

Interpreting Picasso's *Guernica*

Classroom at a Glance

Teacher:	Meghan Zingle
Language:	Spanish II
Grade:	10
School:	Glastonbury High School, Glastonbury, Connecticut
Lesson Date:	March 1
Class Size:	22
Schedule:	45 minutes daily

Video Summary

In this lesson, students interpret and discuss Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. First, as a class, students list vocabulary words suggested by the images in the painting. Then, working in pairs, they write a radio news announcement based on their interpretations of the painting. Finally, students read about and discuss the painting's historical background and prepare to use this information to revise their newscast.

Standards Addressed

- Communication: Interpersonal, Interpretive, Presentational
- Cultures: Products
- Connections: Making Connections

Read about these standards at the end of this lesson.

Key Terms

- negotiation of meaning
- thematic units

Definitions for these terms can be found in the Glossary located in the Appendix.

Class Context

“I encourage communication between students as much as possible. If you’re asking a friend, Can you lend me a pencil? ask it in Spanish. We do activities where students write dialogues and they communicate together. We do debates where students develop their arguments together. So not only are they doing interpersonal and interpretive tasks, but now they’re challenging each other.” —Meghan Zingle

School Profile

Meghan Zingle teaches grades 10–12 Spanish at Glastonbury High School in Glastonbury, Connecticut, a suburb of Hartford. Many of the town’s 32,000 residents are professionals. The high school, with 1,800 students, offers a comprehensive curriculum for college and career preparation as well as a regional vocational Agriscience and Technology Program. The Glastonbury Foreign Language Program teaches Spanish in grades 1–12, French and Japanese in grades 6–12, and Russian in grades 7–12. Latin is offered in the high school.

Lesson Design

The teachers in the Glastonbury Foreign Language Department base their curriculum (see Resources) on the Standards. They also identify a theme to be the focus for each year of

Year at a Glance

Geography of Spain
(physical and political)

- Regions of Spain

Events that have influenced people today in Spain (history)

- **Guernica discussion**
- Research on Spanish artists and their corresponding histories

Integrated into above units:
How would my life be different if I lived in Spain?
(day-to-day life)

Class Context

language learning. The theme for the Spanish II curriculum is Spain, focusing on the question, Who is a Spaniard? Students become familiar with the geographical, political, and cultural diversity within Spain, and look at one community in depth from the perspective of one of its citizens. When designing her lessons, Ms. Zingle first considers topics that interest students, and then looks at ways that students can use the information they learn. She also considers the grammar and vocabulary that students need for each unit.

The Lesson

In the videotaped lesson, students wrote original radio announcements based on their initial interpretations of the painting *Guernica*. Although students were somewhat familiar with Spanish history from previous Spanish and world history classes, not everyone knew about the historical context of the painting prior to this lesson. All students were, however, comfortable with the vocabulary and communication skills needed for the partner discussions, creative writing, and contextual reading in this lesson, as they had been studying Spanish since early elementary school. After this lesson, each student chose and researched a topic in Spanish history, and presented his or her findings in oral and written form to the class.

Key Teaching Strategies

- **Role-Playing:** Role-playing is an activity in which students dramatize characters or pretend that they are in new locations or situations. It may or may not have a cultural element. This activity challenges students by having them use language in new contexts.
- **Scaffolding:** Scaffolding is a method of structuring an instructional task in a way that helps learners gradually advance through the process. Initial portions of the task are designed to be within learners' competency so that they can complete them on their own. As students' confidence, skill, and knowledge increase, the teacher provides less and less scaffolding for that task in a gradual release of responsibility.
- **Using Graphic Organizers:** The teacher uses graphic organizers to record student responses and arrange the information from student report-outs.

Analyze the Video

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

Before You Watch

Respond to the following questions:

- What are some of the most significant works of art in your target culture(s)?
- What strategies help students derive meaning from an informational text?
- What strategies help students develop their own understanding of a cultural product?
- How do you present abstract cultural topics to learners with limited language proficiency?

Watch the Video

As you watch “Interpreting Picasso’s *Guernica*,” take notes on Ms. Zingle’s instructional strategies, particularly how she has organized the lesson and which kinds of materials she uses. Write down what you find interesting, surprising, or especially important about the teaching and learning in this lesson.

Reflect on the Video

Review your notes, and then respond to the following questions:

- How does the graphic organizer assist students in creating the radio announcement? What evidence supports its effectiveness?
- How does Ms. Zingle enhance a typical textbook reading? What other ways might one use a textbook reading?
- How does Ms. Zingle scaffold the lesson so that each succeeding step leads to the culminating activity?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.

Look Closer

Take a second look at Ms. Zingle's class to focus on specific teaching strategies. Use the video images below to locate where to begin viewing.



Video Segment: Interpreting the Painting

You'll find this segment approximately 3 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 2 minutes and 30 seconds.

Students generate a list of vocabulary words that describe what they see in the painting.

- What is the purpose of having students write down vocabulary based on the images in the painting?
- What does Ms. Zingle do with the vocabulary that students generate? How does she handle errors?
- Describe the graphic organizer students use when combining their lists. Is it effective?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Working in Pairs

You'll find this segment approximately 8 minutes after the video starts. Watch for about 5 minutes.

Working in pairs, students use a graphic organizer to help them invent a story inspired by the painting, and then write a radio announcement about their story.

- How do students interact? What evidence do you see of their negotiating meaning? What evidence do you see of their working to develop language accuracy?
- How does Ms. Zingle facilitate student work?
- How do the students move from using the graphic organizer to writing their radio announcements?

Analyze the Video, cont'd.



Video Segment: Interpreting a Cultural Reading

You'll find this segment approximately 18 minutes and 30 seconds after the video starts. Watch for about 4 minutes.

Students read a textbook selection about *Guernica* and discuss the painting's intended meaning.

- How does Ms. Zingle help students derive a more culturally accurate interpretation of *Guernica* compared to their initial interpretations?
- How does the earlier task of interpreting the painting serve as a prereading activity for the textbook selection?
- What kinds of skimming/scanning activities does Ms. Zingle use?
- How is the graphic organizer reused? What effect does it have?

Connect to Your Teaching

Reflect on Your Practice

As you reflect on these questions, write down your responses or discuss them as a group.

- How do you design lessons so that students can work with more abstract topics that are important to a culture?
- What kinds of reading strategies help your students understand informational texts without having to spend excessive time decoding or translating?
- How do you make decisions regarding the role of the textbook in your teaching? When do you enhance textbook materials? When do you substitute other materials for those in the textbook?

Watch Other Videos

Watch other videos in the *Teaching Foreign Languages K–12* library for more examples of teaching methodologies like those you’ve just seen. Note: All videos in this series are subtitled in English.

- “Interpreting *La Belle et la Bête*” (French) illustrates the interpretation of cultural products.
- “Vegetables We Like” (Arabic) shows younger students making connections to art.
- “Russian Cities, Russian Stories” (Russian) provides reading for understanding and creative writing models.

Connect to Your Teaching, cont'd.

Put It Into Practice

Try these ideas in your classroom.

- Use artwork to help students develop their communication skills and learn more about the culture reflected in the art. For example, have students choose a painting and imagine what happened before and after the scene depicted in the painting took place. A painting like Georges Seurat's *Un dimanche après-midi à l'Île de la Grande Jatte*, which inspired Stephen Sondheim's musical *Sunday in the Park With George*, can evoke rich classroom discussion about characters. By using art to stimulate oral and written work, you can move students outside of their environment. Students can explore the art for its artistic meaning and value in the culture.
- When assigning reading selections, give students a reading plan that includes prereading, skimming/ scanning, and closer reading stages. Let students know how closely they should read the text—in most instances they can stop short of understanding every word. Once they have gleaned the relevant material from the reading, you can use the information in other activities. Ms. Zingle began with a prereading activity (the initial interpretation of the painting) that piqued student interest. She then explained skimming/scanning guidelines for identifying people, places, and dates when reading the textbook selection. Students used a graphic organizer to help them identify *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* as they read. The focused reading helped students develop effective reading strategies (learning to read), and also gave them relevant cultural and historical information (reading to learn).

Resources

Lesson Materials

Painting Interpretation Web: Student Work*
Sample graphic organizer completed by a student during the *Guernica* interpretation activity

* These lesson materials can be found in the Appendix.

Curriculum References

Glastonbury Public Schools: Foreign Language Department
<http://www.glastonburyforeignlanguage.org/>

Meghan Zingle's Recommendations

Web Resources:

StudySpanish.com
<http://www.studyspanish.com>
An online tutorial with links to Spanish pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and verb lessons for students and teachers

Conjuguemos: Conjugation Practice
<http://www.conjuguemos.com>
Self-timed, self-graded grammar exercises with an optional grade verification sheet (available in French, German, Latin, and Spanish)

Standards

World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages

The *World-Readiness Standards for Learning Languages* create a roadmap to guide learners to develop competence to communicate effectively and interact with cultural understanding. This lesson correlates to the following Standards:

Communication

Communicate effectively in more than one language in order to function in a variety of situations and for multiple purposes

Standard: Interpersonal Communication

Learners interact and negotiate meaning in spoken, signed, or written conversations to share information, reactions, feelings, and opinions.

Standard: Interpretive Communication

Learners understand, interpret, and analyze what is heard, read, or viewed on a variety of topics.

Standard: Presentational Communication

Learners present information, concepts, and ideas to inform, explain, persuade, and narrate on a variety of topics using appropriate media and adapting to various audiences of listeners, readers, or viewers.

Cultures

Interact with cultural competence and understanding

Standard: Relating Cultural Products to Perspectives

Learners use the language to investigate, explain, and reflect on the relationship between the products and perspectives of the cultures studied.

Connections

Connect with other disciplines and acquire information and diverse perspectives in order to use the language to function in academic and career-related situations

Standards, cont'd.

Standard: Making Connections

Learners build, reinforce, and expand their knowledge of other disciplines while using the language to develop critical thinking and to solve problems creatively.