

# *Every Picture Tells a Thousand Words: Teaching Language through the Visual Arts*

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**Medicine feeds the body.  
Education feeds the mind.  
What feeds the soul...?**

# Quotes about Art:

- **“The purpose of art is washing the dust of daily life off our souls.” –Pablo Picasso**



- **“Art imitates life.” –Common expression**



# Quotes about Art:

- **“A great teacher is a great artist. Teaching is the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit rather than the brush.” –John Steinbeck**
- **“The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.” –Aristotle**





**What are the visual arts...?**

# What are the Visual Arts?

- **What is art?**
  - **2-dimensional images:** oil/acrylic paintings, watercolor paintings, drawings, illustrated books, photography, murals.
  - **3-dimensional images:** sculpture, pottery, jewelry, carvings, printmaking, and other crafts.

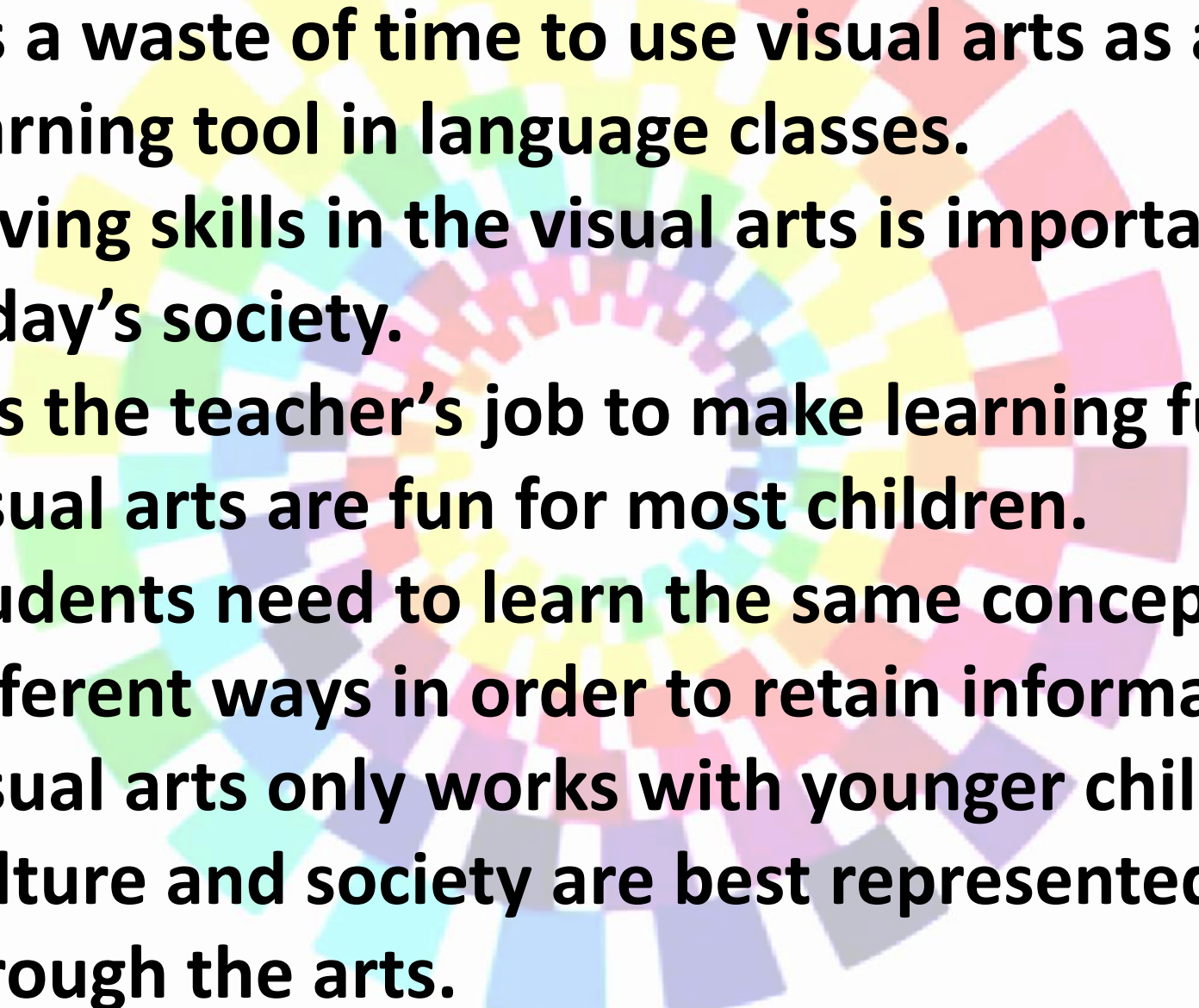


# **Training Objectives:**

- **Teachers (you!) will explore the benefits and strategies for teaching language through visual arts activities.**
- **Teachers (you!) will learn how to apply these strategies and ideas to:**
  - **Make English more fun and engaging.**
  - **Encourage and maximize communication.**
  - **Teach about and explore English-speaking cultures.**
  - **Appreciate the arts and improve art skills.**



# **Do You Agree or Disagree?**

- 
- 1) It's a waste of time to use visual arts as a learning tool in language classes.**
  - 2) Having skills in the visual arts is important in today's society.**
  - 3) It is the teacher's job to make learning fun.**
  - 4) Visual arts are fun for most children.**
  - 5) Students need to learn the same concept in different ways in order to retain information.**
  - 6) Visual arts only works with younger children.**
  - 7) Culture and society are best represented through the arts.**

A circular sunburst chart with four concentric rings of colored segments. The segments are arranged in a circular pattern, with each ring containing 24 segments. The colors of the segments vary across the rings, creating a vibrant, multi-colored circular pattern. The segments are arranged in a circular pattern, with each ring containing 24 segments. The colors of the segments vary across the rings, creating a vibrant, multi-colored circular pattern. The segments are arranged in a circular pattern, with each ring containing 24 segments. The colors of the segments vary across the rings, creating a vibrant, multi-colored circular pattern.

**Visualize this for a moment...**

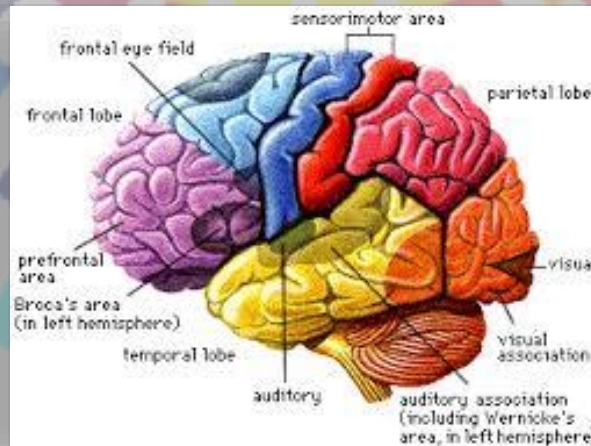
# Visualize this:

- 1) Draw a picture of your hometown or something that reminds you of it.
- 2) IN A LANGUAGE THAT IS NOT YOUR FIRST, try to describe the drawing in that language:
  - The steps you're taking to draw the image.
  - The things it contains.
  - A story behind it.
  - Why you chose that subject and what it means to you.
- 3) Was there any language you didn't/don't know that could make this easier?





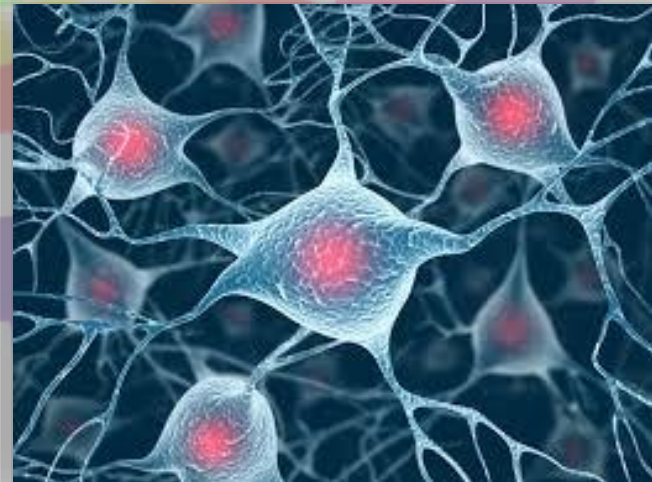
***Why should we use  
visual arts to teach a  
second language...?***



# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

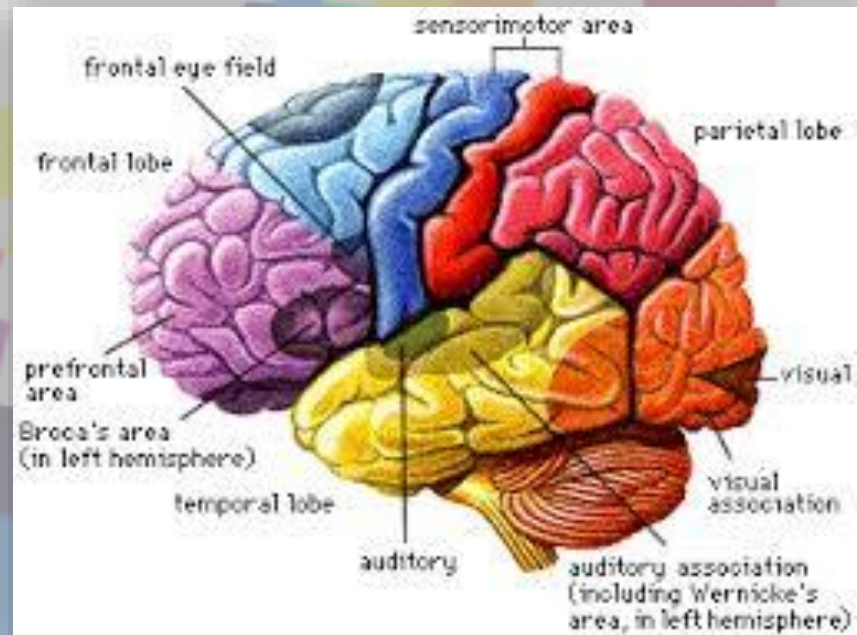
**Research about the brain suggests:**

- **It is important to teach language in multiple ways:**
  - **Through the 5 senses.**
  - **By creating cross-curricular connections.**
  - **It activates more “dendritic pathways” of the brain.**
    - **Wolfe, P. (2001).**



# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

- When more parts of the brain are activated, more areas store data about just one piece of information.
- As a result, a person *fully* learns, instead of just memorizing.
  - Wolfe, P. (2001).





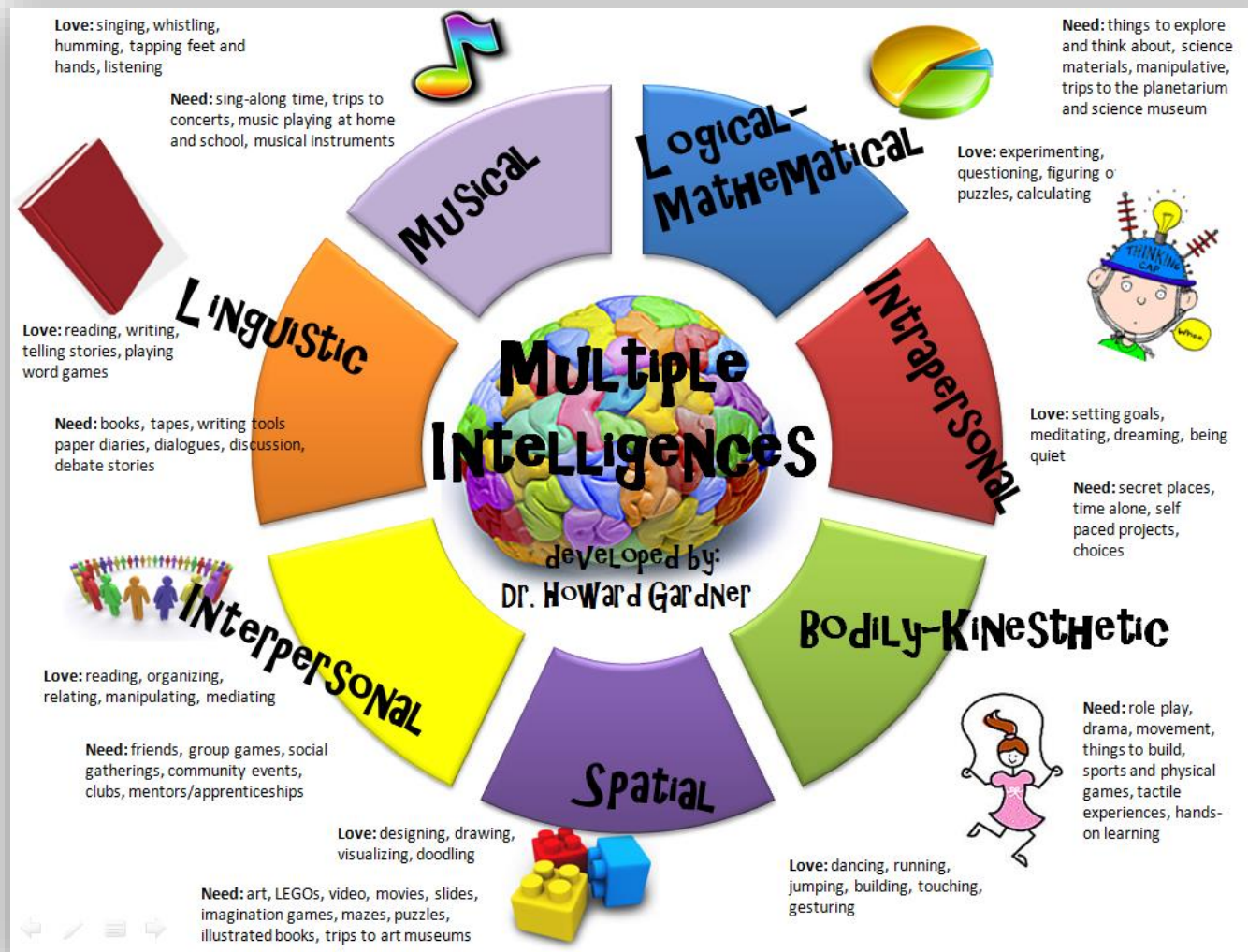
# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

- **Art is important to language learning because:**
  - **Students learn through various ways and senses, so:**
    - **It stimulates multiple parts of the brain.**
    - **This leads to higher levels of retention.**
  - **It “kisses the brain!”**



# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

- It naturally and automatically makes use of most multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983)



# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

- It naturally and automatically makes use of 3 main learning styles:

See it

*Visual*



Say it

*Auditory*



Do it

*Kinesthetic*





# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

- Art contextualizes and illustrates the English concept that is being taught:
  - Art “shows not tells.”
- It imitates and enhances students’ realities.
- It incorporates all aspects of language.
- It can be used to teach almost any language topic/skill.



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# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

- Art is so “open to interpretation” that it generates endless ideas/language.
- It’s easy and practical to implement.
- It makes learning English fun!



# Benefits of Using Visual Arts to Teach a Second Language:

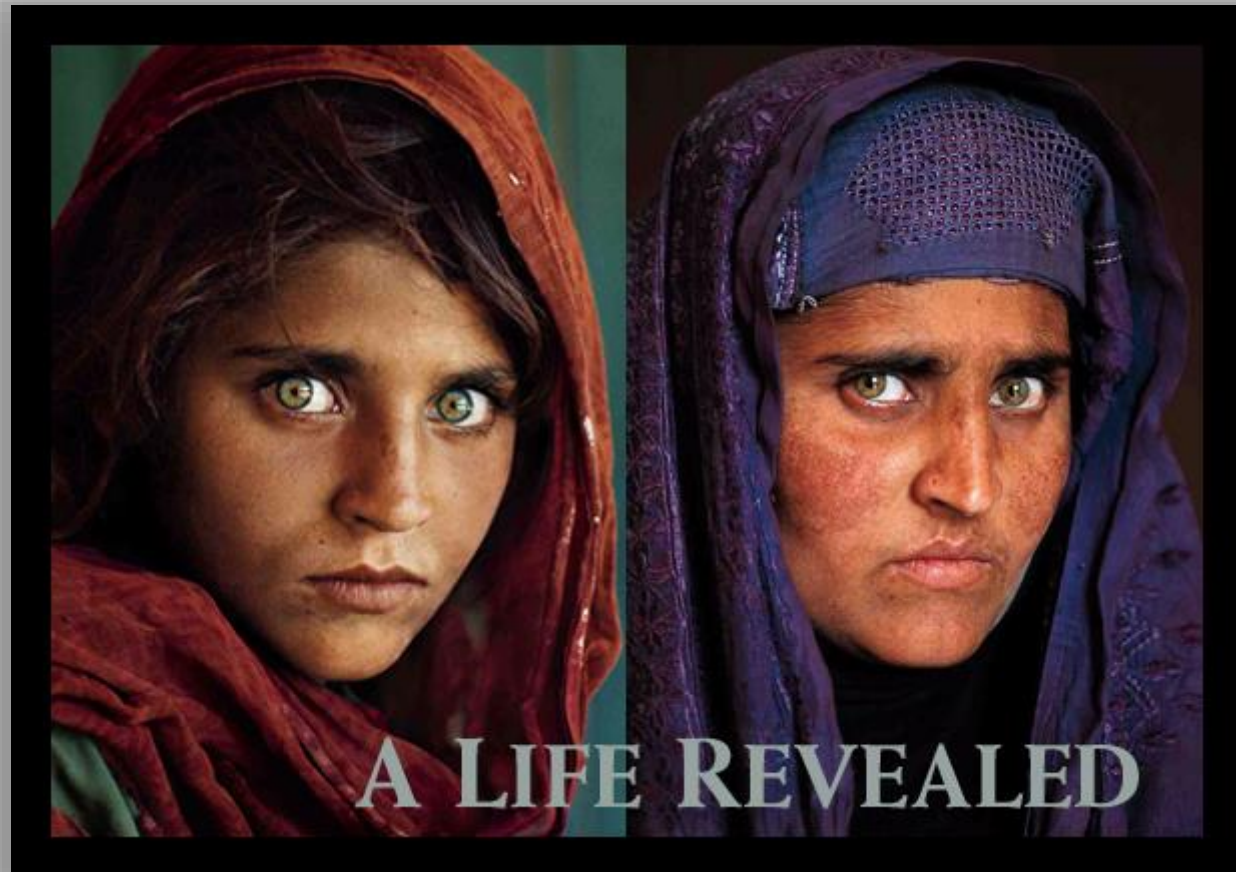
- It allows and encourages:
  - Creative/individual/free expression.
  - Students to explore feelings in a safe way.
  - Motivation.
  - Learning autonomy.
  - Students to create their own fantasy worlds.





# Using Visual Arts to Teach English:

*“Every picture tells a thousand words”*



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# Using Visual Arts to Teach English:

*“Every picture tells a thousand words”*







*How can we use visual arts  
to teach English...?*

# Best Practices for Visual Arts:

Two basic ways that students can use art to learn and practice English in the classroom:

1) Through the process of creating *their own* images:

- *Understanding* the process of HOW to complete the work.
- *Communicating* this process with classmates or teachers.
- *Explaining/describing* their work.
- *Illustrating* a segment of language.

# Best Practices for Visual Arts:

2) Students learn and practice English by using *other people's* images for analysis and description:

- Teacher brings artistic images to the classroom.
- Students discuss classmates' works of art.





# Best Practices for Visual Arts:

- ***Any* work of art created or displayed in a language class can be used to do the following for a language point:**
  - **Practice**
  - **Express**
  - **Describe**
  - **Illustrate**
- **The above can be done in both spoken and written form.**

# Best Practices for Visual Arts:

- Themes of artwork should be based on students' real lives and backgrounds.
- Language mini-lessons prior to (or at strategic points during) art activity work best.
- Summative presentation activity/final art show using learned language points is key!



# Best Practices for Visual Arts:

- **Name at least 3 language points that could be taught through the process of students creating their own artwork!**





# Best Practices for Visual Arts:

- **Artwork can be used to teach a variety of grammar points and vocabulary, including:**
  - **Colors, shapes, and sizes**
  - **Locations**
  - **Prepositions of all kinds**
  - **Adjectives**
  - **Verbs**
  - **Vocabulary**
  - **Grammar of all kinds**



# Teaching Vocabulary Through Visual Arts:

- **Art can be used to depict almost any vocabulary word!**
- **When students illustrate a word they're learning, they make stronger associations and retain the information:**
  - **Students draw an image that reminds them of the meaning.**
  - **Students create art using learned vocabulary and use it in their final show.**

**Definition/s: (Include part of speech and two complete definitions from the dictionary)**

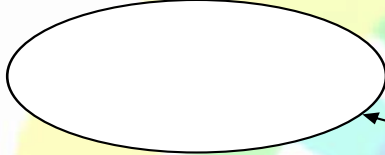
1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

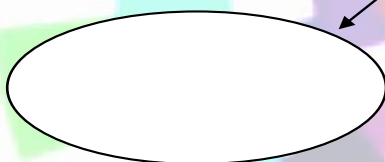
**Part/s of Speech**



**Synonym**



**Antonym**



**Word**

**Draw a Picture:**



**Use the word in 2 sentences:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Write the word seven times:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6) \_\_\_\_\_

7) \_\_\_\_\_



# Text-Art Connection:

**Use art to create written/spoken English:**

- **One artwork or a series of works can be used to do the following in both oral and written form:**
  - **Tell a story**
  - **Interpret/analyze**
  - **Describe**
- **Make sure that the written or spoken part also fulfills a language objective/s.**



# Text-Art Connection:

- “Jigsaw” reading art activity:

1



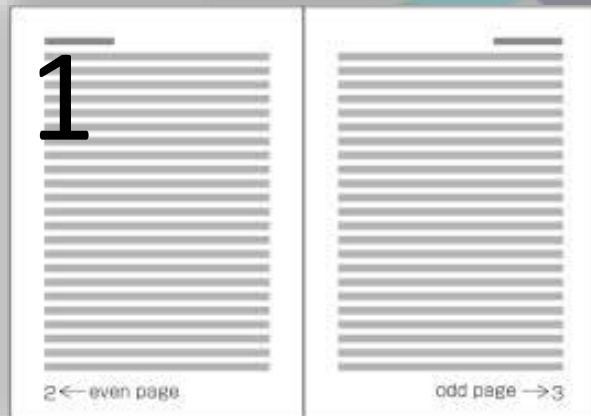
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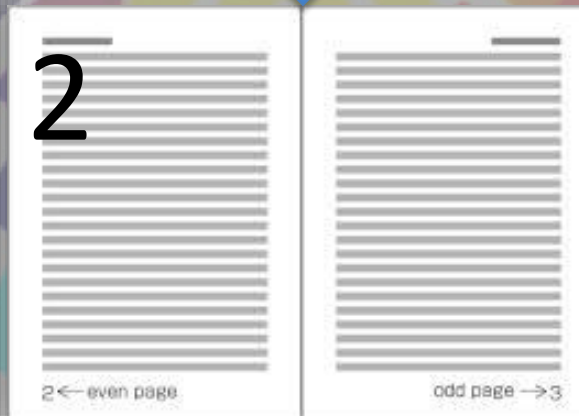
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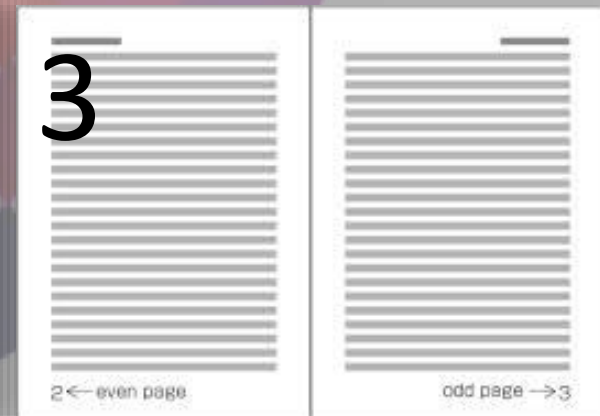
1



2



3





# Text-Art Connection:

- **Descriptive Essay Assignment: “My Dream World”**





# Text-Art Connection:

- Descriptive Essay Assignment: “My Dream World”

## (INTRODUCTION):

If you could wave a magic wand and the world could become the way you’ve always dreamed, how would you design it? If I could create my own dream world, it would be ideal in so many ways. It would have stellar schools and universities, a scenic environment, benevolent people, a democratic government, ample job and career opportunities, and abundant food and drink surrounding us. Although my dream world is a bit unrealistic, it is important to be aware of it so that I can always work towards the highest goal possible. In the following paragraphs, I will describe this world in detail.

# Text-Art Connection:

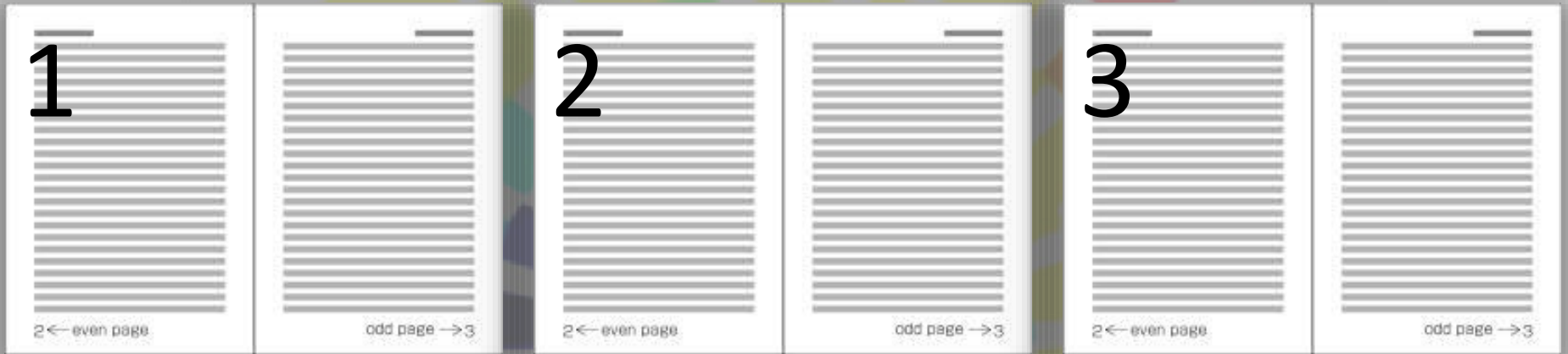
**Use written/spoken English to create art:**

- **A text or aural recording can be used to create a work of art that illustrates it:**
  - **Class murals after reading a book.**
  - **Painting representing an essay.**
  - **Illustration of a recorded conversation.**
  - **Fiction children's book.**



# Text-Art Connection:

- “Jigsaw” reading art activity:





# Using Art in Language Games:

## Examples:

- **Guessing games:**
  - **What or whose artwork is this? (oral description)**
  - **Match the written description to the work**
- **Classroom competition: best written story based on classmate's or own artwork**
- **Running Dictation game**



# Using Art in Language Games:

## Examples:

- Picture description (Ex. Blind listening game)
- Art Pictionary





# Using Art in Language Games:

- Example: “Where’s Waldo?”







**How should we select  
appropriate dual  
art/language activities...?**

# How should we select appropriate dual art/language activities?

- 1) Choose your language and/or content objective:**
  - **Think carefully about what language point you want the art activity to teach/practice.**
  - **Use art activities that will allow students to meet that objective.**
- 2) Consider your ultimate course goals.**
- 3) Try to incorporate a combination of reading, writing, listening, and speaking activities.**

# How should we select appropriate dual art/language activities?

## 4) Plan for assessment:

- Distinguish between informal and formal assessment.
- Summative presentation/show should demonstrate all learned skills/content.
- How will you ask students to use artwork to show the language they have learned?
- What exactly will students be able to do by the end of the lesson?



# How should we select appropriate dual art/language activities?

## Examples of Art-Related Language Objectives:

- *Students will be able to (SWBAT)....*
  - (SPEAKING/VOCABULARY): Use descriptive adjectives to orally compare and contrast a painting created of their hometown to a photo of a city in the U.S.A.
  - (GRAMMAR/WRITING): Use the present simple tense and present progressive verb tenses to write what is happening in their painting in a short paragraph.
  - (LISTENING): Listen to an oral description of a painting in the room given by an instructor and, based on what he/she hears, identify the painting the instructor is referring to.

# How should we select appropriate dual art/language activities?

## 5) Consider carefully:

- **Materials**
- **Time activities will take**
- **Class size**
- **Student age**
- **English proficiency**
- **Art proficiency**



**Now to describe a successful  
English-art hybrid  
pilot class in action...!**



# Pilot Class: Refugees in Buffalo, NY:





# Pilot Class: Refugees in Buffalo, NY:





How could you use the  
following artwork in  
your classroom?



# How Could You Use This?

**Let's explore the ways that a student could use the following works of art to learn and practice English:**



# How Could You Use This?

**Let's explore the ways that a student could use the following work of art to learn and practice English:**





**We only see the world through  
our own personal and  
cultural glasses...**





Images are Personal: Which object doesn't belong with the others?



# Images are Personal: Which object doesn't belong with the others?

*Log:*



**CATEGORICAL/ABSTRACT/  
LOGICAL FOCUS**

*(This doesn't belong in the abstract category of "tools" as we categorize and define them in our culture and language)*

*Ax:*



**PHYSICAL MATERIALS FOCUS**

*(This is the only object that doesn't contain the material wood)*

*Saw:*



**EMOTIONAL FOCUS**

*(Example: the person has a negative emotional memory of getting hurt by a saw as a child)*

*Hammer:*



**UTILITY/CONCRETE FOCUS**

*(You can't use this object with the other three; the other two objects can be used to cut the log; a hammer is useless especially without a nail)*

# **Images are Personal: Which object doesn't belong with the others?**

- **Every student views and understands an image using their own personal logic, which:**
  - **Is affected by the student's background.**
  - **Affects how students interpret and create an image.**
- **Use this to your advantage when using images/artwork to teach English.**
- **Personal interpretations are the key to communicative language expression!**



# Culture Affects Interpretation and Creation of Artwork:





# Integrating Culture:

- Use pop art or famous works from different cultures:
  - Students analyze culture through art.
  - Students create art representing their own culture and compare it with art from others.





# Integrating Culture:

- Use text explaining various aspects of American culture, which students later depict in art form.







How could you use the  
following artwork in  
your classroom?

# How Could You Use This?

**Let's explore the ways that a teacher could use the following works of art to teach English and culture:**

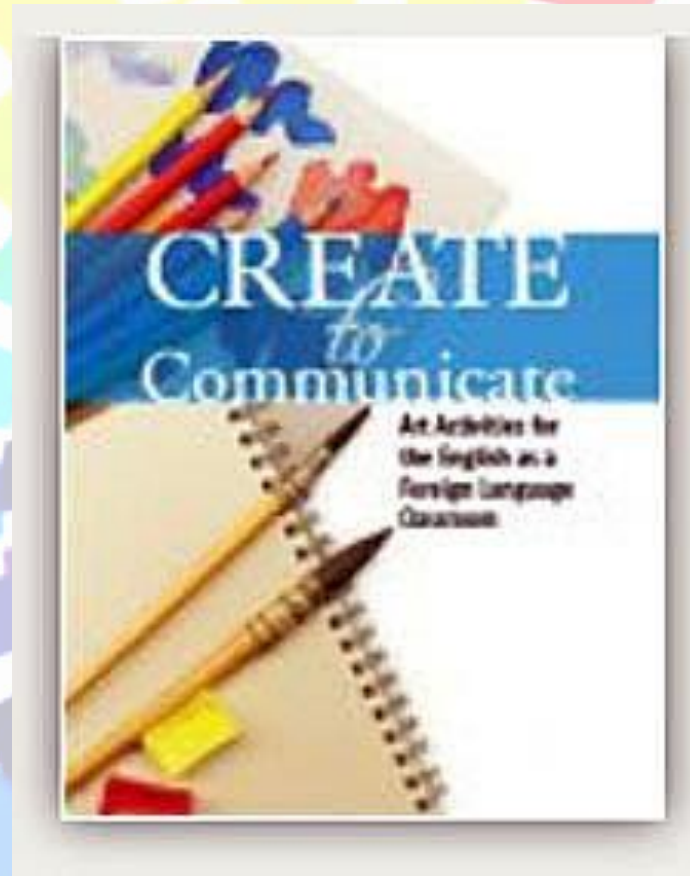


# ***NOW* do you agree or disagree?**

- 1) It's a waste of time to use visual arts as a learning tool in language classes.**
- 2) Having skills in the visual arts is important in today's society.**
- 3) It is the teacher's job to make learning fun.**
- 4) Visual arts are fun for most children.**
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# Great Resource:



- <http://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/create-communicate-art-activities-efl-classroom>



**Thank you!**  
**Questions? Comments?**

# References:

- **Bain, K. (2013) “Learning Through Song, Drama, Play, Art.”**
- **Gardner, R. (1983) “Multiple Intelligences and Education.”**
- **Wolfe, P. (2001). “Brain Matters: Translating Research into Classroom Practices.”**



# My Contact Info:

- My website: [www.peopleleap.com](http://www.peopleleap.com).  
Go to:
  - Resources
  - Amy's Professional Blog
- Shaping the Way We Teach English Website:  
<http://oelp.uoregon.edu/shaping>
- American English Website:  
<http://americanenglish.state.gov>



