

Workshop 6

Literature, Art, and Other Disciplines

“One of the problems with integrating literature [and] other domains is the belief that there has to be some grandiose formal plan. And there does not. It can be very impromptu.”

—Dorothy Franklin, Seventh-Grade Teacher, DeWitt Clinton Elementary School, Chicago, Illinois

Description

Across the country, teachers are offering students doorways into literature via the visual arts, dramatic activities, and music. In addition, increasing dissatisfaction with curricular fragmentation is leading teachers to discover ways to make connections across subject areas. Teachers and students alike find such integration effective in a number of ways.

Asking students to think about their literary experiences in a variety of forms leads to fresh insights and new understandings of a text. Encouraging them to represent those understandings in a variety of forms offers access to representations that might not be available verbally while offering less verbal students multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge.

Connecting the study of literature to subjects across the curriculum enriches both subject areas. Such connections reinforce related concepts across disciplines, provide fuller understandings by revisiting concepts or topics from different disciplinary perspectives, give students more coherent learning experiences and leads them to coordinate the tools used in different disciplines when tackling complex problems.

Offering students the opportunity to read historical fiction, topical poetry and essays, or even nonfiction works such as diaries and letters, often enables students to imagine the human concerns behind historical events. Connections between literature and math or science expand student understandings of both areas while broadening habits of mind. Students who experience a range of such connections learn to establish relationships between and among seemingly contrary ways of defining and explaining the world.

Key Points

- The visual arts, music, and drama provide effective ways for students to develop literary envisionments.
- Teachers are integrating history, social studies, science, and even math with literary experiences.
- Students benefit cognitively when they are exposed to various art forms while studying literature. Art, drama, and music enable students to explore their literary understandings more deeply and expand their thinking about texts.
- Integrating social studies, history, and science with literature study helps students by adding a human dimension to the content of the other subject. Embedding literature study in the context of social studies, history, or science helps students expand their literary understandings.
- Art, drama, and music can provide different points of entry into literature, especially for students with diverse learning styles.
- The arts can provide realistic or metaphorical representations of literary meanings.
- To maximize their value in the literature classroom, art, drama, and music should be integral to literature study, not just seen as add-ons.
- Art provides students with another way to talk about their literary understandings.

- Visual art, drama, and music provide additional ways for teachers to see students thinking about a literary text as well as a way to help students develop their understandings.
- The arts elevate literacy comprehension and further envisionment-building because they force students to shuttle back and forth between their literary understandings and their artistic creations.
- Having students dramatize characters or situations helps further their understandings. Skits, role-playing, and other dramatic activities help students understand characters and the situations they are in.
- Dramatic activities provide excellent ways for students to share what they have read with one another.
- Convincing administrators, parents, and other teachers of the value of integrating the arts in the literature classroom can be difficult; others may view the arts as non-essential, or even frivolous.
- The arts can help students develop their sense of imagery, an important aspect of envisionment-building.
- Social studies and history are often paired with literature because literature offers new ways of seeing historical periods and events.
- Contextualizing literature with social studies and history enriches the study of the literature.

Learning Objectives

After viewing this program, you will be able to:

- consider experiences that ask students to integrate literature with art, music, and/or drama.
- consider effective pairings between literary texts and content area topics in social studies, history, science, and/or mathematics.

Background Reading

In preparation for this workshop, review “Literature Across the Curriculum” in Dr. Judith Langer’s *Envisioning Literature* from the Teachers College Press. Copyright 1995. ISBN 0-8077-3464-0.

You may also be interested in the panelists’ professional biographies found in the About the Contributors section of this guide.

For additional online resources, go to www.learner.org/envisioningliterature. Select *Making Meaning in Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 6–8*, click on Workshop 6, and go to Additional Reading.

Workshop Session (On-Site)

Getting Ready (30 minutes)

In this video, you will hear the workshop teachers discussing ways in which they integrate literature and the arts in order to enhance their students' literary experiences. Additionally, they share ways they connect literature to other curricular areas in order to offer students richer learning experiences. As you listen, think about your students and your curriculum. How might you use the arts to enhance literature study? How might the inclusion of literary texts expand students' understandings and appreciation in other curricular areas?

Discuss:

Discuss the following questions:

- Have you ever incorporated art, music, or drama into literary study in your classroom? In what ways? What were the results?
- Have you ever created thematic connections between the study of literature and content areas such as social studies, history, science or math? In what ways? What were the results?

Site Leader: Use these questions to spark discussion before viewing the workshop program. Participants may write answers to the reflection questions in their journals, as time permits. You may use all of the questions or select only a few.

If you have Internet access, display the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, making participants aware of online resources and interactive opportunities.

Reflect in Workshop Journals:

Respond to the following in your workshop journal:

- Choose a specific text that you teach. Brainstorm as many ways as possible that you could incorporate art, music, or drama in its study or explore ways you might connect it to content area themes that your students encounter in other areas of study.

Watch the Workshop Video (60 minutes)

Think About and Discuss:

Pause just before the title card "Literature and the Visual Arts."

- What different art forms are your students particularly receptive to? How might you integrate these into literature study?
- What art forms do you enjoy and feel comfortable with? Are there ways you might share your expertise by connecting it to literary study?
- What are some of the key topics your students encounter in curricular areas other than English/language arts? What literary texts do you know that might connect to those areas?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Site Leader: If you are watching on videocassette, you may pause at the segments indicated here to give participants opportunities to discuss, reflect, and interact with the program. If needed, rewind and replay segments of the program so that viewers can thoughtfully examine all pertinent information. If you are watching a real-time broadcast, ask participants to consider the questions as they view the program, and discuss them later.

You may select any or all of the questions to discuss, as time permits and according to the interests of your participants.

Workshop Session, cont'd.

Pause just before the title card "Literature and Drama."

- How might you use the visual arts to support the learning of your less verbal students?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Pause just before the title card "Literature and Music."

- What dramatic activities might be particularly effective for your students? How could you connect them to specific literary texts that they read?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Pause just before the title card "Literature and Social Studies."

- What musical experiences might you offer to enrich students' developing envisionments of a text?
- What are some creative writing invitations that you have found effective as ways to expand student understanding of a literary work?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

View program until the end.

- How might the addition of literature to topics in history or social studies benefit students?
- How might the study of history or social studies enrich students' understandings of a literary text?
- What questions or thoughts are raised as you watch the video?

Going Further (30 minutes)

Work in Groups:

In groups:

- list a number of ways to combine your assigned area with the study of literature.
- identify the value(s) of such combinations for students and for a teacher.
- identify the challenges of implementing such combinations effectively.
- suggest management strategies to support effective integration.

Site Leader: Divide the participants into groups of three to five, asking each group to choose one of the following areas for discussion (you may assign topics if you wish): the visual arts, drama, music, or another curricular area (such as history, social studies, science, or math).

Between Sessions (On Your Own)

Homework Assignment

Journal:

Respond to the following in your workshop journal:

- What are the particular strengths and talents you observe in your student population? What are some ways you can take advantage of those abilities to enrich their thinking and learning about literature?

Reading:

In preparation for Workshop 7, read “Ongoing Assessment: Evolving Goals” in Dr. Judith Langer’s *Envisioning Literature* from the Teachers College Press. Copyright 1995. ISBN 0-8077-3464-0.

For additional online resources, go to www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, select *Making Meaning in Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 6–8*, and look under Additional Reading for Workshop 7.

Ongoing Activity

Channel-Talk:

You are encouraged to participate in an email discussion list called Channel-Talk. Send comments and questions regarding the workshop to other participants around the country. Comments can also be viewed on the Web site. Go to www.learner.org/envisioningliterature, select *Making Meaning in Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 6–8*, and click on Channel-Talk.

Extension: Classroom Connection

Teacher as a Reflective Practitioner:

Many administrators and parents undervalue integrating the arts in the literature curriculum. Brainstorm a list of reasons for such attitudes. Then list the arguments you might use if called upon to justify the inclusion of activities such as art, drama, or music in your classroom. How might you convince such critics that these activities are not frivolous add-ons, but rather useful tools for extending student thinking about literary texts?

Student Activities:

Try this activity with your students. Choose a short piece of literature such as a poem. Divide your students into groups and ask each group to choose one of the following presentations:

1. create a dramatic reading of the poem using your voices—individually or in unison—to present the poem’s meaning(s) to the class.
2. set the poem to music and prepare to sing it to the class.
3. create and perform a dance that conveys the poem to the class.
4. choose another mode of presentation that involves rhythm, music, and/or dance.

Divide the class into groups. Give each group a different short script. Ask them to prepare a Reader’s Theater presentation of their script, limiting their acting to verbal interpretation and brief hand gestures. For more information, see the teacher resource Reader’s Theater in the Appendix of this guide.

For other suggestions for incorporating fine arts in your work with literature, consult the teacher resources Sketch to Stretch and Save the Last Word for the Artist in the Appendix.

Between Sessions, cont'd.

Additional Reading

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994. ISBN 0-87120-230-1.

Barnhouse, Rebecca. *Recasting the Past: The Middle Ages in Young Adult Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. ISBN 0-86709-470-2.

Benedict, Susan and Lenore Carlisle. *Beyond Words: Picture Books for Older Readers and Writers*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN 0-435-08710-X.

Berghoff, Beth, Kathryn A. Egawa, Jerome C. Harste, and Barry T. Hoonan. *Beyond Reading and Writing: Inquiry, Curriculum, and Multiple Ways of Knowing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2000. ISBN 0-8141-2341-4.

Blecher, Sharon and Kathy Jaffee. *Weaving in the Arts: Widening the Learning Circle*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-325-00032-8.

Carreiro, Paul. *Tales of Thinking: Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1998. ISBN

Claggartt, Fran with Joan Brown. *Drawing Your Own Conclusions: Graphic Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Thinking*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN 0-86709-293-9.

Daniels, Harvey and Marilyn Bizar. *Methods That Matter: Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms*. York, ME: Stenhouse, 1998. ISBN 1-57110-082-2.

Gee, Karolynne. *Visual Arts As a Way of Knowing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1999. ISBN

Graves, Donald H. *Bring Life Into Learning: Create a Lasting Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999. ISBN 0-325-00170-7.

Hart-Hewins, Linda, Nanci Goldman, and Fran Parkin. *Integrated Programs for Adolescents*. Ontario, Canada: Pembroke Publishers, 2001. ISBN 1-551-3800-99.

Heller, Paul G. *Drama as a Way of Knowing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1995. ISBN

Hubbard, Ruth Shagoury. *A Workshop of the Possible: Nurturing Children's Creative Development*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1996. ISBN

Karp, Karen E. Todd Brown, Linda Allen and Candy Allen. *Feisty Females: Inspiring Girls To Think Mathematically*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-325-00009-3.

Kaywell, Joan, ed. *Adolescent Literature as a Complement to the Classics*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 1997. ISBN 0-9268-426-17.

King, Caryn M. and Peg Sudol. *Fusing Science With Literature: Strategies and Lessons for Classroom Success*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-887-5109-65.

Lindquist, Tarry and Douglas Selwyn. *Social Studies at the Center: Integrating Kids, Content, and Literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. ISBN 0-325-00168-5.

McClure, Amy A. and Janice V. Kristo, eds. *Books That Invite Talk, Wonder, and Play*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996. ISBN 0-8141-0370-7.

Mcguire, Margit. *Seeing The Whole Through Social Studies*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995. ISBN 0-435-08902-1.

Meinbach, Anita Meyer, Liz Rothlein, and Anthony D. Fredericks. *The Complete Guide to Thematic Units: Creating the Integrated Curriculum*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 2000. ISBN 0-926842-42-2.

Monseau, Virginia R. and Gary M. Salvner, eds. *Reading Their World: The Young Adult Novel in the Classroom*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000. ISBN 0-86709-473-7.

Between Sessions, cont'd.

Moss, Joy F. *Using Literature in the Middle Grades: A Thematic Approach*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 1994. ISBN 0-926842-38-2.

Pace, Glennellen, ed. *Whole Learning in the Middle School: Evolution and Transition*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon, 1995. ISBN 0-926842-44-7.

Pugh, Sharon L., Jean Wolph Hickeys, and Marcia Davis. *Metaphorical Ways of Knowing: the Imaginative Nature of Thought and Expression*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997. ISBN 0-8141-3151-4.

Pugh, Sharon L., Jean Wolph Hickeys, Marcia Davis, and Tonya Venstra. *Bridging: A Teacher's Guide to Metaphorical Thinking*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1992. ISBN 0-8141-0384-7.

Richardson, Judy S. *Read It Aloud! Using Literature in the Secondary Content Classroom*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000. ISBN 0-87207-256-8.

Rief, Linda. *Seeking Diversity: Language Arts With Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN 0-435-08724-X.

Rief, Linda. *Vision and Voice: Extending the Literacy Spectrum*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-325-00097-2.

Samuels, Barbara G. and Kylene Beers, eds. *Your Reading: An Annotated Booklist for Middle and Junior High 1995-96 Edition*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1996. ISBN 0-8141-5943-5.

Short, Kathy G. and Jerome C. Harste with Carolyn Burke. *Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers*. 2nd ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 0-435-08850-5.

Smagorinsky, Peter. *Expressions: Multiple Intelligences in the English Class*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1991. ISBN 0-8141-1664-7.

Smith, J. Lea and J. Daniel Herring. *Dramatic Literacy: Using Drama and Literature To Teach Middle-Level Content*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001. ISBN 0-325-00050-6.

Sorensen, Marilou R. and Barbara A. Lehman, eds. *Teaching With Children's Books: Paths to Literature-Based Instruction*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1995. ISBN 0-8141-5292-9.

Stefanakis, Evangeline Harris. *Multiple Intelligences and Portfolios: A Window Into the Learner's Mind*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2002. 0-325-00363-7.

Swarz, Larry. *The New Dramathemes*, 3rd ed. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 2002. ISBN

Tchudi, Stephen N. and Stephen Lafer. *The Interdisciplinary Teacher's Handbook: Integrated Teaching Across the Curriculum*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 0-86709-398-6.

Tiedt, Iris McClellan. *Teaching With Picture Books in the Middle School*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2000. ISBN 0-87207-273-8.

Trelease, Jim. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995, ISBN 0-1404-6971-0.

Tunnell, Michael O. and Richard Ammon. *The Story of Ourselves: Teaching History Through Children's Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993. ISBN 0-435-08725-8.

Wagner, Betty Jane. *Educational Drama and Language Arts: What Research Shows*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-325-00076-X.

Whitin, David J. and Sandra Wilde. *It's the Story That Counts: More Children's Books for Mathematical Learning K-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995. ISBN 0-435-08369-4.

Whitin, David J. and Sandra Wilde. *Read Any Good Math Lately? Children's Books for Mathematical Learning K-6*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992. ISBN 0-435-08334-1.

Whitin, Phyllis. *Sketching Stories, Stretching Minds: Responding Visually to Literature*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1996. ISBN 0-435-08870-X.

Between Sessions, cont'd.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. *You Gotta BE the Book: Teaching Engaged and Reflective Reading With Adolescents*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1997, ISBN 0-8077-3566-3.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D. and Brian Edmiston. *Imagining to Learn: Inquiry, Ethics, and Integration Through Drama*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998. ISBN 0-435-07041-X.

Wolf, Dennie Palmer and Dana Balick, eds. *Art Works! Interdisciplinary Learning Powered by the Arts*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999. ISBN 0-325-00116-2.

Zakkai, Jennifer. *Dance as a Way of Knowing*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse, 1997. ISBN 1-571-1006-44.

Professional journals about literature instruction:

ALAN Review: The National Council of Teachers of English's Assembly on Literature for Adolescents produces a review of adolescent literature and literature instruction three times a year (fall, winter, and spring).

CELA Newsletter: The National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement, State University of New York, Albany, publishes a newsletter in the fall, winter, and spring. The newsletter addresses a wide range of issues concerning literacy. The newsletter can be accessed for free on their Web site at <http://cela.albany.edu>.

The National Council of Teachers of English Journals: NCTE publishes many subscription journals, including *The English Journal*, high school level, *Voices From the Middle*, middle school level, and *Language Arts*, elementary and middle school levels.

Some literature titles referred to by the teachers in this workshop program include:

Smoky Night by Eve Bunting

The Great Kapok Tree by Lynne Cherry

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963 by Christopher Paul Curtis

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens

The Diary of Anne Frank by Anne Frank

Lily's Crossing by Patricia Reilly Giff

Among the Hidden by Margaret Peterson Haddix

The Giver by Lois Lowry

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

Lyddie by Katherine Paterson

Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick

Thunder Cave by Roland Smith

Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

The Red Pony by John Steinbeck

Night by Elie Wiesel

For additional resources, go to www.learner.org/envisioningliterature. Select *Making Meaning in Literature: A Workshop for Teachers, Grades 6–8*, Workshop 6, and Additional Reading.