

Revealing Character

Length:	30 minutes
School:	Mineral Springs Middle School
Location:	Winston-Salem, N.C.
Grade:	8
Teachers:	Kathy Adams, 8th-Grade Language Arts Cindy Ellis, Visual Art
Description:	Students create ceramic place settings based on literary characters.

About This Program

Eighth-grade language arts teacher Kathy Adams approaches visual art teacher Cindy Ellis about translating the themes of a young-adult novel, *The Weirdo*, into a visual arts project. The two teachers work together designing instruction to help students demonstrate what they have learned about themes and characters through a complex visual art project involving ceramics and other media.

We see Kathy's students analyze aspects of the novel in her classroom, and then Cindy joins them to introduce the work of feminist artist Judy Chicago and her installation *The Dinner Party*. In the art studio, both teachers work with the students as they create place settings—inspired by *The Dinner Party*—that represent the arc of the characters in the novel.

The finished place settings are put on display in the school's media center. As the students present their remarkable creations, it is clear how deeply they have understood the message of the book and the transformations of the characters. At the end of the program, Kathy and Cindy reflect on what the project showed them about their teaching, and about working together.

Arts and Non-Arts Standards Addressed in This Program

Standards listed refer to the McREL Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks, a synthesis of national standards in each of the disciplines, found at www.mcrel.org.

Visual Arts

Standard 2: Knows how to use structures (e.g., sensory qualities, organizational principles, expressive features) and functions of art

Language Arts

Standard 6: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

Viewing Suggestions

Who Should Watch This Program

Teachers—“Revealing Character” will be interesting to language arts and visual art teachers who want their students to better understand and relate to the character, plot, and theme of a novel.

Administrators and professional development providers—This program can be useful in encouraging teachers to plan and develop collaborative projects.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- How do you connect with another teacher in order to develop projects that meet both of your goals?
- If students have difficulty expressing themselves in language, what are ways of helping them gain confidence in this area?
- What advantages might there be to infusing art-making into a literature study?

Watch the Program

As you watch, take notes on the collaboration between Kathy (language arts) and Cindy (visual art). What goals, knowledge, and skills do they each bring? How are their teaching styles similar and/or different? Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about their collaboration.

Reflect on the Program

- What struck you about the collaboration between Kathy and Cindy? How did their roles change as they moved from their own into one another’s classrooms?
- What elements of the study made it possible for students to delve into challenging emotional subjects in their artwork?
- What evidence did you see that students were able to apply what they were learning?
- What role did Judy Chicago’s work *The Dinner Party* play in the project? Many people would find the subject matter of her work—which often deals with the details of human anatomy—challenging material for adolescents. Would you use an artwork of a controversial or explicit nature, and if so, how would you prepare students to view and discuss it?

Additional Resources

Consult some of these resources for more information about the arts integration strategies in this program.

Books

Chicago, Judy. *The Dinner Party*. New York: Penguin Books, 1996. ISBN: 0 14 02.4437 9 (paperback) 0-670-85957-5 (hardback)

Lippard, L., Lucie-Smith, E., & Thompson Wylder, V.D. *Judy Chicago*. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2002. ISBN: 082302587X

Taylor, Theodore. *The Weirdo*. New York: Harcourt Children's Books, 1991. ISBN: 0152949526

Web Sites

The Artchive: An archive of images, text, and articles made available for educational purposes
<http://www.artchive.com>

The Web Gallery of Art: A virtual museum and searchable database of European painting and sculpture of the Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque periods
<http://www.Gallery.euroweb.hu/index.html>

Art in Context: This site provides public access to information that is added by curators, dealers, artists, writers, and others from around the world
<http://www.artincontext.com/>

ArtCyclopedia: An art search engine for locating images and museums
<http://artcyclopedia.com/>

Judy Chicago: Through the Flower Homepage: An organization dedicated to creating a cultural legacy built upon the vision embodied in Judy Chicago's work, through education, exhibition, and preservation
<http://www.judychicago.com/>

Faces, The Ultimate Composite Picture: Composite picture software (CD-ROM) containing a database of 4,000 facial features that can be used to create endless combinations of faces
<http://www.pimall.com/nais/faces.html>

Notes
