

## **Do You See What Eye See? –Exploring Yourself and Others**

*Erin Pugh*

### **Introduction**

This unit is designed for teachers of young learners that are looking to have children explore themselves and others in a fun and insightful way. Teachers of elementary K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students, as well as elementary Art teachers may choose to use this unit at the beginning of a school year as a way to build the classroom community and have students explore accepting people beyond what the eye can see and really getting to know each other. Teachers may also choose portions of this unit to introduce an artist study of Niki de Saint Phalle or Andy Warhol during a study of exploring the idea of family under the content area of Social Studies or to accompany Literacy units using the books “A Bad Case of the Stripes” or “The Way I Feel”.

I currently am in my 7<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and have taught 3 years of kindergarten and 4 years of 1<sup>st</sup> grade. I teach at Berewick Elementary school in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District, a large, urban school district in North Carolina. My school serves approximately 560 students with a diverse population including African-American, Asian, Hispanic and multiracial students. We have a large English as Second Language (ESL) population and also serve students with disabilities as well as talented development (or gifted) students. 63% of our students are on free or reduced lunch.

The class I am writing this unit for consists of 22 students: 4 ESL students, 2 students with disabilities, as well as 2 gifted. The students come from a variety of backgrounds and include 9 males and 13 females. Ethnic backgrounds include African American, Hispanic, Asian, White and multiracial. With such a diverse class, I feel it is important to incorporate lessons about exploring customs and culture as well as looking beyond just what one sees when they look at a student.

I feel that a majority of classrooms focus on diversity one time a year and this during the month of December. In this age of global awareness, I really feel that teachers must expand beyond this. Incorporating discussions of cultures, customs and diversity is something that can be done daily within the classroom, with just a small amount of research. That is part of my reason for creating this unit. It is something that can fit into both literacy or the arts. It is a fun unit, yet still provides meaningful insight into exploring emotions, perception, and tolerance.

With young learners, incorporating these lessons into areas such as art and literacy provides a fun and innovative approach to doing just that. It is my hope that other teachers can utilize this unit to do just that within their own classroom.

## **Rationale for Unit**

I was inspired to create this unit while taking part of a Seminar that met weekly at the Bechtler Art Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina. This seminar provided me with the awesome experience of being able to go behind the scenes and really explore and discuss amazing art exhibitions with professionals, an opportunity I was very fortunate to be involved with. I realized that many educators and of course students do not get opportunities like this, and I wanted to create a unit that could let teachers and students around the world share in this experience.

While exploring the art pieces, I realized that no two people ever look at a piece of art and have the exact same thought. One of the activities our seminar leader had us do was to explore the museum and find pieces that we felt “described” us. It was so intriguing to listen to other seminar members explain how the pieces they chose matched up with their feelings and hear them express it in words. Pieces I had walked right by took on new meaning for me. Every time I walked through the gallery from that moment on, I looked at the painting or sculpture in a different way. This idea led to the creation of my curriculum unit.

This concept of using art to express what we feel about ourselves is very much the same as how we perceive people; upon meeting them, by instinct, you immediately have a thought. The thought may be negative or positive. It is through discussions and observations of others that your mind is opened up to ways of looking at things that you may have never considered. Also by researching the art pieces that intrigue you, you learn even more. Hearing the story of the artist and what they were going through when they created certain pieces may totally change your perception about how you first viewed it.

This is very similar to what we do when we meet new people. We form opinions and thoughts about what could be potential new friends. It is only after we take the time to actually talk to people and hear their life stories that we gain new perception and appreciation for them. I want to be able to teach my students the importance of doing this and show them to go deeper than what the eye can see. I also want to teach them that through art, they can express how they are feeling with or without words and tell their story about their lives and backgrounds!

I chose to use art to explore this idea because young children love to create! I wanted to take this excitement and enthusiasm and turn it into something that would be more than just an art project, but rather create a memory they can revisit in their minds when meeting new people or dealing with a new feeling.

## Strategies and Resources

In this unit, I will use a variety of strategies that encompass both literacy and the arts. The first strategy I will use is the Socratic Seminar method. For those of you who are unfamiliar with this method it is defined as “ a collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text.<sup>1</sup>” You, the teacher, will only play the role of facilitator. It is hard at first to not interrupt the students and guide them, but if you start to use this method the students really take ownership of it and you simply pose the questions. It is very important to ask open-ended questions. Creating questions that can simply be answered with a yes or no answer will not create a discussion, especially when used with young learners. If you are considering using this unit for an upper grade, students may be given hand outs with the questions on it, and one student can be assigned the role of “facilitator”.

The purpose of Socratic Seminar is to “achieve a deeper understanding the ideas and values of a text. Good discussions occur when participants listen actively and share their ideas with others.<sup>2</sup>” This works quite well in a 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom, because students are so intrigued by a read-aloud. It is important to remember as a teacher that the discussion is “not about right answers; it is not a debate. Students are encouraged to think out loud and to exchange ideas openly while examining ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful, manner.”

Because I teach 1st grade, I will keep my class as whole group, and I will act as the facilitator. Socratic Seminar is used following a reading, or in our case, the teacher reading a book to the whole group. The teacher should remind students of the main rules:

1. Respect each other.
2. Only talk when it is your turn.
3. If you disagree do it politely. Also, if 2 people start speaking at the same time, someone should say “You go first.”
4. Stay in the group. Bathroom is for emergencies only!

Socratic Seminar is typically divided into 3 categories: Pre-Seminar, Seminar and Post- Seminar. I will define these more in detail in the Classroom Activities section of this unit.

Another strategy I will use in this unit is making predictions by taking a picture walk. This is simply when I have my students look only at the pictures and have them record

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nwabr.org/education/pdfs/PRIMER/PrimerPieces/SocSem.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nwabr.org/education/pdfs/PRIMER/PrimerPieces/SocSem.pdf>

what they think the story will be about based only in the title and pictures. I find it important to keep introducing these comprehension skills no matter what the subject matter! I frequently tell them that taking a picture walk is like watching a silent movie. I show the students all the pictures and then have them make predictions about the story based on what they see. This can be extremely effective if you are able to find the book you are choosing online. If you have a SmartBoard or projection system, you will be able to display the book and mute the reading, so it truly is like a silent movie. It also enables your visual learners to be truly engaged.

The art aspect of this unit will have the students using two different mediums. Those include clay and paint. The materials I have found most appropriate to use for my age group of students and the available resources I have is any type of air-dry clay. This does not crack when drying and the clay does not require a kiln or baking prior to painting. Any paint I have used is tempera paint, which is nice because it dries true to the shade it paints as, yet is easily washed out of clothes, which the parents appreciate. The classroom activities portion of my unit will be more specific about use of the materials.

I will also incorporate the use of technology to display images for my students to discuss. I do not have a SmartBoard in my classroom, so I use my projection system to display images to the class. If neither of these resources are available to you, I provide book titles and weblinks that include the images I used that can either be printed out, or made into a transparency.

The level of questioning used in Socratic Seminar was based upon Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains. For those of you unfamiliar with this, Benjamin Bloom identified three different types of learning and broke down questions according to these learning styles. By using these different levels of questioning, even the most apprehensive learners in your classroom will feel comfortable answering the questions you have created! In the teacher's resources portion of this unit, I have listed a helpful website that includes verbs and question stems if you would like to create your own questions to coincide with the books this unit uses.

### **Classroom Activities**

I will begin my unit with the book "A Bad Case of Stripes" by David Shannon. For those of you that are not familiar with this story, it is about a little girl named Camilla Cream who loves lima beans. She is very worried about starting school for two reasons; the first is that all of her friends "hate lima beans, and she wanted to fit in. Camilla was always worried about other people thought of her." The second reason is that she could not decide what to wear because she was worried about all the people to impress. All the worrying leads to Camilla not feeling well, and this is where the story begins.

I chose this story because I feel it does a fabulous job of expressing to students that it is normal to be nervous about meeting new people. It also shows the silly side of how worrying too much about fitting in can lead to you losing yourself and your personality. I have seen over my short seven years as an educator how these worries are affecting students, especially females, at an earlier age each year. I have seen little girls whispering about the outfits others are wearing and speculate about where they were purchased. While this is something you may see more frequently in a “tween-age” (11-12 year olds) classroom, it is disheartening to see it begin at such a young age. That is why I feel this unit can be so effective in letting students know that they are each unique and beautiful in their own way and to let people see that from the start!

### A Bad Case of Stripes: Day One

To introduce this book, I will begin by gathering my students on the carpet for whole group time and telling them I have a story to tell them. Early age learners are so engaged by story time, and I find this is one time of the day that they are all engaged and almost entranced by the speaker. Whether it is the teacher just telling a story about their life or reading a story book, you completely have their attention!

I will begin by reminding students what good listeners do by having them “Give Me 5”. This is something my school uses as a school wide signal for letting them know their attention and focus is required. I tell my students this means two ears are listening, two eyes are focused on the speaker and 1 mouth is closed!

I always begin a story by reviewing the basics of the book. Have students identify the main elements of a book: front, back and spine of the cover. Ask what the author does, what the illustrator does. Take the students on a “picture walk” A picture walk involves you showing the students the illustrations of the story and recording what their predictions are. The teacher or students can record these. This book is available to view online through [www.storyonline.net](http://www.storyonline.net). This is a FREE resource that is wonderful for visual learners. It has different SAG (Screen Actors Guild) actors read the stories online and includes the illustrations shown in the book.

To utilize this resource for making predictions, just mute the reading! I have found this to be a valuable tool because the image can be dramatically increased in size via a SmartBoard or projection system. If the book I am using is available online, I have the students make a prediction on a post-it and we place them on a section of my classroom where I have a “prediction board.” I simply use a piece of cork board, but you could use the wall or even a laminated piece of construction paper. When I am using solely the book, I have the students tell me their predictions and record them on a white board. It is important to remind students that a prediction is a “guess” and are never right or wrong, just what is on their mind. I will then read the book to my students and we will review the predictions they made during the picture walk.

This is the book that will utilize the Socratic Seminar method. After we make our predictions I will have the students write about something that they have been teased about and how they felt. This falls into the Pre-Seminar portion that I mentioned in the above strategies portion of the unit. This is what happens before the reading of the text. The questions used at this stage should be at the knowledge and comprehension level,(according to Bloom's Questioning Levels ) based on prior knowledge. As previously mentioned, you use this time to identify different elements of the book and make predictions.

My 1<sup>st</sup> graders will be expected to write at least 3 complete sentences in response to the posed question. Teachers using this unit may increase or decrease this expectation based on grade level and abilities within their own classrooms. You may adjust the document I created under the heading "Activity Sheets" to suit the needs of your classroom. Students will share their predictions about the story as well as their written responses to something they have been teased about and how they felt as closure to today's lesson.

#### "A Bad Case of Stripes": Day Two

I will again gather my students on the carpet using the procedure outlined in Day One. We will review predictions and listen to the story. I will then have the students form a circle on the carpet to proceed with the Seminar Questions which is part two of the Socratic Seminar method. In this portion, the facilitator (teacher) will open with a question about the story that each student should respond to. I use a ball that I pass around the group and you are only allowed to speak if you are holding the ball. If the student's choose not to respond, they are allowed to pass. I have found that at the beginning of using this method, a few students may choose this option, but after becoming more familiar with this style of learning all students participate. The questions involved with this portion of Seminar are analysis, synthesis and evaluation level questions, according to Bloom's.

The facilitator will pose this question:

1. The title of the book is "A Bad Case of Stripes". The author named it after was wrong with Camilla. What would another good title be?

The next three questions, any student can answer. They must be holding the ball though. Again, any item or signal can be used. I just find a ball easiest to use, because when the student are sitting in a circle they can just roll it to the other speaker. This is the core of the Seminar; the line of questions focuses on the text. The following questions were used to facilitate discussion about how others perceive us and the feelings we get thinking about that.

2. Why do you think Camilla was worried about what other people thought of her? Should we do the same?
3. Do you think the kids at school were good friends to Camilla? She changed each time someone had a thought about her. What would you do if that happened each time someone thought something about you?
4. At the end of the book, it says "...some of the kids at school said she was weird, but she didn't care a bit." What do you think made Camilla change her mind her mind about what people thought about her?

The final question should include participation from each student. Again, they do have the option to pass. This question should be something that relates the book to the students' lives.

5. Do you think it is a good thing to try to be just like everybody else or do you think it's better to be your own person? Explain why you feel this way.

After completing Seminar, students should have an understanding that this story is used to explain how we cannot worry about what others will think about us. It should empower them to show their true colors, because that is when we can be our happiest and healthiest! This will be a great lead into day three's art activity!

#### "A Bad Case of Stripes": Day Three

Today's activity should begin by activating prior knowledge. The teacher will remind students of the Socratic Seminar discussion about how Camilla felt so much better once she gained to confidence to just be herself. Teachers using this unit should emphasize how sometimes we may think one thing about someone by just looking at them, but if we take the time to talk to that person, we find out MANY things about them! This leads into the third portion of Socratic Seminar, the closing activities. This is when the teacher can further develop ideas from the discussion and text.

Because this is a unit about using art to relate to how people perceive each other, I have chosen an activity where students will create a playful image of themselves that uses colors and designs to express their mood and feelings. During my seminar, I was fortunate enough to explore the Bechtler Museum while it was doing an exhibition of art by the artist Niki de Saint Phalle. She is an artist that was born on October 29, 1930 in France. Niki came to live in America in 1933. She was adventurous from a young age, painting leaves on statues at her school bright red! From 1948-1949 she worked as a model. In 1953, Niki decides to become a full time artist. She really enjoyed creating large sculptures and pictures that expressed how she was feeling. (Teachers, you may choose to add more to this biography based on the age of your learners. Because I work

with such a young age group, I chose to create a biography that included just the basics, using information from her official website [www.nikidesainthphalle.com](http://www.nikidesainthphalle.com) )

One thing Niki is most famous for is her creation of “Nanas”. These are freely posed forms that use colors and designs to express how Niki was feeling at that time in her life. I will project the image of one of these images titled “Vive Moi” for my students to see and ask them to write about what they think this image is and how they think the artist felt when she was creating it. Was she happy? Sad? Students will record their responses on this document.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*Note: The picture I will use in this document is listed in the Resources portion of the unit documents.\*\***

1. What does this piece of art make you think about?

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2. Do you think the artist that made it was happy? Sad?

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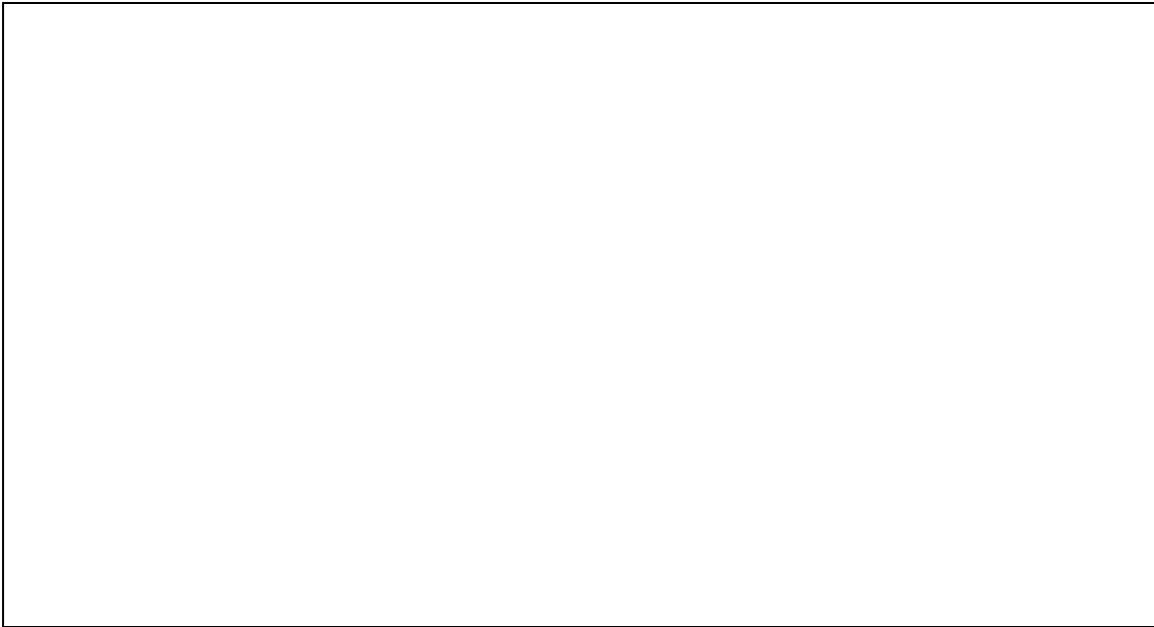
3. If you were going to write a story about this piece, what would the TITLE be?

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I will then tell my students they will create their own Nana! Remind the students that artists often have many, many drawings of their “masterpieces” before they are created. Using the activity sheet created below, students can draw what they want their Nana to look like. I find this to be a useful tool, that way I can set up the project. I know what



color paint to have available, and with young students, if they have something to look at it, they have much more success which eases feelings of frustrations they may have about creating their “artwork”!



Draw a picture of what you want your “NANA” to look like.

Think of these things:

1. What colors will you use? Why?
2. Will you have any lines or other designs on it?
3. What story about YOURSELF will go along with your sculpture?

I will use these colors

because... \_\_\_\_\_  
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My design means this to

me...  
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My story idea

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Students will create these using a base I created. I used a stand-up paper towel rod, tape and newspaper to create the “mold” of the sculpture. If you are using this unit with older students, they may be able to do this part themselves. Simply make a “ball” of newspaper around the paper towel rod and use tape to support it. The students will then use air-dry clay to create their sculpture. It is important to remind your students that there is no “right or wrong” way to do this, because art is what YOU make, just like your feeling are what YOU feel. Remind the students that artists often have many, many

drawings of their “masterpieces” before they are created. After the clay dries, students may paint the sculptures using colors and designs to share how they are feeling.

It is important to continue to remind the students that how they paint their sculpture should not be based on what others think of them, but how they are feeling and what they are think about. For example, if they want to paint their sculpture blue and put wavy lines all over it because they wish they were at the beach and not at school, that is fine! Remind them that they should be proud of how they feel and what they like, just like Camilla did in the story. Ask them what they think Camilla would paint her Nana like. Would it be pink and covered in lima beans?

The fun part will be when your students explain why the painted their sculptures the way that they did. They will have the freedom to discuss their feelings, because they are explaining their artwork and not necessarily themselves. You may even want to invite parents in for a “gallery crawl” and see if they can pick out their students art work! To make the students feel more like true artists, you may want them to give an “artist speech”. This could be something small; 2-3 sentences that describe what they created and why they used the designs and colors that they did.

“The Way I Feel”: Day One

The second book I will use during this unit is “The Way I Feel” written and illustrated by Janan Cain. This book is described as having

“zany characters who snuffle, soar and shriek through this book (that will) help kids understand the concept of such emotions as joy, disappointment, boredom and anger. "The Way I Feel" will also show kids how to express their feelings with words.”

I used this book in my unit as the second activity because I think it follows the theme nicely. It takes a whimsical approach upon colors and really shows expression of the young age group I am working with. It will extend learning about how just looking at a color can bring out different feelings in us all and can serve as an “ice-breaker” into exploring and discussing those feelings.

I have found that this book also does an amazing job of using color to express the emotions that the characters are feeling. For example, the pages that discuss being scared uses shades of black, grey and purple. The pages that explain happiness have bright flashes of yellow, orange and pink. Red is used on the pages that express ANGRY feelings. Before reading this book the teacher should remind students of the Nana projects they just created. Ask your students why they used the colors they did to tell how

they were feeling. What made them think to use blue to be sad? Why do they bright colors mean happy? What color do they think of when they think of angry feelings?

For this lesson, gather the students on the carpet in the same manner you did for the previous activity. Take students on a picture walk, and call on several students to make their predictions. You can then proceed with a reading of the book. Pause on each page to discuss the different colors and how they make the students feel. Ask them if they think the colors that the illustrator used express the feelings. Are they the same colors the students would choose?

After reading, teachers who have access to SmartBoards or projection systems to show the story being read online. Tell the students to listen closely to how the girl reads each page to express emotion. Tell your students to pay special attention to pages read about the feeling “Proud”. (4:09 mark <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnQZ5szkjVg>) Pause the video at the 4:47 mark. Discuss how what the reader just stated connects to the lesson we just completed after reading “A Bad Case of Stripes”. Should the girl in the story not be proud of the outfit she put together? Have your students pretend the character in the story heard what was said. Discuss how you think she would feel. Teachers, this is one of those teachable moments!

While reading “The Way I Feel”, teachers who use this unit will be able to discuss how different colors can make pictures remind us of different feelings and emotions. To incorporate the second portion of the art part of the unit, teachers will introduce the artist Andy Warhol. Again, I will present the basic facts of the artist, but you may add more to suit the needs of your own classroom. I will tell my students that Andy Warhol was born in Pittsburgh in 1928. He went to school at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. He became very famous for taking familiar objects, like a Campbell’s soup can, and painting the image over and over again, using bright colors and designs.

<sup>3</sup>

At this point, I will explain how Warhol used “mass-production techniques”. I will explain this means that he took the same picture and copied it over and over again. I will then show examples of this technique using both books and online images. (See resources portion of the unit). Because my seminar that inspired this unit was held at the Bechtler Museum, I was fortunate enough to see the Warhol original of Marilyn Monroe image, as well as images he produced for the Bechtler family. I will show my students the Monroe image and ask them to write and respond to what they think Warhol was meaning to express with the colors he used.

I will then introduce the next art activity for the students. I will use each student’s school picture (If these are not available to you, you can ask to have parents send in a

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<sup>3</sup> [www.biography.com](http://www.biography.com)

picture of their child.) I will use the copy machine to reproduce the image 4 times on a standard sized sheet of copy paper. After presenting these to each student, I will give them a palette of tempera paint in a variety of colors. I will explain to the students that their “challenge” is to paint themselves in the style of Warhol, to express 4 different emotions they have felt from time to time!

After students have completed their paintings, I chose to have them accompany this with a writing piece. This will serve as an informal assessment to see if they understood how different colors artists use can be used to express feelings, without even using words. I will remind students that again, there is no right or wrong answer. Blue to one child may represent sadness, but to another child it may remind them of the beach, which may be one of their happiest memories. The color red may make a student think of anger and violence, but to another it may remind them of love and warmth. Shades of black or brown may represent fear of the dark to one student, but pride in the African-American culture to another. This all encompasses my original inspiration for this unit, “Do you see what EYE see?” My eye may view a piece of art as one thing, while your eyes may perceive it in a totally different light.

To bring closure to this unit, you may choose several different activities. As I mentioned before, you could have your students set up a “gallery crawl” and invite parents and other staff to view the pieces created by your students. To have your students feel like the true artists they are, have students create a small speech about what they created and why they use the colors that they did.

Another idea is to have students write a response in their own words about what they liked about this unit, disliked and what they else they would like to do if they were given the chance to explore learning in this style if you used it again. I feel feedback from my student’s is often more valuable than from my colleagues because 6 and 7 year olds are usually pretty honest about whether or not they liked what you did in class! It can also be used as an assessment of what worked and did not work if you choose to use this unit again.

It is our job as educators to encourage students at a young age to not be afraid to express to express their emotions and feelings. It is also becoming an imperative part of our job to teach not only tolerance but ACCEPTANCE of all emotions and feelings based not upon perception, but after discussion of what we think we may see. I hope you find this unit inspires you and your students to do just that.

## **Student Resources**

*The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain

*A Bad Case of Stripes* by David Shannon

[www.storyonline.net](http://www.storyonline.net)

## **Teacher Resources**

*SOCRATIC SEMINARS AND LITERATURE CIRCLES* by Victor Mueller

*Socratic Circles: Fostering Critical and Creative Thinking in Middle and High School* by Matt Copeland

*What's the Big Idea?: Question-Driven Units to Motivate Reading, Writing, and Thinking* by Jim Burke

## **Internet Websites**

[http://www.studyguide.org/socratic\\_seminar.htm](http://www.studyguide.org/socratic_seminar.htm)

<http://www.nwabr.org/education/pdfs/PRIMER/PrimerPieces/SocSem.pdf>

Both of these websites are extremely helpful in setting up Socratic Seminar in your classroom.

<http://www.teachers.ash.org.au/researchskills/dalton.htm>

This website can be helpful when creating questions to use for Socratic Seminar.

[www.storyonline.net](http://www.storyonline.net)

This is the website I used to play A Bad Case of Stripes.

<http://kinderart.com/sculpture/clayheads.shtml>

This website can be helpful to help you set up the “mold” for creating the base for your student’s “Nana”.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnOZ5szkjVg>

This is where you can listen the The Way I Feel online.

[www.nikidesaintphalle.com](http://www.nikidesaintphalle.com)

This website provides information about the artist as well as images of her creations.

[www.bechtler.org](http://www.bechtler.org)

This is the website of the Bechtler museum, where the inspiration for my whole unit took place. It may be used to gain pictures and images about the artists and pieces I used in my unit.

## **Works Cited**

"Famous Biographies & TV Shows - Biography.com

<http://www.biography.com> (accessed November 25, 2011).

This website can be used to create a biography of the artist's mentioned in this unit.

"Bechtler Museum of Modern Art." Bechtler Museum of Modern Art.

<http://www.bechtler.org> (accessed November 27, 2011).

This website can be used to gain access and show students images of the art work I mentioned in my unit.

Cain, Janan. *The way I feel*. Seattle, Wash.: Parenting Press, 2000.

This book can be used to help students explore different colors and how they are use when expressing their feelings.

Moore, Rita A., and Victoria N. Seeger. *Building classroom reading communities:*

*retrospective miscue analysis and socratic circles*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.:

Corwin Press, 2010.

This book can be used to help teachers gain insight into Socratic Seminar. It can also serve as a tool to help set-up the Seminar in their classroom.

Schulz-Hoffman, Carla , and Pierre Restany. *Niki de Saint Phalle*. Munich: Prestel,

2008.

This book can be used to create a biography for Niki de Saint Phalle. You can also use the pictures in it to show students examples of Niki's works.

Shannon, David. *A bad case of stripes*. New York: Blue Sky Press, 1998.

This book can be used as an example to students of how we let others perceptions affect us.

