



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2010 Volume I: Connecting the Visual to the Verbal in the Classroom

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## **Lying to Tell the Truth: Archetypes, Art, and Imagery**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 10.01.09, published September 2010

by Brook Blaylock

Archetypes are everywhere. When reduced to their most basic parts, archetypes are nothing more than symbols recurring again and again throughout literature and culture, manifesting themselves on the written page as well as on the canvas of history. They represent the transcendence of the human condition and the mystery of the collective unconscious, forces inherent within the plots and characters of every story, verbal or visual, ever created. According to Nancy Clasby "No story is unique, standing alone, nor does it stand entirely outside of the mind of the reader. An internal dimension is already in place; the psyche is prepared, etched with the patterns of myth. The infinitely varied poetic images of beauty and danger mesh with these imprinted designs to form a lens through which readers see their own situation in a larger perspective." What better means to introduce students to the primordial and universal understanding of character motivation they unwittingly already possess than through the lens of a paired introduction of archetypes—"the etched patterns of myth," and the study of art and ekphrastic poetry? As a result of this union, students can access the "internal dimension" of their "prepared psyches," exploring the symbolic and "poetic images of beauty and danger" as a catalyst for enhanced comprehension. Rather than simply presenting archetypes as a list of repeated symbols for students to memorize and apply in isolated literary examples, a unification of artistic analysis, poetry study, and the writing of ekphrastic poetry affords students a broader and more extensive study of archetypes. This curriculum unit's design applies these principles to create a unit of study both challenging and accessible as students engage with an interdisciplinary exploration of archetypal symbolism, art analysis, and ekphrastic poetry.

(Developed for Language Arts, grade 8; recommended for Language Arts, grade 8, and English, grades 9-10)

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