



Bringing Alive the Art of the Past: Modern Tattoos and Illuminated Manuscripts

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Introduction

The greatest challenge I face as an urban teacher is creating culturally relevant lessons that fully engage my students to maximize their creative potential. I believe that excellent curriculum units always begin with a “hook” that pulls the learner into the lesson by grabbing their interest and sparking excitement about the subject. Hooking them into an experience starts by understanding what is culturally relevant and exciting to my students.

It is easy to see what my students are interested in when it comes to art. As I gaze over my classroom, one commonality that I recognize is their love of tattoo art. Many of my students are “tatted up,” so to speak, and they take great pride in the images that decorate their bodies.

My students’ tattoos outwardly communicate their own stories. Some of the common tattoos that I see on my students are pictorial narratives that when “read” tell a story of the loss of loved ones to violence while others show a long family history communicated only with an array of images and names. All this information is accessible to me without words being shared between us. However, when I ask my students to explain the meaning of their tattoos, I noticed that they often stumble over the story because they have never put the story together articulately. Providing my students with the skills and practice to interpret and talk about art will enable them to articulate the context and critically interpret their tattoo images meaningfully. I realized that there is a need and opportunity to teach literacy skills in my classroom so that my students will have the skills that will enable them to “read” images and understand what an image is attempting to communicate.¹ Many of the images within my students’ tattoos have cultural and historical backgrounds that have the potential to enhance the overall meaning and appreciation of their tattoos. This unit’s main theme is to bridge the gap between history and art in a way that is personally relevant and meaningful to my art students at Ballou High School.

Through the production of tattoo drawings, journal writing and the study of a historical work of art, students will begin to make connections, seeing how the cultures of the past directly influence the artistic decisions that we make today, especially in the art of today’s tattoos. The *Book of Kells* will be the artifact that I will use to anchor my lessons with historical imagery predominantly displayed on my students. I chose this collection of illuminated image because of its rich iconography of letters, images and swirling motifs that in many ways

resemble the decorative elements found in today's tattoo art. I want my students to see that their tattoo designs are inspired by a culture of the past so that they can see how past cultures have affected, and continue to influence, the artistic choices that we make in our everyday lives.

Understanding how distant cultures continue to affect us is necessary to point out to my students because it will give them a global view of the world. Many of my students have never ventured out of their neighborhood and often think that they came up with their pop culture trends without understanding that their modern tastes were inspired by people in a different place and time. This kind of global awareness will help promote cultural tolerance in my students and an appreciation of the different beliefs and customs of people around the world.

My school district is committed to this concept of teaching global awareness. DCPS is preparing students to become global citizens through a study abroad program which provides students with equitable access to travel so that all our students can explore the world with the goal of growing competence into real world contexts.

Background & Rationale

Frank W. Ballou High School is located east of the Anacostia River in Southeast Washington, D.C. and is a part of Ward 8 in the District of Columbia Public Schools. Most of Ballou's student population has been touched directly or indirectly by substance abuse, violence, and death due to gang activity and gun violence. As a result, many of our students have experienced the loss of friends and family members. Academically, Ballou ranks among the district's lowest-performing high schools on core measures. Truancy is also a rampant problem as well; nearly 9 in 10 Ballou students missed a month or more in classes last school year for unexcused absences, according to school data. Ballou High School has recently been reconstituted for the second time in six years. Reconstituting Ballou is the District's method of overhauling a low-performing school. Low teacher retention in the district, especially at Ballou, has fostered an apathetic culture among the students. This unit will create excitement about art and increase engagement in my classroom.

Increasing student engagement in the classroom is an important part of transforming the climate and culture of learning at Ballou High School. When students are excited about learning and engaged in an activity, learning will take place and discipline problems will be eliminated. Ultimately, student engagement in my classroom will also give me the pathway to raise the rigor with the outcome being a higher mastery of learning the material presented in my curriculum.

Mastery of skill and knowledge is not the only purpose that an art classroom can fulfill for students who experience frequent emotional and physical trauma. An art classroom can also provide a safe place for expression and self-exploration. Students can discover hidden talents and interests that inspire and validate that they exist and their existence matters. It is an important community for many of my students who live in group homes, have incarcerated parents, or face homelessness. So, although this unit addresses academic and artistic experiences, it is also my goal that at the end of the unit, students will use this experience to transcend trauma and loss, to gain self-awareness and self-esteem, and to feel part of our community.

This curriculum unit will span a period of three weeks and is created for a high school art class that meets for

70 minutes every other day. However, I believe that many elements of this unit would be useful to other areas of study such as English language arts, creative writing, literature, history, and social studies courses at the high school level. The primary thematic purpose of my curriculum unit is to increase interest in the visual arts by making them relatable and relevant to their daily lives. Although Ballou High School is located only a few miles from the Smithsonian Institution, most Ballou students have never ventured to the other side of the Anacostia River to walk through the Smithsonian Institution's nineteen free museums and art galleries. Teaching in a city filled with a vast array of rich historical and cultural resources, I want my classroom to be that place of inspiration that will ultimately increase cultural awareness and interest in art and history, resulting in my students visiting the museums and art galleries that reside in their back yard!

One of the strategies of this unit will be a field trip to the National Gallery of Art so that my students can see first-hand illuminated letters and other artifacts that resemble tattoo art. In the teacher resource section of the curriculum unit, I will list a few of the resources that are on display in the National Gallery of Art collection.

Classroom Context and Objectives

The experiences and practices laid out in this unit are designed to engage students in the concepts and themes of visual literacy, art criticism, art history, art lessons on drawing tattoos and daily journal writing. Activities outlined in this unit will provide students with the opportunities to interact with ideas that relate to their everyday lives.

So, before beginning the unit, I feel that it is important to take time to review how to conduct an organized whole group art critique. An outline on how to guide students through a structured class critique can be found in the strategies section of this unit plan.

After this step, I will then introduce a PowerPoint of tattoo images that were directly influenced by the Celts during the early medieval period. The images below found in *figures 1, 2 & 3* are a few examples of how Celtic images inspired tattoo artist Pat Fish to recreate them in tattoos. In a video that Pat created on her website, she refers to this as, "Bringing alive the art of the past." Her quote was the inspiration for the title of this unit.² The symbolic meaning of these images will be explained in greater depth later in this unit.



figure 1

Understanding the relationship between words and images

Understanding the relationships between images and words is one concept of visual literacy. Visual literacy is also the ability to “interpret, recognize, appreciate and understand information presented through visible action”³ In this unit we are examining a collection of images and texts in Celtic art and attempting to find similarities and differences with today’s tattoo art through a series of teaching strategies.

Most students do not intuitively develop skills for interpreting visual images on their own. They must be intentionally guided in ways to understand visual information methodically. That is why in this unit I will spend the beginning of each class in this three-week unit, showing images from the *Book of Kells* to my students, with the expectation that they will “read” the work of art before starting to work on their art project. I intend to begin the unit this way because I believe that intellectually developing the ability to read images will enhance their creative ability to produce more innovative and meaningful works of art.

Having said that, the way I will begin is by using open-ended questions (those with no real right or wrong answer) for modeling a process that students can use themselves as they progress through the course. I have carefully planned the questions with a goal in mind, and that is to create a classroom where it is safe to express your thoughts without fear of failure. Open-ended questions often elicit fresh and sometimes even unexpected insights which will show the class that it is safe to say how you feel and that they can trust me to encourage, support and respond positively to their answers.

A few examples of some of the open-ended questions that I will ask when looking at the artifacts are as follows: “What stands out most when you first look at this work of art? Explain why.”⁴ “What leads your eye to that place?” “What are the elements that you see most in the work of art?” “What is the main idea of this work, and if you were to give the work a title, what would it be?” “What do you already know about the objects in the work that help you understand what you are looking at?”⁴

I will progress to questions that prompt multiple and sometimes conflicting answers. My strategy here is to engage discussion and possibly even spark a debate. A few examples of these kinds of questions are; “How do words or text together support or cause conflict with the image (Juxtapose) in this work?” “What would be lost if you removed the words from the image or the image from the words?” “How do the words and images interplay (the way in which two or more things influence each other) in the work?” “In this work of art, do the images support the text or do the text support the pictures?”

The idea here is to get the students thinking about the power of text when combined with pictures and how the interplay with each other to convey a message. Once the learner has displayed proficiency in this area (measured by listening for content during the class discussions) teacher-guided questions can then guide students to make artistic judgements about what they are seeing.

I will use the above questioning strategies when introducing the images below. I am sure that the images will inspire interesting discussion especially when points comparing and contrasting images from the *Book of Kells* to modern day tattoo art. The images below are the work of tattoo artist Pat Fish from Santa Barbara, California.⁵

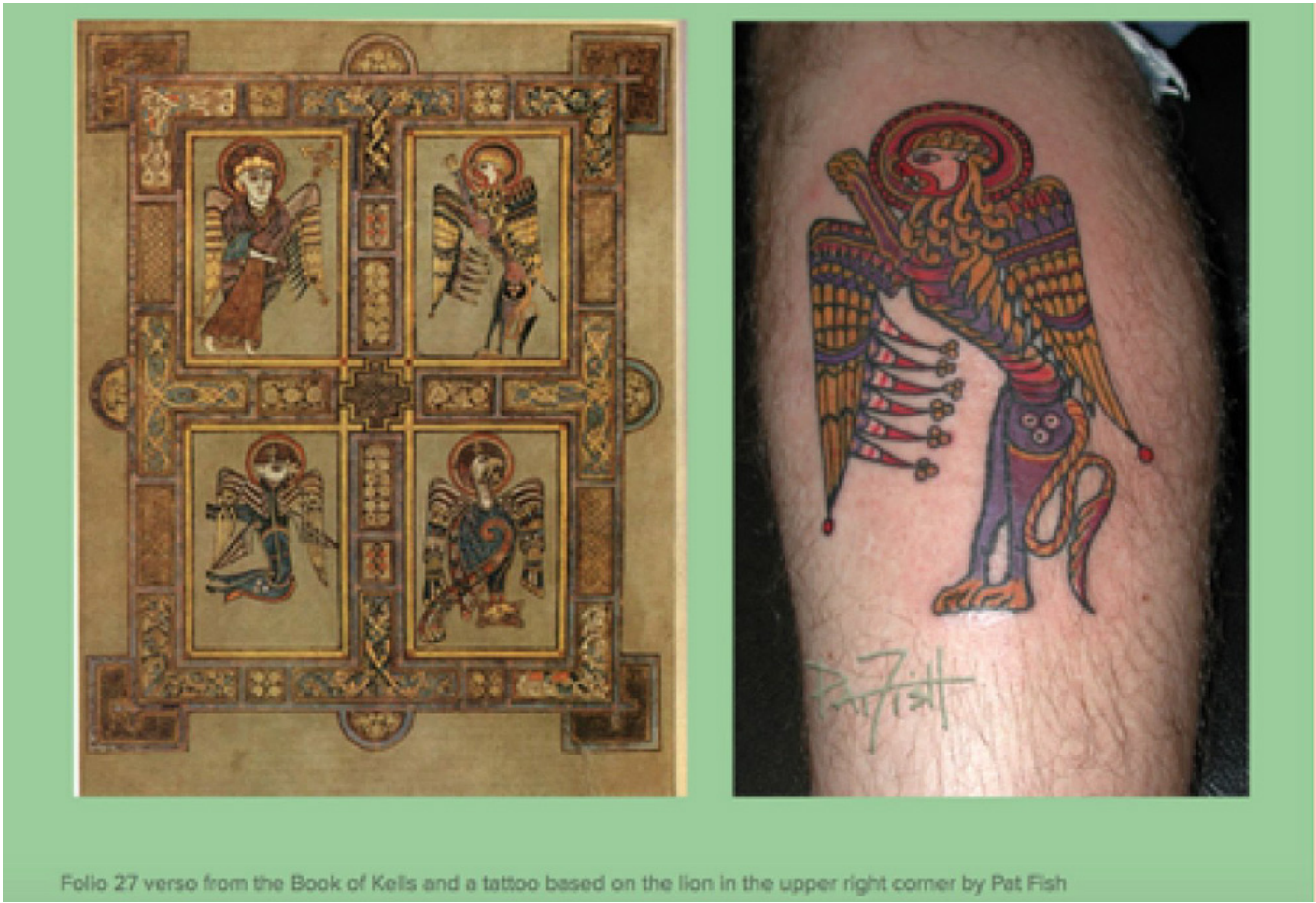
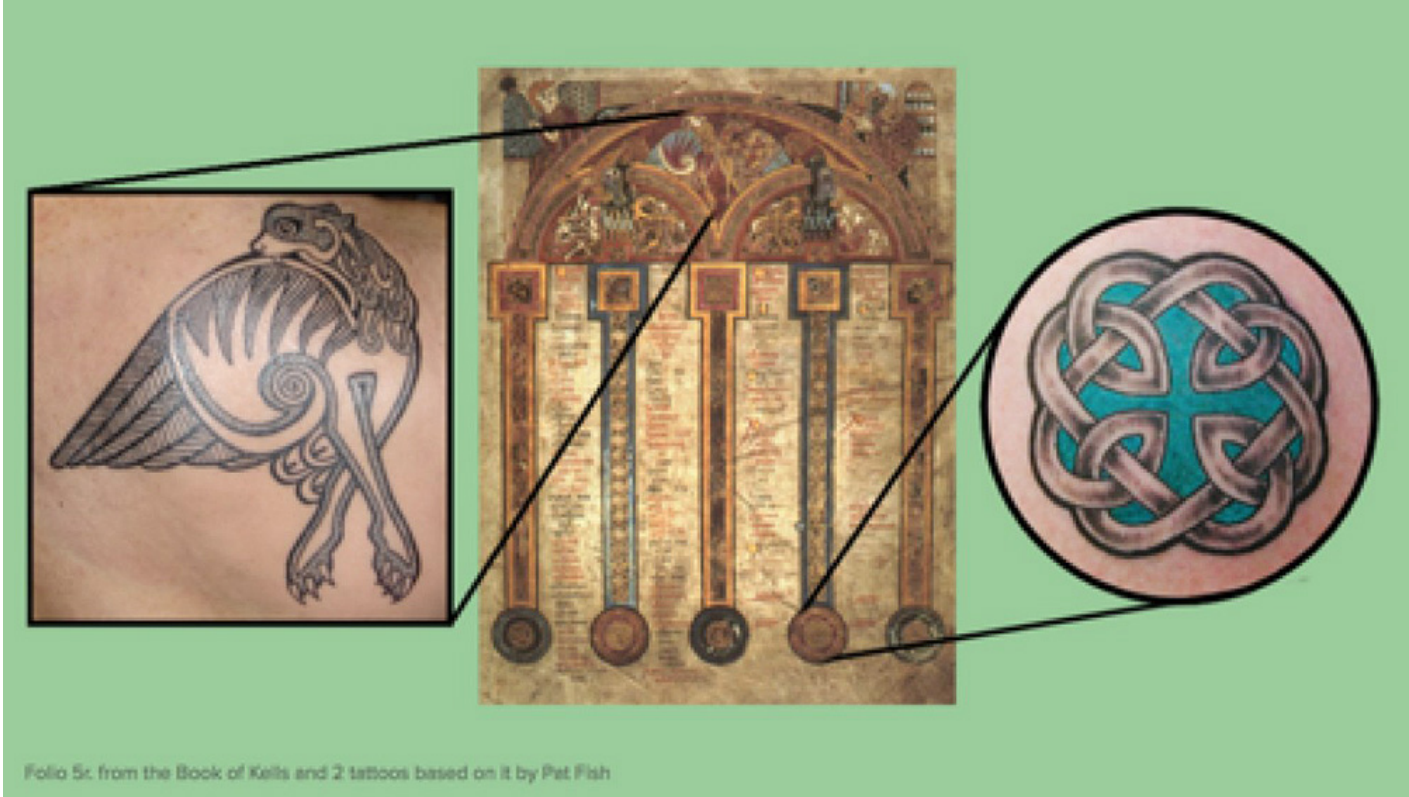


figure 2



The Unit

The art history component of this unit provides opportunities for students to gain in-depth knowledge of how a work of art and literature, specifically *The Book of Kells*, influences our everyday lives today. Students will have the opportunity to view slides of illuminated miniatures from the *Book of Kells* with slides of modern day tattoo art for discussion about how the two art forms are similar and different.

Although I am using the *Book of Kells* as the main inspiration in this unit, there is a wealth of iconography and symbolism in the Celtic culture that can also be used to support the theme of this unit. Other medieval illuminated manuscripts in the Insular art style include the *Book of Durrow* and the *Book of Lindisfarne*. The artifacts from *Sutton Hoo*, Celtic knot work, spiral designs, and jewelry are also excellent examples of how tattoo art resembles Celtic images.

Introduction to Celtic Tattoos

Before looking at the *Book of Kells* and tattoo art, I will discuss the guidelines and procedures on how classroom discussion will be conducted. It is important to establish at the beginning of the unit the way the class discussion will be conducted. Such topics as: waiting your turn, making thoughtful responses to another person's comments, and using a respectful tone of voice are all areas that I would have to reinforce at my school. An outline of how to conduct a whole classroom critique can be found in the strategies section of this unit.

When beginning this unit, I would suggest starting with reviewing the history of tattoo art. Although my students think that they know a lot about tattoos, I want to show them tattoos that have a Celtic cultural influence. Later in the unit, this will be purposeful especially when students view the illuminated manuscript pages from the *Book of Kells*. Students will be expected to make connections between the two genres of art so a review of this material will be necessary to have engaging and meaningful conversations. There are many resources available on the history of tattoos. I have composed a short video and PowerPoint that tells how far back in history tattoo art can be traced. I also recommend an excellent book on this topic entitled, *The History of Tattooing* by Wilfred Dyson Hambly⁶. These resources can be found in the teacher resource area of this unit. I also suggest using the visuals below. The tattoos were created by tattoo artist Pat Fish. Her traditional Celtic tattoo art can be found on her website at www.luckyfish.com.⁷



figure 4



figure 5



figure 6

Book of Kells

After viewing images of Celtic tattoos, I will then introduce to my students the illuminated manuscript, the *Book of Kells* (Trinity College Dublin MS 58). It would take too many classes in the semester that I see my students to unfold all the contents of this artifact, so I intend to break this information down into what I believe would be the facts that my students will need for contributing to class discussion and for the creation of their art work. I also think that limiting the historical information to a summary of the book's historical background and the visual elements will allow time for the art critiques and the interpretation of the images and texts found in the book, which is the central theme for this unit.

In my opinion, the most important piece of information when introducing the *Book of Kells* is to explain to the class the purpose of the book. The fact that the book was created as a sacred work of art instead of a book for educational purposes is an important concept to grasp before moving forward trying to interpret the meaning of images, letters, and colors. I intend to make connections to the sacred aspect of the artifact to the religious nature of the tattoos that many of have.

A great starting point would be to introduce the "who, what, where, when and how" of the book. I want to impress upon my students the importance of this artifact by exclaiming its historical value as one of the greatest treasures of medieval Europe and the pride of Ireland. It is an illuminated manuscript of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John of the New Testament in Latin.⁸ The book was created by Columban

monks sometime between the 6th and 8th centuries and was named after a town in County Meath in Ireland. However, many people thought that it should be referred as the *Book of Iona* because many believed that monks from that Scottish island were the original artists.

The manuscript contains 340 pages (or folios) that are 13 inches wide by 10 inches high made from calfskin vellum. I know that my students will find it interesting that sixty pages are missing most likely because it was stolen from the monastery in Kells around 1006 only to be found “two months and twenty days later under sod.”⁹ Stories such as this one make what we are discussing relatable and very memorable. Also, another interesting fact that the class could paint a visual picture in their head is that it is said to have taken the skins of 185 calves to make the book.

For an art class, discussing the decorative elements and Christian symbolism contained in the book is vital. To assist in this task, I have included at the end of this unit a worksheet that has many of the symbols pulled out of the book and would serve as a great visual resource to be placed on the art room tables for the students to view while working.

Explaining who the artists were in creating this book, as well as spending time discussing monks and monasteries might be necessary. Also, from images that the monks created in the artifact it would be important to define Christian symbols as Icons. Icons were early Christian art forms and they had a sacred significance. “The meanings, origins and ancient traditions surrounding early Christian art symbols date back to early times when the majority of ordinary people were not able to read or write and printing was unknown.”¹⁰ People were able to “read” the iconic image and understand the religious message. The symbol of the cross is a perfect example of this, but there are other iconic symbols that are not so intuitive and would need to be explained to students. Here are a few examples of symbols and their definition from the *Book of Kells*: The four Gospels were symbolized by these images: Matthew was symbolized by a male angel, Mark a lion, Luke an ox, and an eagle symbolizes John.¹¹

The *Book of Kells* is full of animal symbols. The meaning of some of the animals can be interpreted because they trace back to the early Christian church. Early Christian history tells us that the butterfly represents the resurrection while the chrysalis or cocoon resembles the tomb where Jesus was placed after his crucifixion. Goats represents demonic wicked men, horses are a symbol of nobility, the lamb represents Christ, a dove is symbolized as the Holy Spirit, and the Pelican denotes sacrifice of Jesus.¹² The PowerPoint entitled, “*Symbolism in the Book of Kells*” will be an excellent tool to convey this information. A link to my PowerPoint and handouts are in the teacher resource section.

Not only did animals in the book convey messages, there was also meaning in the letters and symbols. One symbol that my students will make a connection with is the Christian symbol of a fish. Even today, my students may have noticed “fish” stickers on cars owned by Christians. The Christian fish symbol is called Ichthus. This can inspire a rich conversation about why a fish is a symbol for being a Christian. The answer is very interesting. “The initials of the word Ichthus are also used as a Christian acronym of the following Greek words:

I=Jesus

Ch=Christ

Th=Theou (God’s)

U=Uios (Son)

S=Soter (Savior)

Using the Ichthus acronym IChThUS “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior”.¹³

Looking back at the earlier tattoos in *figure 1*, the tattoo artist Pat Fish was directly inspired by image Folio 29r from the *Book of Kells*. She calls this work, “The Celtic dog of nobility, grace and Celtic splendor.”⁵ Celtic hounds were dogs that were well respected by both warriors and nobility. They were given as gifts to men of honor to show their loyalty and courage. Hounds were also looked upon as guardian animals of “roads and crossways and are believed to protect and guide lost souls in the Otherworld”. In Celtic culture, it was an honor to be called a “hound.” Examples of this can be in famous Celtic heroes who were named “Hound of Culann,” “Hound of Ulster,” and “Hounds of Annwn,” just to name a few.¹⁴

The image in *figure 2* is of a Celtic cross. In the Christian faith, the cross is a sacred symbol that denotes Christ’s death for the forgiveness of sins. However, when this image is intertwined into the art and symbolism in medieval illuminations, it transposes beyond just that message and it also becomes a message of honor, loyalty and courage. ¹⁵

A tattoo of a cross is popular with both men and women and can represent a plethora of different meanings. My students have taught me a great deal about the meaning of a cross in tattoos. I have learned that a cross with a heart represents love and faith, but it can also represent someone that they loved but passed away. A small, simple t-shape cross on the back of neck accounts for a deep Christian faith, while a tribal cross on a traditional tattoo design represents strength, dedication, and courage. The iron cross is rooted in German history, and when used in today’s modern tattoos it is a symbol of bravery.

The most popular cross design in today’s tattoo art is by far the Celtic cross, and that is why this curriculum unit is so culturally relevant to my students. Not only does the Celtic cross represent Christian faith, but this design also poses a connection between the physical world with the spiritual world. The knots found in the Celtic cross is what symbolically connects both worlds. There are so many variations of Celtic cross designs already created, but I believe that having my students create their version of a cross for a tattoo drawing would be a vibrant art and history activity.

Figure 3 is of a Celtic war horse. The horse is a common image in medieval art. I would spend time discussing this with my students so that they can analyze and predict why this is so. Questions such as, *what do you think the horse represents? What was the purpose of the horse in this society? Is it a sacred symbol?* Leading questions may draw the student to surmise that the horse is in the position of power, strength and nobility. We may never really know all the real meanings of all the symbols in the artifact, but it will be a great point for discussion in the classroom.

In addition to thinking about the history and symbols in this book, it is also important to introduce calligraphy and illuminated letters to the students. The first letter of texts is enlarged and decorated. This can be seen in the example, *figure 4*. Pages that often had an embedded cross in them and full designs with lavish illustrations started the four gospels and are called “carpet pages” as you can see below in *figure 5*. Medieval manuscripts often had elaborately decorated borders filled with pictures and repeated patterns. When looking at the borders in this manuscript, students will see a lot of intricate Celtic knot designs. I plan to view these beautiful borders with my students and open a discussion about how the images in the borders directly reflect

the tattoo bands that are designed for the ankle, wrist or upper arms.

Close-up of an Illumination



figure 7

Example of a Carpet Page

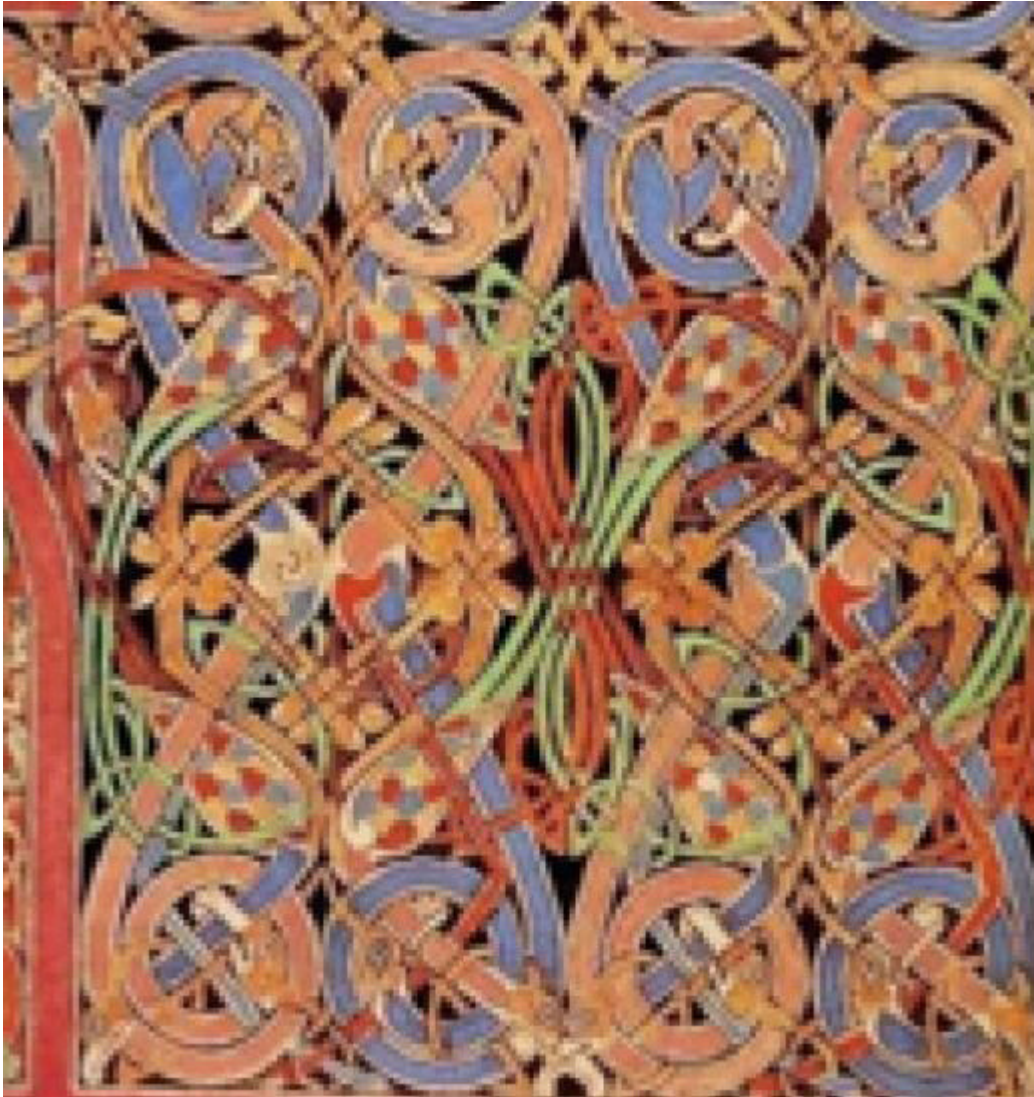


figure 8

Along with the beautifully decorative lettering found in the manuscript, there is also a wide variety of colors including yellow, red, green, purple, blue, brown, black and white. The yellow used in the book is unique because it is more of a yellow ochre than a shade of yellow. Red was used the most throughout the book. The pigments were created from elderberries, blueberries, Brazil wood, and from various lichens. Brown was made from iron gall ink, black was produced from soot and sometimes burned bones. There are three shades of indigo found in the book, and they were made from mixtures that include Lapis Lazuli which can only be found in Afghanistan or Persia. This fact tells us that the monks put great effort into gathering the art supplies needed for making this illuminated manuscript.¹⁶

There are hundreds of pages in the *Book of Kells*, so I intend to focus on only a few pages, beginning first with the most popular page. The “*Chi Rho*” page which are the letters of the word Christ “*The Word Made Flesh*” in ancient Greek as seen in image C (BBC). On this page, students can look for images such as angels, butterfly, moths, and cats feeding their kittens. The text reads in Greek: “*XPI autem generatio....*” and is translated to “*Now the generation of Christ was in this wise. When as his mother, Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost*” (employees.oneonta.edu).¹⁷

The Chi Rho page is significant because it is one of their earliest cruciform symbols used by Christians. I remember seeing this image dress the pulpit of the protestant church that I attended when I was a child. I also have memories of it on our hymnals and prayer books. Possibly my students may have been exposed to this popular Christian iconic image. "It is formed by superimposing the first two letters of the word "Christ" in Greek, chi = ch and rho = r."¹⁸

Students may comment that though it is not technically a cross, the Chi Rho does resemble the crucifixion of Jesus as seen in figure 6.

The cross is a favorite image found in today's tattoos. Because of its popularity, I will spend time discussing with my students the different ways in which the cross and the Chi-Rho represents Christ. Because we will be examining the power of symbolism and icons in this unit, I want my students to compare symbols similar to the Chi Rho such as the Staurogram and the IX monogram. Another symbol is the Chi Rho with a circle. It can be seen on the 4th-century sarcophagus of Domitilla in Rome. The use of the circle around the Chi-Rho in this symbol represents the victory of the resurrection of Christ over death. I believe that the point here is that symbols can take different forms and convey meaning. Symbols are a language of their own and can be read by people without words.

Other pages that I will use as examples are the Gospel of John and the carpet page, folio 32, image D, showing Christ enthroned. Another interesting page is Folio 183 entitled, "*Erat autem hora tertia*" translated, "now it was the third hour." It would be important to review for the students the purpose of this sacred book and remind them that it is a text of the four Gospels. That is why the carpet pages of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are so elaborate. The page will show the class an excellent example of letter, text, and images together on a page and should evoke a great discussion.¹⁹

Then, finally, to express how the world perceives this artifact, I think it would be important to mention that the many people consider the book "one of the most beautiful, intricate and ornate documents in existence" (*The Book of Kells* by Laura King). Referring to the four steps to art criticism laid out in the strategy section of this unit, student can describe, analyze, interpret and then make a judgment on how beautiful they feel the illuminated pages of the *Book of Kells* are to them.

Chi Rho: the first two letters of "Christ" in Greek



figure 9

A portrait of St. John the Apostle



figure 10

Strategies

Art Critique

It is essential to introduce guidelines on how to critique works of art. The ability to evaluate art is one of the most useful skills an artist can possess. Art students must learn the skills of critiquing art for many reasons. To begin, successfully critiquing art will give the level knowledge and skill needed to advance as an artist. The ability to self-reflect and make critical judgments is essential for improving in any field, but especially the artistic arena. Secondly, as patrons of art, including a person getting a tattoo, students must be able to recognize good quality art in comparison to art that has weak elements. Lastly, critiquing art teaches us about our taste in what we like or dislike in an art piece, which will be the perfect starting point for students to begin the art creation assignment for this unit.

Classroom Procedure for art critique

When we observe a work of art, our minds go through a process. Organizing that process for my students is

essential for having an effective class discussion, so I will teach steps of art criticism in my classroom in a simple four-step process. *Description* is the first step in art criticism, and in my opinion, it is the easiest and most natural because our minds naturally take notice of what is present in the work of art. For example, having my students begin first only telling me what it is that we are looking at just to get the discussion going. The next step is *Analysis*, referring to how we see the elements of art and principles of design in a work of art. In this step, the student is guided to interpret the lines, color, the composition of the artwork. Another principle of design such as balance, rhythm and proportion and unity within the work must be analyzed to see if the formal qualities of the work were successful and if not, analyzing the work will teach students what makes a work of art unsuccessful. As we move forward, the student is guided to interpret the work of art. I have found that this is the most difficult step for my students. They always want to skip this step and move on to making a judgment. Therefore, teaching students how to find meaning in a work of art is important.

Creating meaning is hard. Students are quick to answer without taking the time to contemplate their response. Getting the students to slow down their thoughts will require careful attention to the delivery of the instruction. While implementing this unit, my students will practice the skills necessary for thoughtful, genuine reflection. Many times, students' initial response to a work of art or a question is quick and at the surface level. Their responses at times are very predictable. With this in mind, I plan to push beyond the initial response and require students to dive deeper into making a judgment. That's what true judgment is, not one's immediate reaction.

Often there is no wrong answer but higher level thinking skills must come into place to pull out of the visual images messages that the creator of an artwork may have been trying to communicate. Finally, the student will be guided through the last step of the critique which is *Judgment*. Judgment only asks us if the work is successful. What is important in this step is to remind students that the art may not be their favorite, but it may still be successful.²⁰ I model this to the class by saying something like this, "I believe this work is successful because the composition and sense of light are used to evoke a strong sense of depth, and all the colors work together harmoniously to portray the mood. However, I am not a fan of tattoos."

<p style="text-align: center;">Description:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of things do you see in the work? • How would you describe them? • What information can you get from the credit line? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Elements of Art did the artist use (line, shape, space, form, texture, color)? • What Principles of Design are used (rhythm, movement, balance, proportion, variety, emphasis and unity)?
<p style="text-align: center;">Interpretation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think this piece is about? • Does the title fit? • Pretend you can climb inside. How does the painting feel? How does it make you feel? • Would you agree with the choice of medium and colors? • Does the date make a difference? 	<p style="text-align: center;">Judgment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do you think other people should see this work? • What would you do with it if you owned it? • What is worth remembering about this picture?

figure 11

Description:	Analysis:
Interpretation:	Judgment:

figure 12

Stop and Start Times & Questioning

The approach that will be used to teach this concept will be whole group discussion in the form of “Stop and Start Times and Questioning.” Stop and start times depict the points in the lesson where the greatest learning takes place. During this time students can “turn and talk’ to each other answering a teacher-provided question, then when I bring the whole group, students will share their opinions.

Turn & Talk

After every art class, we use the T. A. G. teaching strategy to close the lesson. This strategy engages art students in conversation. The “T” stands for, Tell. The student will tell his neighbor something good about what they created that day in art. The “A” stands for, Ask. They must then ask the friend a question about their art work. Finally, the “G” stands for giving. They must then give a suggestion to the classmate on how to improve their art. This visual is free and can be found on the Art of Education website at www.artofed.com.

Art Vocabulary Word List

Codex, Celtic Art, Monks, Monastery, Abbey, Vellum, Icon, Iconography, Symbols, Celtic Knots, Knot-work, Scripts, Calligraphy, Runic Style of Script, Illuminations, Manuscript, Bifolia

Activities

The Art Project

The art production component of this unit will introduce students to a variety of drawing skills that will encourage the creation of tattoo drawings to bring alive again the art of the past. Students will be instructed to combine a collage of texts and images that convey a graphic narrative that can be told and read both visually in the drawing. Also, students will reflect on the meaning of their works through journal writing. As students begin to use the visual arts as a tool for communication, skills such as learning how to describe and interpret meaning in the art will be developed. Introducing these practices will enhance the students' ability to analyze and make judgments about works of art in the past and present.

Students will already have had multiple art lessons on how to shade using pencils. Students will also have practiced drawing the human figure using basic shapes, circles, ovals, rectangles, and triangles. The discussions and information from viewing and discussing images and text from the *Book of Kells* will now be implemented into a symbolic tattoo drawing that has the central theme of a story that the students want to tell.

The tattoo drawings should be a collage of images, texts or letters combined in a manner that can be "read" as a story or a symbol. As discussed earlier, the viewer may not always read the story the way it was meant to be heard or perceived, so the student will also write narratives explaining the symbols in the art work as well as verbally sharing the message of the artwork in an open classroom critique. Examples of this can be seen in the images below.



figure 13



figure 14



figure 15

Writing Assignments

Often, schools focus on the physical and academic environment but fail to address the emotional and social aspect of learning. I have seen the greatest gains in learner growth in my classroom when I purposefully integrate rich culturally relevant curriculum that develops students' personal and social capability, and that guides them to learn and understand themselves.

That is why, through the writing part of this unit, I want to address ways my students can recognize and

regulate their emotions and communication skills as well as develop a greater understanding of who they are through their own eyes and what it is that they want others to see in them. The intended outcome will be that young people leave my classroom with higher self-esteem and a greater capacity to manage their own lives and their relationships with others.

The writing assignments will be extensions from class discussion prompts that encourage my students to examine the psychological and emotional reasons why people get tattoos. They may be surprised to find out that tattoos were discovered on the Iceman and on Egyptian mummies! It is not their generation that created the art of tattoos. The popularity of tattoos moved from counterculture to mainstream in the 60's with the hippie and biker culture in North America.

It is my target goal for the writing process to lead the student into self-discovery and a deeper awareness and mindfulness about what it is that they want to portray to others via their body art either consciously or subconsciously. If the student does not have a tattoo, then they will use this time to self-reflect why they might not be ready to make such a permanent decision. Teacher question prompts will be at the end of this section.

If they believe that they are prepared to get a tattoo, I would like for them to go through the writing process explaining why they feel that they are willing to commit to a tattoo on their body for life. Ultimately the learner outcome will be a more in-depth self-actualization of the reasons behind this life-changing decision.

Making the decision to get a tattoo should mean that you want to live with that image for the rest of your life. An important decision like this one takes deep contemplation to know what it is that you want to say through the visual images and texts on your tattoos. Tattooed bodies are means of communication that tell people who you are and what is important to you. Here are just a few of the questions that will be asked to the students: "What is important enough to you and will it still be important to you 10, 20 or even 50 years from now?" "How does the viewer participate in your story when viewing the images and text on your body?" "What do you want people to see and think when they view your tattoos?" "What person are you trying to portray with the images and text that you chose, and is that really who you are inside?" "How does having a tattoo change the way you feel about yourself?" "How does having a tattoo (or getting one) change how you feel about yourself?" "Do people get tattoos as a fast way to change their outward appearance of toughness instead of working out at a gym to achieve strength and muscles?"

Also, as a writing prompt, I intend to show images of people with tattoos and ask the class questions such as these: "What do you think this person does for a living?" "Does this person have a family?" "What is his family like?" "Do you think he ever committed a crime?" "If you were going to have a tattoo, what would you choose and why?" These are deep and culturally sensitive questions; however, I believe if conducted properly, this can be an amazing venue to explore how they view themselves and others. Hopefully, in the student art and writing narrative, I will see that they gained a better understanding of how they view themselves physically and intrinsically.

Assessments

In my art classroom, I use many forms of assessment, but one thing that I always do is pre-assess my students' knowledge about a topic. The benefit of doing this is two-fold. First, I will gain a sense of my students' background knowledge, and secondly, I will be able to measure growth at the end of the unit. In this case, I will give my students a written test on all the vocabulary words listed in this group and a few concepts.

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Appendix

Best website to show images of Celtic tattoos: <http://www.luckyfish.com/>

Flipped Classroom Movie that I created on the history of tattoos:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-dSyfBsbhIkeXhGZUjvS2RxcE0/view?usp=sharing>

PowerPoint on the symbolism in the Book of Kells:

<https://prezi.com/4vagobmdet9b/animals-and-creatures-in-the-book-of-kells/>

YouTube video created by tattoo artist, Pat Fish: <https://youtu.be/txBB3L8Xp0w>

Academic Standards

District of Columbia's Scope & Sequence for high school proficiency:

HSP.3.2 Identify examples of historic and contemporary masterpieces associated with global regions, across a range of styles, periods, symbols, iconography, subject matter, materials, and techniques.

HSP.3.3 Discuss the similarities and differences between several comparable works of art from the same cultural domain across long durations of time.

HSP.3.5 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.

HSP.4.2 Assess examples works of art by historical or contemporary artists, using a set of criteria and assess his/her own art using the same criteria, expressing what was successful or less successful, giving reasons based on the visual characteristics.

HSP.4.1 Employ the conventions of art criticism in writing and speaking about works of art: description, visual analysis historical analysis, interpretation, and judgments.

HSP.4.3 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.

HSP.4.5 Use published sources, either traditional or electronic to research a body of work or an artist, and present findings in written or oral form. View artists original work in museum/gallery.

HSP.4.7 Analyze the work of self and classmates stating facts about the elements and principles of design and effectiveness of communicated meaning in a class critique.

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.7: "Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos or maps) with other information in print and digital texts."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7: "Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6: "Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text."

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.1: "Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively."

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