



***Visualizing the Story Through “Text”iles:
Visual Storytelling***

Barbara Biesak Wesselman, 2014 CTI Fellow
Northwest School of the Arts

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
Apparel and Textile Development I & II, Costume Design, American History, Literacy
Grades 9-12

Keywords: Visual Storytelling, textiles, cloth, fabric, fiber, iconic, symbolic

Teaching Standards: See Appendix for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

Synopsis: A textile is a documentary piece of evidence which conveys a message and is able to tell a story. It is a visual that can be touched and manipulated. In our world of constantly changing images guiding our students to analyze those images or just one image, to stop and understand the story the image is telling is an important comprehensive skill. This unit challenges students to select an iconic textile and understand the story it tells. Storytelling is one of the oldest forms of shared communication; textiles offer a look into history, style, economics and design through the end product created with the fibers. Representations of textiles throughout humankind share a glimpse into lives and stories that helped us become who we are.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 100 students in Apparel and Textile Development/Grades 9-12.

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Visualizing the Story Through “Text”iles: Visual Storytelling

Barbara Biesak Wesselman

I have always been fascinated with textiles, fabric, and cloth. Memories throughout my life often point back to an object that is textile based. Baseball uniforms at the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, my mom’s orange 1950’s cocktail dress, a space suit at Cape Canaveral, my sons’ “blankie”, The Shroud of Turin, the rag rugs (made from fabric scraps twisted and braided together) my grandmother used to make that my Dad called “Angelina’s revenge” because they slid all over the floor when you stepped on them, the picture of my other grandmother’s wedding dress that she told me she made into kitchen curtains and baptismal gowns for her seven children, hanging a flag on the flag pole at school and in our front yard at home and the ceremony and reverence given to folding an American flag.

Textiles accompany us throughout life's journey, wrapped as we enter the world, and covered when we leave it. We all have a story of cloth to tell. Despite their varied cultural backgrounds, all people have something in common, the celebration of life from birth to grave, and the use of textiles during these festivities.¹ Actually all of us probably have memories that are textile based; it’s just not something most people recognize. People don’t recognize it because for us cloth is not precious. It’s a commodity that we take for granted, but the history of textiles reveals that textiles were once more precious than gold. They distinguished social classes and helped the hunter-gatherer to evolve into farmers and stake claim to land and build societies.

Textiles established the oldest trade route in Europe, The Silk Road, established during 206 BC to AD 220,² which derives its name from the lucrative Chinese silk trade, a major reason for the connection of trade routes into an extensive transcontinental network.³

A textile can be a documentary piece of evidence which conveys a message, tells a story. Modern society communicates more now with visual images than words. Textiles contain information about the past, present and future.⁴ From around the world we can find example after example of textiles whose imagery immediately brings about a story. Some interpretations might be different, but that’s what imagery is about.

A few years ago a student brought a simple class project to my attention, converting pillow cases into dresses for young girls in refugee camps in Turkey to cover their bodies. Many unclothed young girls were being raped. The ministry in charge of this project hoped that with clothing perhaps some of the violence could be avoided. We discussed

embellishments and the role color, decoration and style play into garments and the messages that are consciously or unconsciously sent. Textiles are complex. What we do with textiles changes lives. I was deeply moved after watching a video about the Star Spangled Banner. What the flag stood for in the history of our country is astounding. The colors, the pattern, the textile itself symbolize this nation. Along with pointing out a few amazing textiles, I hope to open your mind to the limitless potential cloth has in our world.

An example of rarity and value became clearer when you consider a blanket that was discovered in Tucson Arizona in 2001. The owner claimed to have received the blanket from legendary frontiersman Kit Carson. The blanket has a simple design with brown, white and blue stripes. It's the simplest pattern of all the known 19th century Navajo first phase blankets. Less than 50 first-phase blankets made before 1865 are still around today. The blanket was sold to the Detroit Institute of Arts. Its appraised value is \$350,000-\$500,000.⁵ Fabric can tell stories of the past, the people and the history of our countries heritage.

Objective

This unit will lead students to identify and explore the iconic textiles in American history and the story they tell. An Iconic textile, in terms of this unit, is defined as: a textile that represents a visually recognizable part of American History, symbolic, widely identifiable and established, distinctive, actual. The word "text" derives from the Latin *texere*, which means to weave⁶. The terms, textile, cloth and fabric will be used interchangeably throughout this paper. Getting students to tell their story, to interpret images, is an important aspect of teaching. So much can be explored through the sharing of one's personal interpretation. As a teacher, one of the most intriguing parts of each school day is to see what new twist a student will put on the information I share with them. I'm looking forward to seeing my students delve into this unit and discover the threads that bind us together! (Or in some instances, attempt to tear us apart).

I began my research with the idea of explaining the importance of messages in quilts, especially during the time of the Underground Railroad. I wanted to discover the answer to quilt codes. "Quilts are diaries in cloth. Whether geometric, or pictorial, they tell of happy memories, sad events, funny antidotes or flights of fancy. Every fabric choice and every design decision illustrates the quilt-maker's story, like a journal in cloth."⁷ So much has been written, rather than trying to find new information on a well researched topic, I chose to change my focus from Underground Railroad quilts to any and all textile based item that hold significant importance in the history of the United States.

My discipline is a visual extreme. I teach to integrate all academic and elective areas of education holistically. Apparel Development and Costume Design, my curriculums, exemplify visual story telling. Much can be inferred about a person, a character in a story

or play just by what they are wearing. The world opens up to the study of history, science, math, and the arts through the study and creation of costume. This Charlotte Teachers Institute seminar is being held at The Harvey B. Gantt Center, a beautiful and important cultural museum in Charlotte. It is a treasure of the community and a rich visual environment.⁸ I hope to help guide the development of image narratives through my students. In addition, by using exhibits in museums from around the country or on the web, educators provide exciting visuals for their students and provide an excellent starting point for this unit.

School Background

I teach at Northwest School of the Arts in Charlotte, North Carolina in the Charlotte Mecklenburg School System (CMS). We are one of 164 schools serving 144,000 students throughout the district. Northwest is one of 9 magnet programs, the only Middle School / High School magnet program in the system. Our school has approximately 1,000 students, 65% African American, 30% Caucasian and 5% "Other". We have a population that is 60% female and 40% male. The school's art magnet theme offers concentrations in: Music (Instrumental and Vocal), Piano, Dance, Theater, Costume Design and the Visual Arts. Our academic programs are rigorous with proven results beyond the norm.

We are recognized as one of the most successful schools in the nation: A National Magnet School of Excellence, the highest graduation rate in CMS for a 4 year high school and AP (Advanced Placement) courses are offered in: English 11 & 12, Calculus, Statistics, Biology, Environmental Studies, U.S. and European History, Psychology, Computer Science, Human Geography, Studio Art, and Art History. We are also recognized as a model for our Pro-Caring climate and diversified population.

Our students choose to be at Northwest School of the Arts. They are highly engaged. This works to improve both academic outcomes and graduation rates. Training in the arts, regardless of socio-economic status has been proven to lead to higher GPAs and standardized test scores, lower drop-out rates and increased graduate rates. Students with four years of arts or music in high school average 100 points higher on their SAT scores.⁹ These gains last throughout a student's life and into their career.

Northwest students are trained with 21st century skills like creativity, problem solving, collaboration, critical thinking and communication. Students are trained for the creative jobs they wish to hold post-college, while building vital skills transferrable to other occupations. The Arts are an export industry that grew to \$64 billion in 2010 and employs 3.35 million people nationally.¹⁰ My class size ranges from 12 to 27 students in Career and Technical Education (CTE) curriculum. Apparel Development 1 & 2 and Costume Design are North Carolina state approved curriculums I wrote that are unique to our school. My class population is 95% female. This unit will be taught to all of my

classes in varying degrees. A unit can last from 1- 90 minute block to 6- 90 minute blocks (approximately one day to two weeks).

History of Textiles

Over 30,000 years ago a person in France went into a cave and drew pictures of animals on the cave walls. (I won't talk about the drawings of alien-like creatures, that's for another unit!) 30,000 years later we are seeing and imagining the story those people were trying to convey through the visuals they left behind. 17,000 years ago people in Spain drew pictures of animals that made the animals look animated, drawing what looked like moving legs and a tapestry from 1067, 230 feet of embroidered threads tells the story of the Norman conquest of France. Visual storytelling, it can be argued, is the oldest form of universal communication. There are still ancient written languages that we cannot decipher but the saying, "A picture is worth a 1000 words", from the expression "Use a picture. It's worth a thousand words," first appeared in a 1911 newspaper article quoting newspaper editor Arthur Brisbane discussing journalism and publicity.¹¹ It is an undeniable fact.

The principles and elements of design (color, shapes, scale, etc.) and their relation to fictional and nonfictional events come to life through picture books as well as textile designs. The apparel curriculum is a natural extension of student learning opportunities offered through this seminar by exploring visual concepts while providing invaluable cultural exposure to students. "Fashion is the expression of personal style without having to use words. It's a language that tells a story about the person who wears it. In other words, fashion is a narrative that we write each day based on what we decide to put on and that narrative can change."¹²

Think about all the ways in which textiles impact your own daily lives. Most people are unaware of the wide reach of this subject because they have never had the opportunity to think about the topic holistically. They do not realize the rich and textured stories cloth can tell. For many years I have preached about the importance of textiles (which are finally being recognized for their historical contributions).

To be human is to be involved with cloth. Stories and memories evoked through clothing are real and valuable. Clothes are made from textiles, and many of the important textiles traditions are made to be displayed on the body. Religious, cultural, socio-economic and political norms can be expressed through clothing. We have a need to express ourselves and to share our ideas (communicate) with others. We want to understand what others are saying, we want to understand, to learn and thus expand our horizons.¹³

Because I design, visualization is a natural process for me. I understand it is not that way for everyone. This unit will provide the starting point for my fellow educators and

ultimately for our students, to “use graphic design, infographics, illustration, and photography to convey information in the most elegant, entertaining, and informative way. Today, the creative scope of existing visual storytelling techniques is being expanded to meet the formidable challenge of extracting valuable news, surprising findings, and relevant stories from a daily flood of data head on.”¹⁴

With few exceptions characters in a story wear costumes, realistic or imaginary. Those designs, colors and textures are intricate elements in a character’s make-up. Visual imagery is real. Description can be imagined. The imagined can be illustrated. I will guide students to develop their own visual story of heritage, history or fiction, using examples learned in this seminar. Through this enrichment my students can take these skills and apply them in all areas of learning to bring storytelling to life.

“The Smithsonian Institution is America’s largest and most cherished repository for objects that define our common heritage. Hundreds of scholars and curators selected 101 objects from thousands and thousands to represent: *The History of America in 101 Objects*. Among those 101 objects: George Washington’s uniform, the Star-Spangled Banner, the Conestoga Wagon (covered wagon), Isaac Singer’s Sewing Machine (I had to throw that one in), Levi’s Duck Brown Trousers, a Mexican Army Coat, Harriet Tubman’s Shawl, Christian Fleetman’s Medal of Honor, Abraham Lincoln’s Hat, Conspirator Hoods, Eli Whitney’s Cotton Gin, King Kamehameha III’s Feather Shawl, Custer’s Jacket, the Kitty Hawk Flier, a Ku Klux Klan Robe and Hood, a World War I Gas Mask, Amelia Earhart’s Flight Jacket, John L. Lewis’s Union Badge, Marian Anderson’s Mink Coat, Dorothy’s Ruby Slippers, We Can Do It Poster by Howard Miller, Audie Murphy’s Eisenhower Jacket, Jacqueline Kennedy’s Inaugural Ball Gown, Neil Armstrong’s Space Suit, Muhammad Ali’s Boxing Gear, Cesar Chavez’s Union Jacket, an AIDS Memorial Quilt Panel, a U.S. Olympic Hockey Jersey, Mr. Rogers Sweater, Seinfeld’s Puffy Shirt and Kermit The Frog. Thirty-two (32) objects are textile based (with the exception of the poster which was included because the image and garments are so iconic, Rosie the Riveter), the cotton gin and the sewing machine - industrialization that changed textiles and the world forever and the Kitty Hawk flier whose wings are covered in fabric enabling it to lift and ultimately take flight.¹⁵

We share information and ideas through many vehicles, speech, music, graphic signs, performances and visual expression. Textiles help us communicate and learn, add beauty and stimulation to our days and make our lives richer. Ninth century, pre-Columbian Andean people developed a sophisticated information storage system using knotted cords or string. It makes sense that the recording system used by these pre-Columbian people would have involved fiber, since they valued cloth so highly; it was for them not only a marker of status, but sacredness as well. It was necessary to communicate with a visual code of sorts, since people needed to discern quickly from a distance whether approaching armies were friends or foes. Today coded flag systems still function as

quickly processed communications. Textile designs can help groups feel a sense of solidarity or bonding.

According to Homer's *Iliad*, Helen of Troy also used weaving to express her feelings about the destruction that ensued after her abduction. As she worked on a large purple cloak, she incorporated images of battles scenes and horrible wars the Greeks and Trojans suffered for her sake. One commentator who uses *The Iliad* verses to interpret what Helen must have felt writes that she went from "silent weaver to public speaker."¹⁶

Blue star flags flew in front of the home of someone serving in the U.S. armed forces during World War II. A single star indicated that the family had one person on the front. A well-known example of memory cloth composite is the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt, where each panel is made in honor of an individual who died from the disease. It was laid out on the Mall in Washington D.C. Contemporary fiber artists like to point out the relationship between cloth and communication. Medieval people learned bible stories from huge tapestries hung in churches and draped nonpublic streets during processions.¹⁷

Background

Fashion

In Charlotte Smith's *Dreaming of Dior*, the stories provide a glimpse of countless women's lives as journaled through their clothes. The use of textiles in imagery is used to make a powerful statement. From the Costume Institute at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *100 Dresses* are published as renowned pieces of fashion "each of which is a reminder of the ways in which fashion reflects the broader culture that created it."¹⁸ Fashion speaks to our society in a way no other medium has. For my high school students, the freedom of self-expression through their choice of clothing at a school that accepts individual differences is liberating. Many have stories to tell of being ostracized at previous schools because of what they wore. Clothing is a neutralizer and a protagonist depending on when and where it is worn.

Ribbons

It was in the British fashion to have worn yellow ribbons during war and American civil war soldiers' wives are said to have carried on the practice, as evidenced by the 1949 John Wayne film, *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, and the 1970's song, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree." During the U.S./Iran hostage crisis of 1979-81, yellow ribbons were a common sign of remembrance; people tied them to the front door of their houses, their trees and even to telephone poles. Ribbon tying re-emerged after the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001. Color-coded bands now appear as signs of vigilance for other causes. Pink ribbons represent the fight against breast cancer, and red ribbons the fight against AIDS. Purple ribbons represent the fight for the

legalization of gay marriage. Black ribbons represent a state of grief or mourning. The communicative power of textiles was recognized by Sophocles (important Greek playwright- died 406BC), who, in a play that has now been lost, coined the phrase “the voice of the shuttle.” (Shuttle: carries thread across the weft threads during weaving redefining the way textiles were and are made). Color and textiles are significant displays of symbolic beliefs that announce a commitment or cause without using words.

Film

The dress Marilyn Monroe wore in the film *The Seven Year Itch* is regarded as an icon of film history. The image of Monroe in the white dress standing above a subway grating blowing the dress up has been described as one of the iconic images of the 20th century.¹⁹ Pop stars Madonna and twenty years later, Lady Gaga gained notoriety in part because of their musical talents but arguably because of their dress in bizarre costumes which brought them acclaim and stardom. Maybe the outfits made of meat worn by Lady Gaga would be dismissed as non-textile based but I would point out that the skins from those animals were our ancestors’ earliest non-woven coverings. Madonna wore undergarments on the outside of her traditional clothing causing a new generation of young people to dress more promiscuously.

Costume

Shoes worn by the Dorothy character in *The Wizard of Oz* sold at an auction in 2012 for two million dollars. These iconic ruby red slippers²⁰ are one of four or five pair of shoes known to exist and symbolize not only the story that over the years in both book and movie versions have fueled a number of elaborate theories as to the story’s deeper meanings. Some of these have been overtly political, some have been spiritual, some monetary.²¹ In the children's novel by L. Frank Baum, on which the film was based, Dorothy's magical shoes were silver. The idea to change them to ruby red came from Noel Langley, one of the film's screenwriters—probably because the color would stand out better against a yellow brick road. Legendary Hollywood costumer Adrian designed the slippers—which owe their glitter to burgundy sequins.²²

Uniforms

Military uniforms invite one to recall battles/war, tyrants, heroes, leaders and ultimate sacrifice. School and job related uniforms visually alert us to the status, responsibilities, beliefs and requirements of the individual wearing them. Conversely a uniform can send false information to the observer when expectations are one thing and the person is the other. We can look at photographs, videos and art work to make educated assumptions about the date, social status, geographical location, season and event of a person by the clothes they are depicted in or actually wearing. There is no doubt that clothing and fashion have and will continue to embody culture, events and society.

Quilts

Quilts are useful coverings originally made from left over, or previously used textiles and garments. Quilts have covered beds and adorned homes for hundreds of years in the United States. They were first used in a very utilitarian fashion and later, when time allowed, became works of art. The history of quilts is as interesting as a quilt itself and worthy of note in this paper however those details will not be covered at this time. Quilts are a good option for more in-depth study in visual storytelling.

The quilts of the underground railway have been the subject of much study and some controversy. Some historians say African American slaves may have used a quilt code to navigate the Underground Railroad. Quilts with patterns named "wagon wheel," "tumbling blocks," and "bear's paw" appear to have contained secret messages that helped direct slaves to freedom. The code "was a way to say something to a person in the presence of many others without the others knowing," said Dobard, a history professor at Howard University in Washington, D.C. "It was a way of giving direction without saying, 'go northwest.'" But there is a lack of corroborating evidence. Quilt codes are not mentioned in the 19th century slave narratives or 1930s oral testimonies of former slaves. Additionally, no original quilts remain. "What I think they've done is they've taken folklore and said its historical fact," Wright said. "They offer no evidence, no documentation, in support of that argument."

However Dobard refutes the claims that his book lacks evidence, noting that he uses oral history and thus lacks written records noting; "Who is going to write down what they did and what it meant ... it might fall into the wrong hands?"

Addressing the lack of concrete evidence, Dobard emphasized the fragility of quilts. "Consider the nature of quilts. A quilt was to be used. To expect a quilt that remained within the slave community to survive more than one hundred years is asking a lot." Fact or myth, people agree that the idea of a quilt code is compelling. Bonnie Browning of the American Quilter's Society in Paducah, Kentucky, said: "It makes a wonderful story."²³ The Underground Railroad is the name for the secret route fugitives took to escape to freedom. It was so named because fugitives who traveled on it just seemed to vanish as if traveling underground. It was not a real railroad, but rather a series of safe hiding places called "stations." The people who helped the fugitives travel from one station to the next were known as "railroad workers."

It is believed that people who worked and traveled on the Railroad used secret codes to learn the routes from one safe place to the next. Some believe that an Underground Railroad Quilt Code existed to guide fugitive slaves to freedom. Because it was illegal in slave-holding states to teach slaves to read, slaves could not communicate with each other in writing. Because slaves of all backgrounds shared an oral history of storytelling

coupled with a knowledge of textile production and African art—an art form which embodies African symbolic systems and designs—they discovered they were able to communicate complex messages in the stitches, patterns, designs, colors and fabrics of the American quilt. To memorize the code, researchers believe fugitives used a sampler quilt, with blocks arranged in order of the code. The patterns told slaves how to get ready to escape, what to do on the trip, and where to go.

Once stitched, the coded quilts were “aired” out the windows of slave cabins, acting as secret maps for slaves brave and desperate enough to make the dangerous trek from South to North, from slavery to freedom. Researchers today are excited about unraveling the mysteries behind the Underground Railroad Quilt codes. Twelve quilt patterns were used to direct the slaves to take particular actions.²⁴ An entire lesson on understanding and designing a quilt can be found at; Really Good Stuff Activity Guide, Underground Railroad Quilt Guide. It is a compelling theory and another amazing example of the iconic role that textiles and visuals play in our history and our present.

Flags

Flags have been used for thousands of years. Originally thought to serve as identifying signals for the military they evolved into representations for royal houses, then countries and ultimately governments, businesses, military ranks and units, sports teams and political parties. The purpose of a flag is to represent a place, organization, or person. They are most often made of rectangular shaped cloth and can be seen from a distance.²⁵ The American flag has evolved over the course of our countries’ history. The red, white and blue colors have remained a constant. The white stars represent the states and the stripes represent the thirteen British colonies that first declared independence from Great Britain.

Teaching Strategies

Stories can be found in textiles from all over the world. Each piece / item not only tells a story, it warrants critical analysis and study. The lesson for this unit focuses on American textiles and their stories. A brief summary is given in the body of the paper on various textile based examples that can be applicable for the lesson explained below. but this list is not all inclusive. I encourage you to continue searching for meaningful textile examples that may be applied to this lesson. I have chosen the Star Spangled Banner, in my opinion the most iconic textile that represents our country.

When I teach our unit about textiles I explain the process of making a thread (or yarn) to my students. I give them each a cotton ball and challenge them to twist and spin the fibers into a long durable thread. It’s something that’s not easy to do. Now imagine all you have are cotton balls and you need something to wear. How old would you be before you are able to make the threads that are then woven together to cover your body?

Referring to textiles as a visual presentation, weave alone can tell a story. Fabrics are manufactured in wide varieties and design. Threads are woven on a loom. Weft threads run left and right. Warp threads run lengthwise. A woven fabric is made by running threads over and under each other in different but consistent patterns. The different design and effect is produced on the fabric with the help from various mechanisms which form different weaves and designs that enhances the look of textiles. Different types of weaves produce different fabrics.²⁶ Plain, satin, and twill are the most commonly produced woven textiles. Cloth can also be knit, where threads are interlocked to produce a stretch and give to the fabric. The third type of fabric is non-woven, the oldest type of fabric made. Felt is the most identifiable non-woven fabric. Fibers are pressed together with a combination of moisture and pressure. Being able to identify weave, analyze color and pattern may enable one to get the story out of a piece of cloth. (As with the Navajo blanket).

Product: visual presentation, story board, fabric journal, graphic novel

Students will use a variety of visual presentation formats to convey understanding. At first students will quickly sketch or collage their image. They will then write and finally they will create their own visual story depending on the textile they choose. Below are three examples of products that may be produced in this unit.

Fabric Journal

A fabric journal is a tactile way to tell a story. The possibilities are endless with the use of threads, fabric pieces and imagination. No words are needed when one can see and feel. One of the reasons I love textiles is their tactile importance, as with a touch and see box when the student reaches inside a covered box and describes what they feel inside item by item. Like braille is tactile reading, so can textiles help tell a story to those who cannot see through feel. Sighted people can see the colors and design, as well as weave, for a story of their own.

Graphic Novels

“Graphic novels have found their way into the classroom, as teachers are realizing their usefulness as literacy tools. After a study of graphic novels, researchers concluded that the average graphic novel introduced readers to twice as many words as the average children’s book. This realization has reinforced the idea that the comics format is a good way to impart information.” While there remains controversy about graphic novels—especially from people who worry that graphic novels will end traditional reading—our experiences with adolescents, as well as a number of current research studies, suggest that graphic novels are an important adjunct in our instruction. Graphic novels are viable options for students with disabilities, struggling readers, and English learners, but they are more powerful than that. Graphic novels are motivating and engaging for all students.”²⁷

Powerful examples of graphic novels and visual storytelling engross the reader by visually telling a story that in many ways is open to interruption, peaking interest through pictures.²⁸ Graphic novels often require a new kind of visual literacy for readers and viewers. The text or story is largely dialogue or compressed narratives that can be created through layers via panels nested on pages. The intertextuality, words and pictures combined to tell a story, are important. Through boxes and bubbles the viewers can tell with the text is a throughout or narrative. On the pages all space, gutters, panels hold meaning. The reader or viewer can see and find meaning moment to moment, action to action, scene to scene and aspect to aspect as well as non-sequitur (having no connection at all) just by looking at a page.²⁹ Because this form of literature is identifiable to our students it is an important source of literacy we need to understand and utilize. I read my first graphic novel four years ago during my time as a Yale National Fellow. It has impact, with or without text. I will utilize images from *Fashion Beast* illustrated by Facundo Percio.

Story Boards

Most identifiable for its necessity in filmmaking, story boards box the plot and action from start to finish using illustration. Some textual descriptions sometimes accompany the boxed image and action, below the box. Story boards are easy to follow and visual extremes. This is another example of storytelling. Students can illustrate or collage to tell their story visually.

The Visual Storytelling seminar encompassed “not merely simple texts, picture-books also often depict difficult issues such as U.S. slavery and violence, and we will explore the role of visual images in presenting such topics to our children. Image narratives are an important element of storytelling for young adults as well, and we will discuss how graphic novels and illustrated texts offer sophisticated narratives for older readers. We will have opportunities to explore the concept of the visual narrative through discussions that dissect the works of art on view in the museum’s current exhibitions. We will also explore artwork created by children, and have the opportunity to create our own visual tales in order to fully consider how image narratives continue to tell important stories.”³⁰

Visual Project: The Star Spangled Banner

Instructions

1. *Previewing Content.* In advance of the text reading, use imagery as a way to activate background and prior knowledge.

I will instruct you to close your eyes. I will say a word and give you seven seconds to see that word in your mind. Keep your eyes closed until I tell you to open them. There will be no talking until the first two steps are completed.

After the seven seconds you will have one minute to draw, collage or create any type of illustration that visually represents what you “saw” after I said the word.

Do you understand the instructions? You will have the materials in the center of your table to create your visual. (Groupings of materials will be in the center of each table- students can also use their own materials, if that works better in your classroom setting) Are you ready to begin?

Please close your eyes. Remember, no talking.

The word I want you to see is: FLAG

- the teacher will silently count down 7 seconds, or use a stop watch
- alert the students to open their eyes after 7 seconds and begin to create a visual for what they saw
- inform students after 30 seconds have passed, 50 seconds and stop at 60 seconds
- all materials should now be on the table
- ask for student volunteers to show their picture to the class, choose 5 and ask students to hold their pictures up in the front of the classroom. (there is still no talking)
- assign a number to each picture for identification later
- ask the remaining students to each choose 1 picture from the group of 5 in front of the classroom or have seated students count off by 5 to create more evenly numbered groups
- assign illustration to groups

2. *Narrative Writing.* Ask students to read the picture paying careful attention to the details and imagery used. Then ask each student to write their own summary of the story being told in this image.

- instruct the students seated they will have 1 minute to tell the story of the picture they have selected, tell the students who are holding the pictures that they have 30 seconds to write a description of the picture they shared
- start, give 30 second alert, 50 second and stop at 60 seconds
- group students in 5 groups or work as a whole class, students can now share verbally what the word meant to them, and how their visual conveyed their feelings and emotions to their classmates

3. *Summarizing Information.* A third possible use for graphic novels involves writing summaries. Like oral retellings of readings, written summaries require that students consider the main ideas in a piece of text and use their own words to recap what they know.³¹ Students can discuss the graphic novel and the text they've read with a small group, and then create their own summaries. Alternatively, students could summarize the text and then create a compare-and-contrast graphic organizer, in which they note the differences between their summary of the text and the way that the author/illustrator of the graphic novel summarized the text.³²

- Reflect and observe
- Lesson: After this warm up activity read the following to the students. After the reading I suggest finding pictures depicting the battle, the flag, the restoration and the displaying of the Star Spangled Banner at the Smithsonian.
- The National Anthem can also be played

Read aloud:

In 1811 Major Armistead who had command of Fort McHenry, the Baltimore, Maryland fort that would prove to be the last strong hold against the British forces in a battle that was known as the 2nd independence battle, the War of 1812, wrote "We have no suitable ensign to display over the Fort, and it is my desire to have a flag so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it from a distance". Two flag were ordered then made by Mary Pickersgrill, her daughter, 2 nieces and an African American servant of Baltimore at the cost of \$405.90.³³

The flag measured thirty by forty-two feet completed. It was made of worsted wool bunting, a lightweight wool fabric often used for flag making at the turn of the century, with fifteen white stars, two feet across on an indigo background. There were eight red stripes and seven white stripes alternated on the flag, each twenty three inches wide, seven of which ran the entire length of the flag and the remaining were stripes adjacent to the indigo fabric which held the stars.³⁴ The flag symbolized a new nation and as the battle raged throughout the night with British bombs, rockets and a sky filled with lightning and torrential rain, Francis Scott Key observed it all from a ship in the Baltimore Harbor. His only wonder as daylight came was what flag he would see flying above the fort, the British Union Jack or the Stars and Stripes. The republics' flag remained and as the British attack fleet retreated Francis Scott Key penned the poem:

*O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose board stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watch'd were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,*

*Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say does that star spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free an the home of the brave?*

This was first published as “The Defense at Fort McHenry,” it later became known as the Star Spangled Banner and our national anthem.

- *Stop and let the students contemplate this information.*

Question for understanding

- *Is this new information? Did you know what the lyrics meant?*
- *Why 15 stars? Why 8 red stripes? Why 7 white stripes?*
- *Why were the colors red white and blue chosen?*
- *After hearing this story does it change what the flag means to you? Is that a change for you? Explain.*

Continue Reading

Amistead was given the flag and it was passed down through his family for generations. It was displayed during parades and celebrations for many years. Newspapers of the time called it “a holy relic never disgraced, and receiving now the homage of friends.” (Through the Perilous Fight: Six Weeks that Saved the Nation by Steve Vogel) Over time more than two hundred square feet of fabric had been cut from the flag as war veterans and celebrities were allowed snipping, it is noted one soldier is even buried with a star from the flag. The flag was hidden during the Civil War and again during World War II. It was loaned to the Smithsonian and finally given to the museum in 1914 with the stipulation that it remains at the museum forever.

By the year 2000 over \$58 million dollars had been spent conserving and displaying this national icon.

Questions for understanding

- *How does the cost of the original flag relate to the restoration costs?*
- *Is this a relic we should be saving?*
- *What is the background of the people who are doing the restoration work?*
- *What are some common themes or issues that arise during the discussion?*

Product

After students have mastered the concept of this activity they will choose their own iconic textile to explore research and document through visual storytelling. They may create a graphic novel, a fabric journal, a presentation or a portfolio telling the story of their piece without words.

In addition, a written assignment will be submitted with the product. The report will address:

Iconic textile piece

Make up of fiber content and why that textile was chosen

Principle and elements of design used

The story

Conclusions

Research Report: Iconic American Textile

Student Name: _____ Textile: _____

| CATEGORY | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| First Draft | Detailed draft is neatly presented and includes all required information. | Draft includes all required information and is legible. | Draft includes most required information and is legible. | Draft is missing required information and is difficult to read. |
| Quality of Information | Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples. | Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and/or examples. | Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given. | Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic. |
| Mechanics | No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors. | Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors | A few grammatical spelling, or punctuation errors. | Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors. |
| Illustrations | Illustrations are neat, accurate and add to the reader's understanding of the topic. | Illustrations are accurate and add to the reader's understanding of the topic. | Illustrations are accurate and sometimes add to the reader's understanding of the topic. | Illustrations are not accurate OR do not add to the reader's understanding of the topic. |
| Understanding | Accurately portrays the ideas of the report topic and uses meaningful thoughts and phrases to depict the textile lifestyle | Accurately portrays ideas of the topic and uses somewhat meaningful thoughts and phrases to depict the textile lifestyle | Most of the ideas accurately portrays the topic and somewhat meaningful thoughts and phrases to depict the textile lifestyle | Few ideas portray the topic accurately and the thoughts and phrases are less than meaningful in depicting the textile lifestyle |
| Presentation | Presentation is clear, accurate, organized, and effective for peers | Presentation is clear, accurate, somewhat organized, and effective for peers | Presentation is somewhat vague, accurate, semi-organized, and somewhat effective for peers. | Presentation is vague, many errors, unorganized, and ineffective for peers |

Materials

colored pencils, plain white paper, paper scissors, glue, magazines, colored markers, lined paper and a pencil or pen, plain weave fabric & felt of various colors, fabric scissors, fabric scraps, needle and thread, technology for research

Appendix: Implementing Common Core Standards and CTE North Carolina Objectives

The teaching strategies for this lesson will utilize North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) Objectives: 1.00 covers the industry history, Industrialization, 19th Century, 20th Century and 21st Century, objective 2.0 which teach about textiles, pattern making and construction and 3.0 that teaches about the principles and elements of design as well as a career opportunity focus. These objectives comprise the newly introduced curriculum objectives and pacing guide launched the summer of 2014. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools is a pilot Career Technical Education district testing the rigor of this new preliminary curriculum. Prior curricular objectives were greater in number 1.0 - 12.0 but this new program has a richer, more detailed content. This unit will use all parts of the new NCDPI Apparel I and II objectives.

Common Core Standards:

- Key Ideas and Details
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Through their research project, students will demonstrate understanding of Key Ideas and Details in Common Core Standards. Their reports and presentations will be evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources

Students will address Common Core Literacy standards by researching the topic and integration of information in the form of a report and visual presentation relating to the unit topic.

CTE Objectives

Family and Consumer Sciences content is a complex set of knowledge and skills that builds human literacy and leads to quality of life for individuals and families. Human literacy is achieved in three ways:

1. (1) Individual empowerment – making informed decisions – e.g., evaluating reliability of information, analyzing pros/cons of choices, and applying information to novel situations.
2. (2) Life span development – focusing on skills and strategies for meeting human needs from such basic needs as food, apparel, housing, and safety to parenting, early childhood education, food technology and enterprise, personal finance, resource management, and interior design.
3. (3) Career preparedness – learning to access professional opportunities through employability skills, technical expertise, and development of work ethic, lifelong learning, and skills for work-life issues.

Family and Consumer Sciences courses provide a context within which reading, math, science, and social studies concepts are applied. Many FACS courses are projects-based. Students apply content from core subjects to solve problems, apply strategies, and design systems related to foods, apparel, housing, child development, and personal finance concepts. Students learn to read a lease, interpret instructions, read stories to children, measure, and estimate. These academic applications provide a rich context within which core subject skills are used while abstract ideas gain deeper meaning and clearer relevance.

In this course students are introduced to advanced clothing and textile development skills. The use of fibers and fabrics is combined with design and construction techniques to develop and produce clothing or housing apparel products. A real or simulated apparel business enterprise activities allow students to apply instructional strategies and workplace readiness skills to an authentic experience and to develop a portfolio. Mathematics and science are reinforced. Work-based learning strategies appropriate for this course include cooperative education, entrepreneurship, internship, mentorship, school-based enterprise, service learning and job shadowing. Apprenticeship is not available for this course. Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) competitive events, community service, and leadership activities provide the opportunity to apply essential standards and workplace readiness skills through authentic experiences.³⁵

Student Reading List

Gordon, Beverly. *Textiles: the whole story: uses, meanings, significance*

"Graphic novel's satire punctures fashion week." Graphic novel's satire punctures fashion week

Durcanin, Cynthia. "The Museum of Costume." PBS.
<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/1999/10/what-is-fashion>

Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*

Louie, Elaine. "Using Textiles to Tell Many Stories." The New York Times.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/01/garden/using-textiles-to-tell-many-stories.html>

Kurin, Richard. *The Smithsonian's History of America in 101 Objects*

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<http://www.glencoe.com/sites/california/student/socialstudies/assets/pdfs/dp6ign.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2014).

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<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/1999/10/what-is-fashion/> (accessed September 26, 2014).

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Kurin, Richard. *The Smithsonian's History of America in 101 Objects*. New York: Penguin Group (USA) LLC, 2013.

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- Ringgold, Faith. *Tar Beach*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1991.
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- "Stories of Cloth." - Home. <http://www.storiesofcloth.co.uk> (accessed September 26, 2014).
- "The 10 Most Expensive Finds on Antiques Roadshow." TheRichest. <http://www.therichest.com/luxury/most-expensive/the-10-most-expensive-finds-on-antiques-roadshow/5/> (accessed September 26, 2014).
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- Merriam-Webster. "iconic." Merriam-Webster. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/iconic> (accessed September 26, 2014).

Notes

¹ <http://www.storiesofcloth.co.uk>

² (<http://gallery.sjsu.edu/silkroad/intro.htm>)

³ ("Approaches Old and New to the Silk Roads" Eliseeff in: *The Silk Roads: Highways of Culture and Commerce*. Paris (1998) UNESCO, Reprint: Berghahn Books (2009), pp. 1).

⁴ (<http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/science-shines-new-light-on-shroud-of-turins-age/>)

⁵ (<http://www.therichest.com/luxury/most-expensive/the-10-most-expensive-finds-on-antiques-roadshow/5/>)

⁶ (Textiles the Whole Story)

⁷ (Fuse and Tell)

⁸ (Paula Connolly)

⁹ (http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/get_involved/advocacy/research/2013/artsed_sat13.pdf)

¹⁰ (Melody Sears)

¹¹ ("Speakers Give Sound Advice". *Syracuse Post Standard* (page 18). March 28, 1911).

¹² (<http://forthdistrict.com/fashion-tells-a-story-your-story/>)

¹³ (Textiles, the Whole Story)

¹⁴ (<http://usshop.gestalten.com/visual-storytelling.html>)

¹⁵ (History of America in 101 Objects)

¹⁶ (209)

¹⁷ (Textiles, The Whole Story)

¹⁸ (100 Dresses)

¹⁹ (Shmoop. *History of Fashion in America: Shmoop US History Guide*. Shmoop University Inc. p. 21. ISBN 978-1-61062-141-0. Retrieved 24 May 2011.)

²⁰ (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/05/23/the-wizard-of-oz-ruby-slippers-sell-for-2-million-video_n_1538766.html)

²¹ (<http://www.vulture.com/2013/03/wizard-of-oz-theories-gold-standard-feminist-religion-jung.html>)

²² (<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/for-those-ruby-red-slippers-theres-no-place-like-home-130170740/?no-ist>)

²³ (http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2004/02/0205_040205_slavequilts_2.html)

²⁴ (<http://page.reallygoodstuff.com/pdfs/154227.pdf>)

²⁵ ((<http://www.nava.org/flag-design/good-flag-bad-flag/what-is-a-flag>)

²⁶ (<http://www.fibre2fashion.com/industry-article/11/1095/different-types-of-weaves1.asp>)

²⁷ (<http://www.glencoe.com/sites/california/student/socialstudies/assets/pdfs/dp6ign.pdf>)”

²⁸ (P. Connolly)

²⁹ (Paula Connolly)

³⁰ (Paula Connolly, *English, UNC Charlotte*)

³¹ (Frey, Fisher, & Hernandez, 2003).

³² (e.g., Fisher & Frey, 2004)

³³ Smithsonian

³⁴ (Smithsonian)

³⁵ <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/cte/curriculum/essential-standards.pdf>