More Than Meets the Eye

*Carolyn Day*
T. H. Rogers Middle School

INTRODUCTION

In an interview in 1998, Ossie Davis, an American actor and playwright, stated, "Any form of art is a form of power; it has impact, it can affect change – it can not only move us, it makes us move." Whether through body language, spoken word, written word or visual imagery, artists shape our world. Historical change hinges on a single event in many instances. Recently the political journalists discussed the SNL (*Saturday Night Live*) Factor during our current presidential election campaign as being a powerful force in putting the candidates in a more favorable light to the younger voters. Millions of people seeing them on a trendy television show were an important means of conveying a nonverbal message.

Visual imagery is an effective method of communication that has been used since the days when prehistoric man told stories on cave walls:

> In most early civilizations and well into the current century, the majority of the population was illiterate. Reading was a luxury for the well-to-do. Drawings and cartoons were used as a simple way to convey ideas or sentiments to the working class populace. As we entered the Industrial Age and began using machines to do work for us, these working class people began to have more leisure time; time that was spent looking for entertainment. As more folks began reading, humor periodicals began to appear. Humor was an effective way to address social ills or political agendas." (Tychinski)

This studio art unit is written for middle school students and focuses on the influence visual artists have in creating and recording history. Most of the unit concentrates on the sphere of influence of American artists on history; however, it would be a terrible injustice to my students if the art narration was limited only to America. Paintings associated with the Spanish Civil War, which include *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso and *Third of May* by Francisco de Goya, are not a part of American history, but they are commanding examples of the power of art to galvanize hearts and minds.

One American artist influential in shaping our early history is Benjamin Franklin. This remarkable man was gifted in many arenas, including art. His command of the unspoken was potent. Benjamin Franklin began publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack* in 1732. It is one example of the early use of a publication to further a cause in America. When Franklin was the editor, each issue of *Poor Richard's Almanack* contained some anecdotal image that reflected Franklin's perspective on life in America. Political cartoons published in his periodical shaped opinions, gave credence to the cause of independence and commented on the human condition. The segmented snake is an image more people study when they learn about America's fight for independence, but there are numerous other illustrations equally significant. Benjamin Franklin's art molded people's thoughts in America during Colonial times and furthered the advance of the American Revolution rapidly without ever speaking one word.
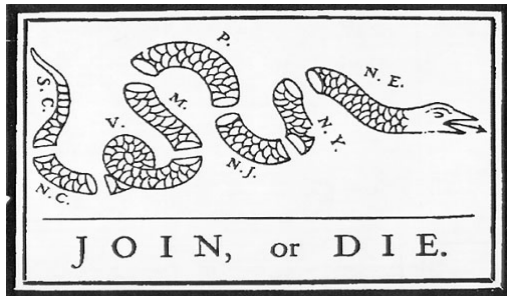
This political cartoon, "Join or Die," by Benjamin Franklin, was originally published May 9, 1754, in the *Pennsylvania Gazette.* This woodcut drawing pictures a divided snake in eight pieces representing the existing colonial governments. The drawing was based on the popular superstition that a snake that had been cut in two would come to life if the pieces were joined before sunset. The illustration captured the public's imagination instantaneously, and was reprinted in other newspapers.

"Federal Superstructure" is another cartoon by Benjamin Franklin. It appeared in the Massachusetts's *Centinel* on January 30, 1788. It shows a hand helping to raise Massachusetts to an upright position and join the states that had ratified the Constitution.

Cartooning in early American history was usually political in nature. Benjamin Franklin and others realized that they could achieve their goals more quickly using humor because it got people interested and then more involved quicker. Other times in United States history images appearing in publications impacted opinion and effected change. Some of these periods are during the War Between the States, World War I, and World War II. Uncle Sam and Smokey the Bear are characters that remain a part of our American culture. These characters continue to evoke emotion to viewers and maintain appeal to generations of Americans. They serve a purpose and shape opinion. These characters appeal to our desire to work toward a common goal.

Political cartoons are common during times of war. Uncle Sam helped us to get men to enlist in the Armed Forces beginning before World War I; however, Uncle Sam has a long evolving history beginning when provisions were provided to the troops during the War of 1812 by a New York meat packer, Sam Wilson. There is not too much information for or against Sam Wilson being the origin of Uncle Sam, the personification of America. Legend says that a soldier asked what the U.S. stamped on the side of the carton stood for, and jokingly he was told it stood for Uncle Sam. Since that time several people are attributed with adding to the character as we know it today: Dan Rice, a circus performer dressed in Uncle Sam attire, popularized the image, and cartoonist Thomas Nast mirrored Abraham Lincoln's physical appearance. None was more important than James Montgomery Flagg, a cartoonist who made Uncle Sam into the United States Army recruiting poster.

Other characters continue to shape our thinking in a more lighthearted way through the eyes of a group of neighborhood friends and a dog we all know very well. This group of ragtag characters that we know as *Peanuts* is the creation of Charles Schultz. These wise children and their beloved canine are so revered that United States Postal Stamps portraying their likenesses are now available. These characters tell us about life in simple terms that most understand readily. They originated as lines on paper, but after reading their words of wisdom and watching their interactions with each other, they are now beloved members of our society. They allow us to laugh at ourselves, and as Victor Borge said, "The shortest distance between two people is laughter." Approaching serious subjects in a playful form is not a new phenomenon.

During the early years of our Republic, many journals and other publications galvanized the thoughts and dreams of colonial America. One publication published by Benjamin Franklin regularly poked fun at our serious human condition in our new nation.

Franklin's publication is not alone in molding opinion in America. Other periodicals also contain dynamic editorial cartoons and visuals that contribute significantly to their appeal and longevity. One such magazine is *The New Yorker*. I know I go straight to the cartoons when I open it. The cartoons are brilliant comments on life that bring a smile to your face and a different take on an every-day situation. *The New Yorker* cartoons demonstrate the lighter side of the role of the artist in our society.

Artists do not always dwell on gloom and doom as indicated in some of the works cited above. Many use comedy to discuss potentially sensitive subjects. During a recent interview one contemporary comedian stated that no subject was off-limits; the timing to know when it is acceptable to make light of something is the crucial element. When we are able to laugh at a situation, then we are on the road to recovery. Everything is going to be OK.

In our pressure-filled society, we all need comic relief. In America this humorous way of portraying difficult situations began in the eighteenth century with the advent of periodicals and continued in the nineteenth century in graphic novels. These novels were considered less than *real* literature because they were a departure from familiar formats.

The novel was another publication designed to entertain people. The books were usually illustrated, usually involved great adventures or mysteries, and were very popular publications. Many of Americas' heroes gained a place in the hearts of the people through this medium. Swiss Humorist Rodolphe Topffer published *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* in Europe in 1841, and it became the first major graphic novel to appear in America in 1842. It appeared on September 14, 1842, in a weekly New York City periodical entitled *Brother Jonathan*. In1895 *The Yellow Kid* became the first successful comic strip character. Since then there have been many characters that have become icons in our society like the Green Hornet or Superman. Most of America does not consider the graphic novel as literature, but many see benefits to this format.

Our literacy rate is higher today than ever before, but many people still do not read unless reading is the only source of getting desired information. This sad statement boosts the importance of drawings, cartoons and graphic novels to express thoughts and opinions to the general public. Graphic novels are original, full-length works that look and read like a comic book but are presented in book form. The story is visual with only a few words to support the drawings. The drawings are in panels and cover a myriad of subjects ranging from the most basic of concepts to complex topics. Sequels are appearing more frequently today, after witnessing the success of the *Harry Potter* series of books. Graphic novels are more than just comic books. Sure, comic books fit into this category, but the GN goes way beyond the comic book. Look and read through graphic novel selections carefully before allowing students to read them.

At the website www.time.com/time/2005/100books/0,24459,graphic_novels,00.html, the top ten ALL TIME graphic novels are listed, but of these selections only one is suitable for young children and another is appropriate for older teens. The others are very inappropriate. *The Complete Bone Adventures* by Jeff Smith is a graphic novel whose characters and story lines are well defined and middle school age students will identify with each selection in the series readily. *Watchman* by Dave Gibbons is appropriate for older teens, but the other eight listed in *Time Magazine's* top ten graphic novel list have adult characters and story lines for mature audiences. *Persepolis* is the story of a girl growing up during the Islamic Revolution and enduring the mayhem in her country. It is written and illustrated by Marjane Satrapi.

In *Graphic Novels in Your Media Center*, Allyson and Barry Lyga state that three diverse learners benefit from graphic novels. They divide the learners into the following classifications:

1. Students Incapable of Visualization – Because it is extremely difficult for some students to visualize a setting or a character, graphic novels provide visual prompts that support the text and assist the reader in envisioning a more accurate interpretation.

2. Reluctant Readers – Some students reach a reading plateau that they do not readily admit to because they are embarrassed or threatened by the material they are required to read. Their retention is minimal and they prefer to simply put the book down rather than read something that is difficult for them. The illustrations assist in their reading process and eliminate the more threatening aspects of the process. There is some data correlating successful male adult readers with those who read comic books or graphic novels when they were children. It kept them engaged in act of reading and decoding body language.

3. Visually Dependent Students – Our students demand immediate response from their endeavors and must have bold, in-your-face visuals for them to even see the value of the visual cues. They claim that it helps in their social and literary transition from adolescence to adulthood. Many recent studies indicate that we have a problem in addressing the educational needs of our male students. This is one available tool to bridge the learning gap.

OBJECTIVES

These lessons meet HISD objectives in Art, American history, and English. The students will:

- Art. 6.2.01 Define evaluative criteria appropriate to specific art forms
- Art.6.2.02 Critically evaluate your work and the work of others for two artworks
- Art.6.2.03 Identify technical qualities desirable in the use two given medias
- Art.1.2.06 Determine criteria for evaluating artworks
- Art.7.2.07 Analyze artworks in terms of process, media, style, function, purpose
- Art.8.1.01 Develop perception skills necessary for generating and organizing art
- Art.8.1.07 Understand the expressive qualities of specific art and design elements
- Art.8.1.08 Analyze the application of specific elements and principles in six works
- Art.8.1.04 Explore different and unusual ways of approaching six subjects
- Art.6.1.06 Develop two ideas that can be used in a variety of art areas
- Art.6.1.14 Analyze properties and techniques inherent to two different art areas and art media
- Art.6.1.16 Develop two ideas that can be used in a variety of art areas
- Art.5.1.15 Analyze group artworks to interpret meaning
- Art.5.1.17 Discuss everyday life as presented through group design
- Art.5.1.16 Share individual viewpoints through original group artwork
- Art.5.1.09 Compare relationships between design and everyday life
- Art.5.1.06 Express individual viewpoint through original artwork
- Art.5.1.04 Link observation, experience, and imagination to artistic self-expression
- Art.5.2.14 Recognize the characteristic historical visual cues of selected artworks and selected artists from a minimum of five art periods

RATIONALE

One major goal includes the introduction of humorists in America beginning with Benjamin Franklin through contemporary humorists including Bill Watterson, the artist and author of *Calvin and Hobbes,* two friends who show us a slice of life from their distinctive perspective. Through humor these artists and many others cover some of the toughest issues people face

during their lifetimes. It is difficult to laugh about sensitive topics, but as time, distance, and perspective factor into a scenario it gets easier to laugh about the most sensitive subjects.

Middle school students have their own variety of emerging humor, but have difficulty in expressing it in a socially acceptable manner. Providing a platform to express themselves gives males a sense of empowerment and addresses their specific needs that have been addressed poorly in our educational system over the past decades. We are losing our boys during middle school because we are not providing lessons and methods for implementing these lessons that actively engage our male students. This information is according to current studies that explored reasons for a significantly higher drop-out rate among males than females. There were many reasons, but two those teachers can address concern lack of interest and boredom. Identifying topics of interest and creating lessons that involve the use of gross motor skills along with fine motor skills can fulfill state-mandated objectives and may prove to be more successful in engaging our students.

We are educators and it is our responsibility to identify topics that interest students and meet educational objectives using a fresh array of subjects and teaching methods to engage all our students. We must all use our inquisitive natures and creative spirits to move out of our comfort zone and reach out to our youth using formats that interest them. Some teachers may be reluctant to explore untried waters and students may feel threatened at the mere mention of exposing an element of their life and holding it up for the world to see, and possibly joke about it. It takes a confident person to come out from the shadows to make light of personal situation. Humor exposes us – our strengths and weaknesses and our joys and fears. Several of the unit lessons involve competition and actions using gross motor skills to achieve goals that were previously implemented in a more sedentary way. These lessons are designed for all students, but they are particularly geared toward male students who are tuning out of school (literally and figuratively speaking) at a rapid pace.

On a personal level I want to give artistically-minded students an element of confidence in their abilities. There is an element of comfort in knowing that those who have come before you probably encountered like thinking from their parents and some of their siblings and peers. In a conversation about a student's unbelievable talent, a parent likened art to dessert after a four course meal: sometimes there is room for dessert and other times there is not. She clearly indicated that art was of no significance. I cannot disagree more fervently. This unit is designed to show the importance of the visual mind and creative spirit in society today, yesterday, and tomorrow. We are certainly not a core subject; we are a conglomerate of all the core subjects. I want all students to be proud of their gift and know that their mind and hand unite to form a commanding communication tool. With one stroke they can make people laugh or cry or even divide or bring people together with a simple image showing the human condition.

This unit is written for Pre-Advanced Placement art students in a middle school that is located in a large city. It can easily be modified to suite the needs of either elementary, regular middle school, or high school classes by adjusting the depth and complexity of each lesson. A major goal of this lesson is to enhance a student's ability to analyze drawings, cartoons and the graphic novel in communicating ideas. This unit requires visual prompts to introduce the unit, and more graphics to properly introduce the purpose of political, social, and satirical cartoons. After all, political cartoons develop accurate information and interpretive abilities and put them in a format that is socially provocative.

Graphic usage is worldwide and spans centuries and civilizations, but I am concentrating on the use of the political and satirical cartoon and the graphic novel in America from the American Revolution through today. My students are accelerated learners and have a tendency to over-think every situation. Graphic novels encourage students to think succinctly and

logically. The panels show a step-by-step progression of events and limit the jargon to a few relevant words or phrases. It eliminates ambiguity. Students with reading disabilities definitely benefit from this format.

LESSON PLAN PREPARATION

Although in my teaching position I work with children who are considered Gifted and Talented, I began trial lesson plans for this curriculum unit. We discussed humor and what makes them laugh. For my middle school aged students the topics often lean toward the absurd and slapstick. We read through a couple of comic books in addition to looking through age appropriate graphic novels, and we looked at political cartoons that I cut out of magazines and newspapers. We watched clips from routines by Bill Cosby and Ellen Degeneres. Bill Cosby discussed his relationship with his children and grandchildren, and Ellen Degeneres' routine involved getting peanuts on an airline flight. We concluded that humor discusses situations that are common to many people in a humorous, in-your-face manner.

Some created a political cartoon relevant to an issue important to their age group. The second group read a graphic novel to understand the purpose of the graphic novel better and to examine the illustration format using limited text to convey the story. Before assigning the students one of the two prospective projects, we discussed the history of political cartoons and their importance throughout many generations and virtually every society worldwide. We examined various cartoons for meaning and possible impact the cartoon could have on a community. Furthermore, we talked about the ability of a visual artist to express more about a subject without fearing censorship. Each of the students gave their reason why they thought a visual artist has more potential for expression. Their responses varied, but at the conclusion of our discussion they all understood the power of the wordless pen.

I gave the students the choice of working alone or with a partner. They all chose to work with a partner. With a stenographer's pad and pen in hand, each duo or trio began brainstorming ideas relevant to their world.   Class members provided a wealth of subject matter from teen magazines gleaned from the library. Current and older newspaper articles were also available for their use. Accurate research of a subject to obtain accuracy produces a more effective visual. Each group had the same access to materials whether they were creating a political cartoon or writing a graphic story.

Graphic stories are limited to approximately sixteen pages. The story must include an introduction of characters, setting, story, character development, and a conclusion. Because this unit is about effective use of humor in visual communication, stories show situations in a light-hearted manner. The introduction of existing visuals throughout the generations and across different cultures and brainstorming is proven to be a most important element in the success of the projects. In my test groups the students thought of great topics to spoof, but found it difficult to transfer the serious situation to a humorous one. After discussion and a few readings from Bill Watterson's wise *Calvin and Hobbes***,** the students began to envision ways of converting serious situations to comedic ones. It is still quite a struggle for them to loosen up enough to see the humor in everyday life. Because my students do have a tendency to over think, I limited their research time to two forty-five minute class periods. This gave them more reason to focus on topics derived during their brainstorming session and permitted them to address one topic they truly felt they could portray in a humorous manner.

In my introduction of this unit to single cell imagery, I read an article from our local newspaper about an armed robbery. I then told them a story my daughter relayed to me about her armed robbery experience. They were horrified. After listening to all their comments, I asked them if they found any humor in these otherwise humorless events. They did not see any humor from the newspaper account, but did recognize comedy in the narration of my daughter's event.

One cartoon from the December 20 and 27, 2004, issue of *The New Yorker* humorously illustrated a similar event. This particular comic showed two men standing about three feet apart. One of the men was dressed in a suit and had one arm up over his head and the other arm was outstretched toward a man facing him and had his wallet in it. The man across from him was dressed casually and had a gun in his hand and it was pointed at the man in the suit. Yes, the man was being robbed at gunpoint. The caption was "Use the platinum card – I need the miles." They began to understand the power of a one-liner.

One group of three sixth grade females gave me permission to use their work in this unit. They gravitated to a universal issue of mammoth proportions, global warming. They did their research and were passionate about the issue. They created a large scale line drawing on paper and then traced over the lines with a fine tip permanent marker on one side of a clear piece of heavyweight acetate. After this they developed their color palette and painted each area on the back side of the acetate. When you paint a cell painting the back side looks messy, but it looks very clean and precise when you view the work from the front. My initial thought was to buy products specific to painting on acetate. The medium needs to be very thick to get an opaque appearance quickly. I looked for cell paint locally, but was unable to find a product that produced the desired result. All the paints I found were designed with the crafter in mind. Hesitantly I told the girls to begin painting with Acrylic paints, painting from light to dark, back to front. They did a great job as you can see in the images below.

It was remarkable to me that they could understand the tragedy associated with global warming, and visualize an image that conveys one horrible aspect related to the issue. The serious piece has global appeal but does not empower an individual to understand that every person can do their part not to make a difference. In their research they read findings from a government funded research project that involved carbon emissions. This article stated that during the course of one year in a town of forty-five thousand people over three hundred thousand cubic feet of carbon dioxide is emitted from opening carbonated beverages. The girls found an issue regarding global warming where they could play a part in diminishing a problem of epic proportions.

They went to work immediately and there was very little time when they were not focused on completing a finished piece that they could look at with pride. The three girls have strong personalities, and they definitely learned negotiating skills during this process. I observed, but did not intervene so that they could resolve their own issues. The two images shown below are their completed images on the subject, the tragic and the comical. I especially thank students Maral G., Jennifer (Hanying) L., and Andrea A. for giving me permission to use their work in this unit.
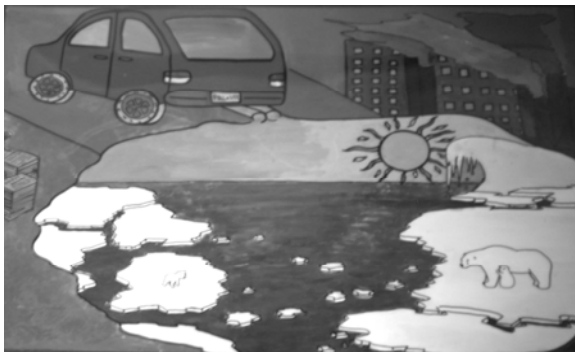
They could see the serious side of the issue, but the comic relief came only after they completed the somber version depicting the issue. Their research gave them all the ammunition they needed

to complete their poignantly comical portrayal. They learned that the CO2 emissions from carbonated beverages emit huge amounts of gases toxic to our atmosphere and our government knows this because they funded the study.

Occam's Razor Riddles

Over thinking is a curse that makes simple projects difficult. Their philosophy is, "Why make something easy when you can make it really difficult." They certainly do not adhere to Occam's razor. A fourteenth century Franciscan friar named William of Occam developed a philosophic principle that states, "Entities should not be multiplied unnecessarily" (Hiroshi). As a logician this definition works well with in the scope of his experiments. Sir Isaac Newton used William of Occam's rule, but changed it slightly to fit his scientific needs. Newton believed that, "We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances" (Hiroshi).

These meanings accurately convey the philosophy's concept; however, most scientists simply state the principle by saying the simplest answer that works is the correct one; typically the best. There are so many ways to state this principle, but the simplest explanation is typically the best one. In other words, the simplest answer that fits the situation is the correct one. The students love riddles and will enjoy this exercise. To avoid a quagmire students work through a few simple riddles.

The following are easy Occam's Razor style riddles:

1. Runs all day and never walks.
    Often murmurs, never talks.
    It has a bed, but never sleeps;
    It has a mouth but never eats.

2. "Three people check into a hotel. They pay $30 to the manager and go to their room. The manager finds out that the room rate is $25 and gives $5 to the bellboy to return. On the way to the room the bellboy reasons that $5 would be difficult to share among three people so he pockets $2 and gives $1 to each person. Now each person paid $10 and got back $1. So they paid $9 each, totaling $27. The bellboy has $2, totaling $29. Where is the remaining dollar?"

3. You need to measure out exactly four gallons; how do you do this if you only have a three gallon container and a five gallon container?

4. Two fathers and two sons went fishing. Each caught exactly one fish and yet there were only three fish caught. Why?

COMEDY

The following is information I received in class while preparing for this unit. It was so important to this unit that I included it in total as it was given to me. Taking the time to put comedy in plain words and getting student input into what they think is amusing will significantly add to the success of this unit. They are probably very much like many of us in our society. It is difficult to tell people what makes us laugh, but we know it when we hear or see it. Knowing the types of comedy, the techniques of comedy, differences between tragedy and comedy and how comedy affects us will enlighten all of us considerably.

One meaning of comedy, as defined in materials that were given to us in class is, "The comic is the product of a perceived incongruity between a subject-matter/ issue/ situation/topic and its treatment/expression" (Cunningham).

Types of Comedy (From class notes in the seminar by Merrilee Cunningham)

Low Comedy: is not serious in purpose nor is it presented in a subtle way. There is little intellectual appeal and a few forms of this type of humor include, but are not limited to, wordplay, trickery, fighting and boisterous conduct, clownishness or coarse jesting.

High Comedy: is a more serious form of comedy that makes you think. Some more accepted forms of this style of humor discuss the human condition and challenges social mores.

Burlesque: is a type of humor that gleans its appeal from ridiculous, exaggerated distortions that alters commonly accepted subjects and distorts our thinking about things "that have always been that way."

Farce: is a light-hearted dramatic work that exaggerates situations, personalities of characters and uses body humor many times.

Lampoon: is an overstated spoof that attacks a person or a group of people.

Parody: is an imitation of a real piece of work and is designed to make fun of the original piece. Sometimes they do not make much sense. The article likened parody in literature to what a caricature and a cartoon are in art.

Satire: gives us an opportunity to ridicule the idiosyncrasies of people, places, and times.

Slapstick: is a loud, physical form of comedy where people laugh at base situations.

Travesty: makes light of a serious subject and brings everything down to a lower level.

Other information disseminated in class outlined more comedic techniques. Some of these methods are caricature, hyperbole, irony, paradox, parody, pun, sarcasm, and wit.

Tragedy and comedy are diametrically opposed. Whereas tragedy is rational; comedy is irrational. While a tragedy involves a hero; comedy does not. These types of comedy are evident in visual humor, but are skillfully adapted to a non-verbal image. Created characters act as surrogates to their human counterparts, and provide distance so we recognize the situation, but intellectually feel above the zaniness of the animated creatures. This distance allows time to absorb the intent of the artist as we perceive it. One of the best attributes of drawn, non-verbal humor is that every person has the ability to interpret the images differently; thus limiting censorship. It becomes much harder to disallow an editorial cartoon when it can be interpreted so many sundry ways (Cunningham).

How Comedy Affects Us (From class notes in the seminar by Merrilee Cunningham)

1. Comedy is based on irony.
2. Awareness of irony is an intellectual, not emotional process.
3. Comedy lifts us out of our emotional responses.
4. With emotional defenses down, our mind can see the need for change in a comic character.
5. Typically the comic character is blind to his misperceptions but repeats the rigid behavior.
6. Good comedy allows us to feel superior to the characters.
7. Despite our superior position, we see similarities between the comic characters and ourselves.
8. We sense our own rigidity and blindness are like the comic fool's and note the laughter the comic fool arouses.
9. Comedy acts as a way to change the individual or the society using laughter.
10. Satires, ridicule, and burlesque often work in the service of change.
11. Comedy uses exaggeration, understatement, role reversal and generally the devices of irony to make us laugh and compare.

OVERVIEW OF THE UNIT

Lessons in this unit are designed to integrate drawing, painting, research, history, world cultures and storytelling in a comedic way. Before any projects begin students must have a working knowledge about the Elements of Design that include Line, Shape, Color, Texture, Symmetry, and Balance. "Color My World," "Keep It Simple" or "Over-thinking Is Not Your Friend," and "That Makes Me Laugh" are introductory lessons that precede the meat of the unit. In these classes students learn about themselves and their classmates by taking a personality test where people are divided into one of four different color groups. The next segment introduces Occam's Razor style riddles for them to solve. This illustrates the need to keep thought processes and projects simple. The third introductory class explores types of comedy and what makes them laugh. Hand-outs for each of these classes are included in this unit.

The first lesson is "Simple Drawing and Simple Writing Convey a Message Simply." This lesson teaches drawing objects using combinations of the five basic shapes in a step-by-step method. It is a simple and effective way of drawing that forms a firm foundation for artists. After drawing an object each artist writes a simple sentence that describes the object they created.

"Personification and The Super Hero inside Me" is the next project in this unit. In this unit we look at photographs, view movie clips and artworks, and determine if the piece is factual or a flight of the imagination. Furthermore, we analyze each piece and list the reasons why we labeled it real or a fantasy. Art replicates real life or creates a fantasy environment. Art uses recognizable traits and forms or uses imagination and gives human qualities to animals or inanimate objects. References lean toward familiar characters and scenes from movies. We all know that teapots do not dance, sing or have facial expression, but they do in the Walt Disney's movie *Beauty and the Beast.* Not many elephants fly, but they certainly do in Walt Disney's movie *Dumbo.* These are movies that most of us love to watch. We cherish memories artists create in giving human personalities to these creatures and objects.

Does a super hero live inside you? Most of us have some ideal that may reach the super hero status. To assist in seeing a visual image of the hero inside themselves, students will write a description of their ideal Super Hero. Questions to answer in their writing include:

1. What is your character's name? _____
2. What does your hero look like? _____
3. Does your hero look like a human, an animal, or something else?

    _____
4. Does your hero wear clothing, and if so, describe the clothing? _____
5. What colors do you use to create your hero? _____
6. What powers does your hero possess? _____
7. What moods does your character have? _____
8. Is there an issue your hero wants to solve? _____
9. What does your hero do every day? _____
10. Does he do funny things? What are some of the funny things your hero does? _____

    _____

They will then draw a sketch of their hero. This illustration and story will go into their portfolio notebooks to use in subsequent lessons.

"Connect the Dots" is a project where students compose their own story from their own life or from fantasy, create their own symbols, develop a color palette and place a meaning to each color, and paint their own rendering using Australian Aboriginal style dot art. This is an art form that enables all students to complete a successful project using basic writing skills and iconography.

"Ben and Now" is our first sally into history. We observe some of the ingenious illustrations of Benjamin Franklin. There is a plethora of illustrations drawn by Benjamin Franklin. Many, but not all, are symbolic representations. He bridged many topics that remain in contemporary society. Family, love of country, and large and small political situations are a few of the topics of his drawings. Each student will select one of his drawings and make a single drawing using the same subject matter and put it in a present-day setting.

In "Family Language and Family Issues: A Self-Portrait" a student creates a comic strip based on their own family in a comedic way. They are encouraged not to reveal anything they do not want the whole world to know. They may use human, animal or inanimate objects as characters in their four to eight cell storyboards.

The lessons featured in this unit are the primary ones required to communicate key educational elements relevant this unit. Other instruction is necessary to relate learning objects to the elements of design. These lessons are available on request via e-mail at cday@houstonisd.org

CONCLUSION

Teaching young people is paramount in our society. It is a joy and a worthwhile endeavor that ultimately shapes our country's future. We continue to broaden our horizons and keep current in our pursuit to engage students in worthwhile learning experiences that intertwine disciplines and relay relevance to our students. Our responsibility is to continue to grow and learn while developing creative learning environments that encourage our students to remain in school and continue their educations.

Art contributes greatly to any educational experience. Art is a conglomeration of all disciplines. In a less intimidating setting art teachers have the opportunity to incorporate state-mandated objectives of many disciplines. Involving math, writing, history, world cultures, and science in a lesson plan develops a richer learning experience and deepens the relevance of art in our educational system. Many people do not consider themselves artists, but I disagree strongly. One of my daily objectives is to find the artist in every student and encourage them to use their artistic ability in every discipline. When all disciplines work together toward a common goal we all benefit.

Educators must see our changing world and create lessons children relate to in contemporary society. Let's keep it simple, direct and relevant. In doing so we craft life-long learners who have the ability to think using lessons from the past to fashion a more vibrant today and a better tomorrow.

LESSON PLANS

Lesson Plan One: Simple Drawing and Simple Writing Convey a Message Simply

Grade and Subjects:

Sixth Grade: Art, English, Environmental Science

Pre Lessons:

"I Have a Line for You" is an art lesson using variegated organic and inorganic lines to create shape. Students listen to various culturally rich music tempos and draw lines on paper when and how they feel the music through their marker while their eyes are closed. They stop drawing when the music stops. Their lines have created shapes. They color in each created shape with a sold color or a pattern until the 12" x 18" sheet of paper is completely covered with color or pattern.

Art History References: (See "Sources" below for the artwork)

Wayne Thiebaud is a contemporary artist who was born in 1920 in Arizona, but he grew up in California. He is best known for his pop art with subject matter ranging from cafeteria style foods, sweets, hamburgers, hot dogs, an everyday objects. His style mirrors our culture and has a graphic quality with more brightly colored images and a stark background. His images transcend the boundaries of any country and show a rapport with basic shape and form, and their systematic arrangement. His work named *Cakes* is a good example for this unit.

Paul Klee is a Swiss artist who was born in 1879 and died in 1940. He was a painter, an etcher, and a watercolorist. He is one of the most influential artists of our modern era. His work for this unit is entitled *Head of Man: Going Senile*. Mr. Klee used mixed medium and was instrumental in Cubism and Surrealism also. His work is steeped in symbolism in color and shape selection. He changed his style greatly after a trip to Tunisia. He was impressed by their freedom to use shape and color in a more vivid, interpretive manner.

Romare Bearden is an African-American artist who was born in 1912 in North Carolina but spent most of his life in Harlem in New York City. He was very important in recording African-American life. The piece entitled *The Last of the Blue Devils* is an excellent choice for this unit. He and Jacob Lawrence are two of the most influential African-American artists of the twentieth century.

Miguel Covarrubias is a Mexican illustrator and painter who was born in Mexico City in 1904. He studied art in New York City where he lived most of his life until his death in 1957. The painting for this unit is the jacket painting for the book *Mexico South* (Knopf) written and illustrated by Miguel Covarrubias.

Roy Lichtenstein was born in 1923 and painted in many different styles, but he is best known for his work based on a comic style of drawing. The work to be used in this unit is entitled *Sandwich and Soda*. It is a silk screen print that was painted in 1964.

Sources:

*Encarta Encyclopedia is the source for the biographical information on the artists.
*The Wayne Thiebaud's image source is www.artfacts.net.
*The Miguel Covarrubias' illustration source is www.animationarchive.org.
*The Romare Bearden and Roy Lichtenstein prints are found at
   www.mmoca.org/mmocacollects/show.
*The Paul Klee's print source is www.allposters.com.
*Drawings of animals, flowers, people, cartoons, vehicles, dinosaurs and many other topics   are available at this website and have a printable version. All of the drawings are drawn step-by-step and show all the basic shapes required for each object. The website is www.entertainment.howstuffworks.com.
*Step-By-Step Drawing by Richard Mackay. The publisher is Doubleday & Company,
Inc., Garden City, New York, 1959. This book is more limited in the number of
Illustrated subjects, but the drawings are basic and comprehensive.
*Artlex Art dictionary, www.artflex.com/, last modified March 23, 2008. 1996 – 2008 Michael Delahunt MFA.

Time Required:

In all my lessons I limit the art history portion of the lesson to the age of the students plus one year. If the students are 13-year old children my art history introduction is no longer than 14-minutes.

With all the materials precut and pre-pasted as necessary the lesson takes (5) 45-minute classes.

Materials:

*Nature-themed card covers or magazine pages enlarged to 8" x 10". If the students are younger, then enlarge the original simple pages to as large a size as possible and adapt image sizes to accommodate students who are not developmentally ready to work successfully on a smaller scale.
*Magazine pages or car fronts glued and laminated on railboard
*Vellum large enough to cover the magazine pages
*Pencil
*Eraser
*Precut basic shapes in varying sizes cut from construction paper
*8" x 10" blank railboard sheets
*Gluesticks
*Three folders labeled easy, medium difficult
*Aluminum foil
*Printer's ink
*Paper towels
*Rags
*Masking tape

Objectives:

Students will:
*Gain knowledge of the five basic shapes required to draw anything and everything.
*Understand the significance of proportion in creating shape components of an object.
*View famous artists who use basic shapes in creating their art
*Scrutinize structures in nature and simplify their configuration into basic shapes that includes Circles, Squares, Rectangles, Triangles, and Ovals.
*Discern the basic shapes within the outlined perimeter of each object
*Select corresponding shapes from the precut construction paper shapes and glue them on a blank sheet of railboard to make the composition they traced.
*Craft a composition using cut shapes of paper on railboard and/or continue to complete a foil relief.
*Manipulate placing a piece of Aluminum foil over the front surface of railboard and wrapping the foil over the edges of the railboard.
*Discover taping and gluing techniques.
*Exhibit a working knowledge of burnishing using printer's ink.
*Write a simple word, sentence or paragraph describing their composition using correct English standards.
*Choose a color for the backing board to frame their artwork.
*Demonstrate their ability to convey a simple written description of their work.

Learning Experience:

1. We learn about shape, one of The Elements of Design. We discuss the importance of this design element in composing two and three-dimensional art. If you know about this design element and use the five basic shapes in varying proportions you can draw or build anything. The five basic shapes we discuss are circle, square, rectangle, triangle, and oval. Large shapes are viewed and examined.
2. One-shaped everyday objects the students name in a class discussion are written on the board. A glass, a baseball or a sandwich are examples of one-shaped objects.
3. More complex everyday objects are passed around the room, and the students write down which of the basic shapes are needed to draw that object.

4. The teacher draws one of the objects breaking it down into basic shapes. Make it an everyday object that is familiar to all the students and not too difficult to draw.
5. The students model this drawing activity on paper that is located at each work table. Let the students know that this drawing does not have to be perfect. We are drawing it to examine the shapes that you need to draw it.
6. Students put their drawings into their portfolios, and we turn our attention to relevant works of art from culturally diverse known artists.
7. We examine art prints clearly displaying the artist's use of basic shapes in their art.
8. Dividing the class into groups of three or four students the groups compete to cover the image using translucent shapes. The team that covers more of the print after a five-minute period is the winner for the day.
9. After a class discussion students write their observations about the exercise.
10. Based on their art readiness students request a laminated pre-glued magazine page from teacher provided images that are laminated and categorized into Easy, Medium, or Difficult and placed in folders. They decide which degree of difficulty is appropriate for them. They may reselect if needed.
11. Materials are at each drawing table and students take a piece of vellum and hinge it over the magazine page using two pieces of masking tape.
12. Looking through the translucent vellum students look at the magazine image and determine the basic shapes that compose each object.
13. Now they trace around the perimeter of each object on the vellum.
14. They look carefully at the outlined shapes and determine what basic shapes combine and overlap and fit within the confines of the outlines. If an object has more than one shape in it then they draw all of each of the shapes. Trace over the entire page using only the five shapes.
15. Fold the vellum back away from the railboard and look at the drawing without the magazine page underneath it. Do not take the masking tape off until you are certain you have drawn over all the shapes. Decide whether it is complete or if you need to draw more shapes to complete the composition. When you have achieved your goal of transforming the complex image into simple shapes then proceed to the next step.
16. At this point determine if time permits you to color the shapes in using vibrant colors of markers or if you want to go further and create a foil relief.

Option A Lesson Plan:
Color the shapes in with marker to design a more abstract piece of art. This option takes less time, but still delivers the information on shape adequately. With this option use the following:

Learning Experiences:

1. Outline each of the shapes with a marker. No two shapes that touch each other can be the same color. There is no limit to the number of colors you can use.
2. Color in every area of the page. Leave no white space.
3. Decide on a color that you can mount your work on to display it. Which color complements the work without overpowering it?

Option B Lesson Plan:

Create a foil relief from the shape drawing
With this option use the following:

Learning Experiences:

1. Turn the line drawing over and hinge it onto a blank piece of railboard.

2. Trace over all the lines. When you turned the paper over you put the graphite toward the blank railboard and when you trace over the lines it transfers the lines onto the board beneath the drawing. Remove the drawing on vellum and put it away in your portfolio.
3. Using provided precut shapes select ones that corresponds with each shape on your drawing. Avoid overlooking any shape. Work from the back to the front. A way to determine which shapes should be glued first is to look at the object and see if it is covered by another shape in any way. If it is, then that shape is behind another shape and should be glued on first. Glue on the shapes that are further away from you first. Work from back to front; those objects further away from you to those objects that are closest to you.   This will be important in the appearance of the final project.
4. Each shape selection should match in shape and size. Proportion is an integral Principle of Design, and a clear understanding of the relationship of one size and shape to another is imperative in learning to draw.
5. Once all the shapes are glued onto the board, cover the front with a piece of aluminum foil. Try and keep the foil wrinkle-free.
6. Place the aluminum foil with the shiny side facing the table.
7. Put the drawing with the front of the drawing touching the foil.
8. Pull the edges of the foil over the edges of the board and tape down all the foil edges using masking tape. Miter the corners for a neater project.
9. Flip the art over and rub over the surface lightly using an old soft rag. The objects begin to emerge as you rub over the surface. Avoid rubbing to hard. It does not take very much pressure at all, and too much pressure will tear the foil surface.
10. Wrap the cloth around your index finger and touch the end of the cloth into the printer's ink lightly.
11. With this foil relief most of the color is rubbed off. Only the edges should have color. If you feel that color is too much for the class at this point limit the ink selection to only black or one color.
12. Rubbing off most of the color is called burnishing. Rub in concentric circles until most of the color is removed and only the edges of the objects have color.
13. Decide on a color that you can mount your work on to display it. Which color complements the work without overpowering it?
14. Glue the foil relief to you mounting board selection. Put a measure mark in upper left and lower right corners. This will permit you to place your work on the backing board with a surround that is even on all four sides.
15. Describe your art. Include information about the subject matter, the process, three or more things you learned, and how you feel about the finished product.

Hand-out

Vocabulary:
1. Elements of Design -- The basic components used by the artist when producing works of art. Those elements are color, value, line, shape, form, texture, and space. The elements of art are among the literal qualities found in any artwork.
2. Shape: Circle, Oval, Square, Rectangle, Triangle -- An element of art and design that pertains to an area set off by one or more of the other elements of art and design.
3. Composition -- The way in which the parts of something are arranged to form a work of art. In order to be considered a composition a work must include subject matter and background
4. Railboard -- Usually 22" x 28" large sheets of heavy-duty paper that more closely resembles a thin cardboard in weight, but is finished on both sides.
5. Drawing Paper -- A heavier, better quality paper that is designed for different mediums. There are different weights of paper to meet the requirements of varied mediums.

6. Construction Paper --Thick paper produced in a variety of colors and used especially for school artwork
7. Outline -- A line drawn around the outside edges of something to show its shape
8. Vibrant -- Radiantly bright colors full of liveliness and energy
9. Background -- Those portions or areas of composition that are back of the primary or dominant subject matter or design areas.
10. Mid-ground -- The part of a picture or scene between the background and the foreground
11. Foreground -- The part of a picture or scene that appears nearest the viewer
12. Relief -- A type of sculpture in which form projects from a background. There are three degrees or types of relief: high, low, and sunken. In high relief, the forms stand far out from the background. In low relief (best known as bas-relief), they are shallow. In sunken relief, also called hollow or intaglio; the backgrounds are not cut back and the points in highest relief are level with the original surface of the material being carved.
13. Foil Relief -- Shaped areas raised from a flat surface with a metal front surface
14. Concentric circles -- Describes circles and spheres of different sizes with the same middle point
15. Realism -- A style or tradition in which artists strive to achieve a life-like representation in their work.
16. Abstract -- An image that reduces a subject to its essential visual elements, such as lines, shapes, and colors.
17. Surrealism -- A style of art, prominent in the first half of the 20th century, developed in response to the ideas of psychologists such as Carl Jung. Some surrealists such as Salvador Dali and René Magritte represent dreamlike or fantasy images in a representational way. Others like Joan Miró and Max Ernst use more abstract forms to represent the subconscious.
18. Cubism -- An influential, 20th-century style developed by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque, based on the simultaneous presentation of multiple points of view.
19. Proportion -- The size relationship between the parts of an image and the whole.
20. Principles of Design -- Certain qualities inherent in the choice and arrangement of elements of art in the production of a work of art. Artists "design" their works to varying degrees by controlling and ordering the elements of art. Considering the principles is especially useful in analyzing ways in which a work is pleasing in formal ways. The principles include 1. Balance (the several kinds: symmetry, asymmetry, and radial) 2. Emphasis (largely synonymous with dominance) 3.Eurythmy (a combination of harmony, proportion, and movement) 4. Harmony (compare to unity, tension, and variety) 5. Horror vacui (in contrast to limitation, and emphasis or dominance, the principle most often cited as undesirable) 6. Limitation (in contrast to horror vacui, and emphasis or dominance) 7. Movement 8. Pattern (often paired with rhythm) 9. Proportion 10.Rhythm (often paired with pattern) 11.Tension (compare to unity, harmony, and variety) 12.Unity (largely synonymous with coherence and homogeneity) 13.Variety (often contrasted with unity)
21. Mounting -- To attach securely to a support, as when an artwork on paper is affixed to a sheet of cardboard or another flat and rigid material.
22. Translucent --Allowing light to pass through, but objects on the other side cannot be seen clearly
23. Transparent -- Allowing light to pass through with little or no interruption or distortion so that objects on the other side can be seen clearly
24. Opaque -- Does not allow light to go through so that images cannot be seen through it
25. Printer's Ink -- A semisolid quick drying ink made especially for use in printing
26. Burnish -- To make something shine by rubbing it with a smooth instrument
27. Miter -- To join two 45-degree angles materials together to form a 90-degree angle
28. Graphite -- A soft dark carbon that conducts electricity. It occurs naturally and is also produced industrially. Pencil lead is not lead; it is graphite.

29. Vellum paper -- An off-white heavy translucent paper
30. Tracing paper -- Paper through which it is possible to see what is underneath, and is used for drawing a copy of something underneath
31. Simplification -- An image-development strategy whereby an image is made less complex by the elimination of details.

Art Masters: Copies of the aforementioned artwork by the following artists:

1. Wayne Thiebaud
2. Paul Klee
3. Romare Bearden
4. Miguel Covarrubias
5. Roy Lichtenstein

Technology:

*Teacher created five minute PowerPoint presentation on the art of the five art masters mentioned above
*PBS video: *Against the Odds: The Artists of the Harlem Renaissance*

Evaluation:

*Each student writes a descriptive piece about their composition. Specific information about the subject matter, the process, three or more things you learned, and how you feel about the finished product must be included in your one-page writing.
*Successful completion of the project completing minimum project standards.

Lesson Plan Two: Personification and the Super Hero inside Me

This lesson builds on shape concepts learned in Lesson One, and adds knowledge required to create a cartoon or comic. In this lesson we view images and determine if they are human figures or characters with human qualities. The purpose of this lesson is to expose students to character possibilities beyond the human form. Many students are uncomfortable in drawing the human form. Personification permits character development that is less intimidating. As in Walt Disney's movie, *Beauty and the Beast,* some of the more endearing characters are inanimate objects; characters like the candlestick or the teapot. Through personification drawings remain less complicated and students achieve more successful results. Now a student does not have to have a thorough knowledge of anatomy, but can add features and expressions to characters that are easier to draw.

Each student gets two sets of cards. The cards have either an "R" (real) or and "F" (fanciful) on them. Looking at drawn cartoon images that are realistic and fanciful, class members quickly select an R or F card and place it in a stack as the computer scrolls through the bank of images. This method permits students to see many selections in a short time frame, and encourages decisive action.

Viewing several animated movie clips adds credibility to the idea of using something other than the human figure as characters in a story. Movies to watch include *Beauty and the Beast, Lady and the Tramp,* and *Dumbo.* The movies are Disney movies and are appropriate for all audiences. Each movie has personable characters that are not human, but function like humans.

Many of us think we can not draw, but we certainly did not think this way when we were children. We learned we could not draw by well-meaning instructors and loved ones. Call out words and let each student draw that word in a minute. Words like house, smile, comb, pencil, love, bow, ring, cat, table, lamp, pillow, glasses, fish, etc.

The next exercise is playing the face game. The six basic facial expressions are surprise, sadness, happiness, fear, anger and hatred. Two students take turns in drawing and acting out an expression as they play the face game. This enables students to observe facial expressions more clearly, and it gives them a chance to draw them quickly from observation.

After these exercises students write about the super hero inside them. Their writing must answer the following questions.

1. What is your character's name? _____
2. Does your hero look like a human, an animal, or something else? _____
3. What does your hero look like? _____
4. Does your hero wear clothing, and if so, describe the clothing? _____
5. What colors do you use to create your hero? _____
6. What powers does your hero possess? _____
7. What moods does your character have? _____
8. Is there an issue your hero wants to solve? _____
9. What does your hero do every day? _____
10. Does he do funny things? What are some of the funny things your hero does? _____

Now each student goes to www.unclefred.com on a computer. This is a wonderfully friendly site because it permits teachers to use this site in class for free. Many cartoon illustrators are incredibly generous, and Uncle Fred is one of them. He lists different categories and shows an individual how to create a figure step by step using basic shapes. It is a great way for students to see how to construct a figure. It is fast, easy and effective. This site and others mentioned in these lessons are friendly to school aged people, but that is not true of all sites. Some sites are much too mature for children. View potential websites and direct students to websites that are appropriate to accomplish lesson objectives. Other free sites have a lot of advertising to wade through before you get to the relevant information. The trouble is sometimes worth it to get the free download. Inspect potential websites and direct students to websites that are appropriate to accomplish lesson objectives.

Students draw their super hero based on their writing. Encourage students to keep it simple and use basic shapes. This is a proven way of building a strong drawing foundation. If art students learn to dissect an object and see it as a combination of basic shapes they can draw anything.

Grade and Subjects:
Grade Six – Art, Language arts, Computer science

Art History References:

List below are sources that contain images that are examples of characters that show personification.

Sources:

*Draw and Color with Uncle Fred, http://www.unclefred.com operated by Fred Laswell, Inc.
  1111 North Westshore Blvd. Suite 604, Tampa, Florida 33604.
*Cartoonography by Tim Slee, timslee@post3.teledk
*Artlex Art dictionary, www.artflex.com/, last modified March 23, 2008. 1996 – 2008 Michael
  Delahunt MFA.
*Walt Disney Home Video, *Dumbo.*
Walt Disney Home Video, Lady and the Tramp*
*Walt Disney Home Video, *Beauty and the Beast*
***Toonopedia** by Don Markstein, 1999-2008, Don Markstein. www.toonopedia.com

*Drawing Facial Expressions for cartoons and Icons by Valerie Beeby 2007-2008. www.purple-owl.com/

Time Required: (8) 45-minute class periods

Materials:
*Drawing paper
*Pencil
*Eraser
*Preprinted cards with "R" or "F" written on them
*Computers
*Movies as listed

Objectives:

Students will:
*Communicate ideas and thoughts through illustrations and written descriptive essays.
*Deal with information and ideas in sequential order.
*Envision abstract thoughts.
*Explore drawing techniques for drawing people and caricatures.
*Complete line drawings using learned drawing techniques.

Learning Experience:

1. Show cartoon drawings exhibiting human forms and characters showing personification
2. As the images are scrolling have the students decide if they are real or fanciful.
3. Students select a card and place it in a stack.
4. After the scrolling is complete students count the number of cards in each stack and report the number in each of their stacks.
5. Play preset clips from *Lady and the Tramp, Beauty and the Beast,* and *Dumbo.*
6. Discuss personification and symbolic drawing.
7. Call out fifteen words and have them draw the word quickly. Some words are house, smile, comb, pencil, love, bow, ring, cat, table, lamp, pillow, glasses, fish, etc. Write a sentence using six of these words. Now draw the words and exchange your pictographs.
8. Read the sentences out loud.
9. Play the face game
10. Draw a cartoon character in a setting at www.unclefred.com.
11. Write about the super hero inside them.
12. Make a line drawing of their super hero in a setting on paper and redraw it with Sharpie on acetate.
13. Turn the acetate over and color the back side of the acetate with colored Sharpies.

Handout:

Vocabulary:
1. Acetate -- A transparent sheet placed over originals or artwork, allowing the designer to draw or write instructions and\or indicates additional colors for placement
2. Cartoon -- Today, the word usually refers to a humorous line drawing. Originally, a cartoon was a full-size preparatory drawing for a large wall or ceiling painting, from the Italian cartone, meaning a large piece of paper.
3. Personification -- Giving human qualities to animals or inanimate objects
4. Pictograph -- Also called a pictogram, figurative drawing or picture representing a word, sound or idea. They represent the earliest form in the evolution of a system of writing. An example is the ancient Egyptian writing called hieroglyphs. This method of communication is still used today by certain civilizations including Chinese, Japanese, and American Indians. It

may also refer to a pictorial representation of numerical data or relationships, especially a graph, but having each value represented by a proportional number of pictures.

5. Style -- A visual planning device for sketching out a sequence of frames for a comic strip, film, video, and so on
6. Symbol -- A sign or object that stands for or suggests something else because of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance
7. Technique -- Method or procedure used to produce a work of art

Technology:

*Scrolling images of cartoon drawings
*Showing movie clips
*Drawing images on the computer

Evaluation: Write a one-page essay about this lesson

Lesson Plan Three: Ben and Now

This lesson is about one of our most famous Americans, Benjamin Franklin. Mr. Franklin was an extraordinary man who continues to influence our lives today when we look through the lenses of our glasses or swivel in our computer chair. He also set a tone for using humor to bridge political topics. His powerful images galvanized a young, struggling nation. He saw the power of humor and effectively used it to influence people just as political humorists do in today's society.

This lesson is drawing a cartoon about a current political situation. We discussed drawing techniques and personification in previous lessons. Although Franklin did not draw the human form often, he had a great command over symbolism to make his point. Each class member has a different Franklin cartoon. What is the message in the drawing? What similarities do you see in his cartoons with political cartoons in today's magazines and newspapers? Compare and contrast the styles.

Although I did not plan to initiate drawing people in this unit, I found such a great website that I decided to use it because so many political cartoons use caricature. The website has three components that include Drawing Basics, Drawing People, and Drawing Caricatures. Caricature, a style of visual humor that is easier to draw for many people, and much more difficult for others needs you to use your visual literacy located in the right side your brain which helps to achieve success in this venture. A caricature is an exaggeration of features when drawing a person, animal, or an object. Caricature is an effective way to tell a story using visual imagery.

In middle school we become less likely to just draw because we fear it will not be perfect. Drawing is a skill that is learned and continues to evolve throughout our lives. Drawing faces usually scares people needlessly. I remember this stage in my art training, and wish I had individual instruction without anyone, including the teacher, seeing what I was drawing. Computers are great for this, and there is a site that is largely free. It is well written and informative. It is worth the minimal fee they request at the end of each of the three included sessions. The free information is ample to get students started on drawing basics, people, and caricatures. I think it will be more helpful that one instructor trying to teach an entire class simultaneously. The website is the creation of Kirk Bjorndahl of Lago Vista, Texas. The web address is www.learntodraw.com. There is no sense in trying to reinvent the wheel when students can pace themselves and learn much more as they draw step-by-step maneuvering through the website.

Once they are comfortable with their drawing skills we can research topics of interest to each student, and draw a cartoon of their own.

Grade and Subjects

Sixth grade: Art, Language arts, United Sates History

Art History References:

www.sundaycomix.blogspot.com
www.morningcup.wordpress.com
www.ignatz.brinkster.com
www.learn-to-draw.com
www.earlyamerican.com

Time Required: (8) 45-minute classes

Materials:
*Paper
*Pencil
*Eraser
*Computers
*Calvin and Hobbes cartoon selections
*Collection of cartoons drawn by Benjamin Franklin

Objectives:

*Explore Benjamin Franklin political cartoon contributions
*Learn wisdom from Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*
*Explore symbolism
*Compare issues important to Colonial America to political issues contemporary America
**Learn to draw people
*Learn to draw caricatures

Learning Experience:

1. Make strips with information that may or may not be true regarding Benjamin Franklin's accomplishments. Students select one, open it, and decide if the statement is true or false. The class discusses the validity of each statement.
2. Discuss the symbolism in "Join, or Die." (See Introduction for drawing)
3. Interpret a Benjamin Franklin cartoon.
4. Compare and contrast colonial American political cartoons and contemporary cartoons.
5. Go to www.learntodraw.com website and interactively go through the free portion of the program and draw a few basics, people from three different perspectives, and caricature techniques.
6. Research topics of interest in American politics.
7. Draw a cartoon of your own.
8. Write text to accompany your cartoon.
9. Transfer your drawing onto acetate using a Sharpie to trace over your pencil lines.
10. Paint in the back side of your drawing on acetate using colored Sharpies.
11. Mount your acetate cell on white railboard, and mount the railboard-backed drawing onto a complementary colored backing board.

Handout:

Vocabulary:
1. Caricature -- A drawing, description, or performance that exaggerates somebody's or something's characteristics for humorous or satirical effect
2. Cartoon -- A humorous drawing published in a newspaper or magazine that comments on a topical event or theme. It is intended to entertain and often accompanied by a caption
3. Complementary -- Coordinating and completing something else

4. Exaggeration -- To make something appear more prominent than is usual or desirable
5. Pictograph -- A graphic symbol or picture representing a word or idea in some writing systems, as opposed to a symbol such as a letter of the alphabet representing an individual sound.
6. Silhouette -- The side view of a face
7. Style -- A distinctive and identifiable form in an artistic medium such as music, art, architecture, or literature
8. Symbol Drawing -- A graphic symbol or picture representing a word or idea, as opposed to a symbol such as a letter of the alphabet representing an individual sound
9. Symbolism -- The artistic method of revealing ideas through the use of pictographs
10. Technique -- The procedure, skill, or art used in a specific task

Technology:

*Interactive drawing lessons
*Online research

Evaluation: Display of completed project

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGAPHY

Works Cited

Books

Lyga, Allyson A. W., and Barry Lyga. *Graphic Novels in Your Media Center*: *A Definitive Guide.* Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2004.
   This book makes the compelling case for having graphic novels in the library. Graphic novels engage reluctant readers and those readers who have difficulty in visualizing.

Mackay, Richard. *Step-by-Step Drawing*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959.
   This book shows a beginning artist an extremely easy way to learn to draw. It is more limited in the number of illustrated subjects, but the drawings are basic and comprehensive.

Lecture

Cunningham, Merrilee. Lecture Notes. *Comedy in Literature: Greece to Hollywood.* Houston Teachers Institute-University of Houston Seminar. Spring 2008.

The Internet

Beeby, Valerie. "Drawing Facial Expressions and Symbols." Purple-Owl.com. 2007. June 5, 2008. <http://www.purple-owl.com/>.
   This site explores cartoon expressions.

Bjorndahl, Kirk. "Drawing People." "Drawing People." "Drawing Caricatures." Learn to Draw.com. 2007. June 5. 2008. <http://www.learn-to-draw.com/>.
   This site is a great tutorial for learning to draw the basics and more in sequential order. It is a wonderful tool for a teacher teaching a class to draw. With this site each student gets the same information at a comfortable pace. It makes more of you and increases your teaching effectiveness.

Borge, Victor. "Victor Borge Quotes." *ThinkExist.com Quotations Online.* May 1, 2008. June 05, 2008. <http://einstein/quotes/victor borge/>.
   Victor Borge's quote came from this site.

Davis, Ossie. "Ossie Davis Quotes." *ThinkExist.com Quotations Online.* May 1, 2008.June 05, 2008. < http://einstein/quotes/ossie_davis/>.
   The Ossie Davis quote about art came from this site.

Delahunt, Michael. "Artlex Art Dictionary." 2008. June 5, 2008. <http://www.artlex.com>.
    This is an invaluable site for definitions of art terms.

Dudok de Wit, Michael. *Parenthetical Missing Calvin (and Hobbes)*. September 1, 2006.
    April 20, 2008. <http://morningcup.wordpress.com/2006/09/01/missing-calvin-and-hobbes/>.

Hiroshi, Sugihara. "What is Occam's Razor?" University of California Riverside Department of
    Mathematics. 1997. University of California Riverside. April 20, 2008.
    <http://math.ucr.edu/home/baez/physics/General/occam.html>.
    This site tells us what Occam's razor is, and why it is important.

Laswell, Fred. "Draw and Color with Uncle Fred." 1998. Fred Laswell, Inc., June 5, 2008.
    <http://www.unclefred.com>.

Markstein, Don. *Toonopedia* 1999-2008, Don Markstein. 2008.

    <http:// www.toonopedia.com>.
  This site is and excellent source to learn about the history of cartoons in America. He has a thorough
  listing of germane cartoon items and information all about them and about their creator(s). He includes
  information about all the images, writers and illustrators, and cartoon characters listed in this unit.

Slee, Tim. "Cartoonography" Tim Slee, Inc., 2008. <http://www.timslee@post3.teledk>.
    This site allows students to make their own cartoon characters using the step-by-step drawing method.

Tychinski, Stan. "A Brief History of the Graphic Novel." 2004. *Graphic Novels.*
    <http://www.graphicnovels.brodart.com/history.htm>.

Videos

Against the Odds: The Artists of the Harlem Renaissance. Dir. Amber Edwards. Perf. Joe Morton. PBS
    Home Video, 1993.
    This video is used in Lesson Plan One.

Beauty and the Beast. Dir. Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise. Voice Perf. Paige O'Hara, Robby Benson, Jerry
    Orbach, Angela Lansbury, Richard White, and David Ogden Stiers. Buena Vista, 1991.
    This beloved animated film is a Disney production based on the French love story of a beautiful,
    intelligent young lady named Belle who people laugh at because she is a bookworm and finds true love
    in a most unlikely place has wonderful examples of personification.

Dumbo. Dir. Samuel Armstrong. Voice Perf. Sterling Holloway, Edward S. Brophy, Herman Bing, Verna
    Felton, Cliff Edwards. RKO, 1941.
    This treasured Disney film is an example of personification that tells the story of Mrs. Jumbo who
    wishes for a baby, but when the stork finally delivers; the baby has enormous ears that allow him to
    fly.

Lady and the Tramp. Dir. Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson. Voice Perf. Peggy Lee, Barbara Luddy,
    Larry Roberts, Bill Thompson. Buena Vista, 1955.
    This beautiful animated film shows personification in telling the love story of a pampered pooch who
    falls for a personable street dog. This was Disney's first full length cartoon feature and it was also his
    first to be shot in Cinemascope.

Works of Art

Bearden, Romare. "Romare Bearden." The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia.
    © 1994, 2000-2006, on Infoplease. © 2000–2007 Pearson Education, publishing as Infoplease.
    13 Jun. 2008 <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0806607.html>.

Bearden, Romare. *Serenade*. Collection of Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. New York, NY.
    1969. <http://www.mmoca.org/>.

Calvin and Hobbes. Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia. 22 Jul. 2004. Wikimedia Foundation. 10 Aug.
    2004 <http://en.wikipedia.org>. 2008. <http://en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Calvin_and_Hobbes>.

Covarrubias, Miguel. "Miguel Covarrubias." *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia.*
    © 1994, 2000-2006, on Infoplease. © 2000–2007 Pearson Education, publishing as Infoplease.
    13 Jun. 2008 <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0813835.html>.

De Goya, Francisco. *3rd of May*. The Prado Museum. Madrid, Spain. 1814. Artchive. *The Artchive's
    Favorites Tour*. Slide #12. Text by Kenneth Clark.
    <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/G/goya/may_3rd.jpg.html>.

Franklin, Benjamin. "*Join, or Die*." *The First Political Cartoons*. Archiving Early America. April 20,
    2008. 2008. <http://www.earlyamerican.com>.

Hulzier, Tim*. A Short Biography of Bill Watterson. 2002*. The Derkins Library for Calvin and Hobbes
    Research. *Rare Bill Watterson Art*. April 20, 2008 <http://ignatz.brinkster.net/cwords.html>.

Ink, Max. *Rare Watterson*. OSU Comic Research Library. October 26, 2007. June 2008.
    <http://www.sundaycomix.blogspot.com>.

Klee, Paul. "Paul Klee." *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia.*
    © 1994, 2000-2006, on Infoplease. © 2000–2007 Pearson Education, publishing as Infoplease.
    13 Jun. 2008 <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/people/A0827885.html>.

---. "Senecio." *AllPosters.Com*. Art.Com. 2008. Aril 20, 2008. <http:.//www.allposters.com>.

Lichtenstein, Paul. "Roy Lichtenstein." Infoplease. © 2000–2007 Pearson Education, publishing as
    Infoplease. 13 Jun. 2008 <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0281484.html>.

---. *Sandwich and Soda*, 1964. Collection of Madison Museum of Contemporary Art. Gift of the Betty
    Parsons Foundation. New York. <http://www.mmoca.org/mmocacollects/artist_page.php?id=20>.

Munch, Edvard. *The Scream"*. *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*. 22 Jul. 2004. Wikimedia Foundation.
    10 Aug. 2004. 11 June 2008. <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

Picasso, Pablo**. *Guernica***. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia. Madrid, Spain. 1937. Mark
    Harden's Artchive. *The Artchive's Favorites Tour*. Slide #23.
    <http:www.artchive.com/artchive/P/picasso/guernica.jpg.html>.

Thiebaud, Wayne. *Cakes*. National Gallery of Art. Washington, D. C. 1963. *Unbalancing Acts: Wayne
    Thiebaud Reconsidered*. An article written by Steven Nash Artchive.Com. April 20, 2008.
    <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/T/thiebaud.html>.

Supplemental Resources

Gair, Angela. *How to Draw and Paint PEOPLE*. London, England.
    Quarto Publishing Limited, 1991.
    Many different approaches to drawing the human figure are in this book. A few very easy lesson plans
    about drawing people are also in this book.

"How to Draw Animals." 02 July 2007. HowStuffWorks.com. 12 June 2008.
    <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/how-to-draw-animals.htm>.
    This site shows how to draw numerous animals step-by-step using basic shapes.

"How to Draw Cartoons." 09 July 2007. HowStuffWorks.com. 11 June 2008.
    <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/how-to-draw-cartoons.htm>.
    Inside this article is step-by-step instructions on how to draw a cartoon baby, cartoon dog, cartoon
    dragon, cartoon monster truck, cartoon mouse, cartoon locomotive, cartoon skateboarder, cartoon
    stuffed lion, cartoon hobo, cartoon Clydesdale horse, cartoon robot, cartoon soldier, sad clown cartoon,
    overweight jogger cartoon, cartoon juggler, cartoon roller-skater, baseball pitcher's windup cartoon,
    napping old man cartoon.

"How to Draw Flowers and Plants." 01 July 2007. HowStuffWorks.com. 12 June 2008.
   <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/how-to-draw-flowers-and-plants.htm>.
   This site shows how to draw numerous flowers and plants step-by-step using basic shapes.

Katter, Eldon, and Marilyn G. Stewart. *Art: A Personal Journey*. Worcester, Massachusetts: Davis
   Publications, Inc., 2002.
   This is a textbook, but it was not adopted by our school district. It has many fantastic ideas and lots of
   information and lesson plans. I used it in my Australian Aboriginal art project and in background
   information on pictograms and symbolic drawing. It also covers the Elements and Principles of design
   nicely. The unit entitled "Artists as Recorders" blends visual and written historical recording concepts
   in a concise manner. Their treatment of Egyptian and Haitian culture provides important data.

Llobera, Jose. *Alive to Art: Introducing Subjects and Skills.* Trans. Strachan, W. J. New York: Crane
   Russak & Company, Inc., 1976.
   Page 60 provides wonderful examples of possible facial expressions for the basic expression
   categories.