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**Reading Art: Determining Importance**

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Grade Level: 6–8

Related Big Picture Concepts: interdependence, meaning

Subject Areas: Visual Arts, Language Arts

Duration: Introducing the focus work and completing the art project will take 3–4 class periods of 45 minutes. The time frame for reading and writing about the literature will vary depending on the piece.

Essential Question: *How can importance of meaning be conveyed?*

Abstract: This lesson will build students' skills at identifying the principal story in a work of art and text. Through discussion, students will assess the central and supporting stories of a work of art that is characterized by multiple layers of action and meaning. Students will independently demonstrate their ability to identify the central plot and subplot of an assigned text through journal writing and an art making activity. They will compare the techniques artists and authors use to focus on and support these essential stories.

Focus Works of Art:



Master of the Latour d'Auvergne Triptych (French, active about 1490 - 1500)

*The Annunciation with Saints and Donors*, about 1497

Tempera and oil on panel

2ft 2in x 1ft 7in (66cm x 48.3cm)

# North Carolina Standards Correlations

Visual Arts:

6.V.2.1, 6.V.3.3, 6.CX.2.2

7.V.2.1, 7.V.2.3, 7.CX.2.2

8.V.2.1, 8.V.2.3, 8.CX.2.2

Language Arts:

6.RL.2, 6.W.9, 6.SL.1, 6.SL.2

7.RL.2, 7.W.9, 7.SL.1, 7.SL.2

8.RL.2, 8.W.9, 8.SL.1, 8.SL.2

# Student Learning Objectives

* Students will compare and contrast the methods artists use with those writers use to help the viewer/reader determine importance.
* Students will analyze a piece of literature to determine central and secondary ideas.
* Students will convey this analysis in writing in journal entries and artistically through creating a triptych.

# Activities

1. Introduce students to the *Latour d'Auvergne Triptych*. Ask:

*What stories are depicted here?* (Annunciation, lives of donors, lives of patron saints)

*How did the artist organize the stories?* (Annunciation in the center, more contemporary stories on the sides)

*Which is the most important story in the painting? How do you know?* (Annunciation; center location is more important because viewer instinctively looks there first)

*How did the artist show the stories are related?* (common background, side figures look toward middle, scrolls above donors' heads are prayers that the couple would be blessed with a child)

Tell students that artists traditionally place the most important aspect of the story in the center of a painting. They draw our attention to this action by using bright colors, interesting details, and gestures.

Ask: *What are some ways writers focus our attention on the essential story or plot?* (character development, interrelationships between characters, detail of setting, dialogue)

*What are some strategies readers can use to determine which story is most important?* (reader's prior experience, making connections with characters, author's purpose)

1. Choose a text that has a central plot and multiple subplots, such as "The Last Leaf" by O. Henry, *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*, or any short story or novel-length book the teacher has planned to use during the course of the year. Model multiple plot analysis with a short read aloud. Have students read this text and keep a journal of their progress, making notes or completing a [triple Venn diagram](http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/graphic/venn3/) or a [concept web](http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/graphic/conceptweb/) of the various stories they see unfolding, the relationships developing between them, and their predictions about the upcoming action. When they have completed the text, have students reconsider their notes and make a final determination about which story was primary and which stories were secondary. Have them write a final journal entry justifying their determination, describing how the subplots supported the central one and the techniques the author used to concentrate the reader's attention on the main story. Model this type of writing, helping the students to stay objective and not include personal opinion.
2. Instruct students to create a triptych that illustrates the assigned text, placing the primary plot in the center of the work of art and the subplots to the right and left. Students may enlarge or transfer the [triptych template](http://www.ncartmuseum.org/artnc/content/lesson/sampleRubric/18.pdf) to white cardboard or foam core and depict their stories with paints, colored pencils, markers, or another medium of their choice. Before they begin, encourage students to consider the following:

*Which part of the action will you use to represent the full story? Which characters will you depict?*

*What are some additional details that are necessary to communicate the story to the viewer?*

*How will you show the relationship of these stories to one another?*

*What will be the setting of your stories? What are some details that will help the viewer identify the setting?*

*What problems do you anticipate as an artist? Consider multiple solutions before making a decision.*

1. Display these triptychs in the classroom and discuss as a class.

*Was there one common story represented in each of the triptychs?*

*How did students represent it differently? What were some similarities?*

*How does seeing these triptychs aid understanding of the literature?*

*What are some relationships between art and other disciplines?*

1. Have students write a journal entry after analyzing the class triptychs. How did the use of art aid understanding of the literature? How did the literature influence the art?

# Assessments

* Evaluate the triptych for understanding of how artists convey feelings and information.
* Observe students for consideration of artistic problems and possible solutions.
* Evaluate discussion and writing for understanding of the connection between art and literature.
* Evaluate journal entries using local rubrics for student understanding of the central ideas of the piece of literature and how the student drew information from the literary text to support analysis and reflection.
* Evaluate discussion using local rubrics for both for student participation in collaborative conversations and analysis and ability to explain the conveyed information of the triptychs.

# Resources

Vocabulary:

altarpiece

annunciation

triptych

polyptych

plot

subplot

characterization

author’s purpose

Materials:

Triptych template, colored pencils, markers, or paints, cardboard

Links:

Concept Web

http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/graphic/conceptweb/

Triple Venn Diagram

http://www.teach-nology.com/worksheets/graphic/venn3/

