



***See It With Words:
Critical Analysis Using Visual Literacy***

by M. Amanda Soesbee, 2017 CTI Fellow
North Mecklenburg High School

This curriculum unit is recommended for:
English II, 10th grade, Honors/MYP
English I, 9th grade Honors/MYP

Keywords: visual literacy, literacy, images, critical analysis, literary analysis, reading comprehension

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

Synopsis: In 10th grade English (English II), the major focus as outlined by the state curriculum is the End of Course Test, which requires students to call upon advanced reading comprehension skills. The test includes informational texts, poetry, and fiction, and most questions are based on literary elements. Students have to know how to apply the literary skills they have learned, often in combination, to a variety of texts. In an effort to increase the analytical strategies students have in their arsenals, I have designed this mini-unit incorporating visual literacy as well as textual analysis. If students are able to “see” a text, even if it does not have already include visual elements, then maybe they will be able to deepen their understanding of it. In 10th grade, we do not incorporate visual literacy as an objective, but it draws upon the same skills we try to build in students as they prepare for the state test.

I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 65 students in English II MYP (IB Middle Years Program).

I give permission for Charlotte Teachers Institute to publish my curriculum unit in print and online. I understand that I will be credited as the author of my work.

Introduction

Rationale

“Being literate in the 21st century entails more complex criteria than in prior generations. More diverse expectations are being placed on our students’ cognitive capabilities considering the current bombardment of non-linear demands of the technological age. As students move away from strict print reading, and journey into a world of literacy that is predominantly visual, sensory and technologically loaded in other ways, visual literacy instruction is becoming paramount for our children.”

~Ellen Topiel – Bright Hub Education

Instead of a major unit on visual literacy, this plan will showcase a mini-unit to be utilized at the end of a major unit of literature study. The mini-units I am designing will be structured for tenth grade English MYP classes, but could easily be adapted for other levels or disciplines. I settled on this idea because I didn’t want to isolate visual literacy as a unit in and of itself, but rather fold the concepts into units I already teach. In English II MYP, students are preparing for the state standardized end-of-course exam as well as for the IB Diploma Programme and IB exams, all of which demonstrate a heavy focus on literary analysis and critical thinking. In the age of growing technological stimuli, it is as important for students to be as literate in visual “texts” as they are in traditional printed texts. The four major units we teach in English II MYP incorporate novels, short stories, poetry, and nonfiction informational texts; after studying visual literacy in our CTI seminar, I realized the need for students to be well-versed in visual literacy strategies as well. Studying visual “texts” will be beneficial in strengthening analysis, which students can then translate back to printed texts, thus building their arsenal of critical thinking skills.

Background

North Mecklenburg, a Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District high school, is situated in northern Mecklenburg county in Huntersville, NC. It is a 65 year old school steeped in tradition and rich in history. However, most students who attend North Meck for the past three years are from nearby Charlotte as the boundary lines dictate. North Meck families are predominantly from low to middle class socio-economic backgrounds. North Meck also houses three magnet programs: International Baccalaureate, Career and Technical Education, and World Languages. Our school follows the Common Core State Standards and the NC Department of Instruction standards. Student population is almost 2500, grades 9-12. My two English II MYP classes are comprised of 32 and 33 students and meet first thing in the morning on alternating days. Students are African-American, Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern. Three are labeled with learning difficulties, five with health impairments, two with English language learning difficulties, and one is diagnosed autistic. Differentiation will be key when designing lessons and activities for this class.

Last year, North Meck was reported as having a score of 35.58% in the state of NC's rankings. According to our test scores from 2016-2017, we had fallen below average in showing growth. In 2016-2017, the English II team and students showed a growth measure of 1.2, which was magnificent for our students. We intend to keep up this forward momentum this year with a school-wide focus on data-driven instruction and writing. While this mini-unit is less driven by data and more pliable in nature, I believe that strengthening a student's critical analysis and critical thinking skills can benefit him in many other areas as well, including standardized testing. Reading comprehension, whether through analysis of a text or through visual literacy, can increase drastically using writing as a tool.

Structure

Within the English II IB/MYP (International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program) curriculum, we teach four major units, one per quarter, each based on an overarching key concept. Within those, we design mini-units and daily lessons around related ideas within each key concept. I plan to design a 5-day visual literacy mini-unit that I can alter and use four times, once within each of the major units. The mini-units will be structured essentially the same but will incorporate varying visual lit strategies that align with the key and related concepts. Each will serve the purpose of teaching critical analysis, which is a focus of 10th grade English because of the End of Course state test, but through images rather than text.

Quarter 1

Key Concept: Ethics

Related Concepts: purpose, theme, character, setting

Texts: Behind the Beautiful Forevers by Katherine Boo; banned book (novel that has been challenged or banned in the US – student choice); “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell; “An Ethical Dilemma of a Sandwich Down the Pants” by Kelly Shriver; “If Not Threats of War or Sanctions Then What?” by Alan Greenblatt (from CommonLit); “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut
****“Harrison Bergeron” acts as our bridge text from the Ethics unit to the Global Perspectives unit.***

Quarter 2

Key Concept: Global Perspectives

Related Concepts: point of view, character, conflict

Texts: (continuation of banned book – student choice); collection of short stories: “The Sniper” by Liam O’Flaherty; “Desiree’s Baby” by Kate Chopin; “The Interlopers” by Saki; selections from “The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessimist” by Emile Habiby; “There Will Come Soft Rains” by Ray Bradbury.

Quarter 3

Key Concept: Identities

Related Concepts: self-expression, intertextuality, theme, style

Texts: “Julius Caesar” by William Shakespeare; “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon; “Oedipus Rex” by Sophocles.

Quarter 4

Key Concept: Personal Relationships

Related Concepts: genre, structure, character

Texts: Enemies, a Love Story by Isaac Bashevis Singer; optional – The Bean Trees by Barbara Kingsolver.

Essential Questions

EQs are prevalent in most lesson plan formats because they drive inquiry in the daily lessons. EQs are meant to be thought-provoking and hopefully lead to higher-level questions from students. Here are several examples of EQs that I used in teaching the mini-unit:

- What makes an image powerful or iconic?
- How does “photographer’s purpose” connect to “author’s purpose?”
- What do we lose (or gain) between text to image?
- What role do images play in your life, whether personally, academically, or socially?
- What is the relationship between text and image?
- What clues do you get from the image about the intended audience?
- How might an image or text present bias?
- How does an audience or a creator filter material through his own perspective?
- Why do both images and text need a conflict, problem, or hook?
- How does a reinterpretation of a text or image affect the original (and vice versa)?

Strategies

“I See, I Think, I Wonder”

A favorite activity that I've recently re-discovered is "I See, I Think, I Wonder." I'm sure it's not a totally new concept as I've seen modified mini-activities similar to it before, but I like the way this is built. Basically, I choose a photograph that is intended to make viewers question its content and to elicit an emotional response from viewers. (National Geographic and Time Magazine have great choices; the key is not to use any captions or provide any information about the photo's subject matter.) Students first have a time limit (2 minutes, for example) to write down all the things they see in the photo. Then, as a class, we'd discuss the visual aspects. Next is the "I Think" step, where students write what they think has happened, is happening, or will happen from their list of things they saw. The last step is "I Wonder," which is the most difficult for students. Here, they speculate about things they can't see in the photo, whether it be other people or the surroundings or the photographer, etc. After this, we'd share again to see the different perspectives each person offers. I think my biggest responsibility here would be to affirm each perspective and show students how their vastly different (hopefully!) viewpoints are all correct. I want to teach them how imagery, setting, and author's (or photographer's) purpose specifically can be affected by the point of view the reader/viewer brings to the subject. My hope with this is to show the connection between the "creator's voice" (even through a photograph) can affect and be affected by the audience. This activity will be used as a warm-up and/or practice as we go through our four major units and will help students familiarize themselves with the process of analyzing images as they are used to with texts.

Ethical Dilemma Presentation (with Unit 1)

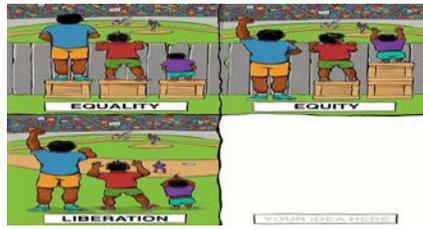
Over the summer, students read Behind the Beautiful Forevers by Katharine Boo. During our first unit, they will read “Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell, “An Ethical Dilemma of a Sandwich Down the Pants” by Kelly Shriver, and “If Not Threats of War or Sanctions, Then What?” by Alan Greenblatt (www.commonlit.org). In teacher-led class discussions and a student-led Socratic Seminar, we have covered a variety of the ethical issues presented in the texts, noting any political, religious, social, and/or legal connections. The point is to help students understand that moral choices, whether large or small, can be influenced by culture and have an effect on both sides of the issue. At this point in the unit, students will get into groups of 3-4 and compose a presentation following the guidelines listed in Appendix 1. The literal portion of the presentation requires students to research the ethical issue they’ve chosen and compile facts and statistics to support both sides. Consequently, the figurative portion of the assignment asks students to collect two images and one poem that represent the opposing sides.

Look and Remember

This activity works for both written texts and images. When using an image, have students look at an image for ~60 seconds. I found it’s best to project the image, but also have students pull it up on their own devices if possible. There should be no text with the image. After the minute is up, have students close their devices and remove the image from the projected screen. For the next two-three minutes, students should write or sketch everything they remember from the image. They should recall as many details as possible. (Try using only sketching and only writing for differentiation, depending on your end goal.) Students can then “turn and talk” or share in whole-class discussion to see what details they were able to recall. Ask students to try to classify or group the details they remembered and the details they forgot. In this step, you can help students notice patterns of details they tend to recognize and/or ignore. Ask them to try to identify why they left out certain details - were the colors not vivid, were objects too small, did they only see what was in the center, etc? This activity works similarly for written texts as well. Students would be given a certain length of time to read a short passage and then have two-three minutes to write down (or sketch, or both) all of the details they remember. Again, after a brief discussion, coach students through the process of identifying why they were able to remember certain things and why they neglected others. Was there an issue with vocabulary, or comprehension? Were details with vivid imagery easier to remember? The more students practice this activity, the more they will be able to recall details in a more reliable and consistent manner.

Journaling

On occasion throughout each of the four units, I will use photographs as journal prompts. Students will be shown an untitled, uncaptioned photograph relating to the current text we're studying that is intended to invoke emotion and reaction. An example from our first unit on Ethics is the image and accompanying journal questions included below:



How does the image above represent the ideals presented in “Harrison Bergeron” vs. the rights we expect? What aspects of each image help portray equality or equity? What emotions are shown and how are they displayed? According to the images, how would you define “equality” and “equity?”

Portfolio

At the conclusion of each of my four major units, students will present a portfolio of their work consisting of three major components, as follows:

Photos

As an assessment tool at the end of each major unit, students will compile a specified number of images into a portfolio. Each image will represent an aspect we have studied based on the key concept for the unit. (The number of images may vary based on how many texts and/or skills have been studied in the unit.) Students will have the option to create their portfolio using Google Slides or via hard copy. Students should use photographic elements discussed from our original image activities to help them select their images. (For instance, they may choose an image with a very linear structure - leading lines, eye lines - to represent a text with a limited and pointed perspective.)

Photographic elements include:

- lighting to create effect; lighting to direct attention
- leading lines and eyelines
- viewpoint - worm's eye, bird's eye
- composition
- framing
- focus
- color/contrast

Response

For each image, students will choose a guided approach to construct a written analysis. Guided approaches could include:

I See, I Think, I Wonder

Students will have practiced this approach in class during previous activities. For the portfolio, their See/Think/Wonder responses should also include connections to the text. An example is included below:

I see a child with a red balloon....I think he might be lost because there's no one with him...I wonder how the child or the balloon might symbolize the main character in "The Scarlet Ibis."



First, Second, Third Look

This approach is similar to "I See, I Think, I Wonder" in that students look at the image three times, each time with a different focus and level of complexity. "First Look" represents a literal understanding. Students would respond to basic elements of the image, such as what is happening in the frame. "Second Look" graduates to more interpretive responses, such as the effect of colors and patterns or what the central idea might be. "Third Look" requires the student to consider the image's creator and what his intentions might be. In this stage, students might respond to questions of "Why did the creator choose to..."

What's Going on in this Picture?

In the style of the New York Times "What's Going on in this Picture?" online conversations, students would respond to their images with three analysis questions: 1. What's going on in this picture? 2. What do you see that makes you say that? 3. What more can you find? This approach is a little more broad than the first two, which will appeal to students who think in a more non-linear fashion.

Seeing is Remembering

Again, students would use a three-step process to respond to their images. The first response is similar to most others in that students answer “What do I see in the image?” The second question, though, allows students to respond by making connections: “What does it (what I see in the image) remind me of?” This step aids with analysis because students will relate the images to something that’s already familiar to them and with which they’re already comfortable. (Connecting an ‘unknown’ to a ‘known’ will make the ‘unknown’ more ‘known!’) The third step is “So what?” In this step, students make assumptions and respond as to why the image and its elements matter.

Past, Present, Future

With this approach, students will respond to the images by considering what might have happened before the image was captured, what is happening in the image now (as it was captured), and what might’ve happened in the immediate future, minutes or hours after the image was captured. Responding in this manner allows students to use an historical application as well as inferencing skills for predictions.

Reflection

Using a free-write approach, students will write about the images they have selected for their portfolio. This will include an analysis of each image individually as well as an overall reflection of the portfolio. The students will also incorporate the MYP global context from each unit in their overall reflection. Questions for students to answer in their reflections include:

- Why did you choose the images you selected for your portfolio?
- How do your images relate to the text, from a literary standpoint as well as in relation to the unit’s key concept?
- What were your artistic choices in including the different images?
- How does your choices in your portfolio bridge the text(s) to the images?

Literary Analysis

Students will use a literary analysis technique from class to connect their images to the texts we’ve read in the unit. Skills to address include: author’s purpose, inference, reader’s interpretation, intertextuality, connections, allusion, substantiate a claim, tone, mood, theme/lesson, imagery, figurative language, conflict, characterization. In this section, students will need to show the direct correlation between their images and the text(s) from the unit. This is where they will make connections between photographic elements and literary techniques. (For example, a student may choose to show the mood of a disturbing poem through a striking, dark photo.) In this section, students show how they have visually recreated the skills and concepts of each major unit through their own perspectives with the images they’ve chosen.

Portfolio Assessment - End of Unit

The portfolio can be assessed however the teacher chooses. Because my students are MYP year 5, I am choosing the MYP rubrics that align with the criteria I used for the mini-unit. Students will receive a score from 0-8 for Criterion A, strands i and ii, and Criterion C, strands i and ii. I will then combine the two scores for their final grade. I will give students the rubrics with the portfolio assignment during each unit so they know exactly what is expected and can plan their portfolios accordingly.

Criterion A: Analyzing - Students should be able to:

1. analyze the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) and the relationship among texts
2. analyze the effects of the creator's choices on an audience

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	LEVEL DESCRIPTOR
0 1-2	<p>The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.</p> <p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provides limited analysis of the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) <i>and visuals</i> and the relationship among texts/<i>visuals</i> 2. provides limited analysis of the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. rarely justifies opinions and ideas with examples or explanations; uses little or no terminology 4. evaluates few similarities and differences by making minimal connections in features across and within genres and texts/<i>visuals</i>.
3-4	<p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provides adequate analysis of the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) <i>and visuals</i> and the relationship among texts/<i>visuals</i> 2. provides adequate analysis of the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. justifies opinions and ideas with some examples and explanations, though this may not be consistent; uses some terminology 4. evaluates some similarities and differences by making adequate connections in features across and within genres and texts/<i>visuals</i>.
5-6	<p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. competently analyses the content, context, language, structure, technique, style of text(s) <i>and visuals</i> and the relationship among texts/<i>visuals</i> 2. competently analyses the effects of the creator's choices on an audience 3. sufficiently justifies opinions and ideas with examples and explanations; uses accurate terminology 4. evaluates similarities and differences by making substantial connections in features across and within genres and texts/<i>visuals</i>.
7-8	<p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. provides perceptive analysis of the content, context, language, structure, technique, style of text(s) <i>and visuals</i> and the relationship among texts/<i>visuals</i>

2. **perceptively** analyses the effects of the creator's choices on an audience
3. gives **detailed justification of** opinions and ideas with a range of examples, and **thorough** explanations; uses **accurate** terminology
4. **perceptively compares and contrasts** by making **extensive** connections in features across and within genres and texts/*visuals*.

Criterion C: Producing text - Students should be able to:

1. produce texts that demonstrate insight, imagination and sensitivity *relating to written and visual texts* while exploring and reflecting critically on new perspectives and ideas arising from personal engagement with the creative process
2. make stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating awareness of impact on an audience

ACHIEVEMENT LEVEL	LEVEL DESCRIPTOR
0 1-2	<p>The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below.</p> <p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. produces texts that demonstrate limited personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates a limited degree of insight, imagination and sensitivity and minimal exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes minimal stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating limited awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects few relevant details and examples to develop ideas.
3-4	<p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. produces texts that demonstrate adequate personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates some insight, imagination and sensitivity and some exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes some stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating adequate awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects some relevant details and examples to develop ideas.
5-6	<p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. produces texts that demonstrate considerable personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates considerable insight, imagination and sensitivity and substantial exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes thoughtful stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating good awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects sufficient relevant details and examples to develop ideas.
7-8	<p>The student:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. produces texts that demonstrate a high degree of personal engagement with the creative process; demonstrates a high degree of insight, imagination and sensitivity and perceptive exploration of, and critical reflection on, new perspectives and ideas 2. makes perceptive stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating good awareness of impact on an audience 3. selects extensive relevant details and examples to develop ideas with precision.

Appendix 1

State Objectives

I have selected one strand from the Common Core State standards: English Language Arts Standards for Writing from which to pull my mini-unit objectives. The major activity of my mini-unit will use, alone or in combination, these standards to give focus to the lessons.

READING - Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#)

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

READING - Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6](#)

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

READING - Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.¹

SPEAKING AND LISTENING - Comprehension and Collaboration:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2](#)

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING - Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5](#)

Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

WRITING:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W9-10.6](#)

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

International Baccalaureate Objectives

In the next few years, North Mecklenburg High School is moving towards a whole-school International Baccalaureate model. Therefore, I'm relying heavily on the IB/MYP style of unit planning for this mini-unit. It is a big part of my teaching philosophy that the IB/MYP way of teaching is not only appropriate but also quite beneficial for all students. An MYP unit is designed around a key concept, and students should see how each lesson within the unit is reflective of the unit's Statement of Inquiry.

Unit 1: Ethics: An awareness of characters' points of view and settings shape an understanding of an individual's purpose and theme and guide a reader to recognize how differences impact fair, ethical decisions.

Unit 2: Global Perspectives: Differences in perspectives can be reflected in conflict between characters.

Unit 3: Identities: Critical readers understand how a character's societal identifications transcend into literature and how each person's self-awareness affects how they interact with others.

Unit 4: Personal Relationships: Relationships among people and characters affect and change the way they view their own identities and world perspectives.

Based on these, my mini-unit will have a type of Inquiry Statement as well: "*How do visual 'texts' help a reader understand written texts by acting as a bridge between the literary techniques and the conceptual ideas of the unit?*" For instance, if an author presents a somber tone in a work through the use of character repression and negative diction, how can the reader use visual elements of a related image to further advance the author's purpose?

From the IB/MYP Language and Literature guide, four criterion are used as guiding objectives for unit planning. They are: A-Analyzing, B-Organizing, C-Producing Text, and D-Using Language. From these criterion, I have selected the following strands for this mini-unit and have added in italics terms specific to visual literacy but not from IB/MYP:

A - Analyzing: Through the study of language and literature, students are enabled to deconstruct texts *and visual texts* in order to identify their essential elements *whether literary or visual* and their meaning. Analysing involves demonstrating an understanding of the creator's choices, the relationships between the various components of a text *or visual* and between texts *and/or visuals*, and making inferences about how an audience responds to a text (strand i), as well as the creator's purpose for producing text (strand ii). Students should be able to use the text to support their personal responses and ideas (strand iii). Literacy and critical literacy *and visual literacy* are lifelong skills; engaging with texts *whether written or visual* requires students to think critically and show awareness of, and an ability to reflect on, different perspectives through their interpretations of the text (strand iv).

- i. analyse the content, context, language, structure, technique and style of text(s) and the relationship among texts
- ii. analyse the effects of the creator's choices on an audience
- iii. justify opinions and ideas, using examples, explanations and terminology
- iv. evaluate similarities and differences by connecting features across and within genres and texts.

C - Producing Texts: Students will produce written and spoken text, focusing on the creative process itself and on the understanding of the connection between the creator of *visual and written texts* and their audience. In exploring and appreciating new and changing perspectives and ideas, they will develop the ability to make choices aimed at producing texts that affect both the creator and the audience.

- i. produce texts that demonstrate insight, imagination and sensitivity while exploring and reflecting critically on new perspectives and ideas arising from personal engagement with the creative process
- ii. make stylistic choices in terms of linguistic, literary and visual devices, demonstrating awareness of impact on an audience
- iii. select relevant details and examples to develop ideas.

These strands best exemplify the goals I'm trying to help students reach throughout this unit. The language for students will be from the IB/MYP curriculum as I will also use rubrics from that curriculum to assess student work.

Bibliography

Baker, Frank W. "Media Literacy - Chapter Three." ISTE - International Society for Technology in Education - Home. 2012. Accessed November 12, 2017. <https://www.iste.org/docs/excerpts/MEDLIT-excerpt.pdf>.

This PDF is chapter three of Baker's book entitled "Media Literacy in the K-12 Classroom." In this chapter, he discusses the barrage of visual information facing our society and the importance of becoming visually literate, especially for students. He includes several images as examples and plenty of external research. Also helpful, Baker includes state objectives from McRel and NCTE as well as handouts and activities for use in lesson planning. In one section, Baker details several elements of photography, which are helpful in teaching students how images "communicate" to their audiences.

Eisenburg, Jill. "First Look, Second Look, Third Look: Close "Reading" with Book Art." The Open Book. January 20, 2015. Accessed November 10, 2017. <http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/11/09/first-look-second-look-third-look-close-reading-with-book-art/>.

This blog is written by members of an independent children's book publishing company. Their focus is diversity, and the contributors are publishers, publicity associates, and literacy specialists. The posts I read were written by the secondary literacy specialist and follow Common Core State Standards. The site is easy to maneuver and contains quite a few resources that would be useful to teachers of all grades and a variety of subjects.

"English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 11-12." English Language Arts Standards » Writing » Grade 11-12 | Common Core State Standards Initiative. 2017. Accessed September 07, 2017. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/>. Aligning curriculum units and lessons with CCSS is generally an accepted requirement for ELA/Literacy teachers. This site is an easy access guide for decoding the standards and recognizing which ones to focus on within a curriculum unit or an individual daily lesson.

Google Images. Accessed October 28, 2017. <http://www.google.com/images>. Though it seems simple and possibly too generic, Google Images provide a great starting point for students when searching for images to match texts. They are directed to different sites for the images they select, but are given a chance to explore a vast array of options when they simply need a starting point. Also, it's easy for students to access and save images from their school technology devices, as they all have Google accounts through the school system.

"MYP Curriculum | International Baccalaureate®." International Baccalaureate®. 2017. Accessed October 10, 2017. <http://www.ibo.org/programmes/middle-years-programme/curriculum/>.

The IBO website is a comprehensive collection of resources for teaching the IB curriculum. The methods of unit planning are applicable in any classroom, however, for teachers who wish to follow a more thematic, global focus. Also, assessment criteria are clearly outlined and explained and can be implemented as rubrics for writing assessments in any classroom.

"North Mecklenburg High." SchoolDigger. September 07, 2017. Accessed November 01, 2017. <https://www.schooldigger.com/go/NC/schools/0297001248/school.aspx>.

With data compiled from the National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Census Bureau and the North Carolina Dept of Public Instruction, School Digger offers an insight into the performance rankings of the schools across any state. While it's best to investigate schools on a more personal level, School Digger is a good place to start for statistics and trends in different schools, counties, and states.

"Travellers Image, Ireland | National Geographic Your Shot Photo of the Day." Photo of the Day. October 03, 2017. Accessed October 10, 2017.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/photography/photo-of-the-day/2017/10/elephant-sanctuary-kenya/>

National Geographic photos are excellent for journal prompts. The website offers a variety of photos to choose from, but for the mini-units in this curriculum, I prefer the "Photo of the Day" link as it provides a different image every day. I ask students to complete a journal activity called "I See, I Think, I Wonder" with these photographs. The images are vivid and provoking enough for students to make connections, yet global enough to provide a perspective outside of their usual zone. The image from this specific day was used in conjunction with George Orwell's short story "Shooting an Elephant."

"What's going on in this picture?" Visual Thinking Strategies. Accessed November 10, 2017. <https://vtshome.org/>.

This site is a good resource for visual literacy. It was especially helpful in creating the portfolios for this mini-unit because the creators provides research, strategies, and photos from a global community and with practical methodology. A curriculum is available for purchase as well.