Finding the Story through Intermediality: PoetryComics, Animated Poetry and Tableu Vivant

Overview:

What do Tim Burton, Charles Shultz and Billy Collins have in common? I have listed a film director, cartoonist, and poet. Some of the greatest artists of our time provide us with unique ways in which to see the world, but many teachers would never think that in a unit plan these disparate artists could be combined. How does one use comics to inform poetry or teach Shakespeare? How does poetry have anything in common with film? This unit provides teachers with the tools to be able to use a range of art forms to help students understand content and to process what they understand in a unique and varied way. This subject matter is a powerful tool and has a cross-curricular adaptability if you as a teacher gain an understanding of how combined media can be a wonderful vehicle for delivering content that is initially difficult or intimidating for students, but soon pays off. I will discuss many resources that could be of use in an English, Drama, or History class, as well as Visual Art, which is my primary focus.

My classes are mainstream and include students from ninth to twelfth grade. Most often this is their first art class. I have roughly thirty-three students per class. They sit at tables of twelve which makes collaboration very accessible. This unit is designed for visual art and English classes and can be applied to any grade level. I have my students for one hour a day and five days a week for the entire year. I allow ten minutes for set up and clean up, so the actual lesson is fifty minutes per day. This is a four week unit of poetry and comics that will include *Animated Poetry* for an extra two weeks. *Tableau Vivant* is also another extension that can take a month or longer.

The reason I chose this subject is not only that I am intrigued by the rich combinations of media, but also that I want my students to see the nuances of these pairings and learn that each medial art-form can be at once liberating and limiting. By learning what each medium does, they will gain a better understanding of what medium they should use to express a specific idea, and their understanding of visual art will expand as they move through a series of scaffolded experiences of intermediality. I will start with teaching traditional poetry and explaining its conventions and limits, then we will move to comics and their structure, advantages, and limits. Next, I will talk about how animation is comics in motion and talk about how it differs from still comics. Finally students will learn the conventions of theater and how tableau vivant can be used to express poetry or art and how it is similar to and differs from animation.

This unit will help you understand the conventions of poetry, comics, and theater and how to combine them in interesting ways that will help your students appreciate the expansiveness of convention by blurring media to create a new space for learning and challenge the students' notions of what art is and why it is important to them.

Before embarking in this intermedial journey, I would like to encourage you to simply ask your students: *What is art? Why does it matter?* When I ask a first yeFar student the question above, the answer usually follows this form: "Art is a painting of a landscape that has a feeling", a student says as I nod, "yes" while wanting them to understand it's much more than that. Students often give detailed examples of specific art objects, while most often overlooking art's expansiveness and its relationship to our individual and collective lives.

As an art teacher for all levels, I've come to understand the importance of changing our lessons to incorporate multiple viewpoints about what art is. Encouraging variation in the projects in content and scope, always scaffolded from one instance to the next, is my method to help students understand that there are exciting moments than can happen in all media.

How students view art directly influences how they see the world. The word, Art, is a term that is much broader than students realize and its many layers once understood can foster an appreciation for everything from clothing to furniture to architecture, city design, billboards, nature, portraiture, digital media, etc. What is considered art is by and large a matter that needs to be explored and, even more importantly, experienced through intermediality. As a person who is influenced by everything you see, I want you to think about artists you love, movies, cartoons, and every image that you find inspiring. I encourage you to pair some of them together and think about why you like them so much. This unit is born from a love of Chris Ware's cartoons, Kim Addonizio's poetry, and Tim Burton's films. All artists create by distilling the things they love into ideas that speak of what's in their heart what needs to be said. My students will also come to be aware of their own personal narrative, because without that we would not have anything to say.

Art in Culture and Society

Let's face it, we are all products of mass culture. All art comes from somewhere. Visual culture is the way in which images in the mass media are integrated into our every day experience, but my students for some reason don't see these images as art. I encourage you to use examples of advertising, fashion, and anything you can get your hands on to prove that these images are in fact visual art. Thinking of art as a solo medium that functions within its own terms is the beginning art student trap. Art is usually thought of as (still art) a drawing or a painting or other conventional and Eurocentric ideals that still weigh heavily. These medial choices belonged to the Renaissance but have since become classist in that within this specific definition art is only for the rich and those who are well-educated enough to gravitate toward traditional museums. Easel art, as it's sometimes called, is still what people buy to cover walls—that is, if it wins out over the plasma TV. This outworn ideal prohibits some people from considering that art is for them—that they too have the opportunity to enjoy such an activity as going to a museum or creating a piece of art involves having techniques other than the use of expensive oil pigments and bristle brushes. At present we in developed societies are lucky because technology makes images more accessible. This fact helps the art teacher or any teacher for that matter in that all forms of art can be researched and made accessible to students in a matter of seconds. Multi-media such as collage, combining a plethora of materials and formats of art, are encouraged and even more interesting to us now than ever before. Learning in the arts is less linear because of all the ideas and materials now accessible. Intermediality is a given in today's rapid exchange of information. The lens through which we view art must focus the complex dissemination of images around us.

What is Intermediality?

The concept of intermediality in culture is described beautifully in a citation from Katherine Hayles by Stephen E. Tabachnick in his book, Teaching the Graphic Novel: "we are in the midst of a cognitive shift and reading today has become a hybrid textual and visual experience, as witnessed by the inescapable presence of the internet." [1] In animated poetry, Billy Collins's works are an example of words forming a rich narrative that is brought to life through a colorful sequence of images, sound, and text. This emerging form of art follows the conventions of music videos in the 1980's and makes the normal conventions of traditional still poetry much more textured, interesting, and visually appealing to students. Students gain an understanding of content when they learn in multi-modal ways. By having the text, image, and sound support each other, students come away with a richer meaning in less time. Tradional poetry needs to be spoken and read several times by my students before the text can be understood to the automatic degree that it registers when seeing an animated poem. I am not suggesting that Billy Collins poems are being simplified by the images, as they are rather enhanced to provide a more interesting sensory response that evokes moments of emotional stimulus and awareness.

Finding the Narrative in Words & Images

It is my primary goal that my students be prepared for this high-speed and multi-layered world, that they become problem solvers. As Einstein says, "Creativity is more important than knowledge." Google and other well known employers often list creativity as a main skill they are looking for in their staff. They need people who are able to switch hats and form concepts that appeal to people on a mass scale. To do this, it is a necessary skill to learn how words and images work together, how colors affect how people feel, and essentially what is important to display as a representation of a belief or message that gets disseminated out into the world.

My students will learn this skill from a variety of angles. They will look at images and text from the point of view of a visual artist and a writer. Acquiring first-hand knowledge of the blurring of media and art themselves through art-making and interpretation is the most meaningful of all the activities in my beginning art class.

The important common feature within and among media I call the Narrative. The story embedded in the art includes the story of the art–making. This is who the artist is, what culture or background they come from, what is important to them and how they have chosen the materials to convey what they are appearing to say. The next element of the narrative is the story the viewer arrives at as a result of looking at and interpreting the art.

Narrative drive is a core quality of the greatest importance across media. Without the layers of narrative, there would be no art or writing, period. The story is the driving force behind the wish to create art, and it is common to all art-forms. The collaborative narrative between artist and viewer forms a partnership of merged experience. In his essay, "What is Art", Anthony Bond says, "I believe that a precondition for the existence of art is an empathetic link between the artist and the viewer, which is necessary for their collaboration to complete the artwork." [2] The story that is created in the maker's and the viewer's eyes is the narrative core that makes the experience valued by both.

Two Disparate Schools of Defining Art

Here are some more elaborate details about the definition of art throughout time periods. First there is the early approach to visual arts that is central to the traditions of Europe. According to biographer Giorgio Vasari,

during the Renaissance—his period—the word Art jointly encompassed painting, sculpture, and architecture. Later, this grouping was expanded to include music and poetry, and all together became known in the 18th century as the 'Fine Arts'. These five Arts have formed a core which has generally excluded 'decorative arts' and 'crafts', all of which have utility as an end. In the early 20th century, however, all traditional notions of the definition of art were challenged by Marcel Duchamp and the Dada movement with which at times he was associated. Duchamp, a controversial artist in his time, declared that anything the artist produces is art. This conceptual focus took the viewer away from things that are considered beautiful. He was a showman, and an example of his facetious philosophy of art is his famous urinal in a very prestigious art show, but at the same time a broader and more inclusive assessment of art was born from his provocations. In his essay, "What is Art?" Anthony Bond says, "I strongly believe that art can sometimes change the way we look at the world." [3] Duchamp's urinal did exactly that. But, the point I would like to make is these two camps are extreme. I think Vasari's focus on beauty and Duchamp's focus on the conceptual "art is anything" notion should be challenged by the idea of process. The making of a piece of art is the experience in which the greatest meaning can be derived. The art-maker and the viewer meet at the point of the narrative in the work, and the process should support the narrative and prevail.

What is art now?

My students will decide after participating in this unit whether their concept of art has changed and how. It is my goal to show them the complexity of layers across media and within the definition of art. Hopefully, their response will derive from first hand experiences of the rich nuances that they find in intermediality. It is my belief that in the intermedial the most substantive and multifaceted ideas lie *between* media. The beautifully murky and sensuous realm that one senses between media is almost a third space that allows the artist or viewer to explore the five senses and form experiences that would never exist within one art-form alone. The experience of getting lost and then finding oneself enriched is what I hope my students will realize when studying Poetry Comics, Animated Poetry and Tableau Vivant. These three examples of intermediality are scaffolded in my lessons to build upon one another and implement prior knowledge and activate schema. The flow of one discipline to the next is strategic in that the curriculum goes from still pictures in *PoetryComics* to motion in Animated Poetry and finally the artist in motion in Tableau Vivant. It employs media that are rich in sensory experiences while still relying on imagery either with text or in a pictorial manner. Audio is also utilized in some Animated Poetry and Tableau Vivant.

Rationale

The Connection between Poetry and Comics is a means for obtaining a skill set in Words and Images. There is an inherent connection between comics and poetry: rhythm, division of lines, frames, the ability to summon the senses and combine text and image with equal weight stand out for me as devices that are employed in both media.

In these sister arts, the narrative is simplified to fit in a structure. The assonance of the text creates a beat and rhythm that helps the reader move through the art-form. Decisions have to be made by the artist-writer about the layout of the piece in the formatting of the comics design and the line breaks of the text, which must be considered for the flow or movement to work well. How the viewer reads the comic depends on the choices of the artist. The cartoon panel itself determines the experience of the reader, just as the poet is

concerned with how many syllables, words, and breaks there are per unit of expression, whether line or stanza. The poet-artist can leave panels or spaces for lines void of words. Ultimately, the story is what all these devices both visually and textually amount to. This narrative is the core of what the reader will take with them and assimilate into their visual archive of images for future use.

Poetry as a convention juxtaposes images, just as comics juxtapose words. This is why they can be considered sister arts: they both move through a story with short breaks and fluid movement.

Cartooning employs a lot of graphic and design elements. Its position on the page, size, and flow of images are important to the overall read. It makes the reader consider time because of its sequences, and the comic artist also has to consider as she/he creates the work, how and in which direction the reader's eye will move along the page from one panel to the next, etc.

Poetry and Comics both appeal to the senses in that drawing or writing a word or image helps the reader recall color, smell, touch, and taste, as when recalling a memory.

What is "*PoetryComics*"?

Poetry Comics is a term coined by Dave Morice in 1978. A friend of his said, "Great poems should paint pictures in the mind." He replied, "Great poems would make great cartoons." [4] Morice wondered how 'Prufrock' and Sylvia Plath's 'Daddy' would look as comics, so he drew them. *Poetry Comics* are the merging of the two genres that will give my students a skill set in understanding and interpreting words and images. I will focus on finding the story or *narrative voice* in this art form. The structure of a *Poetry Comic* is self-explanatory. The words of the poems are placed in cartoon balloons and panels in a comic book format.

By taking a poem, which is essentially "writing that formulates a concentrated imaginative awareness of experience in language chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound, and rhythm" [5] , and pairing it with a comic, which is "a juxtaposed pictorial in a deliberate sequence" [6] , students will be able to have a rich experience of storytelling and intermediality.

When my students create *PoetryComics* they will come to understand that in a successful poem every word counts. Words conjure images and comics, like poetry, are about simplifying and paring down. Visual elements are crucial to both. A cartoonist places panels across a page and poets decide on the placement of words.

I want my students to experience what is special and particular to comics. As the cartoonist Seth so eloquently stated in an interview with *Carousel Magazine*, "The cartoonist is trying to boil down real life experience into an image that is capable of conveying the depth of life by only suggesting it" [7] When endowed with narrative devices in images and words, a piece of art can tell a very colorful story that appeals to the reader's emotions and senses. My students will learn visual and textual examples of how to depict those things that enhance feeling in a piece of art for the viewer. The cartoonist Chris Ware stated, "Comics are a sort of piano roll, or sheet music, of the rhythm of life, flattened out on a page 'played' with one's eyes." [8]

PoetryComics are important to what I want to teach in giving students a skill set that will allow them to understand how images and texts function together. The skills they would obtain from creating and analyzing *PoetryComics* will be varied and allow them a more creative dimension through *intermediality* or combination of media. My students will have to look at the decision making in an existing piece of art and consider how those choices of specific artistic and literary devices inform the finished piece. My students will also have the opportunity to make a PoetryComic that will take the learning process a step further and have them be the

decision maker. This fulfills my goals of wanting my students to be active participants in creating and interpreting images throughout their lives.

What is Animated Poetry?

Animated poetry occurs when poems are joined to moving images through digital means. I suppose that puppets or objects could also be used in the place of animation, so for this purpose let's define it as when a poem is illustrated through a medium that employs movement. There is also usually an audio that accompanies the animated images and most often text is superimposed on the screen. Billy Collins' poems are known to be some of the finest pieces in this genre. My students will explore this art form by first looking at music videos with rich images and text. A video that comes to mind is Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer," which shows rich visuals that reference surrealist artists and impressionist painters but also reflects the direct influence of word and image relationships, while being a great example of intermediality and of cross references to other modes of art. Another video that comes to mind is "Right now" by Van Halen. This video has text that relates directly to the image instead of the song lyrics, as is the case in Gabriel's video. Another example is David Byrne's "And She was" and "Burning Down the House." These videos also have images describing the lyrics, with little text.

What is Tableau Vivant?

Tableau vivant is a theatrical device that is used to bring paintings and sculptures to life by giving voices through actors that are stand-ins for the original piece of art. Often time these performances are slap-stick, with wry humor that pokes fun at the original art piece or adds an interesting layer of commentary for the viewer to enjoy. An example of this is an improvisational troupe called Killing My Lobster. They had a show called *Patronizing the Arts*, in which the Mona Lisa had a moving mouth, the David was a live naked man, and the scream painting of Munch interacted with the other two. In these ways it gave readings of the works in question and created a third space that would have never been there for the viewer to think of the original piece in a comical light, and thus take a piece of high art down from its pedestal. This play was a success due to some very interesting choices by the writers and the artists concerning how these art pieces could interconnect with an understanding of the needs of the human characters in the respective paintings. They wanted love, admiration, affection, and sometimes very simple things like food or someone to scratch their back. This personified characterization of famous art pieces is enjoyable to most people because of the famous artwork's icon status. Most people understand that Michelangelo's David is a masterpiece put on a pedestal in the history of art, as the Mona Lisa is also. To have these works of art portrayed as people, or talking and down to earth objects, is quite amusing and I am sure that my students will like it. The text that is formed is purely in the hands of the writer, and any concept or idea can be created to pair along with the actors in their roles as art subjects and the ways in which they carry out the play. This freedom results in creating very interesting pieces of theater and interpretation.

Teaching Strategies:

One of my main objectives for this unit is for students to learn how to interpret text and image in a meaningful way, so that they are able to create the sort of experience they seek in the world in a positive way. I want them to gain skills of analysis, and here are some tools that I will give my students when we talk about art in a

large group.

What is the image in front of you?

What is the artist trying to say?

How does it make you feel?

Are the words and images supporting each other?

How are the words and images working as devices?

What is the story behind the piece?

What are some interesting choices the artist has made?

How would you in the place of the artist say the message differently?

If you were the artist would you change anything?

Students will be given these questions as prompts for analyzing a piece of art. They will have to form conclusions about images and text and create a plan of their own if they intend to make a piece of art with a similar idea.

Another element that I am striving to impart to my students is critical thinking and analytic skills. I will introduce my students to famous poems that they will analyze. There are several reasons for this teaching strategy. Students will learn to appreciate words—particularly the sounds of words, the symbols and stories they represent. Students will gain an appreciation for the craft of poetry and the devices present in poems. Students will also acquire an understanding of how a writer puts images together in a strategic way. The structure of a poem, with its line breaks, are important in how we read and interpret the poem. I will model these things by going through a sample poem and pointing out structural features on the board. Students will have the opportunity to supply feedback and to answer questions on the materials presented.

Ekphrasis as a tool in understanding the Text and Image Relationship

There is a form of poetry called Ekphrasis, when a poem and a picture are combined to create a narrative. I will use ekphrastic poetry in my lesson to get students accustomed to looking at words and images together. My professor at Yale, Paul Fry, has made apparent that really wonderful things can happen in the conversation between a painting and a poem, or, for my purpose in this unit, an image and a poem. When paired together one speaks of the other in support or almost as a debate concerning the confines and expansiveness of each disparate medium. The reading or narrative that the reader walks away with is muti-layered and complex, and often times it has been said in our seminar that one cannot pin down everything the poem could mean in relation to the picture and beyond it. This form of art asks many questions and also provides the reader with a lot of investigation prompts to learn the true meaning. The readings are always very subjective for each viewer, which seems to be the intention of the artist. By creating a dialogue about an art piece sometimes whole centuries later, long after the piece was historically contemporary, ekphrasis really engages the reader in a new way and challenges habitual reading. Paul Fry has taught me more than anything that two media, when alongside each other, create a third space of intermediality that is of particular interest. I will convey this art-form to my students as they are learning to see and analyze image and text.

For my teaching strategy concerning Ekphrasis, students will first read out loud the poem about Van Gogh's "Starry Night" by Anne Sexton and then we will look at the painting in relation to the poem. I will give them the definition of Ekphrasis and then we will discuss it. Finally, students will be given a postcard of a well known piece of art and be asked to write a poem about it. I will talk about poetry and how it conjures images, has a beat, line breaks etc. before they start. They will also be given a worksheet that explains how to create a poem.

The Use of Technology in Research

Students will use technology in research that can be combined with a poem that may illustrate or challenge it. They will be given a list of artists and writers to choose from.

List of Writers:	*List of Comic Artists*
Joy Harjo	Dave Morse
Pablo Neruda	Winsor McCay
Sharon Olds	Chris Ware
Aimee Bender	Jillian Tamaki
e e cummings	Gabrielle Bell
Billy Collins	Lynda Barry
Kim Addonizio	Scott Mc Cloud
Naiomi Nye	

Templates and Visual Tools: I will also make templates and handouts based on: Lynda Barry's *Picture This*, Gabrielle Bell's Graphic Novel, *Cecil and Jordan in New York* , and Craig Thompson's Graphic Novel, *Blanket*. I will teach the structure and the sequence of comics with power-point presentations of Chris Ware, Winsor *McCay's Little Nemo in Slumberland*, David Weisner's *Tuesday*, Jillian Tamaki's Graphic Novel, *Skim* and Maurice Sendak, *In the Night Kitchen. Drawn and Quarterly* will be a website that I reference throughout my teaching. It is a wonderful resource for Graphic Novels. *Discussion*. There are a variety of ways to stimulate discussion. I begin a lesson with a whole group discussion to stimulate ideas and then focus on large group discussion. *Active Learning*. Meyers and Jones (1993) define active learning as learning environments that allow "students to talk and listen, read, write, and reflect as they approach course content through problem-solving exercises in small and informal groups, role playing, and other activities — all of which require students to apply what they are learning" [9] Many studies show that learning is enhanced when they are having first hand experiences with the materials.

Lesson Plan One: What is Poetry?

I will introduce the medium of poetry to my students by asking them to come up with a definition. I will write what they say on the board and then return to it after we have read several poems.

Strategies for Teaching Poetry

The first thing is to think about the title of the poem and consider whether the title contributes a special meaning or image to the poem. Is is important to pay attention to formal structure. This is simply the arrangement of words on the page. Look at the placement of lines and how they are paired. Observe whether the lines and stanzas form a pattern. Listen to the sounds the words make. Is there a rhythm as you read the poem aloud? Do the sounds point to important imagery? Pause where punctuation marks appear, not only

where the line ends. It is helpful to read the poem aloud several times and to determine the rhyme scheme. Poets often use near rhyme to make the reader focus on an important word. Determine the purpose of the sounds. Because poets have few words to use, they must decide how to use them interestingly. Are there any personal connections that you as a reader have to this poem? Summarize the poem's meaning as a whole. What was the writer's intention? I will be using Kim Addonizio's *Ordinary Genius* as a course reader.

Procedure

I will discuss the above information and read Kim Addonizio's poem, "What do Women Want," out loud. As a class, we will complete the suggestions above. I will model how to determine the meaning of a poem. I will encourage them to dig deeper to find meaning. My students will analyze a poem with a format for written analysis that I give to them. We will discuss this poem as a class.

We will read other poems out loud by Neruda, Harjo, Olds etc. that are visual in nature and evocative of the senses. Students will be asked to describe the imagery as it relates to pictures or illustrations. They will be prompted to draw several of the images and defend the writers' choices in a few sentences. We will speak as a group about this. I will convey to my students that just as words conjure images, images conjure words. I want them to think about this concept and write about it. They will be asked to give several examples in the text or image to describe their point of view.

Assessment

There will be a grade sheet that I devise that will prompt the students to make a packet of their work for this portion of the unit. They will have to write about how their view of poetry has changed and what makes poetry unique. They also will have to speak about specific poets and what makes them good examples of the craft.

Lesson Extension:

Using collage and found images, students can make a poetry comic. A great example is the Prufrock poem illustrated by Morse in *PoetryComics*.

Lesson Plan Two: What is Comics?

Strategies for Teaching Comics

I will ask students what is a comic and write the definition on the board. Students will then read a Charlie Brown comic by Charles Shultz, *Little Nemo in Slumberland* by Winsor McCay and work by Chris Ware . We will talk about how the breaks in the comic are different/similar to the breaks in a poem and why the artist chose to make those edits.

Procedure

I will give students a handout from Scott Mc Cloud's *Understanding Comics* that visually supports and illustrates this concept of commonalities between comics and poetry in the rhythm and breaks. We will talk about what makes a successful comic versus what makes a successful poem. Students will be asked to identify similarities and differences between the poetry and the comics. Kim Addonizio's *Ordinary Genius* will be used to emphasize the craft of poetry in this segment. I will provide my students with a passage in the book that supports this notion.

Closure

As a class, we will modify the original definition of poetry and of comics on the board. Then as a class, we will create a column chart that includes the elements that are similar and different in poetry and comics, respectively. Students will then fill out the chart for each poem and each comic we have read. We will discuss these elements as a class.

Assessment

Students will be given a gradesheet in the beginning of the lesson that specifies what homework and classwork activities will be graded and how many points they are worth. The homework assignments include bringing in a comic from a newspaper, drawing a comic of one's day in five panels, and bringing in the work of a cartoonist they admire and writing about why.

Lesson Extension

Later in this unit, I will provide my students with warm-ups, activities and lessons that instruct students in the basics of reading comics, the history of comics, and the art of comics. The last lessons guide students through a simple process of creating their own comic book through characters, plots, settings, and vocabulary. Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* will be central to the other strategies and content that I assimilate.

Lesson Plan Three: What is *PoetryComics*?

Prompt

I will ask my students to think about what *PoetryComics* might be. If they know what poetry is and what a comic is, could they describe in a sentence what the hybrid artform might be?

Summary

Poetry Comics is a medium that combines poems and comics in an interesting way. I will prompt my students to create a *PoetryComic* by describing how to create one without giving them an example just yet. Through creating a poetry comic, students will learn even further of the similarities between comics and poetry.

Procedure

Students will be given a handout of "The Raven" by Edgar Allen Poe. Then, students will be broken into groups of three and asked to illustrate the poem, drawing from the exact words. They will be told to cut up the text, make comic panels for the words and create images in each text panel to create a comic of the poem. Each group will be given 25 minutes to complete this.

Closure

I will show my students "The Raven" by Poe as illustrated in the book, *PoetryComics* by Dave Morse as an example. We will talk about the process and what they chose to do as artists, versus what the artist in Morse's book chose to do. Students will make copies of their poetry comics and trade them with each other. We will review what makes a good *PoetryComic* and look at other examples from the book, *PoetryComics* in a power-point presentation.

Assessment

Students will grade each other using a rubric which we have created at the beginning of the assignment.

Lesson Extension

Graphic Novels are also a great way to illustrate these ideas. You can talk about these conventions as they work together in Jillian Tamaki's Skim, Craig Thompson's *Blankets*, and Gabrielle Bell's *Jordan and Cecil in New York.*

Lesson Four: What is Animated Poetry?

Procedure:

Students read a poem by Billy Collins. Then, I will show the students an animated version of that same Billy Collins poem. We will write down how the experience was different as a class and talk about it.

I will ask my students about any sensations they thought were produced in each experience. Were the images you saw in your mind the same/different depending on the different media choices? If you were Billy Collins would you like the way the artist interpreted the poem? If you were the artist what would you do differently?

Closure

Students will be given a handout about creating a powerpoint of a Billy Collins poem of choice by combining text and images. The poem/image powerpoint will reference the techniques learned in the example of an animated Billy Collins poem. The work should be an original piece of art that can stand on its own.

Assessment

Teacher will devise a rubric that contains sections for craftsmanship, innovation, and understanding of concept. Work habits are also taken into consideration.

Lesson Extension

Music videos such as Van Halen's Right Now, Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer*, and David Byrne's *And She Was* and *Burning Down the House* will be shown. In my opinion, these videos were the first animated poetry, prior to Billy Collins or anything of this kind we see now.

Lesson Five: What is a Tableau Vivant Skit?

Prompt

Students will be given a picture in a magazine and be asked to get in groups of as many people as are in the scene and pose as if they are the figures the picture. They will be asked to move in the exact position of their character and stay there like a frozen sculpture. I will have brought in images that are interesting.

Procedure

As a class we will talk about that experience and what the students might think a Tableau Vivant is and why people may choose to use this art-form. I will give a handout concerning the history of Tableau Vivant and we

will discuss it further. Then, I will show the skit of Killing My Lobster's *Patronizing the Art* on video. We will talk about what happens when the Tableau Vivant moves and becomes a skit in which the character is in motion and has feelings that are human.

Closure

Students will get a handout about creating their own Tableau Vivant skit in a small group, they will choose a famous painting as a group, deciding who is going to play the parts, and writing dialogue that brings the artwork to life.

Assessment

Students will be graded on their performance and interpretation of the piece of art. They will also write about the original piece of art's narrative and meaning and how as artists they brought a new life to the piece by making the choices they did and why.

Works Referenced

This list is appropriate for both students and teachers. Some books are actual graphic novels, while others are about the conventions of comics, poetry, and Graphic Novels - all are appropriate for both teachers and students.

Addonizio, Kim. *Ordinary Genius*. New York, NY: W.W Norton. 2009. A wonderful handbook as to what poetry is and how to create it.

Addonizio, Kim. *Tell Me*: Rochester, NY: BOA Editions. 2000. "What Women Want" can be found in this collection.

Barry, Lynda. *What it is: Montreal, Canada*: Drawn and Quarterly. 2008. Really great prompts for writing visually.

Bell, Gabrielle. *Cecil and Jordan in New York City*. Montreal, Canada: Drawn and Quarterly. 2008. A collection of stories where surreal things happen - very entertaining.

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"Graphic Narrative" http://www-personal.umich.edu/~esrabkin/417GNw05.htm. Eric Rabkin's Syllabus at University of Michigan

"Graphic Poetry" http://www.wig-01.com/graphicpoetry/. A book that looks interesting

"Hillary Chute Department of Language and Literature" http://english.uchicago.edu/facultychute. Hillary Chute is a professor who teaches comics at the University of Chicago

"Introduction to Comics Art" http://teachingcomics.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=104:Introduction%20to%20Comics%20Art:%20Gateway%20to%20Visual%20Storytelling&catid=40:Syllabi&Itemid=62

"Killing My Lobster" http://www.killingmylobster.com/content/view/905/73/. Killing My Lobster is a sketch comedy group that had a show using Tableau Vivant that inspired this lesson.

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Endnotes

1. Tabachnick, Teaching The Graphic Novel.
2. "Why Art Matters by Anthony Bond" http://www.artinfluence.com/whyartmatters.html
3. Ibid
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7. "Austin Kleon". http://www.austinkleon.com/tag/seth/. Interview with Seth in Carousel Magazine
8. "Introduction to Comics Art"
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9. "Teaching Strategies" http://www.gmu.edu/resources/facstaff/part-time/strategy.html