



Picture This: Bookmaking as a Visual Experience

Goal

This lesson is to connect visual art and language arts, helping students to realize that each discipline is a means of communication, thus a language. The cover of the journal will convey facts about the book artist with symbols, materials, images, and design choices. The interior is a place for the artist to express him or herself with both images and works.

Book

Eldon, Kathy, ed. *The Journey is the Destination: The Journals of Dan Eldon*. San Francisco, Calif.: Chronicle Books, 1997.

Harrison, Sabrina Ward. *Spilling Open: The Art of Becoming Yourself*. Novato, Calif.: New World Library, 1999.

These books, published journals that can serve as models, are suitable for high school students.

Focus Art Work

Minnie Evans

Untitled—Portrait with Stars, 1962

Ink and gouache on paper

12 x 9 inches

Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia

Art Production

A handmade, personalized journal

Focus Art Work

Untitled—Portrait with Stars



Minnie Evans, *Untitled—Portrait with Stars*, 1962.
Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia

Look and Learn

Discussion Questions

- Look at the artwork very carefully. What is the first word that comes to your mind?
- Name all the things you see in the picture. (After you answer all the questions, read the information about Minnie Evans and see if you can guess why she chose to put these things in the painting.)
- Is the setting for the portrait a particular place?
- Who is the man in the picture? How do you know?
- Is this portrait from the real world or from the artist's imagination? Why do you think that?
- What kind of balance does the painting have—symmetrical or asymmetrical?
- Why do you think the person has his or her eyes closed?
- What does this painting tell you about the artist?
- Jonathan Swift said, "Vision is the art of seeing things invisible." A visionary artist is self-taught and paints from dreams and visions. Does anything in Minnie Evans's artwork make you think she is a visionary artist?
- If you created an artwork that represented your life, what colors would you choose?
- What symbols represent you, your interests, or events in your life?

Discovering More about the Artist and the Art:

Minnie Evans was born in Long Creek, North Carolina, on December 12, 1892, and was taken as an infant to live with her grandmother who raised her in Wilmington, North Carolina. She left school when she reached the sixth grade and at the age of sixteen married Julius Evans. The couple had three sons. A self-taught artist, she painted because God told her to "paint or die." The artist died in 1987. Read more about this visionary artist at www.outsider-folk-art.org/outsider/education/Minnie_Evans.asp

Picture This: Bookmaking as a Visual Experience

This is the second lesson in a series of lessons from a unit called "Picture This: A Book, A Box, and Me: Telling Our Own Tales Visually." The author of the unit is art teacher Debi West, and it was written for a professional development workshop, Telling Tales: Narrative in Southern Art, held during the summer of 2002 at the Morris Museum of Art. The first lesson, Picture This: Telling Our Tales with Self-Portraits, may be found on the web site. The unit is interdisciplinary, including both visual and language arts.

Objectives:

- Participants will view portraits from the Morris Museum's permanent collection observe how artists use objects, symbols, and the elements of art to tell their life stories.
- Participants will learn the art of bookmaking, creating personal journals.

QCC Standards:

Key learning standards (in Georgia called the Quality Core Curriculum) are listed below. Though several standards at each grade level are covered, space allows us to list only one per grade.

Visual Arts

- 4.5 Emphasizes specific elements of art and principles of design and selects materials and techniques appropriate to creating an artwork based on own idea and self-direction.
- 5.1 Produces artwork and graphic designs that use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message.
- 6.10 Examines selected artworks based on questions related to art theories such as:
Does the intent of the artwork seem to be to imitate? (Realism)
Is the artwork primarily concerned with design or composition? (Formalism)
Is the work trying to express a feeling or emotion? (Expressionism)
- 7.1 Plans and creates artworks using elements of art and principles of design for compositions expressing an intended meaning.
- 8.2 Designs and produces artworks . . . for a specific function.
- 9-12.6 Describes how subject matter and content interact with the elements of art and principles of design to produce a particular expressive quality.

Vocabulary:

symmetry: formal balance, when both sides are the same in size, shape, and position

asymmetry: informal balance, when each side is different, but the composition should still be balanced

geometric shapes: shapes that are based on the square, circle, or triangle

organic or natural shapes: shapes with curving or irregular lines, such as those found in nature

visionary artist: an artist whose images come from dreams or visions

Materials:

- reproductions, slides, or transparencies of portraits in a variety of styles or portraits from the Morris Museum, available on the museum's web site at www.themorris.org/learn/lesson_bookmaking.htm
- decorative paper for the book cover (an optional activity is to make paste paper; find directions in the lesson plan)
- glue
- scissors
- craft sticks
- cardboard
- paper for the inside of the book

- craft knife for cutting cardboard
- stitching needles
- bookmaking thread
- pencils
- waterproof markers
- colored pencils, gel pens, stamps and stamp pad, collage material, and any other materials needed to decorate cover

Procedures:

1. View a variety of portraits in various styles and point out how the artist provides clues about himself or herself with color choices and composition, as well as symbols and other images. Guide students to recognize that artists use many strategies other than rendering a likeness to depict the sitter. Some questions you could ask are:
 - What do the colors tell you about the sitter?
 - Did the artist include any objects that give you clues about the subject?
 - Did the artist use symbols to inform you about the sitter's life?
2. Explain that each participant will make a book with blank pages. They will decorate the covers to provide clues about themselves, just as they saw in the portraits they viewed. They will use the books as journals in which they can write, collage, and draw. They can look at the focus books for an example of how others have used their journals to better understand themselves.
3. Each participant needs two sheets of 9½ x 6¼ inch cardboard. Older students can measure and cut the cardboard themselves. The teacher will need to pre-cut for younger students.
4. Choose a piece of decorative paper with which to cover the book. It should be 1 inch longer on each side than the cardboard (11½ x 8½ inches).
5. Brush glue all over one side of each board.
6. Center the board, glue side down, on the cover paper and press down.
7. Trim each corner of the paper, using an obtuse angle (more than 90°, less than 180°). Do not trim the paper all the way to the corner of the cardboard, but leave ¼ inch to cover the corners of the cardboard.
8. Fold the top border over the cardboard, then fold the bottom. Next fold the sides. Use the craft stick to get all the bubbles out of the paper. Press in the corners so that the cardboard is not exposed.
9. Finish the cover by gluing another piece of paper to the inside. It should be smaller than the cardboard, but cover the edges of the folded border.
10. Press both boards between wax paper with weights such as large books.
11. Place boards side by side, ½ inch apart, with the outside up. Place a piece of duct tape along the length of the spine, leaving ½ inch at each end. Fold the ends of the tape over and put a shorter piece on the inside to cover the edges of each end.
12. Fold signature pages and signature cover.
13. Stitch in the signature pages.
14. Add collage, objects, color, words, etc. to the cover to make the book unique.

Assessment Plan:

Book Rubric

4	3	2	1
Very clearly shows personal expression	Clearly shows personal expression	Personal expression barely evident	Personal expression not evident
Excellent craftsmanship	Good craftsmanship	Fair craftsman ship	Poor craftsmanship
Exceptionally creative	Very creative	Somewhat creative	Not very creative

Extensions:

- Ask students to illustrate in their journal a funny, sad, or happy time in their lives.
- Math connections are easily made since this lesson required that the students must use measurements, and flip, turn, and rotate. Also, notice the math terms *obtuse angle*, *symmetrical*, and *asymmetrical*.

Paste Paper

Paste paper mix:

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup rice flour

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup cake flour (Gold-softasilk is best)

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cup cold water

Mix well

Boil:

6 cups water

Mix thoroughly with a whisk into a paste.

Add 1 tsp. Dr. Bromer's peppermint soap and 1 tsp. glycerin.

Process:

1. Write name on the back of paper
2. Wet paper
3. Sponge off excess water with a moist sponge
4. Scoop out paint mixture onto paper
5. Use fingers, brush, feathers, forks, tools, fibers, stamps, etc., to apply paint and make patterns and designs.

Be creative and experiment with the materials!