



## **Crafting Urban Stories Through Mixed Media**

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This curriculum unit is recommended for

<u>Course/Curriculum Area:</u>	<u>Grade Level:</u>
Visual Art, Beginning	9-10
English Language Arts	9-10

**Keywords:** literacy, art, craft, memory, story, growing up, identity, writing, reading, collage, poetry, migrant, neighborhood, culture, community, Hispanic, African American

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** In this unit adolescent students will consider that social and cultural influences on their identity are formed by their physical surroundings, in particular, the places where their youthful, formative years are spent. Authentic places in our world of experience while growing up are full of story, color, life and memory imbued with cultural identity that defines who we become. Through the provocations of literary selections in this unit from Hispanic and African American writers on the theme of growing up students will find inspiration for creative expression in art and writing. Students will enter the unit topic through the reading of select literary passages about growing up in Hispanic and in African American urban cultures. Through creative expression of their stories, students will grow in awareness of the way lived experience contributes to the culture of the classroom. An important goal of the unit will be that students gain confidence and skill in their ability to make connections between literature and visual expression. This unit provides students a literary entry point through which to investigate their own culturally rich heritage while providing for meaningful creative expression of their story growing their understandings of art and literature in their own lives.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 96 students in Visual Art, Beginning, grades 9-12.*

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## Crafting Urban Stories Through Mixed Media

*Gloria J. Brinkman*

You can never have too much sky. You can fall asleep and wake up drunk on sky, and sky can keep you safe when you are sad. Here there is too much sadness and not enough sky. Butterflies too are few and so are flowers and most things that are beautiful. Still, we take what we can get and make the best of it.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This is a view of life in the city as seen through the eyes of an adolescent Hispanic girl in *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros. As I read this icon of contemporary prose, memories of my own life growing up in the city engendered visualizations of places and renewed feelings for spaces most demonstrative of my youth. The emotions intrinsic in evoking my own coming of age have cultivated within me a determination to write my own story. Like Cisneros', I would like my story to play-out in collaged vignettes of remembered moments rich with imagery, color and texture. With this unit we begin to tell our stories. This unit seeks to motivate adolescent students toward notions of identity through the inspiration of culturally specific literature thematically unified as stories of growing up in Afro American and Hispanic American cultures.

*The House on Mango Street* was one of two volumes by ethnic writers gifted to me and my collegial fellows by our seminar leader, Professor Brenda Flanagan of Davidson College, on the occasion of the inaugural meeting of the CTI seminar "Urban Encounters: Hispanic and African American Literature". The companion gift was Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, a novel about the daughter of Barbadian immigrants living in Brooklyn during the Depression and World War II. Undeniably, literature is itself a remarkable gift, for it celebrates living in allowing readers to behold within their minds and feel within their souls transformative episodes both real and imagined. Like the arts, literature defines lived experience relative to time, geography, idea and opportunity. These and other readings selected for our seminar provoked discussions on the cultural perspectives of our urban students through the lens of literature written by ethnic writers.

In my quest for additional literature, it was a fortuitous delight for me to find in my school's library the book, *Growing Up Latino, Memories and Stories, Reflections on Life in the United States*, edited by Harold Augenbraum and Ilan Stavans. My first random reading was *The Closet*, a short story by Latino writer Denise Chavez. As I read

it I was enraptured in a tale of memory and sensory experience through the eyes of a young girl. Like me, she was one of three daughters of a hard working single mother. Like me, she loved to find mystery and magic in the solitude and delicate darkness of the closets within her home. Like me she grew up in modest surroundings punctuated with icons and traditions of Catholic faith. This lovely piece of literature provided me with visualizations of this child's life, faith tradition, the history of her sisterhood and the values of her small Latino family. Rich were the references to smells, fabrics, textures, images, cloth and icons.

In the darkness there is the smell of my mother's loneliness....All those memories are now suffocated in cloth.<sup>2</sup>

The places that are the neighborhoods of growing up are not always evocative of endearing memories. Urban streets and neighborhoods can be precarious and, at times, dangerous yet for many students in our classrooms this is home. In a provocative and brutally honest book called *Drown*, author Junot Diaz writes stories of the harsh and rocky roads to adulthood for youth of color living on the periphery of the inner city.

A goal of this unit is to provide students with a motivation to consider that social and cultural influences on their identity are formed by their physical surroundings, in particular, the places where their youthful, formative years are spent. Authentic places in our world of experience while growing up are full of story, color, life and memory imbued with cultural identity that defines who we become. Through the provocations of literary selections in this unit from Hispanic and African American writers on the theme of growing up students will find inspiration for creative expression in art and writing.

Featured in this unit are references to poetic works by Hispanic and African American writers expressive of the theme of the places of growing up. During our seminar we had the opportunity to attend a guest presentation by African American poet Al Young, the 2005 Poet Laureate for the state of California. The inspiration of his poetry is featured in this unit in his poem called "A Little More Traveling Music". Young writes a picturesque reflection on his life's passage from a youth growing up in the south to his coming of age as a poet. The images and sounds laden in his memory become captured in his poetry providing for Young his own background music. A poem by Sandra Cisneros called *Curtains*, is a reminiscent of moving to a new place, a common element in the lives of many of our students. In moving, your dreams often have to wait and who you become can take new directions.

### **Content Objectives**

This unit is written toward the curricular content area of secondary Visual Art yet also addresses grade 9-10 Common Core Standards for English Language Arts in Reading and Writing. This unit's connections to seminar literature are two-fold as

students explore their own interlaced urban histories both verbally and visually. Students will enter the unit topic through the reading of select literary passages about growing up in Latino and in Afro American urban cultures. Students will write their own stories of growing up, focusing on the street or neighborhood most vivid in their memories. Through the sharing of their stories, students will grow in awareness of the way lived experience contributes to the culture of the classroom.

Adolescent students are naturally curious about each other and where they are from. However, encouraging them to open up and share their personal histories requires purposefully guided practice. The intention is that meaningful investigation can be driven by this natural curiosity. Some of the classroom processes and constructs that this unit explores include the use of poetry and creative writing to articulate personal perspectives that inspire the creation of their art.

In contemplating the class activities for the unit, I became interested that students develop skills in the design of visual imagery while developing craftsmanship through appropriate hands-on processes of working with tactile materials. It would be suitable to teach this unit early in the school year as a way of getting to know your students while building on their appreciation for the nature and purpose of art. In courses that meet on alternate days, I anticipate that the teacher should allow 3-4 weeks depending on the choice of materials and processes.

Through the literary readings suggested in this unit, teachers and students can better understand the cultural perspectives that construct memory and identity for urban populations and how these perspectives can be used to propel meaningful creative expression. The narratives in each of these works present the reader with insights into the social and cultural perspectives of urban adolescents and migrant populations. Through reflection and artistic response, students will consider the role of environments and lived spaces in imbibing memory and framing culture.

The class activities in this unit are intended to follow a unifying theme of neighborhood, house, memories of home and growing up in a community. Literary works selected to inspire artistic expression in the unit include the following:

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

*Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall

*The Closet* by Denise Chavez, a selection from *Growing Up Latino*

*Sonny's Blues* by James Baldwin

*Drown* by Junot Diaz

*Nothing Wasted* and *Not For Sale*, selections from *The Latino Deli*, Judith Ortiz Cofer

Excerpts from *This Migrant Earth* by Tomas Rivera

*A Little More Traveling Music*, a poem by Al Young from his book *Dancing*

*Curtains*, a poem by Sandra Cisneros from her book *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*

Inspired by the works of African American and Hispanic artists and artisans, students will explore the visual expression of their own stories through the creation of original hand crafted art. This unit presents several hands-on experiences in personal expression through which students may interpret their growing up stories. The teacher may wish to consider an independent approach offering students several avenues of expression from which they may choose. Students will explore methods of working with tactile materials utilizing techniques such as collage, image transfer to fabric, and polymer clay jewelry. Experiences in simple hand-made books will be investigated. Book-arts are a fascinating manipulative genre that makes possible high levels of success for all students without regard for requisite skills. In producing one-of-a-kind books students' develop appreciation for the craft of books and journals.

The unit seeks to offer as inspiration the work of contemporary artists of Hispanic and African American culture such as Ana Maria Hernando and Aminah Robinson, whose work in mixed media storytelling incorporates written narratives or poems with hand crafted materials. Through several processes presented in the unit's class activities, teachers will find options from which to select in order to facilitate the unit in their classrooms relative to their resources.

This unit is appropriate for teaching in a Visual Art, Beginning (Art I) course or year 4 of International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program for Visual Arts. North Carolina defines visual art as an elective in a technical subject. I teach secondary visual art at several proficiency levels as well as the IBMYP. As such, my visual art classes are comprised of students representing a variety of grades, motivations, skills, and maturities within each class. Of primary importance in working with urban youth is to know students and work with the capital they bring to the classroom.

An important goal of the unit will be that students gain confidence and skill in their ability to make connections between literature and visual expression. In writing this unit I contemplated how I might design a visual art experience that would allow students a literary entry point through which to investigate their own culturally rich heritage while providing for meaningful creative expression of their own story. That students are familiar with the craft and purpose of methods of personal expression of diverse types is important in growing their understandings of art and literature in their own lives.

## **Background**

In response to the Charlotte Teachers' Institute seminar "Urban Encounters: Hispanic and African American Literature" I considered strong associations to the lives of the adolescent students I teach in ethnically and culturally diverse Charlotte, North Carolina. The school at which I teach in urban Charlotte, NC is a microcosm of the city. Its rich cultural and economic melee poses challenges in the classroom yet at the same time

inspires me to design learning opportunities through which students explore differences as an avenue to creativity and self affirmation.

For eight years previous to this seminar I taught at Harding University High School. School progress report data for Harding in 2011-2012 reported the adolescent student population at 1618 students. The school's demographics at that time consisted of 69.53% African American, 22.25% Hispanic, 2.97 % Asian, 3.2% Caucasian, and 1.36% mixed race. As a neighborhood school the student population is inclusive of students with physical, emotional, behavioral and learning disabilities. While teaching at this school, its population provided me with motivations to participate in the Charlotte Teachers' Institute seminar on Hispanic and African American literature as an opportunity to better know the students I teach through the literature of their cultures.

Presently, I teach at North Mecklenburg High School, also a CMS public high school. Situated a few miles north of Charlotte, "North Meck" is also a neighborhood school yet serves as a district magnet school for the International Baccalaureate Program and Career and Technical Education. Its students number 1678. Racially this school's demographics consist of 47% African American, 11% Hispanic, 4 % Asian, 35% Caucasian, and 3% mixed race. My transition to North Mecklenburg High School has provided me a diverse classroom environment where this curriculum unit will encourage varied student responses to cultural perspectives on growing up, isolation, loneliness, longing, and dreams for the future.

The class activities within this unit embrace creative writing and artistic expression in response to selected literary works by Hispanic and African American writers around the theme of growing up. A focus for the creation of visual art is to learn and apply hands-on manipulative processes associated with craft techniques. The activities make use of small collaborative groups as well as independent student production in art and writing.

Sandra Cisneros' audio interview on YouTube will serve as the inspiration for a collage activity called *My Mango Street, a collage activity*. Students will create a collage representing their own "Mango Street"- the neighborhood where they grew up-part memory, part fiction.

In a class activity titled *The fabric of the classroom, visual storytelling through mixed media collage*, students will learn the technique of photo transfer to fabric using photographs depicting the student's family heritage, culture or the place they come from. The images will be displayed in the manner of a quilt.

*Crafting non-traditional books* offers activities that support reading and writing skills. Students will read selected literary pairings then will work in groups of two to

three collaborating on the creation of a visual interpretation of a story or poem in the form of a hand made book.

In *Blackout Poetry* students will take a pre-existing piece of text and pull a new piece of writing from it.

*Heritage bracelet, polymer clay*- Selina's bracelet, in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* provides the inspiration for this class activity. Students will create a bracelet using polymer clay beads.

### **Rationale**

I was inspired to pursue this seminar after hearing seminar leader Brenda Flanagan speak about the importance of understanding diverse students through the literature of their culture. Brenda's own story of growing up in Trinidad and immigrating to the United States in 1967 served as an authentic place to begin. As an immigrant young girl from Trinidad she was startled and confused at suddenly being referred to as a "Black American". "Color flavors everything in this country", she remarked. Brenda's recounting of ways that she and her family encountered American racism provided poignant personal story throughout our seminar discussions. As classroom teachers, we seminar fellows each contributed to the pertinent discussion of how cultural identity is perceived and expressed by the students we teach. The seminar progressed by way of a rich interplay of literary readings, video documentaries and guest presenters nurturing in me an appreciation for varied perspectives on themes of growing up in African American and Latino cultures in the US.

*The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros served as a pivotal inspiration for this unit. In reading it I was enlightened as to what it looks like to come of age in Latino culture. The lush collages of imagery describing experiences and relationships lived on Mango Street transported me to a world many of my students come from. At the same time, Cisneros' refreshing collage-like writing style stirred within me visualizations of my own growing up in a small town in Ohio. I was one of three daughters of a single mother who worked long hours for meager income as she raised her girls. Reading brought to mind the emotions associated with my own memories of childhood, my apartment house, my neighborhood, my friends, moving many times, adjusting to new people and situations over a time painted with the physical and emotional challenges inherent in transitions from childhood to adolescence.

In a Youtube video called *The House on Mango Street-The Story*, Sandra Cisneros describes how she came to write the book and why it is so alluring to young readers. The following is adapted from excerpts in the video.

What attracts people to *The House on Mango Street*, I think, is that it speaks to young peoples' isolation, loneliness and longing. I think adolescence is a period of great solitude and a period when you don't know where you're going to go, what choices you want to make and you don't really have the menu in front of you. Nobody really gives you the menu of possibilities that are there for you. You basically have to invent it as you go. You don't really know who to become yet. You are looking for models, as Esperanza is. Young people are challenged by 'how to make myself into the person I want to be if I don't see that person want to be.' I think that that's true for young people in any culture, in their teens when one day they still feel like a kid and the next day they've got the responsibilities of the adult. *The House on Mango Street* speaks to people who are living in that amphibious zone of childhood and adulthood and feeling being very frightened there and very lonely. And I think that's why it speaks to you.<sup>3</sup>

In reading *The House on Mango Street* I became more aware of how urban adolescents of Latino culture might be arriving at my classroom having unique cultural values and perspectives. Though most of my Hispanic students are adapted to American popular culture, they remain marginalized within American schools. Through class activities in this unit, students of diverse ethnicities are prompted to explore connections between their contemporary lives and their cultural heritage and traditions. The goal is to utilize pathways of memory and experience to broaden students' appreciation for cultural identity and its impact on their own personal growth.

Junot Diaz's book *Drown* provides a more raw view of the harsh realities of urban youth growing up on the street. Junot's characters hail from the barrios and villages of the Dominican Republic to the crowded apartments and crack dens of New Jersey's inner city. Junot's descriptions are compelling yet honest in their capacity to envision in the reader a view of a world where growing up, though still rooted in family, is a brute kick into adulthood.

Days were spent out in the mall or in the parking lot playing stickball, but nights were what we waited for. The heat in the apartments was like something heavy that had come inside to die. Families arranged on their porches, the glow from their TVs washing blue against the brick. From my family apartment you could smell the pear trees that had been planted years ago, four to a court, probably to save us all from asphyxiation.<sup>4</sup>

*Sonny's Blues* by James Baldwin is an important short story offering insights about the relationship of two African American brothers who grew up in New York's Harlem neighborhood. The older brother, a high school Algebra teacher, still lives there with his wife and young children. But, the struggles that had plagued the younger brother



in his youth resulted in an adulthood wrought with trouble. Baldwin's eloquent writing flows in and out of the present through articulate character dialogs and visually rich descriptions of place as the narrative unfolds describing their growing up in the culture of an urban black neighborhood. Sonny is just out of re-hab. On the cab ride to his home for a family dinner, the older brother remarks

These streets hadn't changed, though housing projects jugged up out of them now like rocks in the middle of a boiling sea. Most of the houses in which we had grown up had vanished, as had the stores from which we had stolen, the basements in which we had first tried sex, the rooftops from which we had hurled tin cans and bricks. But houses exactly like the houses of our past yet dominated the landscape, boys exactly like the boys we once had been found themselves smothering in these houses, came down to the streets for light and air and found themselves encircled by disaster. Some escaped the trap, most didn't. Those who got out always left something of themselves behind, as some animals amputate a leg and leave it to the trap.<sup>5</sup>

The end of the story is poignant in revealing the power of the creative spirit to reveal one's pathway to freedom, to elevate the downtrodden to a place of hope, fulfillment and redirection in life. Sonny finds at last the part of himself that had been left behind. He plays the blues. The blues are not about anything new. But for the blues musician it's about new ways to make you listen.

For, while the tale of how we suffer, and how we are delighted, and how we may triumph is never new, it always must be heard. There isn't any other tale to tell, it's the only light we've got in all this darkness.<sup>6</sup>

In order to better understand 20<sup>th</sup> century black migration in America and its impact on schools we watched and discussed several important documentaries. The first was part of a set of three DVDs in a series called "The Promised Land". In viewing this documentary we learned of the of the 1930s migration of southern blacks to Chicago where they took jobs in the stockyards, train yards, and domestic service. Families lived in crowded tenement dwellings. The train lines divided white neighborhoods from black neighborhoods for decades. In viewing "Wiley Avenue Days", we learned about the vibrancy of the black neighborhood known as the Hill Street area of Pittsburg. This series was produced by WQED, Educational television in 1992. An important PBS documentary first aired during our seminar. "The African Americans, Many Rivers to Cross", with Henry Louis Gates, Jr. is a six part series that premiered in October 2013 on PBS. This series can be viewed on the PBS website.

During our seminar Dr. Hilton Kelly of Davidson College spoke to us about his research on Jim Crow era teachers and schools in North Carolina. During Dr. Kelly's

presentation we viewed a PBS documentary called “A Colored School”, about Second Ward School in Charlotte, North Carolina, a pivotal institution in Charlotte’s urban Brooklyn neighborhood between 1923 and 1969.<sup>7</sup> The film included present day interviews with former students and lost film footage from 1941 showing school and social life at the Second Ward, a legally segregated school in Charlotte. The film demonstrated that students at Second Ward reached high levels of academic and athletic excellence despite the school being under-resourced.

At Second Ward, the principal, teachers and community supported a nurturing and caring academic and cultural environment in which black students thrived amid a culture that valued the development, not only of their academics, but of their character and integrity. Ultimately, urban renewal in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Charlotte resulted in the school being raised in 1969. Dr. Kelly described how the forced school integration in the 1960’s was “the tipping point” of academic opportunity for black students. Suddenly, in the world of integrated schools, black students were faced with the seeming dilemma of having to be twice as good to go half as far.

This idea of the “tipping point” resonated with me, so I researched to find out more about it. The idea of “tipping point” comes from epidemiology. It refers to the moment in any epidemic when the disease reaches the critical stage at which it has spread to a mass populace and changes how it is to be dealt with. In his book of the same name, Malcolm Gladwell applies the same idea to social epidemics. According to Gladwell, the “tipping Point” in social epidemiology, is that moment when an idea, trend, or behavior crosses a threshold and spreads throughout society. Gladwell believes that big changes are the result of small events.<sup>8</sup>

The effect of the “tipping point” can be seen in urban schools such as the one I currently teach at, north of urban Charlotte. In the 1990’s, schools located within the City of Charlotte were merged with schools served by the county of Mecklenburg thereby creating the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District. As a school serving the northern suburbs, by the early 2000’s North Mecklenburg High School had grown to be the largest school in the state of North Carolina with a student population over 2700 students. Demographically the school culture was predominantly white and college preparatory. In 2006 a new CMS high school was opened further north located in an economically affluent area. Subsequently, a large number of white families sent their children to the new school. This migration of students created a “tipping point” as a changed demographic resulted in an inadvertently altered attraction for job-seeking teachers, heretofore clamoring for the opportunity to teach at the school.

As a white teacher who chose to immigrate from teaching in white-dominated private school culture in Cincinnati to the urban school culture of Charlotte, I have witnessed the impact of the “tipping point” within the culture of my classroom as it has changed dramatically over the past nine years. In response to changing political and

economic climates, district changes in public school programs and the redrawing of neighborhood school boundaries continue to create point and counterpoint in the “tipping” of the demographics and the available resources of schools on a recurring basis. The challenge for teachers is to “tip” the design of their instruction towards meeting the changing needs of urban students who have migrated to their classroom from some manner of migration-geographic, economic, or social. Classroom activities, such as those suggested in this unit, can help to increase levels of student engagement by “tipping” the allure of knowledge toward more meaningful hands-on learning experiences grounded in students own lives and cultural traditions.

In her novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, author Paule Marshall frames her own experiences as a young immigrant black woman. The lead character, Selina Boyce, is the daughter of Barbadian immigrants living in an ethnic Brooklyn neighborhood during the depression. The novel is about Selina’s childhood and process of growing up challenged by an adult world of American racism and the struggles of her own Barbadian cultural identity. The novel ends with Selina poised at the brink of womanhood having arrived at a deep understanding of her parents and the forces that have shaped their community.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of the book, Marshall frames Selina’s coming of age through a deeply symbolic act as Selina removes one of two silver bracelets she has worn since birth and tosses it high into the sky. In Barbadian tradition, girls wear bracelets as a sign and reminder of their folk heritage. Selina’s two bracelets serve as a symbolic representation of the two worlds within which she struggles, the Afro American cultures of North America and the Caribbean. One bracelet is thrown; one is kept. As the bracelet is tossed, its path is traced across the moonlit sky. The sound of a sharp clash is heard as it falls to the pavement. The bracelet is a visible link of her Caribbean heritage, yet also serves as a metaphor for all the lessons Selina has learned in the process of growing up and away.<sup>10</sup> Selina has been transformed by her community, yet leaves a gift to those who will remain behind. Selina’s act of tossing of the bracelet signifies the “tipping point” in her growing up, marking the moment when she bids farewell to her childhood and is ready to embark on her future.

### Craft and Community

An article in the January, 1995 issue of *Art Education* by Eldon Katter called *Multicultural Connections: Craft and Community* has inspired me to create class activities for this unit grounded in hand-craft processes. In his article Katter speaks about traditions in multicultural education having a tendency to package and label crafts education, reflecting an uncertainty about how to deal fairly with diversity. These packages and labels can create insular ways of looking narrowly at the world that in turn can lead to stereotypes, myths, and misconceptions. The consequence is to think in terms of isolation and segregation. Katter sees it as a contradiction to speak of crafts in isolation. He states that the term “craft” implies connectedness; the inherent relationship

between or among an object, its maker and its perceiver. Craft forms represent the merger of people and materials.<sup>11</sup>

Craft records the interaction of human beings, with each other and with their culture. Craft represents the work of individuals who are connected to communities.<sup>12</sup>

In conceiving of this unit, I found myself making connections between the stimulus of the ethnic literature of this seminar and handcrafted visual expressions such as book arts, fabric collage, and jewelry making. Katter calls for a new look at our collective pasts and a greater concern for our collective futures through crafts programs in our schools. Education for democratic citizenship in a global age can be enhanced through offering students opportunities to work in handcrafts due in large part to their potential for increasing students' international and intercultural perspectives.

Like literature, handcrafted objects express values shared within specific communities. In some communities a craft might be a man's work whereas in another only women might participate in that craft.<sup>13</sup> Certain themes appear across continents and over time. Families pass on craft traditions from generation to generation. Yet, when cultures collide, craft objects reflect the blending and borrowing that takes place among cultures. Traces of the old emerge with the new. While craft artists may work within a community tradition they may also borrow and adapt materials to express new, emerging values. I see that this merging of cultures can be important to students as they read the literary selections by ethnic writers proposed in this unit.

Katter suggests that in an ethnographic approach to craft education the students are both makers and perceivers. Students might be asked to consider the relationships between present experience and the past: between the objects they are making or perceiving and their historical antecedents; between themselves, or others, as makers and preceding generations; between the local community and historical memory.<sup>14</sup>

Using this approach, students might interview local artisans such as quilters, doll makers, cabinet makers, the blacksmith or metal worker. Students might consider the diversity of the artisans, what they have in common and the patterns of their cultural experience. Students might inquire as to how knowledge and skill is transmitted from one individual to another or from one generation to another.<sup>15</sup>

One fundamental way craft is learned is by watching or working with family or community members who may share their stories as well as their skills. Stories are one important way that culture is transmitted from generation to generation. Students' interviews with craft artisans can actually help to document and preserve these stories. Students might look at how the artisans interact with each other or with their community, and to what extent the artisan and his or work work reflects community values, beliefs

and identity. Students might explore continuity and change in a specific craft tradition, such as the adaptation of a craft from one culture to another or how a craft tradition evolves to meet changing times. As individuals and communities traditionalize aspects of their experience, social meaning and cultural cohesiveness develop through craft traditions that are created, recreated, renewed and relived. In this way, tradition can build a future out of the past.<sup>16</sup>

### **Teaching Strategies**

In this unit inspired by literature it is a goal that students read and interpret selected works. However, in every classroom the teacher will encounter both able and reluctant readers. In her book *Why Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do*, Kyleene Beers discusses successful literacy strategies for helping students to analyze texts and construct meaning during reading. In consideration of linking art making to literature the teacher may wish to employ one or more approaches to analyzing the literary selections such as annotating texts, 'say something', or rereading. Constructing meaning during reading can be aided by these strategies.

Classroom talk *during* reading<sup>17</sup>

Introduce these strategies by providing students with copies of the poems included in this unit *Curtains* by Sandra Cisneros and *A Little More Dancing Music* by Al Young. Arrange students in groups of two to three, focusing them on one poem. Students will read the poem, first silently, then orally. Students will work together to reread the poem line-by-line pausing to annotate the text, to circle words that act as triggers for visualizations, writing their comments in the margins of what they think the reference is about. For reluctant readers this strategy pulls the invisible process of comprehension out on to the visible level. Bringing conversation into the classroom *as students are reading* focuses the readers on what they are reading as well as how they are making the reading make sense. Consequently the conversation doesn't just focus on the characters, setting, or plot, but also on predictions, clarifications, questions, or other connections the readers are making.<sup>18</sup>

'Say Something' is a very simple strategy that interrupts the student's reading of a text giving him or her a chance to think about what is being read. In their small groups students take turns to read a portion of a text aloud. As they read, they occasionally pause to say something about what was read. They make a prediction, ask a question, clarify confusion, comment on what's happening, or connect what's in the text to something they know. The reading partners offer a response to what was said, then a different student continues the reading until the next time they pause to say something.<sup>19</sup> Beers defines the following helpful rules for 'Say Something'.

With your partner, decide who will say something first. When you say

something, do one or more of the following: make a prediction, ask a question, clarify something you had misunderstood, make a comment, make a connection. If you can't do one of those five things, then you need to reread.<sup>20</sup>

These reading strategies provide an opportune segue into one of the class activities in this unit called, *Crafting non-traditional books*. Working collaboratively in their same reading groups, students will create an interpretation of the poem read in the form of a hand made accordion-style book. The book by Alisa Golden, listed in the teacher resources, offers instruction on the accordion book. This hands-on activity using 2D and 3D craft art processes will support students' reading comprehension in providing an outlet for visual expression of ideas, understandings and creative connections to a literary work.

Texts of interest to adolescents are those that help them with the issues they face right now.<sup>21</sup> Meaningful interactions with texts occur most often when we read for aesthetic response. Struggling readers typically read with one dominant stance, the efferent stance, wherein they read simply to gather information which can distance a reader from the text. An aesthetic stance in reading brings the text closer, lets the ideas and issues, conflicts and contests, triumphs and tragedies of the text become who they are. Without this, students will never discover what the text means to them.<sup>22</sup> Beers suggests that teachers support and nurture an aesthetic response to reading through the use of particular types of questions that allow students to respond to a text by examining what is meaningful to them. Beers offers the following questions to encourage a personal response to the text:

What are your first thoughts about this text? What in the text caused those thoughts?

What emotions or feelings did you have while reading the text? Identify the parts that caused those feelings.

Did anything in this text remind you of anything in your own life?

Did this text remind you of any other texts? Movies? Plays? Why?

If you could talk to the author of this text, what would you ask about or comment on?

If you were going to recommend this text to someone, who would it be? What in the text would the person like?

What confused you or surprised you in this text?

As you read this text, describe how you felt. For example, were you bored, caught up, thinking about characters, thinking about how you might react if in the same situation, enjoying the author's writing style, or enjoying the humor or suspense?<sup>23</sup>

Probing for stories through collage writing

Students will be guided to probe their own experiences in growing up as subject for stories through a writing strategy known as the collage. In his book *Writing with Power*, Peter Elbow explains how this strategy works to produce creative response. A collage is not a single perfectly connected train of explicit thinking or narrative. Rather, it is a collection of writing fragments arranged poetically, intuitively, randomly without transitions or connectives. Its joints remain invisible. The nature of collage is to invite intuition therefore collage writing invites students to create actively out of their own consciousness. Gaps in chronology are abandoned in favor of glimpses, daydreams, scraps of dialog, meditations and reminiscences.<sup>24</sup>

The collage essay utilizes a loop writing process. The first step is to do lots of raw writing. Then look through it to find the good bits, polish them up, then lay them out before you to find their best order. In a collage essay its thread is invisible. You get this implied thread to assert itself as you arrange the good bits of writing in the right order. One often discovers a surprising coherence lurking in a pile of good pieces.<sup>25</sup>

Anything that has passed through my heart is something that I can write about. -Sandra Cisneros<sup>26</sup>

From their writings, students should consider the many things that have passed through their hearts as subject for their stories. Students will compose their own growing up story to be shared orally in small groups. The goal is that students gain an appreciation for the varied places and cultural traditions that frame one's childhood memories. Students may be encouraged to interview their family members to gain insights on how and when and why the family moved to their present neighborhood. These stories will be the impetus as students visualize imagery that will be used to create their artistic response. Students should begin at this time to gather images to use in a visual collage of their story such as drawings, family photographs, or magazine clippings.

Telling stories visually through collage imagery

With the goal of making connections between writers of color and artists of color the teacher is encouraged to look at the book *Free Within Ourselves* by Regina A Perry. In this volume I found an abundance of associations to North Carolina in the artists featured, such as Minnie Evans, Romare Bearden, and Jacob Lawrence. A remarkable correlation to discourse in this unit features the artist Elizabeth Catlett. Catlett was African-American yet moved to Mexico and lived the majority of her life and career there as a Mexican citizen. Celebrated for her socially conscious art that represents the struggles of African Americans, Catlett's works are pivotal as exemplars for students' artistic expression.

Minnie Evans' collage painting *Design at Arlie Gardens* is a beautiful example of her series of collage paintings that she began around 1966. Evans constructed these by

cutting out her earlier wax crayon designs, pasting them to a cardboard background or canvas board and using them in combination with oils and watercolors to create expansive mixed media compositions. Evans' creations are essentially religious in inspiration yet are rich with personal symbolism that she created from the many colors and flowers of the botanical garden where she worked. Her complex designs reveal spiritual and cultural influences of Caribbean, East Indian, Chinese, and Western elements that even the artist could not explain.<sup>27</sup> This artist's work is important to share with students for its potential to inspire the use of rich color and personal imagery in the development of motifs and visual rhythms to use in their own work as they explore considerations of visual design. It is significant to introduce students to an important artist who had no formal training in art. The story of Minnie Evans' art can inspire students who lack self-confidence due to little or no requisite skills in art.

Concurrent with our seminar was a major exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C. called *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*, featuring works from the museum's collection by leading modern and contemporary Latino artists in the United States since the mid-twentieth century. One of my favorite works is *Constellation*, 2004 by María Magdalena Campos-Pons. Campos-Pons's image is suggestive of both 2D and 3D elements in a series of instant color prints of her braided and dreadlocked hair. As it meanders across the multipaneled composition, it takes the shape of a spiral constellation, or a nest, the temporary home of migrating birds. She created this work, which merges elements of photography, painting, and performance, to explore the parallels between her migration from Cuba and the displacement of Africans during slavery. Each photograph can be read as an ethereal landscape or a lyrical trace of displaced memories.

In her book *Spirits of the Cloth* author Carolyn Mazloomi presents several contemporary African American artists whose work is based in the craft traditions of quilt making and fiber arts. These artists create rich narrative quilts telling stories of family, faith, home, healing and social consciousness concerns. Of particular interest to this unit are the artists featured under the theme of "Memories of Home". Mazloomi remarks that quilts are vehicles for remembering.

Hugs and kisses, long trips home, delicious meals around the kitchen table, and visits from city folk bearing gifts are the fabric of the family, as are births, marriages, and deaths. These create ties that bind—and sometimes strangle; here there is joy and sadness, hope and despair.<sup>28</sup>

African American artist Faith Ringgold's story quilts illustrate family, community and stories of growing up in narratives painted on cloth. Her infamous work "Tar Beach" is an authentic example of storytelling through manipulations of the tactile materials of cloth, paint and thread. "Tar Beach" expresses this unit's theme of memories of growing up and the places of growing up in the city. Additionally, an extraordinary example of



the capacity of art to honor and celebrate community can be seen in the video production of her work called “Faith Ringgold Paints Crown Heights”. Ringgold researched the twelve cultures that settled in the community of Crown Heights in Brooklyn through their folktales. In her painting on fabric Ringgold shows how these diverse cultures contribute to the American spirit.<sup>29</sup> The video documents tales of growing up in several cultural traditions and follows the development of the fabric painting that Ringgold produces to honor them, “The Crown Heights Childrens’ Story Quilt” completed in 1996.

In viewing and discussing works by artists such as those mentioned here, students may be guided to appreciate how cultural experiences of growing up help to shape artists and how their stories based on memories of growing up can be told using visual means. In many of their works these artists bridge memory and imagination as they employ the use of invented figures, simple repeating shapes and everyday materials such as crayons, magazines and cloth. In this way students can gain appreciation for crafting their own stories through use of everyday materials.

### **Class activities**

#### *My Mango Street, a collage activity*

The artist cuts and pastes. As an artist you manipulate time, you move things around, like a gardener creating a garden out of a jungle, moving certain flowers around so you can see and pay attention.

It’s the writer’s job to cut away and prune, otherwise you just have a jungle. It is the writer’s job to make order so you can see certain colors and patterns. That’s what I did with the real house on Mango Street from my memory and the invented house on Mango Street from my fiction. - Sandra Cisneros<sup>30</sup>

Students will read selections from *The House on Mango Street* for the purpose of visualizing the neighborhood that Esperanza traverses each day. Suggested chapters are ‘Born Bad’ and ‘Four Skinny Trees’, yet the book is so rich the teacher may select from others. Given copies of the text passages, students will work with a partner to annotate the texts, identifying words and phrases that produce visual pictures. Working in groups of three to four, students will draw examples of visual symbols inspired from their annotations on a poster size piece of paper. Limit the time for each activity to ten minutes. Groups will then present their ideas to the class. The goal is to show how the writer’s words can create visual triggers that form visualizations for use by the artist’s imagination. Allow time for students to consider similarities and differences between the neighborhood in the story and their own. What did their childhood neighborhoods look like? What was it like to live there?

As a young woman, Sandra Cisneros asked herself, “How can I write about something that no one else can write about?” Her answer, “Write about what you know. Anything that has passed through my heart is something that I can write about”.<sup>31</sup> Ask students to consider, what has passed through your heart? What do you know about that know one else does in exactly the same way? Possibilities include:

The way I know my old neighborhood  
The way I know my culture when I play  
The way I know my culture when I dance, how I dress  
The place I remember most fondly  
The place that I go to when I am sad  
The place where I feel most like a child  
The place I go to be alone  
The place that I enjoyed most in my childhood neighborhood  
The room in my house that is the most comforting to me  
My favorite game to play outside with my friends  
My favorite place to walk to  
My favorite place to sit around and who was there with me

Students will create a collage representing their own “Mango Street”- the neighborhood where they grew up-part memory, part fiction. Students will use family photographs and magazine clippings to create a collage as a visual expression of the “garden” of what they know, what it is that they can write about, what it is that they can visualize, that know one else can. A suggested size for the collage is 11”x14” on a chipboard substrate. Collages may be enhanced with drawn or painted elements or with the addition of fabric or fiber materials. Students will write a paragraph explaining their memory, why they chose their imagery and how their visual solution is an effective expression of their idea. The student’s writing will be posted on display with the finished collage work.

*The fabric of the classroom, visual storytelling through mixed media collage*

Two artists come to mind when I consider fabric painting and story quilts. One is, of course, Faith Ringgold. The other is Aminah Robinson. I have had the pleasure of meeting both of these African-American female artists. I am captivated by the work of African American artist, and fellow Ohioan, Aminah Robinson. Now in her 70’s, Aminah Robinson uses her work in fiber arts media to express her feelings about relationships of families, personal histories and communities. I had the privilege of hearing her speak about her work a few years ago when I was a teacher in Ohio. Students will enjoy getting to know the work of this artist and emulating her approach to visual storytelling through fabric collage, found objects, stitchery and applique. She has a wonderfully interactive website: Aminah’s World, <http://www.aminahsworld.org/>.

In this class activity students will use a photo transfer process to create a design on cloth that represents a memory inspired by their growing up story. Students will refer to their source images and photographs selecting one for use as the primary image. The teacher will first create a photocopy of the image using a black and white laser printer (not an ink jet printer) enlarging as necessary for an image size of approximately 8"x8". The photograph will be transferred to a 10"x10" canvas weight fabric using Golden Matte Medium. After transfer of the photographic image, acrylic paint may be used to enhance the work, to unify colors or add decorative effects. Additional materials may include fabric markers, stitched and sewn elements, or embellishments with beads or small trinkets. Students should receive instruction in the care and use of materials such as scissors, brushes and adhesives. This link, also included in the list of resources, provides a demonstration of this process. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGkuTLhB4pg>.

Craftsmanship is a critical component of working with craft materials. Students should use thoughtful concern for the overall look of the work. Students should include a one-inch fabric border as part of their design to serve as a handcrafted frame. Display the finished 10" square designs close together or mount in the manner of a quilt, as a visual display of the stories and cultures of the classroom.

### *Crafting non-traditional books*

The hand made book arts of contemporary artist Ana Maria Hernando inspired this class activity. Born in South America this artist now lives and works in Colorado. Her work includes a wide variety of craft media, sculptural works, handmade books and poetry. Of particular interest is Hernando's Salka Poetry Project, collaboration with Kenneth Robinson, featuring their bilingual poetry in her limited edition handmade book "Salka Archipelago."

In this class activity students will read selected literary pairs. In small groups students will discuss the question posed. Students will then work in groups of two to three to collaborate on the creation of a visual interpretation of the story in the form of a hand made book similar to "Salka Archipelago". The goal is a collaborative venture focusing on the creative and inventive use of materials and learning the art of simple book making construction. Students in each group will contribute to crafting the book by combining original poetry and experimental techniques in the use of paper, paint and lettering in the visual expression of a literary work.

The teacher will find many links to bookmaking processes by simple typing into a Google search window the term "hand made books" and click "images". Scan through the images to find a type and style of handmade book that suits the available materials and intended product. Follow through to the image's website to investigate instructions or tutorials. Another convenient way to find book ideas is through Pinterest.

Pair readings from Judith Ortiz Cofer's *The Latin Deli, Not For Sale*, pages 16-21 with Tomas Rivera's *This Migrant Earth, Picture of His Father's Face*, pages 25-30. Compare and contrast the significance of metaphors found in the two stories such as the bedspread in *Not For Sale* and the framed photograph in *Picture of His Father's Face*. Questions to stimulate discussion and ideation for art making: To what extent are traditions of your parents' or grandparents' home country present in your life today? When have you been caught up in a story of hidden deceit, such as the hidden transcript in the stories told by El 'Arabe in *Not For Sale* or the false promises of the picture salesman in *Picture of His Father's Face*?

### *Poetic Tunnel Book*

In this class activity students will work independently or in pairs to create a Poetic Tunnel Book that conveys their impressions of an urban cultural neighborhood. The Tunnel Book reflects hidden images, foreign and detached to the viewer, not divulging what is within. A tunnel book, collapses open, revealing both the outside and inside. The work is accompanied by a poem, written by the artist on the outside. Several tutorials are available online providing examples of tunnel books and directions on how to make them. See the book by Alisa Golden for instruction on the tunnel book method.

In addition to the motivation suggested earlier, based on the poems by Sandra Cisneros and Al Young, the following is offered as an alternative. Students will read the following three selections and make comparisons of visual descriptions in the way each neighborhood is described. *The House on Mango Street*, pages 3-5 paired with *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, pages 3-6, and *Drown*, page 91. Students will interpret this imagery in the form of a poetic tunnel book expressive of the neighborhoods.

### *Blackout Poetry*

Blackout Poetry is poetry produced by blacking out words on a printed page (as one would expect) so that the only words left visible are the words that you've selected to form the resulting poem. It's similar to Found Poetry in that, for both, you're taking a pre-existing piece of text and pulling a new piece of writing from it.

In this class activity the teacher will photo copy pages randomly from any of the literary selections in this unit and give a different page to each student. Students will create a Blackout Poetry piece from the page provided them. Students will use ink or acrylic paint to black out unwanted text. Consider the application of craft materials to present the final creative work such as mounting it on wood, adding encaustic or wax, bonding it to fabric with stitching, or embellishing it with beads or found objects.

### *Heritage bracelet, polymer clay*

Selina's bracelet, in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* provides the inspiration for this class activity. Students will create a bracelet using polymer clay. Alternative materials may include rolled paper beads made from photographic images or hand painted papers. The concept for the bracelet is that it will represent the student's two cultures, the culture of the student's heritage and the student's present day culture of youth. The intention for this craft-based product is that the beads or plates of the bracelet will be embellished with photographs or stylized motifs representative of the student's heritage-ancestors, family members or places the family has lived. As an object of adornment, the bracelet will become a meaningful symbol of the student's cultural identity.

Mathilde Brun's book, *Polymer Clay Jewelry: The Art of Caning*, is an excellent book offering many techniques for creating beads and jewelry constructions using polymer clay, useful for the *Heritage Bracelet* class activity. The teacher will find resources online in several YouTube videos showing how to work with polymer clay including a video on how to transfer a photographic image using liquid polymer clay.

### **Materials for the classroom**

White drawing paper 12"x18", pencils, scissors, watercolor or acrylic paints, acrylic medium, glue, soft hair brushes, tracing paper, adhesives for paper and fabric collage, chipboard, Golden Matte Medium, photographic images printed on a laser printer, polymer clay, liquid polymer clay, tools for working with polymer clay such as flat knives and excising tools and a pasta machine, wires and findings for joining polymer bracelet sections or beads, access to an oven for low temperature baking of polymer clay forms, magazines, bristle brushes for use with matte medium, beads, small found objects

### **Annotated list of resources for students**

Al Young, Poet Laureate of California, emeritus  
<http://alyoung.org/biography/>, accessed 11/17/2013.

This website for poet Al Young features audio links through which students may hear Al Young poetry readings.

Aminah's World. <http://www.aminahsworld.org/>, accessed 11/25/13.

This highly entertaining interactive website on the work of Aminah Robinson is sponsored by the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, Ohio.

Blackout Poetry, writing prompt.

<http://hphololol.wordpress.com/2012/10/31/wripro-blackout-poetry/>, accessed 10/26/13.

This site offers nice examples of the Black Poetry process and explains the concept as a writing prompt.

"The House on Mango Street-The Story." *Youtube*.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Pyf89VsNmg>, accessed 11/25/13. Sandra Cisneros speaks about how she wrote *House on Mango Street*.

#### H.P.HOLO

<http://hphololol.wordpress.com/>. <http://hphololol.wordpress.com/2013/07/22/wripro-road-trip/>, accessed 10/26/13. This site is an interesting source of writing prompts for teens that guides them through the creation of themed stories in a step-by-step process.

Newspaper Blackout by Austin Kleon. <http://austinkleon.com/category/newspaper-blackout-poems/>, accessed 10/26/13. This site offers another useful resource featuring blackout poems produced entirely through blacked-out newspaper articles.

Poetry Soup. [http://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/growing\\_up](http://www.poetrysoup.com/poems/growing_up), accessed 11/15/13. This site features poems written by young people on a wide variety of topic themes.

#### **Annotated list of electronic resources for the teacher**

Ana Maria Hernando. <http://www.anamariahernando.com/>, accessed 11/23/13.

Hernando is a contemporary mixed media artist born in South America whose work includes a wide variety of craft media, handmade books and poetry. Of particular interest is Hernando's Salka Poetry Project, a collaboration with Kenneth Robinson, featuring their bilingual poetry in her limited edition handmade book *Salka Archipelago*. [http://www.salkastar.com/?page\\_id=436](http://www.salkastar.com/?page_id=436), accessed 11/23/13.

*Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*, an exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Renwick Gallery.

[http://www.americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/archive/2013/our\\_america/](http://www.americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/archive/2013/our_america/), accessed 11/9/13.

Works in all media by 72 leading modern and contemporary artists presenting the rich and varied contributions of Latino artists in the United States since the mid-twentieth century, when the concept of a collective Latino identity began to emerge. Of particular interest to the focus of this unit are works in the exhibition under the theme, "Street Life".

[http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/our\\_america/street.cfm](http://americanart.si.edu/exhibitions/online/our_america/street.cfm), accessed 11/9/13.

The Smithsonian museum created a [bilingual mobile website](#) for *Our America* that includes commentaries about artworks in the exhibition and images of all the featured artworks. An [audio podcast series](#) features commentaries by curators and artists about artworks in the exhibition. [Video shorts](#) with the exhibition curator are available on YouTube.

Specifying: *Black Women Writing the American Experience* by Susan Willis.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=Q13UBp7ZnwMC&pg=PA53&dq=brown+girl+brownstones,+bracelets>, accessed 11/16/2013. This electronic resource to the book by Susan Willis provides easy access to a description of the symbolism of the bracelets in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall.

*Fast Image Transfer with Melanie Matthews*, using Golden Medium. In this YouTube video Golden working artist Melanie Matthews gives a demonstration of how to do immediate transfer of photographic images to fabric using Golden Matte Medium, a process recommended for use in this unit's The Fabric of the Classroom Activity. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGkuTLhB4pg>, accessed 11/25/13.

YouTube videos on working with polymer clay are ever changing as products and processes are marketed. One that is particularly exciting demonstrates the transfer of a photographic image using liquid polymer clay. Image Transfer (Liquid Clay) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9LX\\_ixGDQY&list=PL948F3F7B7BF7B14A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9LX_ixGDQY&list=PL948F3F7B7BF7B14A), accessed 11/25/13.

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### **Annotated list of resources for the teacher**

*A Colored School*. DVD. Public Broadcasting System.

<http://www.unctv.org/content/acoloredschool>, accessed 11/25/13. This DVD, made from lost film footage, sheds light on Jim Crow era teachers and schools as it documents Second Ward School, the first black high school in Charlotte, NC.

Baldwin, James. "Sonny's Blues." In *Going to Meet The Man*, by James Baldwin, 103-141. New York, New York: The Dial Press, 1965. A beautifully written story of two brothers who find each other after growing up following different paths in New York's Harlem.

Beers, Kylene. *Why Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do*. 2003. This book offers a wealth of strategies for aiding students in grades 6-12 to improve their reading process in the classroom. An enjoyable and informative read with vignettes into the classroom.

Brun, Mathilde. *Polymer Clay Jewelry: The Art of Caning*, Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2013. This book is an excellent book offering many techniques for creating beads and jewelry constructions using polymer clay, useful for the *Heritage Bracelet* class activity.

Chavez, Denise. "The Closet." In *Growing Up Latino, Memories and Stories*, edited by Harold Augenbraum and Ilan Stavans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. This collection is a rich repository of stories of growing up in Latino traditions.

Cisneros, Sandra. *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*, New York: Knopf, 1992. This book is a collection of poems containing the poem *Curtains*.

Cisneros, Sandra. "The House on Mango Street." (Vintage Contemporaries) 1984. This book offers a view of life in the city as seen through the eyes of an adolescent Hispanic girl. This book is the pivotal inspiration for this unit.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *The Latin Deli*. New York, New York: W.W. Norton & Company. This book is a collection of short stories telling the lives of barrio women, written by a female Hispanic writer.

Diaz, Junot. *Drown*. New York, New York: Riverhead Books, 1996. Ten stories about life on the periphery for young men of color in the inner city of New Jersey. Descriptions and language are controversial yet honest about Latino youth on tough streets.

Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. This book is a wonderful guide to getting into writing and enjoying the process.

Golden Alisa. *Creating Handmade Books*. New York: Sterling Publishing, 1998. This is one of my favorite books providing great inspiration on the design and construction of a wide variety of hand made books easily adaptable to classroom materials. (Brun 2013)

Irving, David. *Faith Ringgold Paints Crown Heights*. VHS/DVD. Directed by David Irving. Produced by Linda Freeman. 1998. This DVD is the story of the Crown Heights Children's Story Quilt.

Katter, Eldon. "Multicultural Connections: Craft & Community." *Art Education* (National Art Education Association) 48, no. 1 (January 1995): 8-13. This is a convincing article on the importance of including craft education in the visual art curriculum.

Kelly, Hilton. "What Jim Crow Teachers Could Do: Educational Capital and Teachers' Work in Under-resourced Schools." *Urban Review* 42 (2010): 329-350. A scholarly article that sheds light on Jim Crow era schools and teaching in the south.

Marshall, Paule. *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. New York, New York: The Feminist Press, 1981. This book is a novel about the daughter of Barbadian immigrants living in Brooklyn during the Depression and World War II.



Mazloomi, Carolyn. *Spirits of the Cloth, Contemporary African American Quilts*. New York, New York: Clarkson Potter, 1998. This book is a breathtaking collection of narrative works in cloth by contemporary African American quiltmakers.

Perry, Regenia A. *Free Within Ourselves*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1992. A collection of works by African American artists in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Willis, Susan. *Specifying: Black Women Writing the American Experience*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989. Susan Willis provides a description of the symbolism of the bracelets in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* by Paule Marshall.

Young, Al. *Dancing*. New York, New York: Corinth Books, 1969. This book is an early collection of poems by the 2005 Poet Laureate of California.

## **Appendix 1: Implementing Common Core Standards**

This unit supports the North Carolina Essential Standards for Visual Art in its three overarching stands, Visual Literacy, Contextual Relevancy, and Critical Response. This unit is appropriate for teaching in a Visual Art, Beginning (Art I) course or year 4 of International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program for Visual Arts. North Carolina defines visual art as an elective in a technical subject.

Through this unit teachers and students will grow their understandings of the lived cultures and journeys of the individuals in the learning environment. A working knowledge of the relationship between image and idea is essential to rigorous engagements in the classroom. As teachers facilitate learning goals for their students this unit presents opportunities for both collaborative and independent investigations that provide students with literacy skills to use across disciplines and beyond the classroom.

The Visual Literacy strand emphasizes the use of the language of visual arts to communicate effectively, applying creative and critical thinking skills to artistic expression. At the beginning level students create personal, symbolic expression as a means of communication using a variety of media, including 2-D, 3-D, and digital, to produce art. Contextual Relevancy refers to understanding the global, historical, societal, and cultural contexts of the visual arts. The focus is on understanding how art is used to document human experience. Students learn to interpret art in terms of cultural and ethnic context and to understand the interdisciplinary connections and life applications of the visual arts. Critical Response refers to the use of critical analysis to react, either in writing, verbally, through art, or through other modalities to art. Critical Response requires the use of skills such as observing, describing, analyzing, interpreting, critiquing, judging, and evaluating personal art and the art of others. At the beginning level, students use critical analysis to generate responses to a variety of prompts.

This unit also addresses also addresses grade 9-10 Common Core Standards for English Language Arts in Reading and Writing. Through class activities students will determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, how the language evokes a sense of time and place. Students will write narratives through prose or poetry to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*, 33.
- <sup>2</sup> Denise Chavez, *The Closet*, 86.
- <sup>3</sup> *The House on Mango Street-The Story*, Sandra Cisneros, YouTube video.
- <sup>4</sup> Junot Diaz, *Drown*, 92.
- <sup>5</sup> James Baldwin, *Sonny's Blues*, 139.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid
- <sup>7</sup> A Colored School, PBS documentary.
- <sup>8</sup> Durr-e-Nayab, "The Tipping Point by Malcolm Gladwell", 97.
- <sup>9</sup> Susan Willis, *Specifying*, 53.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid
- <sup>11</sup> Eldon Katter, *Multicultural Connections: Craft and Community*, 9.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, 10.
- <sup>13</sup> Regenia A. Perry, *Free Within Ourselves*, 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Eldon Katter, *Multicultural Connections: Craft and Community*, 12.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid
- <sup>17</sup> Kyleene Beers, *Why Kids Can't Read, What Teachers Can Do*, 104.
- <sup>18</sup> Ibid
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid, 105.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid, 107.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid, 283.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, 270.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid, 271.
- <sup>24</sup> Peter Elbow, *Wring With Power*, 148.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid
- <sup>26</sup> *The House on Mango Street-The Story*, Sandra Cisneros, YouTube video.
- <sup>27</sup> Regenia A. Perry, *Free Within Ourselves*, 70.
- <sup>28</sup> Carolyn Mazloomi, *Spirits of the Cloth, Contemporary African American Quilts*, 46.
- <sup>29</sup> Faith Ringgold *Paints Crown Heights*, DVD.
- <sup>30</sup> *The House on Mango Street-The Story*, Sandra Cisneros, YouTube video.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid