# Using Art-Based Research to Explore Metaphors in Romeo and Juliet with English Language Learners

## Introduction

Constantly navigating misunderstanding and confusion in academic and non-academic settings, my students experience learning not as a process of discovery, but as a means of survival. Learning, both academic and cultural, can look very different for the adolescent newcomers in my Art classes. They are trying to understand culture and acquire language simultaneously while learning academic content. Often teaching at my school, Oakland International High School (OIHS), must focus intensively on those critical aspects of our students' learning needs. One class taught at my school, Survival English, focuses on teaching our students basic English through learning experiences in reading, writing, and speaking English.  This type of English instruction alone cannot prepare students for encounters with complex language and academic tasks; therefore, all teachers at OIHS imbed English development within their classes.

As an educator, I am humbled by how my understanding of learning is in a constant state of evolution. Why and how we learn, are just as significant as what we learn. The phrase "to learn" seems too simple to mean something so vast and complex. While learning takes place within us, it is also greatly impacted by our surroundings. We learn as we discover for ourselves, and we learn formally and informally from others. There are things we are curious about and want to learn, and there are things we are forced to learn at the discretion of others. We are innately learners. Infants learn to survive when they explore how to use their bodies to move, eat, and communicate. Young children learn how to navigate within their community when they watch and are explicitly taught by their elders. Through schooling, young adults are taught what they need to know for post-secondary learning and work experiences. Although as individuals our experiences and ways we learn may differ, within our Western way of learning, there is an order in which we are expected to learn as we grow and establish our role within society.

In my first year teaching Visual Arts to an entire English Language Learner (ELL) population, my approach was to integrate informational and reflective writing, speaking, and listening experiences to encourage my students to explain their learning to others.  While these reflection exercises were beneficial in building my students' understanding of Visual Art content, individual experiences in art making, and practicing writing and speaking English, still my teaching did not provide my students with enough depth in English language development.

In the upcoming school year, ninth- and tenth- grade students will read in their English classes an adapted version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with a focus on character, setting, and theme. The unit I will simultaneously teach in my Visual Arts class will center on reading a graphic novel version of the Shakespeare play with a focus on identifying verbal and visual metaphors. Deconstructing text and image to understand metaphors lends itself beautifully to teaching how to create art as well as how to look at art, and doing so is challenging for my students because both literary and visual metaphors require significantly more than a surface understanding of English language and culture to make sense of. Through the unit, my students and I will challenge ourselves as we explore *Romeo and Juliet* through an Art-Based Research Approach, focusing on deconstructing text and image by examining visual, auditory, and literary adaptations of Shakespeare's play. While I hope to challenge my students academically through this unit, I also want them to explore literature that engages their intellect and imagination as they create artwork that reflects the richness of their experiences.

## Background

OIHS is an alternative public high school within the Oakland Unified School District and a member of the Internationals Network of Public Schools, a non-profit organization that grew out of the work of a group of International high schools in New York City. All teachers at OIHS are language acquisition teachers serving 100% English Language Learners and recent arrivals to the United States. Students in my school come from 33 different countries and speak over 30 different languages combined. Many of our students are transnational, meaning they have lived in multiple countries and may therefore more closely identify with countries other than those of their parents. Approximately 30% of our students are undocumented, 15% of students are refugees, and 14% are asylees, individuals who have fled their country due to persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. 24% of our students are unaccompanied minors who crossed the border into the United States without parents and were apprehended by immigration authorities.  Over 95% percent of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Students at OIHS come from more that twelve Oakland zip codes and 40% of students have a daily commute to school longer than 45 minutes.[12]

While these statistics help paint a picture of who my students are, perhaps the most significant factor to consider when trying to meet their individual learning needs is that approximately 40% of OIHS students are considered a SIFE,[2] students with interrupted formal education who have a gap of over two years in their formal educations. To meet the unique needs of recent immigrants, who have historically been underserved, teachers at my school follow the Internationals Approach Model and believe that English language acquisition is best fostered in an academic environment in which students participate in heterogeneous groupings, engage in project-based curriculum, and experience English development integrated into all content areas. To ensure that students begin with a strong foundation of support, for their first two years at OIHS they remain with the same team of five teachers.[3]   For this reason the ninth and tenth grade students are combined in classes together, and the curriculum for all their academic classes loops on a two-year cycle.  Students have a Visual Arts class only during their tenth grade year.

# Teaching Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to English Learners

**Literary Adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet***

Great literature, such as William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, has the transformative power to engage adolescent readers, transporting them and their present-day lives to a place like Verona during the Renaissance. Not just for a visit —Shakespeare invites his readers in with a timeless story of misunderstood adolescents whose love is so earthshattering they will take great risks to defy their parents to be together. Being discounted by adults for a feeling as intense and significant as a first love is an experience many of my students will identify with; however, the notion of being driven to a place of desperation because reality is beyond unbearable is also a theme almost all of my students lived through when they left their home countries. I am in no way comparing the life-risking journeys my students embarked upon to the fictional drama in *Romeo and Juliet*, but I do believe when we are able to connect emotionally to another person's experience, either real or fictionalized, we can build upon our understanding of self. It is an understanding of self that can anchor us when so much of the world around us is uncertain. That is true of one traveling through adolescence and for one adjusting to life in a new country.

In the upcoming school year to deepen their understanding of literary devices students in my Visual Arts class examine several artistic adaptations including:  the No Fear Shakespeare Graphic Novel *Romeo and Juliet*, Dire Straits' song *Romeo and Juliet,* Baz Luhrmann's film *Romeo + Juliet*, as well as the paper cut artwork by Elsa Mora. This unit will take place over a four-month period with classes meeting twice a week for 105 minutes and once a week for 55 minutes. We will analyze some of these adaptations multiple times and within different contexts. At the core of our work will be the No Fear Shakespeare Graphic Novel *Romeo and Juliet*. Although the text of this book is not Shakespeare's original writing, it beautifully brings his work to new and often reluctant readers. This book, filled with black and white comic-book style illustrations that give each character slightly exaggerated features, helps build a reader's understanding though text and its relationship to the visual.

Scott McCloud, author of *Understanding Comics*, talks about using words and images interchangeably when we were children and acquiring and mastering language, and he claims that it really didn't matter if at the time you used words or images or even a combination to communicate with others.[4] For my students, who are developing their use of English language, using words and images interchangeably not only often helps them get their point across to others, but it is also how they make meaning of what they are learning. McCloud breaks down the relationship between text and image by identifying seven different techniques that unite words and images in comics; however, I feel that the first three strategies he discusses are the most relevant when thinking about how ELLs break down image-and-text combinations.  McCloud begins with "word specific," the case in which a picture doesn't bring anything significant to the reader's comprehension of the text. Often my students rely heavily on what McCloud calls "picture specific" combinations to communicate when words add only a little background to the storytelling. Then he identifies "duo-specific" illustrations, in which words and text take a parallel approach to delivering a message.[5]

Dissecting the relationship between words and images in this way may not deepen students' understanding of the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is helpful for a teacher to know when selecting passages to discuss with students.  Selecting scenes to look deeply at because they use one strategy versus another is an excellent way of helping students to gain access to the text. For example, if I were to project an image from the graphic novel with a heavy reliance on text and then asked students to focus carefully on the words, they could

deconstruct the dialog as they work toward identifying literary devices. Or, alternatively, students could look at an image from the graphic novel with no text, and infer what a character might be thinking or imagine what dialog could be inserted with that image given what they have read thus far.

**Literature for Adolescent English Learners**

Many wonder why a teacher would teach literature, let alone a complicated play by Shakespeare to adolescent ELLs, given all the catching up my students have to do to simply graduate high school. Why should their valuable learning time be consumed by what is sure to be difficult and not required learning content? It is true that there are many practical aspects of English language that I could integrate into my Visual Arts classes, but it is also important to immerse my students in a world of writing that challenges their thinking. Jessica Zelenski, a literature teacher in the New Haven Public Schools, whose class was profiled in David Denby's book *Lit Up,* describes reading literature an opportunity "To be part of a bigger world, to travel in time and travel the world, trying on all of these different lives."[6]

How often do we as adults use our knowledge of the English language and ability to read to lose ourselves in different places and different lives? Reading for understanding is not to be taken for granted, and I want my students to have access to such experiences. Simple words artfully put together have the power to take us to places we could have never imagined and question the lives we have created.

To unlock literature for ELLs it's important to remember how much time it takes to learn a second language. To use it successfully for academic and cultural purposes means that ELL students must simultaneously learn both English and academic content in a new sociocultural context.[7] For this reason both language and literary-content learning experiences need to be rooted within thoughtful meaning-making activities with a strong emphasis on visualization to support students' growing knowledge of academic subject matter. Early and Marshall champion "the use of visual representations of the structures of knowledge underlying texts to support students' learning of subject-matter knowledge and scaffold its realization in academic discourse."[8]

**Strategies**

Using visual representations is not a new idea in teaching. I have been in many classrooms in which the walls are covered with lists, diagrams, and pictures of the classroom content. From looking at these artifacts of learning, pretty much anyone can gather what the teacher is teaching a class. However, it is often difficult to see what a students' understanding of that learning is. Visualizing student understanding is an excellent strategy when working with all learners, but ELLs need even more hands-on connections to making their learning visible. By guiding students through meaning-making activities that breakdown text and help them map understanding, it is possible to make deeper connections to language and literature. When learners don't simply consume a visual, but actually create that visual within a context of exploration, two things happen. First, they make a memory and a connection to the making aspect of that learning exercise that remain with them; and, second, they are given the latitude to construct their own context for learning that they are able to build upon at their own pace.

Graphic organizers like the visual examples I mentioned earlier are well established tools to deepen student understanding of content because they are ways of organizing and categorizing topics.  There are graphic organizers to help students understand new vocabulary, classify terminology, compare and contrast ideas; a Google search could bring back a graphic organizer for just about any content learning experience you could think of. However, does this kind of activity, in which students fill in information in an organized format really

develop understanding for ELLs? In my own teaching practice I consider myself to be quite a graphic-organizer wizard. I make all of the graphic organizers that I use with my students so that I can select the words that I use and also how the fonts I use for the look of each word. Sometimes I use specialized fonts to emphasize content and language for my students.  For example when teaching the concept of warm and cool colors, the word "warm" is shown in a font that has flames flaring off of it and the letters "cool" has icicles dripping off the letters. Although I have put much thought into how the letters look to help my students understand the content, if I were to ask them which colors are warm and why might an artist use warm colors, my students would be hard pressed to give me an answer that demonstrates their understanding of these basic concepts of color theory. Perhaps a few would look at our class word wall to help steer them to an answer, but even then my students' answers would lack an understanding that they can apply to their own artwork.

Such language acquisition challenges of adolescent newcomers are universal, and Early and Marshall's study of one of Marshall's classes for newcomers in Vancouver have many parallels to my classes in Oakland. Her students ranged from eighth grade to eleventh grade, with a majority in the tenth grade.  After many years teaching ELLs using "traditional graphic organizers to illustrate the key elements in a short story and engage critically and appreciatively with the texts,"[9] she found herself in the exact same predicament I was in. Marshall felt that her students were not supported enough to examine a text in depth, and this lack prevented them from interacting with the text in a meaningful way; and I would imagine it also did nothing to foster any enjoyment in reading literature for her students. Another English teacher in Marshall's school used a "mandala design as a mediating tool"[10] to help her native English-speaking students interpret text. While using this tool, Marshall's colleague had seen higher quality writing, and her students seemed to enjoy using the tool to dig deeper into literary texts.

Following a great deal of teaching of literary devices and short writing exercises, Marshall was ready to guide her students through their first extended literary project of the year. She began by exposing her students to a variety of mandala examples. As a class they explored similarities and differences, deconstructed symbols within the mandalas, and interpreted the ideas each symbol may represent individually and then all the symbols together as a larger conceptual piece.  Marshall next shared a simplified black-and-white image of a mandala as she illustrated the idea that "even the most detailed and intricate of these signifiers conforms to simple basic pattern or structure."[11]   She went on to explain the next assignment in the unit to her students:

> They would use one of each of the three 'rings' of the mandalas to represent their  analysis of theme, style, and characterization, respectively. The students were given considerable freedom with respect to the aesthetic creation of the mandalas, but their final product, constructed in groups of three, had to contain an interpretation of a short story according to a strict set of criteria. The outer ring of the mandala was to contain a minimum of three symbols illustrating the essence of the characterization intrinsic to the story, plus substantiating quotations from the text; the middle band was to contain at least two symbols that depicted the elements of style (e.g., foreshadowing, point of view, irony), plus substantiating quotations; and the inner band must hold a single symbol representing the central universal theme of the short story, plus one substantiating quotation.[12]

After three weeks of work on their mandalas, Marshall's students shared their work in a gallery walk, using the mandala structure to orally explain their selected texts to other groups. Students engaged in rich discussions reinforcing literary terms and embedding understanding of the literary text they focused on. The mandala-

making activity required students to read and re-read the text and go back and forth repeatedly from the verbal to the visual, a process that increased their comprehension and engagement with the text. In Marshall's class the group mandala project was a catalyst to an independent essay on one element of the short story. Although the mandala approach to analyzing text took students three weeks, it was clear that their understanding of the text and literary devices was deep and authentic. I am eager to see my students breakdown the No Fear Shakespeare Graphic Novel *Romeo and Juliet* using Marshall's mandala approach. I anticipate that they will develop a deep understanding of the text while building confidence in reading and discussing challenging texts.

In my classroom it is important to recognize the variety of language registers that students engage in. Both formal and informal registers have a place in guiding my students to communicate and make sense of the content they are learning. ELLs frequently acquire social communicative language skills within two or three years of speaking English; however, development of academic language skills necessary for content-area classes takes from four to twelve years of English language emersion.[13] In my classes it is critical to remember that I am designing learning experiences for a whole class of students whose individual academic English language acquisition falls anywhere within those parameters. It is important to draw upon both formal and informal language registers when thinking about learning experiences that focus on direct instruction and multiple opportunities to read, write, and talk about academic vocabulary to build a student's content understanding. For example in this unit, students will engage in several activities that focus on the Dire Straits' song *Romeo and Juliet* that follow the Gradual Release of Responsibility model: learning experiences will first focus on the teacher modeling an activity, then students will do the activity with the teacher, afterwards students do the activity in groups, and finally each student will do the activity independently. The register of the lyrics of this song are informal; however, many of the words that students will encounter when decoding the lyrics will be new to them and will require students to communicate within a mixture of formal and informal registers to build their own understanding of the song's meaning. While academic English is the language register that many high school classes utilize with regularity, it is one of many formal and informal registers of English that students encounter in and out of school. Students utilize an informal language register that depends on brevity and abbreviation when texting, but when presenting a speech in class, students engage in a highly formal register to communicate. In classroom settings students are expected to organize their words in a particular way and use academic language to convey their ideas. Each register has value because every speaker needs to use multiple registers to communicate in a variety of discourse communities.[14]

**Metaphors and Metaphorical Thinking**

Metaphors fill our daily lives, and it is impossible to avoid them. According to some estimates, "a native English speaker uses about 6 metaphors per minute, 300 per hour, and more than 1,000 metaphors per day at a rate of a 4-hour speaking day."[15] Understanding metaphors can require a great deal of context and interpretation, and therefore can be incredibly challenging for ELLs. However, an integrated visual arts experience is a powerful place for this challenging learning to take place. In my classes we use the Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) framework to examine artwork. More often than not, my students identify symbolic representations when they look at artwork in class, and a few try to apply those symbols to novel contexts as they make meaning of words and images; however, they are confused when confronted with visual metaphors.

Visual metaphors in film and advertisements fill our popular culture so much that they are imbedded within our common understanding of how to interpret the images we see. Like verbal metaphors that compare one

thing to another, visual metaphors use images to make a comparison. For example one image that I will use to introduce visual metaphors to my student is a cartoon of an outstretched arm, presumably of a politician, reaching over a toilet to drop a dollar bill in the bowl. When the viewer looks down at the bowl, they can see that the entire bowl is full of dollar bills. This metaphor is comparing a politician flushing money down the toilet as being the same as a politician wasting money.

Although my students are very engaged in talking about the visual metaphors they see, it can be for them to make sense of elements of visual metaphors because they are entering their experience of observation with a very literal understanding of language. Even though this may be the level of my students' understanding, Serig says, "Teaching artists aiming to help develop cognitive flexibility—*the ability to think metaphorically must be clear on the distinction between symbol and metaphor. Although creating a symbol may involve metaphoric thinking, it soon loses its metaphorical 'punch.' Whereas creating visual metaphors may involve cognitive flexibility in the creation and in the ongoing, open-ended interpretations the resulting work engenders.*"[16] When working with ELLs it is important to be aware that anything involving interpretation can potentially lead to confusion given students' developing understanding of English language. However through the art making activities in this unit, students will have opportunities to explore and make meaning of the words and images they are engaging with in the No Fear text with a focus on linguistic and visual metaphors.

The activities in this unit will ask my students to look carefully and critically at both verbal and visual metaphors. At times it will benefit students to examine them together and at other times independently. Verbal metaphors may create clarity or identify similarities between two ideas, and two ideas may be linked to each other for a rhetorical effect. For example in act one, scene three of *Romeo and Juliet*, Lady Capulet compares a beautiful woman to be a cover for an object. She uses this comparison as she speaks to Juliet about marriage when she says that a woman surrounds a man with her beauty. In teaching, this is an opportunity to deconstruct text to find the metaphor and identify meaning. An example of a metaphor that is both verbal and visual in the play is the contrast between light and dark. The play is filled with images of day and night. Because this contrast does not have a specific metaphoric meaning, light is not always good and dark not always bad. One instance of this is Romeo's meditation on the sun and the moon during the balcony scene, when Juliet is metaphorically described as the sun is seen banishing the "envious moon" and transforming night into day. In Baz Luhrmann's film *Romeo + Juliet* images of light in darkness repeat throughout the film, and two examples that will illustrate visual metaphors for students are images of Juliet as a rising sun out of darkness and the image of Romeo and Juliet's love as a blinding flash of lightning.

It is thought that metaphorical language should not be taught in the early stages of language acquisition because its complexity and layered meanings are too overwhelming; therefore students are often left with concrete and surface-level understandings of words. Dong's research on language and literacy development and bilingual education in secondary schools and says that "Metaphors are tools for insight—poetic, conceptual, and cultural—and without acquiring knowledge about them, nonnative English-speaking students will always be cultural and language outsiders, despite advanced language and cognitive skills."[17] Native English speakers, immersed in metaphors since childhood, develop an awareness of cultural customs that conventional metaphors, "part of everyday English," as Dong explains, stem from and are able to decipher and understand imaginative or poetic metaphors based upon this understanding. However for ELLs it is critical that teachers help facilitate learning experiences that focus on these types of metaphors to help build language understanding and literacy skills. Dong's research suggests that activities that ask ELLs to seek out metaphors in their home language and in English will support student language awareness in both languages and advance their English language acquisition. She also encourages the comparing and contrasting of metaphors in different cultural contexts to help students build their understanding of metaphors. I understand

that activities like this help ELLs construct a deeper understanding of a concept or in this case a literary device, but I feel that is only half of the puzzle. While I do want my students to understand what they are reading, I do not want them only to take in Shakespeare's play. As an Arts educator, I do not want my students to simply be consumers of culture; I want them to be contributors as well. Therefore my challenge is greater than teaching my students to understand the metaphors they read, hear, and see; I must help them to think metaphorically. This leads me to wonder what the conceptual structure to the creation of visual metaphors is and whether teaching with this in mind will help my students engage with both linguistic and visual metaphors on a deeper level.

Serig's research indicates that when students learn through an experience they are generating concepts, and therefore they are using metaphorical creative thinking to make meaning as they blend and reorganize those concepts. He argues that cognition begins when concepts are formed through affective (emotional) and intellectual (reasoned) responses to sensory experiences.[18] Serig identified five ways in which the artists he studied engaged in metaphorical thinking: *Life to Art and Back; Art Practice in the Social Web; Artmaking Practices; Relationship to the Artwork and Viewers; and Metaphor and the Art Practice*. Each of the five identified themes have a place in a Visual Arts classroom: however, for the focus of this unit I have identified the theme of *Life to Art and Back* as being the most poignant as it connects to the Art-Based Research approach to student-directed learning that I've implemented in the past. The term *Life to Art and Back* refers to the inherently reflexive nature of the relationship between artists and their world, and the ways in which those experiences can become the focus of their art practice and shape how they respond to the world.[19]

> Doing art for these artists necessarily involves reflexivity in which pre-visioned ideas as well as uncertain paths can co-exist as often as disparate elements are thrown together in order to express and explore. In doing so, the artists foster a continuation of the cycle as artmaking feeds back into reflections on the meaning of the art and the meaning of their lives.[20]

While this practice among studio artists demonstrates that dialogue and experimentation in art making encourages metaphoric thinking and supports what Arts educators have strived for as they integrate discussion and material exploration in art classes, it is also an effective strategy in guiding ELLs as they develop understanding of both content knowledge and language acquisition.

**Art-Based Research Approach**

The practice of making art to form a greater sense of self and understanding of the world is not a new concept in Art Education; however, examining Art practice as research asks educators to look at artmaking under a new lens: that of artmaking as a form of inquiry. As art educators guide students to develop an inquiry focus within classroom learning experiences, students establish a personal focus in their work and greater understanding of how their work is connected to a larger world. Marshall and D'Adamo suggest that an Art-based research practice that borrows from three well established approaches in education--experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning--has the power to engage students in a learning journey that "introduces the celebration of personal interpretation or subjectivity in a realm that often strives for clarity and objectivity."[21]

I began using Art-based research as a teaching practice when I worked with a mostly native English speaking population. I initially wanted to use this method because I thought that it would be a way for both my students

and me to look at artmaking with an integrated history lens. The unit that I wrote through my work with the Yale National Initiative, *Discovering the Invisible Bay Street: Uncovering Emeryville's History and Understanding Our Own*, focused on investigating local history through primary sources and historical photographs. Initially I was unsure of how successful the unit would be in guiding students toward their own research on the topic, but after teaching some strategies for collecting and organizing data visually and providing students with a sketchbook to explore and create in, my students became deeply invested in their research. My students became artist/researchers who directed their own learning as they made discoveries and deepened their knowledge. As I consider the role of Art-based research in this new unit with all ELLs, I feel it is important to take a few steps back to look at how I establish the lens of our work and ensure that it reflects the model that Marshall and D'Adamo illustrate in their research, a model that looks quite different than conventional ways of teaching art.

> First, it stresses artistic thinking, creative process, conceptual skills, and research over technical artmaking skills. Second, student artwork is seen differently; it is considered a springboard for learning and evidence of learning, not aesthetic objects or images separate from research. Third, art practice is self-guided and motivated by student interest; the teacher sets the stage and acts as a guide and provocateur. Fourth, art practice-as-research stresses art as a means of exploring a wide range of concepts, from art and art processes to content and methods in other fields. The art-based model, therefore, promotes a natural and substantive integration with the academic curriculum. Finally, the model promotes metacognition; it incorporates "investigations" or activities that call attention to the kinds of thinking and learning that emerge through making art. [22]

It is clear that this model can empower students to direct their learning and focus their own exploration through artmaking. I feel that this focus and the fostering of metacognition will be highly engaging to my students. To ensure that my ELLs are supported enough to take this independent leap in their learning, I will need to look closely at the activities we engage in and offer tiered alternatives as needed.

**Guiding Questions**

How can Art-Based Research help us understand *Romeo and Juliet*?

Can you visualize a metaphor?

What do visual metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet* look like?

How can we use visual metaphors to tell our stories?

How can we use our collage and paper cutting skills to tell stories?

# Classroom Activities

**Read, Record, Listen**

Reading texts aloud is a valuable practice to support students who are developing their reading comprehension skills. To hear proper pronunciation and tone can help students not only build their comprehension of content, but for ELLs, it can also help with English language development. Throughout this unit, students will hear teachers read texts, other students read text, as well as reading with partners and on their own. At times students will record each other using smart phones or computers with microphones and listen to their recorded voices as they hear their pronunciation develop. In addition a collection of recordings of the texts used in class will be available to students to listen to as they are reading along. These recordings will be made by school staff members.

**Sociogram of Romeo and Juliet**

Working in groups, students will create a sociogram of the characters in *Romeo and Juliet* by mapping on large paper the relationships in between the individual characters. Through this discussion students will engage in conversations that transfer information about each character as well as context for the relationships they have with each other. Students will then create a smaller version of this graphic in their sketchbooks so that they can refer back to find out who characters are and how they are connected to each other.

**Comparing Texts**

Spark Notes, the publisher of the No Fear graphic novel *Romeo and Juliet*, has a section of its website dedicated to comparing Shakespeare's original writing with the adapted version. When students gain a familiarity with the graphic novel, they can compare the texts side by side to identify similarities and differences in the words, as well identify words that appear commonly in the texts. This could also be a tiered activity for students who are ready for more challenging texts.

**Circular Mandala**

This meaningmaking activity from Early and Marshall, mentioned earlier, can be used multiple times throughout the unit to help students identify and synthesize characters, plot, and identify metaphors. Working in groups to create mandalas, students will engage in listening to and speaking English. Explaining what mandalas are and modeling how the can be deconstructed to create the mandala should guide this activity

**Deconstructing Advertisements**

Using magazine advertisements, students will examine both words and images as they extract and identify the metaphor used to persuade a consumer. This activity could be done in groups or individually; however, students should have an opportunity to sketch and write about their understanding in their sketchbooks and discuss with partners or in small groups.

**Metaphors in Native Language**

Students will identify metaphors used in their native language then translate them into English. After they will create visual representations of treanslated metaphors in their sketchbooks. Students will then share their

work with a student whose native language is different than their own. As an extension, students could take metaphors in English and translate them into their home language to help further their understanding.

**Collect Metaphors**

This out-of-class activity asks students to tap into their interests (sports, music, etc.) and encourages them to observe an activity or place of interest to identify metaphors specific to it.  For example, many of my students love soccer; in observing their coach during practice, does he or she use any metaphors to help convey instructions? Or in viewing a broadcasted soccer game, students could listen for metaphors used by the sports commentators. Students will record their observations in their sketchbooks and share them in class.

**Metaphors Comparison Charts**

Students will use a Google search to gather metaphors based on one of two opposite themes. For example, metaphors about night or day could yield a collection of metaphors that have some similarities and some clear differences. After students have listed metaphors, they will deconstruct the meaning of the metaphor, translating if needed before creating an illustration of the metaphor to share with the class.

**Metaphor Lists**

As a class, students will conduct an online search for metaphors on that use a particular theme or word. For example, there are many metaphors that reference bread in American culture: to "bread and butter," "break bread (with)," and "breadwinner," each metaphor uses bread to convey something different. Students will seek out metaphors within a focus area, and then deconstruct the meaning of the metaphor, translating if needed before creating an illustration of the metaphor to share with the class.

**Identifying Visual Metaphors**

This activity focuses on comparing scenes from the No Fear graphic novel and the film adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Students will read a selected passage, then view the movie, and after review the text again to identify how a metaphor that is writing can look visually. With each interaction with the text, a discussion of metaphorical elements should take place in small groups and then in the context of a whole-class share out.

**Deconstructing Text: Creating Meaning and Searching for Metaphors**

Students will receive enlarged photocopies of text from the No Fear graphic novel of *Romeo and Juliet* and work with a partner first to identify the metaphor used and second to cut up the passage to rearrange it to convey a different meaning. Discussing how they made their decisions, students will present their reconstructed text to each other.

**Visualize Metaphors**

Students will explore the Dire Straits' song *Romeo and Juliet* first by reading it in groups, then in pairs, and finally listening to the original recording. After students take a verse of the song and working with a partner, they will identify the metaphor used in the verse and what the metaphor is conveying. Finally students will create a visual representation of the metaphor. An extension of this activity could ask students to create their visual representation on a postcard and then decide which character in the play they would send it to and why. After, students would write a message on the back of the postcard explaining why they chose to send this visual metaphor to the character they chose.

## Paper Cutting

### Practice

Using scissors, X-Acto knives, and cutting mats, students will practice cutting out basic shapes both geometric and organic in preparation for creating visual metaphors. Students can use one color of paper or several different colors. After shapes are cut, students can arrange shapes and glue into their sketchbooks. Then students will reflect on the process given written prompts that guide them to identify the shapes they created and the process they took to create those shapes. A teacher demonstration or YouTube video to explain cutting techniques and safety would be beneficial.

### Symbols

Following their initial cutting practice, students will deepen their cutting skills as they identify imagery from *Romeo and Juliet* to create a paper cut out of. Then students will glue their cut symbol into their sketchbook and reflect on the process given written prompts that guide them to identify the shapes they have created and the process they took to create those shapes. It may be helpful first to examine the work of Elsa Mora using VTS to engage students in a dialog that may lead to a familiarity with paper cut objects, symbols in paper cut art, and techniques used.

### Character Silhouettes

Students will utilize their knowledge of metaphors in *Romeo and Juliet* and their experience cutting symbols to examine a character from the play to create a paper cut silhouette that combines the physical attributes of the character in addition to the metaphorical ones they identify. Students will begin by creating sketches and reacquainting themselves with the metaphors they identified through earlier exercises. It may be helpful for the teacher to model this process through a demonstration.

### Self-Portrait Silhouettes

This project begins with the writing prompt, "when I am at my best I am…" to think of a metaphor that describes them. Students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences and goals they to generate ideas. During thinking and sketching time, students will craft a metaphor that they will then share with a partner to exchange ideas about how to illustrate this metaphor. After, students will create a drawing in their sketchbook that is a metaphor of who they are when they are at their best. It may be helpful for a teacher to model this through a demonstration.

Using the sketches and metaphors generated during the "I am Metaphor" activity, students will create a cut paper silhouette of themselves that is reflective of the metaphor they crafted to the prompt, "When I am at my best I am…" This small silhouette will be glued into students' sketchbooks and reflected upon either in small groups or with partners using a discussion prompt. Students will then take their feedback and reflections to redesign their paper cut out and prepare to make a large (18" x 24") self-portrait silhouette that reflects their metaphor.

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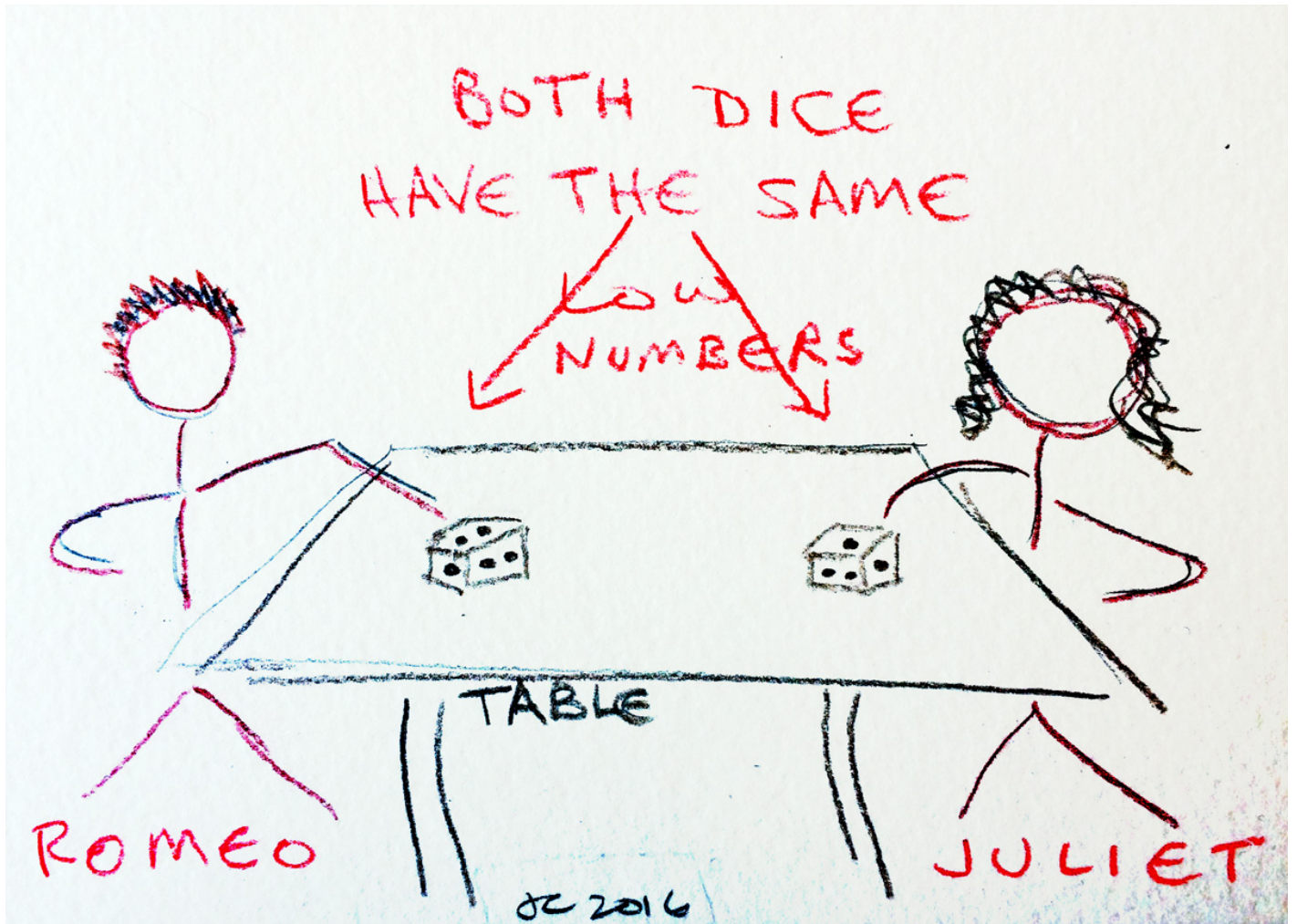
# Appendix

**Photographs**

Figure 1: Illustration of verbal metaphor created after listening to Dire Straits' song *Romeo and Juliet*

Figure 2: Illustration of verbal metaphor created after listening to Dire Straits' song *Romeo and Juliet*

Figure 3: Illustration of verbal metaphor created after listening to Dire Straits' song *Romeo and Juliet*

**Teaching Standards**

As a Studio Thinking Framework Classroom, my students are familiar with the eight Studio Habits of Mind and incorporate them into their daily studio practice. The Studio Habits of Mind are: Develop Craft, Engage and Persist, Envision, Express, Observe, Reflect, Stretch and Explore, and Understanding the Art World. Much of what the Studio Habits of Mind bring to my classroom is a language for us to communicate about our individual and collaborative learning experiences about art and through art making. The Studio Habits of Mind are a critical part of my classroom structure and support my teaching of the California State Standards for Visual Arts.

**California State Standards for the Visual Arts**

1.1 Identify and use the principles of design to discuss, analyze, and write about visual aspects in the environment and in works of art, including their own.

1.3 Research and analyze the work of an artist and write about the artist's distinctive

1.4 Analyze and describe how the composition of a work of art is affected by the use of a particular principle of design.

2.1 Solve a visual arts problem that involves the effective use of the elements of art and the principles of design.

2.6 Create a two-or three-dimensional work of art that addresses a social issue.

3.4 Discuss the purposes of art in selected contemporary cultures.

4.1 Articulate how personal beliefs, cultural traditions, and current social, economic, and political contexts influence the interpretation of the meaning or message in a work of art.

4.4 Articulate the process and rationale for refining and reworking one of their own works of art.

5.2 Create a work of art that communicates a cross-cultural or universal theme taken from literature or history.

## Endnotes

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