted brilliant colors, unlike the shades of white found in my parents' home. A vivid detail was found in the dining room. My friend's older sister created "beaded" curtains for the windows. The effect was similar to draping each glass pane in shades of aquamarine blues and emerald greens. On a sun-filled day the rays of color were pure magic to my young eyes. The house sat on two acres of land and the creativity of the house extended outdoors. I strongly believe that getting to know this house as I did, over a few years, fueled my interest in architecture. It was through this experience that I saw architecture as a tool for one's imagination and exploration (Pratt 7).

In fact, my imagination began the second I returned to my own space a nondescript two-story house. I secretly developed a way to recreate the bedroom I shared with my sister. The plans

included a floor-to-ceiling book case/wall that would divide one room in two. I even designed a scheme for two separate entrances.

I do not consider myself an expert on architecture in general and shelters in particular. However, I do maintain an avid interest in houses, public buildings, the use of green space, and I am constantly "looking" for new, old, and renewed architecture. As with my early introduction to this art form, I hope that exposure to the activities in this unit will enhance the lives of my students and introduce them to architecture in a manner that will give them a life-long interest in this changing art. The initial focus of this unit is to illuminate the house/shelter and then branch out to structures within the Near North Side, and to a lesser extent, downtown and the Heights.

I hope that at some point in the lives of my students they too can have a rich and vivid view of home. This unit and the lessons within it will serve as a beginning for my students and others in their footsteps.

THE NEAR NORTH SIDE OR NORTH EAST OF DOWNTOWN

"The North Side and the East End are the traditional workshops of Houston. They possess a certain gritty texture that has survived. The presence in these areas of working class Hispanic Houstonians results in a degree of popular street life that is missing from the city's more affluent precincts" (Fox 160). These words clearly describe the neighborhood within the boundaries of the elementary school my students attend (North Luzon, East Terry, South Hogan and West Everett streets). This area will serve as the focal point of the unit lessons. Additional area will include North Fulton, between Cavalcade, the I-45 feeder road and 610 East to Fulton. The school my students attend remains true to the architects 1958 original design, the exception being the addition of the ubiquitous portable classrooms on the rear of the property.

Most of the neighborhood housing is a mixture of styles (1900's, 1940's -1970's). In 1939, most of the housing was devoted to single-family homes (Papademetriou and Glunt i-ii). Duplexes did not appear until about 1962, and apartments looked more like large two-story frame houses, subdivided into smaller units (Papademetriou and Glunt iii-2).

The single family houses retain most of their original design work. These wood structures rest on concrete block foundations. The roofs are gabled, the windows double-hung and frequently the houses greet you with a large front porch. Many of the houses exhibit little improvement. On visual inspection, it appears that most of these houses were painted white. What paint remains today is faded and blistered.

In the fall of 2005, I participated in a series of student home visits. Most of the students that I visited lived in apartment complexes. They were two-story brick buildings, with the appearance of packaged housing. One entered the property through an interior courtyard with a communal paved patio. Parking was on the periphery of the building. The interiors were simple but functional (two and three bedrooms). One complex appeared to house sixty families. It was unclear to me as to the ownership of the properties (private or government subsidized).

THE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNER

Empowering students to engage with, critique, and glean knowledge from the built work is a realistic goal of this unit. Visual culture as defined by Barnard is anything visually produced, interpreted, or created by humans which has, or is given, functional communicative and/or aesthetic Intent (Davenport 13). Becoming aware of our rich and diverse visual culture is the initial step in creating a person with a lifelong awareness of visual imagery in general, and the built world in particular. Awareness of buildings, color patterns, detail, and design can reveal something about the people, culture, or society in general that created and lived among these objects.

As an example of visual inquiry, take the ever-present Styrofoam "to-go cup." One hundred years from now, an environmental anthropology student may be asked to construct a line of inquiry about its role in the life of a twenty-first century teen. An initial inspection of the object would be the first line of attack. What color is it? Today most of the cups are white. However, environmental influences may change the color composition. If a logo is still intact, you could possibly determine contents (cold or hot). Perhaps a stain would yield a clue. Does it have a lid? Is the lip removed or did the person using it imbibe the contents from a straw? What knowledge can you gain from the circumference of the straw? A thicker one might have been used to consume a milkshake. Is the straw colored, have stripes, or a bendable arm? Did the cup encase a tall or grande portion? This evaluation of the cup, a simple object, is a significant process in determining an aspect of a culture. As Sardar and Van Loon state, "Popular mass culture is not a new creation of consumer society-it has history" (Davenport 14). Exactly! Culture is about history past, present and future. "Anything that humans have ever produced can be seen as a record of the particular circumstances contributing to or surrounding its production" (Davenport 15).

So in a broad sense, using local architecture to teach historic content gives the learner multiple approaches to learning. This is especially true with the elementary school student whose primary language is not English. The visual clues offered through art/architecture (square, volume, design, color, etc.) are similar to visual clues/symbols one acquires in learning a second language (unfamiliar vocabulary, rules of grammar). Equally important are the cultural signposts of the second language – different but still important in uncovering historic cultural clues.

The overall effects of a rich school arts program are particularly important for the second-language learner. Time and time again, studies have shown positive correlations between students exposed to the arts and academic achievement (Richards 18). Scores in reading, writing, history, and geography increase with a rich involved art program (Richards 20). Lower dropout rates can also be attributed to Fine Arts exposure. Richards states, "The creative arts activities are not only hands-on practice, but they build artistic skills and give students an avenue for self-expression that builds their self-esteem (20). As with reading and the arts, the students' brain channels information through the environment/teaching situation and thus flow to the senses (22). In partnership with reading, the arts are a "rehearsal process that facilitates the changing of abstract concepts to concrete ones (22). In the words of Gardner, "The arts help students learn in their own ways and at their own paces developing their intelligences" (23).

As stated earlier, my present teaching assignment is 96% Hispanic; 45% are enrolled in bilingual classes, and 10% are in ESL classes. Because the district school profiles do not track the language of the students' parents/caregivers, I would estimate that a high percentage of students spend their time away from school in non-English speaking environments. Despite the fact that a Hispanic student in a traditional class (classes taught in English), spends his school day receiving instruction in English, the time spent with friends during free-time generally yields to speaking Spanish rather than English. This habit also tends to be practiced by the adults. As is often the case, the students are less skilled in speaking English, their confidence is low, and this becomes obvious when a lesson requires in depth discussion to participate. How do we as educators reach these students so that they too may have a rich learning experience?

Garcia states that "In less than 20 years, half of the k-12 population in this country will speak a language other than English on their first day of school" (Eubanks 40). Houston's proximity to the Mexican border makes this statement especially pertinent. As an observer of my students, I cannot help feeling unprepared for meeting the needs of my students both today and in the future. Not only do these students not know or feel competent speaking English, there is also evidence of a cultural barrier.

Since teaching art requires a rich visual presentation, the second language learner is consistently receiving stimulation appropriate for language acquisition. Additionally, culture takes on numerous forms within the art classroom. Introducing an artist with a Hispanic surname coaxes the student further into the learning process. An onyx-glazed piece of pottery created in southern Mexico that is embellished with Aztec symbolism bridges the cultural divide. "Students learn when they question the world around them and when school is relevant to their lives and culture" (Eubanks 40). Drawing is a process similar to learning how to speak a second language. In drawing, one is introduced to new vocabulary, symbols, and the use of colors, values, and shapes. Most of the lessons in this unit will require the students to utilize their drawing skills, new skills will be added, and all projects will be evaluated and refined.

Peer tutors (a student who speaks both English and the home language of the non-English student, Spanish in this case) will be used throughout the project. The objective of the peer tutor is to bridge the gap between the English-speaking teacher and the limited or non-English speaking student, thereby reducing some of the cultural divide. By assisting the teacher and non-English speaking student, the tutor can assist with clarification of questions, translation, and answering the student questions. It is my hope that this process will bring all factions of the learning experience closer to the entire classroom.

An art classroom also plays an important role in the acquisition of thinking skills, problem solving, self-expression, and self-confidence. Because the art room environment tends to be seen as a comfort zone (cool reproductions of art versus word walls, writing rules, mathematic equations, endless homework assignments, conduct scores), a place where there are no wrong answers, where each student can be like one and other, a place where success is guaranteed, a struggling student easily gains confidence. With this confidence comes social acceptance and positive interactions, both necessary to permit a student to attempt to understand and speak a new language. A painting or a work on paper is the same in English or Spanish, French or Arabic. Art is a universal language.

CONCLUSION

Through drawing, painting, building three-dimensional works, a student has the potential to expand his power to communicate. This is especially true for the non-English speaking student who occupies a seat in an English-only art classroom. Because in the year 2006, the city of Houston is emerging as a building and developer's haven, our urban landscape is changing daily. Buildings are demolished and new ones sprout up to replace them and the history contained therein. Giving art students an opportunity to discover, to develop, and to learn about this process from the past, present and projecting into the future, hopefully, will seed in them a life-long interest in reading about and drawing about Houston our city.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson One: The World's Greatest Buildings

Objectives

In teams of four the students will use color reproductions of buildings to determine the use, form, and cultural significance of selected buildings from Neil Stevenson's book. They will also determine the distance between Houston and the city of the buildings' locations.

Materials

Color Xeroxed photographs of various buildings found in Neil Stevenson's book, *Architecture: The World's Greatest Buildings Explored and Expanded*, paper, pencils, globes, and string.

Activity

Randomly select groups of four students. Each group will receive a color Xeroxed photograph for use in explaining aspects of a building: What is the use of the building? Where would you find a building such as this (city, open space, neighborhood)? When do you think this building was built? What do you like/dislike about the building? If you were able to enter this structure, what do you think you would find? What shapes did the architect use to create this place? Each question will be discussed by the team members. All answers/opinions will be recorded.

Evaluation

Using string and a globe the teams will measure the distance from Houston to the city of their building. They will then exchange buildings and compare other locations. After completing the questions, the students will use their notes to give an oral presentation to the class.

Vocabulary

- Vault: An arched structure made of stone or brick covering a building. Types include barrel (or tunnel), cross, fan, pendant, and rib.
- Stucco: Plaster work used in imitation of stone, often decoratively incised or elaborately molded.
- Renaissance: Derived from the Italian word for rebirth, and applied to the artistic movement emanating from Italy in the 15th century. Its influence extended throughout Europe.
- Façade: The front wall of a building.
- Nave: A rectangular open space in a church.

Lesson Two: Draw and Paint the Town Wild

Objectives

The students will learn that buildings have standard architectural features: buildings are both functional and aesthetic objects; color theories are incorporated in architecture; ornamentation has a role in the design of a building; building design changes with time; and old styles are revived and reincorporated into new architectural drawings.

Materials

Papademetriou's "Urban Facilities Analysis," Fox's *Houston Architectural Guide*, Siberell's *Houses Shelters from Prehistoric Times to Today*, drawing paper, pencils, erasures, colored pencils, crayons, paint brushes, markers, paint, assorted paper, glue, and cameras.

Activity

There will be a walking tour of the Near North Side neighborhood. Prior to that, the class will discuss and examine selections from the three publications. This will provide them with new vocabulary and visual guides to buildings and street locations. Some of the terms include: overall design, period/style, age markers, ornamentation, and paint motif. Following *Houston's Architectural Guide* of the Near North Side, students will collect photographs and notes on the area toured. Upon returning to the classroom, the students will use their resources to draw and then paint examples of architecture found in their neighborhood.

Lesson Three: Discovering Our Neighbors and Family Oral History

Objectives

The students will interview and photograph neighbors and family members who have lived in the neighborhood. Photography and Language Arts skills will be used by the students.

Materials

Viki Holland's book *How To Photograph Your World*, the video, *Behind The Scenes with Carrie Mae Weems*, digital cameras, journals, pencils and pens.

Activity

After viewing the Weems video and discussing the art of picture taking, the class will create a list of questions to ask their interviewees. The students will list three people they would like to interview. As the students interview, they will record the responses and take photographs.

Evaluation

During the school's end of the year Fine Arts Program, each student will prepare an oral presentation depicting one person from their interview project. The class will also create the stage backdrop. This stage decoration will show examples of the buildings found in the neighborhood of the Near North Side.

Lesson Plan Four: Drawing Patterns from Native Gardens

Objective

The students will learn to recognize vegetation that is native to Houston and then use these skills to sketch examples of native vegetation and how the vegetation appears in public and private property.

Materials

Blackburn's chapter from the book *Houston's Forgotten H*eritage, student photographs of the Near North Side, pencils, paper, erasers, colored pencils.

Activity

After reading sections from *Houston's Forgotten Heritage*, the class will discuss and view examples of various native plants (crape myrtle, magnolia, live oak, hackberry, althea, roses, pomegranate bushes, pecan trees, violets, dahlia, banana trees, and weeping mulberry). Each student will then draw an example of a neighborhood house and landscape patterns.

Lesson Five: Neighborhood Team Work

Objective

The students will work in teams to develop a model of a neighborhood block using their individual work and resources from the unit.

Materials

Recycled, thin cardboard boxes (crackers, light bulb, crayon, etc.), scissors, glue, paint, construction paper, poster board, pencils, colored pencils, glue gun. Student-made projects, photographs, books, and articles from the unit, clay, pipe cleaners, toothpicks, sponges, sand.

Activity

The class will be divided into teams of six. One of the following topics will be selected from a hat, and each team will build their block accordingly: residential, commercial, mixed use, public space/green space. Each team will sketch their plan. After approval, they will construct the block using boxes and containers. Detail and color will be added. Appropriate landscaping will finish off each project.

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Von Bamford, Lawrence, and Kenneth R.Trimblay, Jr. eds. *The Big Book of Small House Design.* New York: Black Dog and Leventhal, 2004.
A great source for explaining floor plans and drawings. Provides ideas for green homes.

FILM/VIDEO

Behind the Scenes with Carrie Mae Weems. Dir. Ellen Hovde and Muffie Meyer, First Features. 2001.
Hosted by Penn and Teller this video is an exciting and fun exploration of the life and work of artist Carrie Mae Weems.

Hellfighters. Dir. Andrew V. McLaglen. Perf. John Wayne, Jim Hutton, Katharine Ross. 1968.
Great shots of the Goose Creek oil field, Galveston Bay, areas outside Houston including Baytown, shows late 60's Houston.

Jason's Lyric. Dir. Doug McHenry. Perf. Forest Whitaker, Allan Payne, Jada Pinkett.
Filmed mostly in the Fourth and Fifth Wards, shows viewer shabby houses/older houses, brick paved streets. 1994.

Terms of Endearment. Dir. James L. Brooks. Perf. Shirley MacLaine, Debra Winger, Jack Nicholson, Jeff Daniels. Dist. 1983.
Good scenes of River Oaks, the Heights, Galveston Beach, circa 1980s.

Urban Cowboy. Dir. James Bridges. Perf. John Travolta, Debra Winger. Dist. 1980.
Scenes of 1980's Pasadena, Deer Park, Pearland, and blue-collar venues.