ALL ABOUT "WE"

USING LITERARY TEXT AS ART IN THE CONTEXT OF STUDYING SOCIAL ISSUES

ART & LANGUAGE ARTS / ARTS & HUMANITIES GRADES: 9-12

DEMOGRAPHICS

This lesson was designed for my humanities students as a 4-day mini-unit during the Modern/Contemporary portion of my class toward the end of a semester-long study of arts & humanities. The plan was then offered during a teacher professional development program called Evenings for Educators at the Cincinnati Art Museum after being taught in my classroom. Several examples of the students' work were displayed in the 4th Floor Gallery of the Cincinnati Art Museum (see examples) during Evenings for Educators, which gave them motivation to produce quality work which would be placed within yards of the

The lesson involved a total of 286 10th – 12th grade students over the course of a year (two semester-long humanities elective classes). The teachers who were subsequently taught this lesson ranged from kindergarten to high school teachers in a variety of content areas and from the tri-state area. The lesson, although originally designed for a humanities class, has strong language arts connections or could be adapted for social studies curriculum. The lesson was presented to the teachers during PD with possible adaptations of the assignment.

CONTEXT

This lesson is based on Glenn Ligon's 1993 work Untitled (I Am An Invisible Man) (The image of the work can be located on the cincinnatiartmuseum.org website by going to "explore" and entering "glenn ligon" under collections.)

More than anything, the arts reflect the beliefs, feelings and ideals of the artists who create them. What better way for a student to actually gain insight into diversity than through the medium of art? One of the primary Academic Expectations of the Core Content for Humanities 4.1 is the big idea of humanity in the arts. As stated in 2.26, through arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share some common experiences and attitudes.

As Glenn Ligon has said of his work, "It's not about me. It's about we."

This is a key component of addressing many social issues, including diversity – it is about the "we" of society. Social issues affect us collectively – as individuals, yes, but also as community members. Our community consists of our schools, towns, cities and counties, but we are also part of a larger community – our country and the world.
My students have strong ideas and sometimes even stronger vocal opinions about what
goes on around them; they have a keen awareness of undesirable social conditions
simply through exposure to media and technology or personal experience in our small
rural community. Real-world issues like peace and justice, race, gender, poverty,
bullying, environment, violence, education, and economics often move my students to
action. They become critical thinkers through dealing with topics relevant to their lives –
by defining problems, gathering evidence, identifying causes, evaluating policies and
developing solutions. During the semester, students also have a wide variety of
opportunities to discuss art within the framework of diversity. In addition to teaching
students about terminology, purposes, chronological time periods, artworks,
compositions, artists, dancers, and musicians, we also investigate historical context
which often includes diversity and social issues. Furthermore, by studying the artist by
beginning with a brief biography, students often make connections between the
background of the artist and the manner in which the artist addresses social issues
through the artwork s/he produces.

By coupling an independent reading assignment that deals with themes of social issues
and diversity to an art assignment, students have an opportunity to explore ideas
further. Students may select fiction or nonfiction of their choice and interest level and
then complete the reading over the course of 2-3 weeks. By connecting student-
identified quotes with an art activity and discussing the quotes within the classroom
using critical thinking strategies, students have a tangible reminder of the impact of the
reading assignment to their lives and may be prompted to action either now or in the
future. This activity comes very late in the semester, after we have spent several weeks
discussing diversity in the four disciplines: visual arts, dance, music and drama/theater.

In terms of modifications, given the independent nature of the reading assignment,
materials can easily be selected based upon the students’ reading levels.

I also share these quotes with my students when discussing Ligon and it provokes
some great class discussion:

"...But I also had a deep interest in literature, which became a big part of what my work
is about. But back then I was just filling up notebooks with sketches and drawings. So
my mother sent me to pottery classes after school. At this point she had separated from
my father. My brother and I were going to private school on scholarship. There wasn't a
lot of extra money, but there was an attitude that money could be spent for anything that
bettered us—in that black, working-class, striving kind of way. Culture was betterment.
Anything we wanted to read was fine. Pottery classes or trips to the Met were fine.
Hundred-dollar sneakers? No."  -- Glenn Ligon

"I consider all the work I've done self-portraits filtered through other people's texts."  
  -- Glenn Ligon
ARTIST BACKGROUND

Glenn Ligon was born in the Bronx, New York, in 1960. Ligon's paintings and sculptures examine cultural and social identity through found sources—literature, Afrocentric coloring books, photographs—to reveal the ways in which the history of slavery, the civil rights movement, and sexual politics inform our understanding of American society. Ligon appropriates texts from a variety of literary writers including Walt Whitman, Zora Neale Hurston, Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison, as well from more popular sources such as the comedian Richard Pryor. In Ligon's paintings, the instability of his medium—oil crayon used with letter stencils—transforms the texts he quotes, making them abstract, difficult to read, and layered in meaning, much like the subject matter that he appropriates. In other works that feature silkscreen, neon, and photography, Ligon threads his own image and autobiography into symbols that speak to collective experiences. "It's not about me," he says. "It's about we." Glenn Ligon received a BA from Wesleyan University (1982) and attended the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program (1985). He has received numerous awards, including the United States Artists Fellowship (2010); Joyce Alexander Wein Artist Prize from the Studio Museum in Harlem (2009); Skowhegan Medal for Painting (2006); John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship (2003); Joan Mitchell Foundation Grant (1998); and Visual Artist Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1989, 1991). His works are in the public collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Tate Modern; Walker Art Center; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others. Glenn Ligon lives and works in New York City.

From http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/glenn-ligon

VOCABULARY

Conceptual Art art in which the idea behind a particular work, and the means of producing it, are more important than the actual creation of a finished product

Quote repeat a brief excerpt or passage from a work of fiction or nonfiction

Social Issue a matter that directly or indirectly affects a person or group of people (member of society) and considered to be problems, controversies related to moral value, or both

Social Injustice concept that relates to the claimed unfairness (injustice) of a society in its divisions of rewards and burdens and other incidental inequalities caused by barriers (prejudice, discrimination, oppression, racism, classicism, ageism, ableism, etc.)

Diversity concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect and the understanding that each individual is unique by recognizing our individual differences (such a race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other
ideologies)

**Stencil** thin sheet of cardboard, plastic or metal with a pattern or letters cut out of it, used to produce the cut design on the surface of something else

**Appropriation** the action of taking something for one's own use, typically without the owner's permission; the artistic practice or technique of reworking images from well-known painting, photographs, etc. In one's own work.

**LESSON OBJECTIVES [LEARNING TARGETS]**

- Students will analyze and discuss Glenn Ligon's artwork *Untitled (I Am An Invisible Man).* [*I can analyze and discuss a work of art.*]
- Students will select and read a fiction or nonfiction book with a social issue or diversity-related theme. [*I can read for a specific purpose.*]
- Students will identify a relevant quote from the book that deals with a social issue or diversity and is a quote that they identify with or “speaks” to them. [*I can personally identify with a passage in a book I am reading. I can make connections between what I’ve read and what I personally believe.*]
- Students will reproduce the appropriated quote into a piece of conceptual artwork using stencils they create. [*I can create art inspired by my reading.*]

**CONNECTIONS**

**KENTUCKY HUMANITIES CORE CONTENT VERSION 4.1**

**AE 1.13** Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts.

**AE 2.23** Students analyze their own and others' artistic products and performances using accepted standards.

**AE 2.25** Through the arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share some common experiences and attitudes.

**AH-HS-1.4.1** Students will analyze or evaluate the use of elements of art and principles of design in a variety of artworks.

**AH-HS-SA-S-VA2** Students will expressively use the elements of art, principles of design, and a variety of processes in creating artworks.

**COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

**CCSS ELA –Literacy.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textural evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
CCSS ELA-Reading.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to address a question or solve a problem.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Art Connections
Standard 1. Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines.

Visual Arts
Standard 3. Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts.
Standard 5. Understands the characteristics and merits of one’s own artwork and the artwork of others

Language Arts
Standard 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

RESOURCE MATERIALS

- Copy of Ralph Ellison’s novel Invisible Man
- Book list of suggested social issue reading (handout)
- Summary of novel Invisible Man (http://www.bookrags.com/notes/inv/)
- Paper for cutting stencils
- Cutting mats or scrap cardboard
- Exacto knives
- Additional cardboard, if spray painting shirts or paper
- Canvases
- Paint
- Collage materials (if students choose to move in this direction)
- Brushes

OTHER RESOURCES

Internet

Glenn Ligon


http://whitney.org/Exhibitions/GlennLigon/Images
Social Justice Websites for Teachers & Students

http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org/2008/07/01/the-best-teacher-resource-sites-for-social-justice-issues/

http://gws.ala.org/tags/social-justice

http://teachingforpeace.org/ [my favorite – has links to videos, comprehensive materials, etc.]


http://www.grandmothersforpeace.org/activism/links

http://www.freechild.org/youth_activism_2.htm

Print Resource
Reaching Diverse Learners Through Social Justice Themes (handout)

BOOKS WITH SOCIAL ISSUE THEMES

Paths to Peace: Ideas and Actions for Change -- Picture Books


Paths to Peace: Ideas and Actions for Change -- Fiction


**Paths to Peace: Ideas and Action for Change – Non-Fiction**

- *We Are All Born Free: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Pictures*. Frances Lincoln, 2008. 64 pages. Age 5 and older


**Roads of Heartbreak: The Costs of Conflict and Injustice -- Picture Books**


Roads of Heartbreak: The Costs of Conflict and Injustice – Fiction


Roads of Heartbreak: The Costs of Conflict and Injustice – Non-Fiction


Krentz, Esther Nisenthal and Bernice Steinhardt. **Memories of Survival**. Hyperion, 2005. 64 pages. Age 10-18


Oppenheim, Joanne. **Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese Incarceration During World War II and a Librarian Who Made a Difference**. Scholastic Nonfiction / Scholastic, 2006. 287 pages. Age 11 and older


**Young Adult Books with Social Justice Issues**

- **Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice** by Phillip M. Hoose
- **The Hunger Games** by Suzanne Collins
- **Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom** by Carole Boston Weatherford
- **The Surrender Tree** by Margarita Engle
- **Elijah of Buxton** by Christopher Paul Curtis
- **Monster** by Walter Dean Myers
- **The Giver** by Lois Lowry
- **Tofu Quilt** by Ching Yeung Russell
- **Jane Addams: Champion of Democracy** by Dennis Brindell Fradin and Judith Bloom Fradin
- **Dia’s Story Cloth: The Hmong People’s Journey of Freedom** by Dia Cha
- **The Boy in the Striped Pajamas** by John Boyne
- **The Enemy** by David Cali and Serge Bloch
- **When My Name Was Keoko** by Linda Sue Park
- **Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood** by Ibtisam Barakat
- **Baseball Saved Us** by Ken Mochizuki
- **Denied, Detained, Deported: Stories from the Dark Side of American Immigration** by Ann Bausum
- **Esperanza Rising** by Pam Munoz Ryan
- **Uncle Bobby’s Wedding** by Sarah S. Brannen
- **Rainbow Boys** by Alex Sanchez
- **Shi-shi-Etko** by Nicola I. Campbell
- **Sacajawea** by Joseph Bruchac
- **Bamboo People** by Mitali Perkins
- **The Traitor: Golden Mountain Chronicles, 1885** by Laurence Yep
- **When the Black Girl Sings** by Bil Wright
- **Voices from Another Place: A Collection of Works from a Generation Born in Korea and Adopted to Other Countries** edited by Susan Soon-Keum Cox
- **Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai** by Claire A. Nicola
- **Aloha, Kanani** by Lisa Yee (American Girl series)
- **Eighth-Grade Superzero** by Olugbemiola Rhudy-Perkovich
- **The Black Book of Colors** by Menena Cottin, Rosana Faria, and Elisa Amado
- **Marcelo in the Real World** by Francisco X. Stork
Ten Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism

from The Council on Interracial Books for Children

Both in school and out children are exposed to racist and sexist attitudes. These attitudes – expressed over and over in books and other media – gradually distort their perceptions until stereotypes and myths about minorities and women are accepted as reality. It is difficult for a librarian or teacher to convince children to question society's attitudes. But if a child can be shown how to detect racism and sexism in a book, the child can proceed to transfer the perception to wider areas. The following ten guidelines are offered as a starting point in evaluation children's books from this perspective.

1. Check the Illustrations
Look for Stereotypes. A stereotype is an over-simplified generalization about a particular group, race or sex, which usually carries derogatory implications. Some infamous (overt) stereotypes of blacks are the happy-go-lucky, watermelon-eating Sambo and the fat, eye-rolling "mammy"; of Chicanos, the sombrero-wearing peon or fiesta-loving, macho bandito; of Asian Americans, the inscrutable, slant-eyed "Oriental"; of Native Americans, the naked savage or "primitive brave" and his "squaw"; of Puerto Ricans, the switchblade-toting teenage gang member; of women, the completely domesticated mother, the demure, doll-loving little girl or the wicked stepmother. While you may not always find stereotypes in the blatant forms described, look for variations which in any way demean or ridicule characters because of their race or sex.

Look for Tokenism. If there are racial minority characters in the illustrations, do they look just like whites except for being tinted or colored in? Do all minority faces look stereotypically alike, or are they depicted as genuine individuals with distinctive features?

Who's Doing What? Do the illustrations depict minorities in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles? Are males the active "doers" and females the inactive observers?

2. Check the Story Line
Liberation movements have led publishers to weed out many insulting passages, particularly from stories with Black themes and from books depicting female characters; however, racist and sexist attitudes still find expression in less obvious ways. The following checklist suggests some of the subtle (covert) form of bias to watch for.

Standards for Success. Does it take "white" behavior standards for a minority person to "get ahead"? Is "making it" in the dominant white society projected as the only ideal? To gain acceptance and approval, do persons of color have to exhibit extraordinary qualities – excel in sports, get As, etc.? In friendships between white and non-white children, is it the child of color who does most of the understanding and forgiving?

Resolution of Problems. How are problems presented, conceived and resolved in the story? Are minority people considered to be "the problem"? Are the oppressions faced by minorities and women represented as related to social injustice? Are the reasons for poverty and oppression explained, or are they accepted as inevitable? Does the story line encourage passive acceptance or active resistance? Is a particular problem that is faced by a racial minority person or female resolved through the benevolent intervention of a white person or male?
Role of Women. Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiative and intelligence, or are they due to their good looks or to their relationship with boys? Are sex roles incidental or critical to characterization and plot? Could the same story be told if the sex roles were reversed?

3. Look at the Lifestyles
Are minority persons and their setting depicted in such a way that they contrast unfavorably with the unstated norm of white middle-class suburbia? If the minority group in question is depicted as "different", are negative value judgments implied? Are minorities depicted exclusively in ghettos, barrios, or migrant camps? If the illustrations and text attempt to depict another culture, do they go beyond oversimplifications and offer genuine insight into another lifestyle? Look for inaccuracy and inappropriateness in the depiction of other cultures. Watch for instances of the "quaint-natives-in-costume" syndrome (most noticeable in areas like clothing and custom, but extending to behavior and personality traits as well).

4. Weigh the Relationships Between People
Do the whites in the story possess the power, take the leadership, and make the important decisions? Do racial minorities and females of all races function is essentially supporting roles?

How are family relationships depicted? In Black families, is the mother always dominant? In Hispanic families, are there always lots of children? If the family is separated, are societal conditions — unemployment, poverty, for example — cited among the reasons for the separation?

5. Note the Heroes
For many years, books showed only "safe" minority heroes — those who avoided serious conflict with the white establishment of their time. Minority groups today are insisting on the right to define their own heroes (of both sexes) based on their own concepts and struggles for justice.

When minority heroes do appear, are they admired for the same qualities that have made white heroes famous or because what they have done has benefited white people? Ask this question: "Whose interest is a particular hero really serving?"

6. Consider the Effect on a Child's Self-Image
Are norms established which limit any child’s aspirations and self-concept?

What effect can it have on images of the color white as the ultimate in beauty, cleanliness, virtue, etc., and the color black as evil, dirty, menacing, etc.? Does the book counteract or reinforce this positive association with the color white and negative association with black?

What happens to a girl's self-image when she reads that boys perform all of the brave and important deeds? What about a girl's self-esteem if she is not "fair" of skin and slim of body?

In a particular story, is there one or more persons with whom a minority child can readily identify to a positive and constructive end?

7. Consider the Author's or Illustrator's Background
Analyze the biographical material on the jacket flap or the back of the book. If a story deals with a minority theme, what qualifies the author or illustrator to deal with the subject? If the author and illustrator are not members of the minority being written about, is there anything in their background that would specifically recommend them as the creators of this book?
8. Check Out the Author’s Perspective

No author can be wholly objective. All authors write out of a cultural, as well as a personal context. Children’s books in the past have traditionally come from authors who were white and who were members of the middle class, with one result being that a single ethnocentric perspective has dominated children’s literature in the United States. With any book in question, read carefully to determine whether the direction of the author’s perspective substantially weakens or strengthens the value of his/her written work. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? Is it solely eurocentric, or do minority cultural perspectives also appear?

9. Watch for Loaded Words

A word is loaded when it has insulting overtones. Examples of loaded adjectives (usually racist) are “savage,” “primitive,” “lazy,” “superstitious,” “treacherous,” “wily,” “crafty,” “inscrutable,” “docile,” and “backward.”

Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or ridicule women.

Look for use of the male pronoun to refer to both males and females. While the generic use of the word “man” was accepted in the past, its use today is outmoded. The following examples show how sexist language can be avoided: ancestors instead of forefathers; chairperson instead of chairman; community instead of brotherhood; firefighters instead of firemen; manufactured instead of manmade; the human family instead of the family of man.

10. Look at the Copyright Date

Books on minority themes – usually hastily conceived – suddenly began appearing in the mid-1960s. There followed a growing number of “minority experience” books to meet the new market demand, but most of these were still written by the white authors, edited by white editors and published by white publishers. They therefore reflected a white point of view. Not until the early 1970s has the children’s book world begun to even remotely reflect the realities of a multiracial society. The new direction resulted from the emergence of minority authors writing about their own experiences. Unfortunately, this trend has been reversing, as publishers have cut back on such books. Non-sexist books, with rare exceptions, were not published before 1973.

The copyright dates, therefore, can be a clue as to how likely the book is to be overtly racist or sexist, although a recent copyright date, of course, is no guarantee of a book’s relevance or sensitivity. The copyright date only means the year the book was published. It usually takes about two years from the time a manuscript is submitted to the publisher to the time it is actually printed and put on the market. This time lag meant very little in the past, but in a time of rapid change and changing consciousness, when children’s book publishing is attempting to be "relevant," it is becoming increasingly significant.
PROCEDURES

DAY 1

- Approximately 2-3 weeks prior to the art project date, students will choose a book from a list of novels and nonfiction works with themes dealing with social issues and read the book independently (I gave them 3 weeks for the independent reading assignment while we were working on other things in class). While discussing the reading assignment, define social issue, social injustice, diversity and connect to the time periods being studied in class (see core content chart for time periods... these three definitions come together in our class during the Modern/Contemporary unit at the end of the quarter.)

- Introduce the project by discussing Glenn Ligon's Untitled (I Am An Invisible Man). Project image onto white board or in whatever manner works for your classroom from the Cincinnati Art Museum website (search under collections using "Glenn Ligon" and the artwork is the only image that shows upon searching). Explain that this is conceptual art with an appropriated quote (see definitions).

- Ask students to describe what they see (possible responses would include black text on a canvas, image becomes blurry as it advances to the bottom, smudgy, use of contrast, etc.)

- Have students infer or speculate about how this particular work of art was created. Where did Ligon get his idea for the work Untitled?

- Read passage from Ralph Ellison's book Invisible Man – either ask a student to read or teacher could read.

- Ask students to interpret the text simply from what is read. What does it mean that the narrator is an invisible man?

- Give a brief background of the novel Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison [handout]. Does this change your interpretation of Untitled? Why would an artist use a literary work to create art?

- Other questions to consider in class discussion with students:
  - Is it ok or appropriate to “borrow” someone else’s words to create art?
  - Is it considered art when you borrow ideas?
  - Can words in a painting serve as self-portraits of the artist?
  - What can you learn about the artist through this piece?
ASSIGNMENT FOR TOMORROW – Be ready to come to class and discuss your book . . . and have some quotes pulled from your reading that made you think, stood out to you, meant something, etc.

DAY 2

- Spend this class period giving students an opportunity to discuss the books read in context of social issues. (I personally start with a pair/share process, then report to the class, but you can utilize what works best for you.) Have students cite specific passages from the text that resonate with them or have caused them to think. Brainstorm ideas that could turn into works of art from the text. What is it about the text that resonates with students – author, characters, setting, plot, theme, style of writing, conflicts?

- For the culminating project tomorrow, students will “appropriate” or borrow a specific passage of text from their reading that resonated with them. Students select ONE quote and bring to class with them. It is probably best (due to time limitations) to limit quote to 20 words or less.

DAYS 3 & 4

- Students will use the selected text to create artwork for the classroom.
- Students will create a stencil for the artwork. Demonstrate how to create a stencil. (YouTube video examples exist and are great – I use the one from theboxkid).
- Demonstrate how to paint using a stencil. (Students may choose to paint on a canvas, poster, t-shirt or other item.)
- Students use their stencils to create artwork and complete basic stenciled quote.
- From this point, students may choose to take the artwork a step further and turn into a collage by adding other elements, but my students stopped at the stenciled quotes.
- Give time for students to complete the work.

Additional Comments

- Students are expected to use prior learning from the core content (elements of art and principles of design) while creating their artwork.

- Students are expected to compose a self-reflective artist’s statement as part of any art project in my classroom. It is part of the assessment rubric.
## ASSESSMENT

**Words, Words, Words:** Literary Text Art Project Scoring Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>All of the graphics or objects used in the product reflect a degree of student creativity and intentionality</td>
<td>Most of the graphics or objects used in the product reflect student creativity and/or intentionality</td>
<td>Only a few graphics or objects reflect student creativity, but the ideas were typical rather than creative.</td>
<td>None of the graphics or objects reflects student creativity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>Graphics/text are an appropriate size, shape and are arranged with thought. Care has been taken to balance across the area.</td>
<td>1-2 graphics or text are lacking in design or placement. There may be a few smudges or marks that appear to be more than part of the design.</td>
<td>3-4 graphics are lacking in design or placement. Too much background is showing. There are noticeable smudges or mistakes that were not intentional.</td>
<td>Graphics are not an appropriate size and or shape. Mistakes evident. Looks thrown together or haphazard in design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Literary Text</td>
<td>Work of art includes a relevant quote from the text read, and ties in with the theme of social issues or social justice.</td>
<td>Includes a relevant quote from the text read, but needs a little explanation as to why it was selected.</td>
<td>Quote seems randomly selected or not relevant to the assignment.</td>
<td>No thought went into selecting the quote from the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time and Effort</td>
<td>Much time and effort went into the planning and design of the project. It is clear the student worked hard on the design.</td>
<td>Class time was used wisely most of the time, but student could have put in more time and effort in class.</td>
<td>Class time was not always used wisely, but student did do some additional work at home to finish.</td>
<td>Class time was not used wisely and the student put in no additional effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery of Text</td>
<td>Text was clearly delivered and easy to read or identify from a comfortable viewing distance.</td>
<td>Text was clearly delivered and easy to read close-up.</td>
<td>Text was mostly clear and somewhat easy to read close-up.</td>
<td>Text was hard to read, even when the reader is close.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist Statement</td>
<td>The student gives a well-developed explanation in writing of how the text has meaning for his/her life or experience and can explain why and how s/he accomplished the final product.</td>
<td>The student gives a reasonable explanation of how the text is related to the assignment and how/why behind the project.</td>
<td>The student gives a fairly reasonable explanation of how the text applies to the final product.</td>
<td>The student's explanations are weak and illustrate difficulty understanding how to relate text to the assigned theme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading:**

- 24 = 100 %
- 23 = 96 %
- 22 = 92 %
- 21 = 88 %
- 20 = 83 %
- 19 = 79 %

18 = 75 %
17 = 71 %

I do not accept grades below 70. Work not meeting criteria must be resubmitted until acceptable.
REFLECTION

Overall this lesson was well-received by students and virtually 100% of the students were engaged and participated in all aspects of the lesson. I cannot say this of every lesson we do in class – there are usually several students who don’t “get” it or won’t participate for a variety of reasons. The initial buy-in for this mini-unit occurred when I told students that they would decide which final products were sent with me to the Cincinnati Art Museum for display in the 4th Floor Gallery, which houses contemporary art. From previous pictures I have posted in the classroom, students realize early on that what they create in class often finds a temporary “home” in other locations in our community.

The personal selection of independent reading aspect was a harder sell . . . students simply didn’t want to read a book in humanities. The “sell” here was that it was personal choice. If there wasn’t a book on the list a student wanted to read, I allowed the student to make a logical, justified case for the book s/he selected. Several students chose this route. Despite my rigorous standards and high expectations, almost all students achieved an average score of C or higher, which is another sign of success in my classroom. It meant that students were engaged in both the process of reading and creating and then completed a project that met or exceeded expectations. And more than anything else, many students exhibited growth from the beginning of the semester, including the quality of the final product.

The creation of the art itself is always an issue for me personally because I still have issues with the “mess” and the appearance of “chaos” in the classroom. This has been a gradual change for me over the past 15 years to allow students to have more control and for me to give up control in order for the creative process to work, particularly where paint is involved because my classroom is really not equipped to be an art room in the conventional sense. I think one way to improve would be to continue reinforcing clear expectations for the process of clean-up in the classroom.

Time also appeared to be an issue, so before the next assignment of this unit students will receive the reading assignment at least two weeks earlier. For many of them, three weeks was not enough time to complete the reading. Perhaps it was merely procrastination on the part of some, but several students complained about not having enough time to read. I also did not allow for in-class reading except after testing or at the end of class if there was time available. I would also consider using other works of art as examples instead of just Glenn Ligon’s Untitled. It is possible to use other conceptual art pieces in the context of a reading assignment.
I don't fear death as much as I fear the combination of the two.
Ralph Waldo Ellison [yes, his father named him after Emerson] was born March 1, 1914 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Ellison, the son of a construction foreman and a church stewardess (maid), attended Frederick Douglass School. When he was three, Ellison’s father died. His mother encouraged his reading, bringing him books from the houses she cleaned. He also received lessons in symphonic composition and began playing the trumpet at the age of eight. After high school, he traveled to Montgomery, Alabama to attend the Tuskegee Institute and study music (1933-36). During those years, he worked at a variety of jobs, including freelance photographer, shoeshine boy, jazz musician and janitor. He took up game hunting to keep himself alive, a skill he attributed to reading Hemingway. After only completing three years in music at Tuskegee, Ellison dropped out of college, but subsequently received 12 honorary doctorate degrees from prestigious universities like Rutgers, Harvard, the University of Michigan and Tuskegee.

Ellison moved to New York City in 1936 and soon met writers Richard Wright and Langston Hughes. These friendships prompted him to attempt fiction writing and he subsequently moved to Harlem where he lived for more than 40 years with his wife, Fanny McConnell. Ellison was a well-known novelist, short story writer and literary critic whose works appeared in numerous magazines and anthologies. He spent his life teaching in colleges and universities such as Yale, the Library of Congress and the US Military Academy. He became the Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities in 1970 at New York University, where he taught until 1980. In 1982, Ellison became professor emeritus at NYU and taught there for several years while continuing to write.

Ellison died of cancer on April 16, 1994 in New York City.

**INVISIBLE MAN – Novel Background**

Ellison’s novel actually began as a story of a captured American pilot in a Nazi prisoner-of-war camp. While visiting friends in Vermont while on sick leave from the Merchant Marines in 1945, Ellison’s opening lines of Invisible Man “came to him,” prompting an entirely different novel than the one he had planned.

*Invisible Man*, published in 1952, was described by Ellison as “a novel about innocence and human error, a struggle through illusion to reality.” He said that his novel was comprised of a “series of reversals,” which provided a “portrait of the artist as a rabble-rouser.” When questioned about the narrator’s journey as a reflection of the black struggle for justice and equality, Ellison responded that he was “not concerned with injustice, but with art.” He further insisted that there is “no dichotomy between art and protest.” He illustrated his point with works such as Don Quixote and Notes from the Underground, arguing that these literary masterpieces not only “embody protest against social and political constraints, but ultimately protest against the limitations of human life itself.”

Ellison credited TS Eliot’s poem, *The Waste Land*, as the reason he became interested in literature. Because he wanted to understand the poem better, Ellison began to read literary criticism. He soon started searching for what he called “Eliot’s kind of sensibility” in other African-American poetry, but didn’t find it until he discovered the writings of Richard Wright. Ellison admired his works, particularly *Native Son*, but thought Wright limited his vision by using the form of a protest novel, which generally depicted blacks as the oppressed victims of whites. He set out to move beyond the protest novel “format” and portray a narrator whose life was not defined strictly by his race, but by his willingness to accept personal responsibility for creating his own life.

Ellison, like his namesake Ralph Waldo Emerson, believed in the philosophy of transcendentalism, which asserts that individuals create their own reality. That reality is essentially mental or spiritual in nature. This perhaps explains his fascination with appearance vs. reality and masks and disguises in his writing. He also like Whitman and Thoreau’s faith in the American democratic ideal, personal freedom and the utopian world where individuals could transcend or rise above their petty selfish desires and obtain a sort of spiritual enlightenment. He believed individuals could work together for the good of all people. [See Emerson’s essay “Self Reliance”]

*Invisible Man* was Ellison’s primary claim to literary fame and won him the Russwurm Award and the National Book Award. It also established Ellison as one of the most important American authors of the 20th century.

Literary critic Henry Louis Gates, Jr. said that Ellison, Richard Wright and James Baldwin comprised “the holy male trinity of black tradition.”
## Arts & Humanities Core Content 4.1 Chart: Concepts by Artform

| Visual Arts                                                                 | Dance                                                                 | Music                                                                   | Drama/Theater                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|                                                                       |
| **Elements of Art**                                                        | **Elements of Dance**                                                 | **Elements of Music**                                                  | **Literary Elements**                                                  |
| Line, shape, form, texture, space (perspective: aerIAL or atmospheric, 2 point linear perspective), value (lightness and darkness, tints and shades), color (color theory – primary, secondary, intermediate hues, intensity – brightness and dullness, color schemes/groups – triadic, complementary, analogous) | Space, Time, Force                                                     | Rhythm, melody, form (rondo, theme & variations, musical forms of opera – overture, aria, recitative, movements of the classical symphony), timbre, harmony, tempo, dynamics | Plot structure (rising action, turning point, falling action), suspense, theme, language, style, monologue, dialogue |
| **Principles of Design**                                                    | **Choreographic Forms**                                               | **Purposes of Music**                                                  | **Technical Elements**                                                  |
| Repetition, pattern, rhythm, movement, contrast, proportion, balance (symmetrical, asymmetrical, radial), emphasis, (focal point), variety, unity | Theme & variation                                                     | Ceremonial                                                             | Scenery, sound, lights, make-up, props                                 |
| **Media/medium**                                                           | **Rondo**                                                            | Recreational                                                          |                                                                       |
| Two-dimensional: paint (watercolor, tempera, oil, acrylic), fabric, yarn, paper, ink, pastel (oil & chalk), fiber, photography, computer design | Narrative                                                             | Artistic Expression                                                    |                                                                       |
| Three-dimensional: clay, wood, glass, metal, stone, plaster                 |                                                                      |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| **Art Processes**                                                          | **Purposes of Dance**                                                 |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Two-dimensional: drawing, painting, fiber art, photography                  | Ceremonial                                                           |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Three-dimensional: textiles, fiber art, ceramics, sculpture, architecture   | Recreational                                                         |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Subject Matter: Representational, nonrepresentational                       | Artistic Expression                                                  |                                                                       |                                                                       |
|                                                                              |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| **Purposes of Visual Arts**                                                |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Ceremonial                                                                 |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Artistic Expression                                                        |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Narrative                                                                   |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Functional                                                                  |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |
| Persuasive                                                                 |                                                                       |                                                                       |                                                                       |

To be used in conjunction with 2007 Kentucky Core Content for Humanities
### Arts & Humanities Core Content Chart 4.1

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<th>Dance</th>
<th>Music</th>
<th>Theater/Drama</th>
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<td>Modern &amp; Contemporary</td>
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<td>O'Keefe</td>
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<tr>
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<td>MIDDLE EASTERN CULTURES</td>
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