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"Through the ages: images that communicate" : a medieval art museum curriculum

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“Through the Ages: Images that Communicate”

A Medieval Art Museum Curriculum

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Abstract

“Through the Ages: Images that Communicate”

A Medieval Art Museum Curriculum

Flannery Santos

The museum curriculum proposed here utilizes the Princeton University Museum of Art’s collection of medieval art to explore the ways in which images communicate. The curriculum is designed to help middle school students explore the concept that art represents the values and ideas of a culture. Students engage in constructivist and project-based tasks that encourage the synthesis and application of this concept in relatable, contemporary contexts by investigating and comparing the agendas of modern advertisements. The museum curriculum is focused on developing the critical thinking skills involved in this exploration, while at the same time working towards a deeper understanding of the standards that are essential in the school classroom. This curriculum can serve as a program model for the exploration of medieval art in other museum contexts.
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Rationale

This curriculum, created using the medieval collection at the Princeton University Art Museum, reflects the author’s conviction that museum education can support learning developed by synthesis and critical thinking. Museums are places to learn how to negotiate with ideas, and practice this skill. Through facilitated use of the resources of a museum, students are able to develop integrative thinking and a variety of advanced skills. In the museum, students develop skills that benefit them in other aspects of their life, such as school and adulthood.

This curriculum explores the importance of images and the ways in which images communicate with viewers. Students learn how to analyze images and gradually develop an understanding of how this skill can be applied in everyday life. Interpreting the environment is an important adult skill: to be able to approach and understand the implicit cultural elements embedded in images is to be able to confront and negotiate with these elements. Additionally, the analytical and critical skills involved in these encounters are applicable in all other realms of thinking and working. The value of this curriculum therefore extends beyond the specific classroom content connections into society at large. The elements of this curriculum introduce and engage children in ways to begin this work.

Museum education does not exist in a vacuum. Museum educators take into account the developmental appropriateness of their teaching, and their relationship with students’ educational context. This curriculum was developed for young adolescents. This age group is unique and can be characterized by many factors. Young adolescents are learning how to become productive and successful members of the world, and are negotiating with the social and emotional challenges that this process entails. Any
curriculum that they are involved in should help them to explore the ways in which they can engage with the world and provide opportunities to apply these abilities.

In this curriculum, students begin by exploring how images served as forms of communication in the Middle Ages. Medieval art is a fruitful genre with which to begin an exploration. The art of this period attempted to explain to people the significance and structure of a world fraught with disease and poverty. Art served as the nexus of a variety of social and political concerns. Its importance as a communication tool was prized. Participants in this curriculum critically compare the functions of medieval art to those of contemporary visual culture, thereby exploring the issues of meaning, intention and power. Medieval art preserved strong iconographic traditions. The creation of art was controlled explicitly by patrons, the Church and the nobility. The messages in art were often conformist and reflected the dictum of the Church and kings, whether that meant preserving certain understandings of religion or of power. The Church and the ruling classes’ power ensured that only certain messages were represented in art. This regulated context is comparable to the modern advertising world: powerful companies use advertisements to convince the public to buy their products and to embrace attitudes that encourage consumption. This curriculum is an exploration of power as can be studied through imagery, and advertisements parallel medieval art in a way that can be meaningful to young adolescents. The vitality of images as tools for communication can be explored throughout time and cultures, and this investigation is facilitated by this curriculum. The exploration of images helps to widen students’ critical lens in order to better understand medieval and modern society and the assumptions embodied by the images, information and texts around them.
This curriculum supports the learning and content standards of students in the Princeton area. Using art from the Middle Ages to satisfy the content standards of local schools is a productive way to also develop the learning and thinking standards of these schools. This curriculum is valuable to school teachers because of this connection, but more than that, it was developed to give students tools to become more cultivated learners, with skills that transfer to future thinking and learning. This curriculum can serve as a program model and be adapted to the medieval collections of other museums as well. The questions asked, strategies applied, activities undertaken and skills developed can be applied to many medieval art collections because the themes explored are ubiquitous in the genre. Art represents the values and ideas of its culture; as the main theme of this curriculum, students will undertake explorations that probe, analyze and explore this idea.

Existing Materials. Existing materials propose several ways of approaching the art of this period with students. Most materials studied here emphasize content knowledge. The Metropolitan Museum of Art provides an educator resource that includes essays for the educator, information and questions for student object explorations, and four lesson plans that can be used as pre-trip, follow-up or stand-alone activities and include art making. (The art-making activity in this curriculum is adapted from this resource.) The resource discusses certain themes present in Medieval Art, and includes accompanying essays. The resource lists several benefits from using these materials: “students will acquire the basic vocabulary, concepts, and criteria for understanding, interpreting and analyzing medieval art…students will be encouraged to use higher-level
thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation...[students will begin] to assemble a repertoire of visual references” (Norris, 2005, p.8).

The Walters Art Museum also provides pre-trip and lesson plans to explore their medieval art collection. The pre-trip materials consist of worksheets directing students to look at a work of art and respond to prompts such as “These objects were very important because...” The lesson plans include standards alignment, and mostly revolve around discussion and art making. The plans include writing portions, and some plans include ideas for assessment (“Lesson Plans,” n.d., “Pre-and Post-Visit Activities,” n.d.).

Previous Integrative Masters Projects (IMPs) at Bank Street include curricula that use medieval or ancient art in ways that move beyond content knowledge to teach transferable skills and cross-cultural themes. In Power and Resources in Ancient China (Canter, 2011), the author has created a curriculum for a classroom teacher that explores power structures in Ancient China through art. The author relates the issues of power to the concerns of middle school-age students. The project will “hone [students’] skills in reasoning, persuasion, questioning, and creative expression” (Abstract).

In an IMP completed at the Morgan Library, Gantwerk (1999) wrote a curriculum that the author implemented with a local school. High school students in the program looked at medieval manuscripts as both art and documents. The author developed the program to achieve constructivist learning experiences, with the goal of teaching critical thinking skills (Gantwerk, 1999, p.16).

The Princeton University Art Museum has an in-gallery activity packet developed for the medieval and Byzantine gallery (“Artful Adventures: Medieval Europe,” n.d.). The packet is appropriate for elementary-school age children, and provides vocabulary
definitions and basic historical context for the era. A scavenger hunt is the main activity in the packet. Questions in the packet ask children to look for clues in the works. One page presents an activity for children to do at home; children are challenged to create a shield that displays representations of their skills, interests and identity, using the examples of symbols provided in the packet. This packet was created for casual explorations of the museum’s medieval collection. The museum does not have any published materials for school groups to use in the medieval gallery.

The review of these existing materials demonstrated different tactics of programs that explore the same content area. The review also raised questions that helped to shape this curriculum. Reading through these curricula, I often questioned the context of the various explorations. It was often unclear what the big, overarching questions were, and how the students would understand the goals of what they were doing. Connections to standards or school curriculum also seemed weak: other than subject matter connections, how can an art museum curriculum connect to standards and the classroom teacher’s needs? What are authentic ways for curricula to connect to standards? What kinds of skills will be learned, and how will they be demonstrated? Teachers can be provided support to connect museum curricula to their class in a way that is more holistic than the heavily activity-oriented connections that made up the bulk of these existing materials (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p.2). A museum curriculum can help students work to develop real-world thinking skills with authentic experiences in challenging and meaningful topics.

**Developmental Appropriateness.** This curriculum is designed to be implemented with late-middle school students. Not only are the State and Common Core
standards for these grades an appropriate match with the content and skill-development cultivated in the curriculum, but the developmental stage of this age group is appropriately suited to the type of explorations integral to the curriculum. Twelve- and thirteen-year-olds can work in possibility and can tolerate a certain level of ambiguity. They want to apply themselves in the adult world and are interested in exploring what that world is. Students can develop skills at this age that will serve them in their adult lives, such as the skills of analysis, critique, synthesis and assessment, all critical thinking skills. James A. Beane (1993) writes that the “central purpose of the middle school curriculum should be helping early adolescents explore self and social meanings” (p.18.) Justice is of particular interest, as are dynamics of power. Presenting new situations to this age can be motivating and fruitful. This age group can be generative when given freedom and responsibility in their projects.

Chip Wood (1997), in his book *Yardsticks*, delineates the characteristics of children in this grade, and their relationship and attitude towards school and work. Twelve-year-olds’ “greatest need is to be with their friends” (Wood, 1997, p.133) and the same is true for thirteen-year-olds: “cognitive growth is enhanced in those environments that foster and respect social interaction” (p.153). Twelve-year-olds can “become deeply invested with their peers in purposeful school work” (Wood, 1997, p.133-134). For these reasons, social learning is incorporated into the activities of this curriculum: much of the students’ learning is accomplished through interactions with each other. This age can accept responsibility and apply themselves with pride towards completion of meaningful work. The culmination of projects in tangible products is especially motivating as students move into seventh grade (Wood, 1997, p.136). In these efforts, students are
looking for recognition from adults and their peers. The culminating project in this curriculum allows students to apply themselves in personally appropriate ways to create a unique finished project that satisfies the developmental learning needs of this age.

While peers and social activity are primary interests in this age group, children still want to feel like they are important independently and “growing into responsible members of the adult community” (Wood, 1997, p.137). For thirteen-year-olds, it is necessary to expand their horizon beyond the classroom and home in order to help them learn how to find their place in the larger adult world. To create opportunities that help children move out of themselves and engage with new situations and other people is to help these children “engage in cognitive development that helps to build the social and moral strength they will need for the years ahead” (Wood, 1997, p.153). In this curriculum, students are challenged to connect to a foreign place and time: medieval Europe. Students encounter and investigate new ideas and are given the responsibility for wrestling with these complex concepts. Most importantly, with the facilitation of the educator, students learn new skills that will serve them as lifelong learners: students will learn to analyze and critique visual images and the messages these images communicate.

Thirteen year olds become more withdrawn than they had previously been during their pre-teen years; they are “protective of [their] developing self-concept and intellectual ideas that remain not fully formed” (Wood, 1997, p.155). Intellectual risk-taking is harder for this age, and must be intentionally scaffolded by their educator. This is accomplished through the gradual release of responsibility in this curriculum. This age starts to question and criticize the value of what they are learning in the adult world; they begin asking their teachers “Why do we have to learn this?” (Wood, 1997, p.157).
History is interesting when it is “tied to issues of clear relevance to students” (Wood, 1997, p.140). The exploration and investigation of power dynamics present in both medieval and current visual culture satisfies this developmental interest.

According to the influential developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, children in adolescence are in the Formal Operational period: children roughly between the ages of 11 and 15 years are better able to generate hypotheses than they have been able to before (Miller, 2011, p.57). Children in this stage are capable of engaging in the more adult form of thinking named hypothetic-deductive reasoning where “reality is seen as that particular portion of the much wider world of possibility…the formal operational thinker inspects the problem data, hypothesizes…deduces from it…and then tests [his or her] theory (Flavell et al., 2002, p.146-147). Children in this stage are able to play with ideas and come to their own conclusions. This is an essential component of mature critical thinking, and students engage in this type of thinking when they observe art works, theorize on their meaning and purpose and form their own understanding of themes derived from their explorations. Students in this curriculum expand their realm of possibility by engaging in critical ways with medieval and contemporary art and visual culture.

For the developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, children of this age are struggling with self-identity in a stage called “Identity vs. Role Diffusion.” The child questions the assumptions and continuities that formed in the earlier stages of their life, and they wonder how they will apply themselves to the world, which they are gradually discovering to be larger and bigger than they previously imagined (Erikson, 1963, p. 227-228). The adolescent’s growing ability to hypothesize, which Piaget also recognized, is
exercised on a personal level: children worry about the future as they imagine potentials for their adult lives (Crain, 2000, p.267). Opportunities for children to apply themselves in productive ways, in which they feel competent in an adult-like world, will help students in the development of their ego identity, or the “feeling for who one is and one’s place in the larger social order” (Crain, 2000, p. 256). The project-based curriculum here will allow students to apply their strengths to a challenging and unique task, while helping to shepherd and orient them in an exploration of a larger adult world where assumptions are challenged.

**Sociocultural Context.** Princeton, New Jersey is a university town in Mercer County, which is also home to Trenton, the capital of New Jersey. Princeton is highly educated as a whole, where only 4% of residents do not have a high school diploma. In Mercer County, by contrast, about 13% of residents have not graduated high school. People living below poverty level in Princeton make up six percent of town’s population, while in Trenton the percentage of people living below poverty level is more than double the state average at almost twenty-seven percent (“Princeton, New Jersey,” 2012, “Trenton, New Jersey,” 2012).

Trenton is a twenty-five minute drive away from Princeton, but the performance of its schools differs widely. On the 2012 NJ School Performance Report, Princeton’s only middle school was rated as “very high,” or equal to or above the 80th percentile, when compared to schools and its peers across the state in academic achievement, college and career readiness and student growth. Trenton middle schools commonly rate as “significantly lagging” in comparison to other schools, or equal to or below the 19.9th
percentile, in these same three performance areas (“NJ School Performance Report,” 2012).

During the development of this curriculum, it was necessary to maintain awareness that my personal experiences with the central themes of this curriculum could create a host of assumptions. With lifelong experiences in museums, and an undergraduate major in Art History and Religious Studies with a specialization in medieval art, I take much for granted in working with the genre. I have studied medieval class systems, the function of medieval religious objects, Christian theology and the production process of medieval art. This background knowledge is absent in the middle school students that this curriculum was developed for. In addition, museums are a much less familiar place to a number of middle school students. What to do when looking at art is not straightforward without experience; I cannot expect students to look at details in a work and make hypotheses without practice or scaffolding. Any kind of assumption that an educator makes about students when working with art can seriously deter and silence their engagement; if students feel like they are not living up to an educator’s implicit expectation or hidden agenda, they will feel discouraged in their engagement. This is especially true for this age due to their heightened sensitivity to their level of competence. Assumptions will only cloud an educator’s awareness of what students are bringing to the experience.

The medieval art collection that this curriculum is built upon is from a Western perspective, which is the cultural perspective I most readily identify with. Students may struggle to connect with an object in this collection because of the culture of their own origination. Furthermore, the medieval objects all are part of a Christian heritage. The
religious function of many of the objects will be challenging for students to comprehend. This function may be disconnected from the everyday lives and religious beliefs of students. The works are not beautiful in the popular sense, and are separated from the students’ lives by many centuries. The curriculum will work to address these issues of detachment by connecting the purposes of these works with those of images in contemporary life.

**Theorists.** Leading educators and developmental specialists like John Dewey, Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Howard Gardner, Jerome Bruner, Maxine Greene, Abigail Housen, George E. Hein, Rika Burnham and Elliot Kai-Kee provide a theoretical foundation for this curriculum. Dewey (1938) writes about the importance of taking into account continuity and interaction when planning a learning experience; educators cannot transfer knowledge to students. The quick dispatch of content is not a tenable teaching strategy: “the notion that some subjects and methods and that acquaintance with certain facts and truths possess educational value in and of themselves is the reason why traditional education reduced the material of education so largely to a diet of predigested materials” (Dewey, 1939, p.46). Jean Piaget’s thinking supports the idea that “there are no pure ‘facts’” (Miller, 2011, p.23). The goal of this program is not to replace the teacher and the content curriculum they are mandated to teach, but to slow down and provide a way to explore and negotiate with this content in diverse ways while also developing intellectual skills like analysis, synthesis, application, observation and comparison. This curriculum is meant to complicate and deepen students’ understanding of the content matter of history, while also teaching students to critically assess elements in their life experience, including art and visual culture.
Content matter can pose a problem in itself. It is important not to include the content in isolation: “it is contrary to the laws of experience that learning of this kind, no matter how thoroughly engrained at the time, should give genuine preparation” (Dewey, 1939, p.48). Any subject presented must have real-world context, and any project undertaken must have meaning that connects to past and future experiences. Presenting medieval art in context will be a challenge. One important characteristic of medieval art is the fact that it represents sets of prescribed ideas, controlled by mandate and custom; tradition tightly controlled iconography in art, and the medieval system of religious and noble patronage and the limits placed on art production by educational restrictions all contributed to the fact that medieval art often executed the agendas of those in power. The cross-cultural and perennial themes of social hierarchy and control that are intrinsic to medieval art will serve as an important point for this curriculum’s explorations.

Learners need to have a certain level of content knowledge in order to work upon a subject: “critical thinking cannot be developed in a vacuum; it needs a subject to act upon as an object of thought” (Housen, 2002, p.121). But in working with the historical content, it is also important to not present this content as “pre-digested” or as the one answer to the posed questions. To create a curriculum with units that promote understanding, “the planning must be flexible enough to permit free play for individuality of experience and yet firm enough to give direction towards continuous development of power” (Dewey, 1938, p.58). The learner must be involved in the “formation of the purposes which direct his activism in the learning process” (Dewey 1938, p.67). The child will use their own experiences and be self-directed in the activities of the curriculum.
Students engaging in this museum curriculum will be learning about the Middle Ages in their classroom: this curriculum was created as a resource for teachers to take advantage of during their study of the medieval period, as mandated by state standards to occur during the late middle school years. Students will have a certain level of contextual understanding about the Middle Ages, variably established by their work in school. This curriculum includes opportunities for the museum educator to apply the students’ use of contextual knowledge that they have established in the classroom.

The museum curriculum lessons ask the educator to facilitate the students’ interaction with works of art before providing contextual knowledge. The educator “does not want the group to see the sculpture first as an artifact of history; he wants the viewers to attend to the artwork’s here-and-now physical presence before them” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p.72). The context, provided after an unencumbered visual exploration, is offered as a resource with which to look at the works in a different way: “art-historical information (increases) the range of interpretive possibilities” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p.72). The educator may ask the students if or how details from the work connect to the context, or how the context may have shaped their thinking in regards to the work. The educator will help the students work with the context, and learn how to use it to shape their opinions of a piece of art. Context is another tool to use in looking at medieval art. In providing context at vital points in exploration, rather than ruling gallery discussion through the discussion of historical fact, “the goal is to extend the conversation, to make the understanding of the work deeper” (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p.72).
Establishing content knowledge with the students is balanced with constructivism in the lessons. Constructivism is “inevitable,’ Hein (1998) writes; “that people make their own meaning out of experience appears to be a phenomenon of nature” (p.34). Constructivism is one of the guiding principles of this curriculum. Self-direction is an important component of constructivism. Constructivist learning happens when a child is self-directed, is able to use their past experiences and actively constructs their knowledge. Two processes are at work when a learner constructs their knowledge: accommodation and assimilation. In Piaget’s learning theory, a learner will incorporate new experiences into their existing framework when they are involved in the process of assimilation. This means that when a “child assimilates things to itself, [he or she] selects them and digests them according to [his or her] own structure” (Miller, 2011, p.31). When a learner accommodates, they “modify and enrich structures” in their framework because of the demands of a new experience or input (Labinowicz, 1980, p.36). The learner adjusts their internal framework in accommodation. These two processes are caused by disequilibrium; a learner experiences disequilibrium when confronted with new information that they cannot readily incorporate into their framework for thinking.

Learning, as viewed in the theory of constructivism, involves “constructing, creating, inventing, and developing one’s own knowledge and meaning” (Liu, 2010, p.66). The teacher must provide the activities and act as a facilitator throughout the learning process so as to cause a sense of disequilibrium for students. The students will have a variable level of background knowledge or experience with contextual information, and it is important that they wrestle with new information. Many of the learning experiences in this curriculum require students to focus on comparing and
contrasting art and ideas with their own conceptions. The disequilibrium created when a student is working to assimilate or accommodate content is an important part of the curriculum, and students are given time, space and materials to think on their own terms.

The educator does not give information to children to be passively absorbed: that mode of teaching rests under the umbrella of a different learning theory, behaviorism. A teacher must provide authentic tasks. These tasks are “chosen to simulate those that will be encountered in real life or in an assignment” (Cooperstein & Kocevar-Weidinger, 2004, p.142). Authentic tasks are applicable in the real world and do not have a hidden agenda. Predictably, students are more motivated by and find it more natural to engage in these tasks than those that make no contextual sense. The educator must provide a “variety of tools, resources, and contexts” (“Technology Assistance Program,” 1998, p.1) in order to acknowledge that every student is going to approach the tasks differently, and is going to undergo adaptation.

In constructivism, students have options for how they will learn. Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory comes into play in the planning of this curriculum: a child’s intelligences should be considered in addition to his or her past experiences when creating a constructivist curriculum. This curriculum offers opportunities for children with visual-spatial, verbal-linguistic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences (Gardner, 2006). Choice will be provided to students during activities in the museum, as well as during the project portion of the curriculum. Students will apply and communicate their learning in projects where they are given the choice to interpret their knowledge in a variety of ways that are individually appropriate. Students will work closely with visual objects while engaging in a variety of individual, partner, small- and
large-group activities. Interaction among students, as they work together to negotiate meaning, is an emphasis in this curriculum.

Dewey (1938) promotes the social aspect of learning: the educator should “enable activities to be selected which lend themselves to social organization, an organization in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute something” (p.56). This is another essential component in constructivism. Vygotsky’s theories mesh with this outlook: “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.90). Students not only work together in groups to construct meaning, but they work together to identify the themes of study as a group. Students will have control over their own experiences in their interaction with their peers.

Critical thinking can be promoted through the arts. In a study discussed in more detail below, researchers identified seven aspects of critical thinking: “observing, interpreting, evaluating, associating, problem finding, comparing and flexible thinking” (Greene, et al., 2014, p.82). In this curriculum, students gain experience in these skills. The educator scaffolds observation and interpretive experiences, eventually transferring responsibility to the students. Students are asked to evaluate art and visual culture in a variety of ways; they consider the function of art and the purpose for its creation. They also judge the social significance of modern visual culture. The educator provides a structure to make associations with works of art through questioning and probing in the galleries, and with content during open activities. Students are asked to compare works and genres of art. In their museum visits and culminating project, students collaborate
and share ideas. They are also asked to make connections between two greatly different mediums: medieval art and modern visual culture.

Greene (1984) writes that art can help students become independent: they realize that they do not need to rely on teachers as custodians of knowledge. With art, an educator can “acquaint [students] with the notions of multiplicity and incompleteness. There are, after all, alternative ways of structuring reality” (Greene, 1984, p.123). This point is related to several essential elements in this curriculum. Students formulate their own understandings of art through studied interactions with these objects as facilitated by the curriculum. Additionally, students explore the ways in which art communicates values and ideas, and critique how these representations show only one perspective. This curriculum gives students the space to assess and appraise the messages contained in arts and visual culture. This type of mature critical thinking is essential to lifelong learners.

An individual sense of understanding is the goal. Burnham & Kai-Kee (2005) work towards this goal in their practice: investigations of a work of art have “brought observations, thoughts, and feeling together into a whole…with a sense of having reached a point of knowledge and understanding, with a feeling of accomplishment…[students] have gained a sense of how works of art may be understood” (p.10). Students can learn to create knowledge through synthesis in encounters with art (Burnham & Kai-Kee, 2005, p.17). This experience can be novel and exciting and is a great strength of museums.

The purpose of all these aspects of the curriculum is to benefit the students as learners. This goal and ethic of museum education meshes with the goals of schools. Part of the mission of Princeton Public Schools is to “enable each student to find, make sense of, integrate, evaluate and utilize knowledge, experience and emerging information to
become a lifelong learner…[and] help each student to understand the common human
ground shared by people from diverse backgrounds in order to promote mutual respect
and cooperation” (“Core Mission Statement and Educational Philosophy,” n.d.). This
school district values diversity, and wants students to learn intellectual and emotional
empathy. In addition, Princeton Public Schools emphasizes learning that goes beyond
content knowledge; Princeton students learn how to use and apply their knowledge in
many different situations. Trenton Public Schools also considers its mission in terms of
the long-term goal of creating lifelong learners (“Our Mission,” n.d.). To become lifelong
learners, students make connections and synthesize any new learning with previous
knowledge. Students learn how to encounter new information and take advantage of their
experiences. The mission of these school districts is to create adult learners who have all
the skills requisite of advanced critical thinking.

These skills can be developed in multiple ways through working with art and
visual culture: students work through observations, discussions and content to
manufacture an understanding of art and society. Students learn how to confront new
experiences and gain tools and confidence in thinking about ambiguous situations. They
create their own knowledge by paying attention to detail and moving beyond surface
perceptions. Works of art are at the center of a multitude of cultural, social, psychological
and historical influences and students learn to see interconnections in their world through
investigating art and visual culture. Critical thinking skills are developed in holistic ways
in museum explorations. The museum has an advantage over the school in this regard, a
fact which can market this curriculum to the classroom teacher. In schools, with learning
being done in discrete content areas, “skills are often taught as if they were ends in
themselves…Yet the fact of the matter is that skills are learned in order that we…can look more carefully at ourselves and others” (Beane, 1993, p.62-63). In the curriculum, students develop skills to investigate the world.

Several studies in museum education support the growth of critical thinking skills through working with art. Abigail Housen (2002) of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) fame conducted a study that measured whether museum visits increased students’ use of critical thinking in different contexts and with different content. What Housen found was that students who had undergone art museum experiences demonstrated significantly more critical thinking in different contexts than a control group that had not worked with art. Additionally, students who had worked with art scored more than twice as well on critical thinking scores when engaging with different content than those students who hadn’t had art experiences (Housen, 2002, p.108-110). In a study conducted at Crystal Bridges Art Museum, Greene, Kisida and Bowen (2014) found that students who visited the museum developed significantly better critical thinking skills. The study measured critical thinking by scoring the seven indicators discussed earlier (observing, interpreting, evaluating, associating, problem finding, comparing and flexible thinking). On average, students who had visited the museum improved by nine percent of a standard deviation over students who had not visited the museum. In particular, students from disadvantaged groups showed a marked increase in the seven indicators. Students from high-poverty schools demonstrated an eighteen percent sized improvement, and students from rural schools showed an increase of almost a third of a standard deviation (Greene, et al., 2014, p.82). These positive results extended to the development of historical empathy, or the awareness of diversity across time (Greene, et al., 2014, p.83).
Not only does a successful art exploration, in the vein of Burnham and Kai-Kee, promote individual understanding, but it also helps students work towards complex understanding of a variety of topics in the future. Critical thinking is developed in successful encounters with art. Bruner (1986) would call this “culture making” (p.127). Art can be “presented in a light to invite negotiation and speculation…the student becomes at once an agent of knowledge making as well as a recipient of knowledge transmission” (Bruner, 1986, p.127). It is in Bruner’s argument for the advantages of the study of art that this curriculum finds its purpose. This curriculum presents art in a constructivist light, and works with historical content and context in ways that take account of the students’ self-direction. Students become agents of knowledge through social learning and the exercise of choice that satisfies multiple intelligences.

**Standards.** In the Princeton Public Schools, the seventh grade studies the Middle Ages, while Trenton Public Schools students study the era in the eighth grade (“Curriculum for Middle School Students,” n.d., “8th Grade Curriculum,” n.d.). The New Jersey Social Studies Standards lists the Cumulative Progress Indicators (CPI) needed by students to demonstrate understanding of this content. The standard that is appropriate as a guide for this curriculum is Standard 6.2 World History/Global Studies. The overarching goal of Standard 6.2 World History/Global Studies is:

> “all students will acquire knowledge and skills to think analytically about how past interactions of people, cultures, and the environment affect issues cross time and cultures. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions as socially and ethically responsible world citizens in the 21st century.”
The student experience in the gallery will be an exercise in thinking analytically about the past, and relating the past to the students’ present.

This curriculum will explore several strands of this standard. The strand “Civics, Government, and Human Rights” will be explored with a focus on the CPI 6.2.8.A.4.a “Analyze the role of religion and other means rulers used to unify and centrally govern expanding territories with diverse populations.” The strand “History, Culture and Perspectives” will be the focus of the curriculum’s alignment with New Jersey Social Studies standards. The curriculum will focus on satisfying this strand by working towards the CPI 6.2.8.D.4.c “Analyze the role of religion and economics in shaping each empire’s social hierarchy, and evaluate the impact these hierarchical structures had on the lives of various group of people;” and 6.2.8.D.4.j “Compare the major technological innovations and cultural contributions of the civilizations of this period and justify which represent enduring legacies” (“Core Curriculum Content Standards,” n.d.).

Common Core ELA and Social Studies standards will also be taken into account when structuring the experience in the curriculum. The activities undertaken will help teachers satisfy these standards for their class. The following standards are specific to seventh grade:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts). (“English-Language Arts Standards,” n.d.)

**Original Material**

**Structure.** This curriculum uses the Understanding by Design template (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This resource for curriculum development is focused on enabling understanding. The authors cite Dewey: “understanding is the result of facts acquiring meaning for the learner” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p.37). This emphasis meshes with the theories that guide this curriculum. The negotiation and speculation that is so essential in Bruner’s “culture making,” or education, is part of a curriculum built for understanding. A curriculum for understanding teaches the context and broad structure of knowledge, and works toward generalization.
An education bound strictly by and limited to facts and specific topics is “uneconomical” and does little to stir intellectual excitement (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p.44-45 & Bruner, 1960, p.31). Dewey proclaims that the responsibility of the teacher, as they provide experiences in the intersection between interaction and continuity, is to inspire collateral learning, the “desire to go on learning” and that this is the “most important attitude that can be formed” in a student’s education (Dewey, 1938, p.48). When a student gains understanding, they are satisfying natural curiosity and a desire to learn, and are encouraged in the learning process.

Understandings don’t come by rote memorization of a series of facts. Understandings come through knowing large patterns and big ideas that serve as the framework for the smaller details and minute facts. Understandings can be used to order and to synthesize ideas. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) write that to obtain understandings is to know big ideas. A big idea is “a concept, theme, or issue that gives meaning and connection to discrete facts and skills” (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005, p.3). Using this template as a frame puts understandings and big ideas at the forefront of this curriculum.

This curriculum revolves around the big ideas and the essential questions that will help students build understandings in the museum galleries, while at the same time working towards the standards that are essential in the classroom. These understandings and questions stand alone as valuable, but will also complement and enrich the necessary study in schools.

The understandings (or big ideas) that this curriculum will work towards follow:

- Art represents the values and ideas of its culture.
- Artists make art that reflects their concerns
- Artists’ concerns arise from their cultural existence
- Art can tell us about three levels of culture: (1) dress, work, activity; (2) social culture, explicit beliefs and behaviors; (3) implicit cultural ideas and values, assumptions
- Cultures in all human society have repertoires of symbols that hold significance for their people; these symbols are important for communication.
  - Symbols communicate larger concepts
  - Art uses symbols
  - Cultures use art
  - Art is a form of communication
  - People develop inter-cultural understandings of symbols that become established through art-making and production
- Art is used to communicate power and to disseminate ideas.
  - In medieval times, art production was controlled by the people who could afford to be patrons
  - Artists created the works that their patrons requested
  - Tradition strongly influenced the imagery and symbols in medieval art; religious and secular patrons also controlled iconography in their commissions
  - Public art and private art had particular functions; public art in churches and civic buildings had certain purposes reflected in its iconography and placement
Contemporary visual culture has particular functions

The essential questions in this curriculum are:

- How is power shown in society?
- What makes a culture? What makes our culture?
- What can art tell us about society and culture from different times and places?
- How has life changed over time?
- In what ways does art reflect culture?

The curriculum focuses on exploring the power structures and classes of these civilizations. Students will discover the complex ways in which art can tell us about a culture and what people were experiencing in that culture. Medieval art is particularly fruitful for this study: art was primarily created for religious purposes in this time period. Everyday life itself was much more consumed by religion, compared to our lives today, and art served as an essential tool for shaping religious ideas, experiences and asserting certain points of view in this crucial focus of medieval life and culture. The vitality of art in this culture makes it an approachable subject with which to study power relationships.

Nevertheless, it is a challenge to approach medieval art, as its form and purpose differ so greatly from much of art which our society is more familiar with. It is necessary in this art program to provide students with an introduction to medieval art. This curriculum scaffolds students’ approach to these works through an introduction to the museum experience and successively complicating experiences through multiple trips to the museum that revolve around work with the objects.
This curriculum is constructed as a holistic unit, and follows the objectives and direction of project-based learning. Throughout the unit and in the culminating project, students will engage in real work: the creation of a project. Project-based learning is an instructional strategy that falls under constructivism and the theories of John Dewey, discussed above. Students construct and invent their own meaning through projects when educators implement this strategy. The artifacts of learning can be a wide variety of objects; what is important is that students explore and finally create their own representation of their learning. Self-direction is a major tenet of project-based learning.

In project-based learning, the end product is critical, but an educator can make adjustments to value the process as well. Portfolios that show a student’s thinking process in the creation of their project helps to balance this instructional strategy, while also demonstrating to students the value of the process in making the product (Grant, 2011, p.63). Students will be provided a “student portfolio notebook.” This will serve as a record and reference of their thinking which they will refer back to and reflect upon at the end of the unit. Incorporating reflection on the product and the process, and the relationship between the two maximizes the learning potential of project-based learning (Grant, 2011, p.38).

Collaboration is an important part of project-based learning. Students are expected to work individually and be self-directed. In this way, projects and their goals will be appropriate, personalized and intimately controlled by the student. But in negotiating with collaborators, students practice making their thoughts comprehensible to others, and acknowledging other perspectives or angles. In collaboration, students
negotiate and test their thinking. These skills are important for genuine learning and application (Hernández-Ramos & De La Paz, 2009).

Project-based learning, established on essential understandings and questions, is one guiding structure of this curriculum. School standards help guide the unit and are balanced by the development of learning skills, such as critical thinking, analysis and synthesis. The curriculum uses the content of medieval art as a medium with which to create a dynamic learning environment. Students explore and apply their learning, and complicate their understanding of the world while also gaining confidence and experience in critiquing and scrutinizing new media.

**Format.** This program is designed to be offered to teachers to use during their study of medieval Europe, which is a requirement of Social Studies in the seventh grade in Princeton and the eighth grade in Trenton. The curriculum revolves around the museum trips. The students will take three trips to the Princeton University Art Museum, which are complemented by five sessions in the classroom that include art-making, looking and presentation components. The curriculum begins with a visit to the classroom by the educator. This trip allows the educator to establish contextual knowledge. While this curriculum highly values independent and individual understandings of art, medieval art can be indecipherable without understanding medieval culture and society. This curriculum tries to balance the necessity of context and the importance of personal exploration and analysis.

Context will be provided in one manner through this timing alignment and in another manner by this program. The book, *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* (Avi, 2002) will
be recommended as a reading material for the teachers to use in their classroom. This book is appropriate to the age-level, and was picked to complement the ELA program in this grade. Using the book *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* as an introduction to the world of medieval art allows the students to negotiate information from the text to establish contextual knowledge themselves during the “1st Classroom Visit: Book Discussion.” The educator uses this time as an introduction to the historical content of the Middle Ages. Using the students’ experience in reading the book or a selection from *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*, the educator will ask students to identify the social hierarchy of the period, and the different players involved. Students engage in small-group discussion in this session. During this time, students will gain experience in working with art by discussing the ways in which art can support a particular perspective through its imagery. In using the famous *Trés Riches Heures*, the educator provides an introduction to the ambiguities of the art that the students will find in the museum: the *Trés Riches Heures* is less subtle and therefore an appropriate introduction.

In the next session, “1st Museum Trip: Intro to the Museum and Collection,” the students visit the Princeton University Art Museum. The educator introduces the students to medieval art through storytelling. Students will be guided through a close-looking exercise, and are asked to extend their thinking by considering the reasons that an artwork would be created. Finally, students will conduct discussions in partners and apply the concepts about symbolism and imagery that they have been introduced to in considering other works of art.

The “2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy” is structured differently than the first, in order to provide a variety of experiences and support the
development of skills for independent museum use and critical thinking. During this trip, students will be given more autonomy in their work with the museum’s objects. Students will work in small groups to explore several works chosen for their level of accessibility. Students will be asked to consider how and what these objects communicate. Groups will choose the activities they would like to engage in during this session. At the end of the trip, the educator acts as facilitator for students in creating a list of themes and topics that they identified in their explorations.

In the “2nd Classroom Visit: Art-Making,” students will engage in an art-making activity that will serve as an introduction to the culminating project. In this session, students will use a work of art as a model, and through reflection and discussion find themes to translate to their own lives or modern day. In the next visit, “3rd Classroom Visit: Comparing Art and Ads,” the educator will introduce students to the culminating project by first exploring modern visual culture using advertisements. The choice to use advertisements reflects the constructivist ethos of this curriculum: “constructivists, with their concern with the schemas and ideas that are already in learners’ minds, will be more likely to ask whether the environment is one with which the learner can make any connections” (Hein, 1998, p.38). Students will investigate the purpose of the ad, and will identify the choices that the ad’s creators made. Students will create a list of themes from their investigation of this medium. After this introduction, students will begin their work on the culminating project. In this project, students will investigate how both modern advertisements and medieval art communicate to viewers and what the messages of these mediums are. Additionally, students are asked to consider how art and images influence thinking and, by extension, who controls these images.
The educator will visit the classroom again during the “4th Classroom Visit: Work Session” to assist the students while they work on their projects, and facilitate collaborative reflection. The climax of the project will be the “Presentation Day,” where students will display their findings to their peers and guests. Finally, the educator will host the students during one last trip to the museum. Students will have applied their visual literacy and critical thinking skills in many ways throughout the curriculum; during this trip, they will consider different genres of art and reflect on their learning.

The format of these lessons is as follows:

Lesson Summary: An overview of the lesson and its goals.

Materials: Materials need for the lesson.

Goals: Specific goals for the lesson that support the exploration of big ideas and essential questions.

Note on “Student portfolio notebook:” Student portfolio notebooks are used in each session. Each student receives a notebook for recording and note-taking. This notebook holds their work, which students will use as a reference, and to reflect and to record their progression through the curriculum.

Lesson: Teaching points, content. Sample script notated in italic.

Standard Connections: Connections to New Jersey Social Studies Standards, and Common Core State Standards is important to this curriculum.
Letter to the Classroom Teacher.

Dear Middle School Classroom Teacher,

Are you interested in a partnership with a museum that will develop your students’ critical thinking skills in project-based ways, while also immersing them in a standards-aligned exploration of the Middle Ages? We are excited to announce the creation of our new eight-part curriculum “Through the Ages: Images that Communicate.” Art and visual culture represent a variety of contexts, including social, political, historical and psychological factors. Through utilizing the objects in the museum, students will develop strategies to assess and synthesize this information. The museum’s collections will be used to help students develop complex understandings of historical content, while critiquing the ways that visual culture affects their society and their lives.

Your students will use the museum’s art collection during three museum trips in order to learn how to analyze images. Students will engage in a critique of the ways in which images communicate values and ideas influenced by society and those in power. In four to five classroom visits distributed throughout the partnership, the museum educator will facilitate a deeper and broader interaction with this societal examination. Students will synthesize their experience with medieval art and an exploration of modern advertisements to gain a greater understanding of the critical thinking necessary to apply in encounters with external influences.

An educator will work with you to incorporate this program into your classroom. The educator will meet with you before the program begins to plan how to incorporate a
grade-appropriate suggested text, *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*, into your literary program and the manner in which to implement the culminating project. The culminating project will challenge students to identify themes of power in images from two different contexts through creative and critical analysis. Students will apply their multiple intelligences and construct their own knowledge in this work.

The middle school students participating in this program will diversify and develop their critical thinking skills and gain experience in synthesizing and applying novel information sources. Students will learn how to develop their own understandings of society and culture through the exploration and comparison of medieval art and contemporary advertisements. Arts and visual culture represent the values and ideas of a society, and this museum curriculum will teach students how to critically analyze and identify these factors.

Thank you,

(Museum Educator)
1st Classroom Visit: Book Discussion.

Lesson summary. The educator will have met with the classroom teacher beforehand, and will have discussed implementing *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* by Avi (2002) in the classroom. The educator will discuss with the teacher the possibility of using the book as a reading selection for the class. As an alternative, a selection from the book that best highlights medieval power dynamics may be used. Chapters 1-8, pages 1-36, provide a rich encapsulation of medieval life, from the perspective of a serf. This selection speaks about poverty, the average peasant life, the power dynamic between the lord and his serfs, religion, the castle, village and church as institutions of life and the restrictions of serfdom. The classroom teacher will incorporate the book or the selection into the class.

During this “1st Classroom Visit: Book Discussion,” the educator will visit the classroom to discuss the book, or the book selection, with the class. Ideally, the class will complete the book by the second museum trip. During this visit, the main goal is to help students understand the structure of medieval life. The educator will use visuals to help examine the power relations in the book. The educator will use illustrations from the *Très Riches Heures* that illustrate the activities of serfs and the life of nobles. The educator will also compare an image of Saint Giles with the text written about this character in the book. This classroom visit gives the educator an opportunity to assess what the students know, so as to be able to address these areas later in the curriculum.

Materials.

Access to PowerPoint presentation

Images from *Trés Riches Heures* (educator will search for an appropriate image for the individual class needs)

Image of Saint Giles (educator will search for an appropriate image for the individual class needs)

Student portfolio notebooks

**Goals.** Students will discuss the selected text and engage in analysis of artworks to, both, practice engaging with art and anchor contextual knowledge about the medieval period.

**Lesson.**

**Introduction.** The educator will ask students to sit in groups with their books. The educator will introduce himself or herself, and tell the students that they will be exploring the Middle Ages though the book *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* and in art during visits to the Princeton University Art Museum.

**Book discussion in groups.** Educator will ask students what has happened so far in the book, or the book selection. The educator will ask students to discuss the following in their groups: *What was life like for Crispin in his village?* Follow up if this is unclear: *What kinds of activities or work did Crispin do? What did he do for fun? What was in his village? What types of people were in his village?* The educator will ask for evidence. Groups will meet for 5-10 minutes, with the educator circling around the room and helping to facilitate discussions and evidence-finding. Then the students will share-out
and the educator and students will record their answers in their student portfolio notebooks.

**Comparison to art.** Educator will help students examine the life of a serf through an exploration of the *Très Riches Heures* and a portrait Saint Giles, who is introduced in the book.

*Très Riches Heures.* The educator will introduce the *Très Riches Heures* as an idealized portrait of medieval life: *These images are from a book that belonged to a rich nobleman. These don’t show what life was actually life: they show what perfect medieval life would look like. There is no messiness or pain or hardship in these pictures. The nobleman wanted a book whose pictures showed what the world would be like if it ran the way he wanted it to be run. This book does show us the actual activities and work that people were engaged in.* Looking at several slides of serfs and nobles, the educator will ask students questions such as *What is happening here? What are the different jobs people are doing? Who are the people that are included? How can you tell? Are any of the jobs or occupations from our reading book included in these images?* Depending on the educator’s knowledge of the students’ school work through collaborating with the classroom teacher, educator will also ask how the *Très Riches Heures* and *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* connect to what they have learned so far in class about the Middle Ages.

*St. Giles.* Educator will how students an image of St. Giles, then ask them to turn to page 28 of the book and read the following selection:

“Two faded images were on the walls: one was our Blessed Lady, her eyes big with grief, the tiny Holy Child in her arms. The other revealed Saint Giles,
protecting the innocent deer from hunters, a constant reminder as to what our faith should be. Since I was born on his day, and as he was the village’s patron saint, I held him for the kin I never had. When no one else was there, I would creep into the church to pray to him. I wished to be the deer that he protected” (Avi, 2002, p.28-29).

Tell students that this image may have been like the image displayed in Crispin’s church. Ask students: What do you see in this image? Why do you think Crispin prayed to this figure?

Wrap-up and conclusion. Using what was explored in class and any other background knowledge they have, educator will ask students to summarize in groups what it meant to be a serf and how that compared to being a noble. The educator can ask students to draw Venn diagrams to illustrate this comparison. Then ask student groups to share out.

Standard connections.

New Jersey Social Studies Standards.

Standard 6.2 World History/Global Studies

6.2.8.A.4 Expanding Exchanges and Encounters

6.2.8.D.4.c Analyze the role of religion in shaping empire’s social hierarchy

Common Core State Standards.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions
1st Museum Trip: Intro to the Museum and Collection.

Lesson summary. In this trip, students will be introduced to the museum and to the medieval collection. Students will engage with the works through a guided partner activity, and a share-out. The educator will introduce the function of three objects, and necessary context, using students’ knowledge from the reading selection as a starting point. Students will also be asked to identify the different types of people in these works: peasants, knights, gentry, royalty, clergy, saints etc. The educator will refer back to the students’ reading book at this time.

Materials.

Pencils

Student portfolio notebooks

Pencils

(Fig.1) Despallargues, P. (Late 15th-early 16th Century.) Retable: Saints Sebastian and Julian. [Tempera on Wooden Panels]. Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/28874.

(Fig. 2) The Villaroya Master. Archangel Michael. [Tempera on wooden panel]. (Late 15th century). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/20393

(Fig. 3) Saint Michael. [Wood with polychromy and glass]. (Late 15th c.). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/22253
Goals. Students will examine selected artworks and will find connections between the observed imagery and context. Students will consider the different ways symbols are used by different cultures, and for what purposes.

Lesson.

1st Stop.

(Fig.1) Despallargues, P. (Late 15th-early 16th Century.) Retable: Saints Sebastian and Julian. [Tempera on Wooden Panels]. Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections(objects/28874.

Goal. Students identify types of people and symbols. Students are introduced to the context of medieval religion.

Pre-activity and introduction. For the introduction, the educator will ask students to sit on the floor in front of Retable: Saints Sebastian and Julian in preparation for the first activity. The educator will reintroduce themselves, review museum rules and recap the discussion on the literary text. Ask students to think about the book Crispin: The Cross of Lead that they’ve been reading. All of the artwork in this room is from the time period in the book. Ask students about the characters in the book. Ask students: What are the different classifications of people in the medieval world?

Introduce the Retable: Saints Sebastian and Julian. There are lots of different people in this painting. We are going to see some of the types of people from our book in the painting, and we’ll learn about new people. The educator will then ask students to engage in observing details in this work, as an introduction to the close noticing necessary in interacting with a museum’s collection. Ask simple, open questions to
encourage noticing. Open questions are important at this stage. The educator wants to establish an accepting atmosphere from the very beginning. The educator’s job is to help teach students that museums are welcoming sites of intellectual engagement of all types.

What do you see? Have you seen something like this? The educator can ask students to discuss their observations with a partner. Ask students to talk with the person sitting next to them about observations they have, which they will then share out in the large group.

Tell the story of the saints. The educator will listen to students’ observations about the work. The educator will ask the students to keep these observations in mind while the educator recounts a pair of stories. The educator will ask students to listen to the two stories, and look for details in the painting that align with the storytelling. The educator will ask that the students share these details after the story is over. The educator will make the account of the characters’ legends a narrative, and engage in dynamic, but brief, storytelling.

Sebastian was a soldier in the Roman army. Instead of worshipping the Roman gods, he was a Christian, which was illegal. The emperors did not know this, and made him a commander of the army. One day, Sebastian saw two men who had been arrested for being Christians. The men’s families came to beg them to give up the religion, but Sebastian convinced them not to. The Romans killed these men and their family with spears. Then, the Romans went after Sebastian. The emperors sentenced him to death for offending the Roman gods. Soldiers tied Sebastian to a post, and shot “so many arrows into his body he looked like a porcupine” (Ryan, W.G., 2012, p.100) and left him to die. But several days later, Sebastian showed up without any injuries on the steps of the
emperors’ palace. The emperors were furious, and ordered Sebastian to be stoned to death, where he finally died (Ryan, 2012, p.97-101).

Julian was born a noble person. One day when he was young, while on a hunt, he was chasing a deer when it turned around and said “Are you going to kill me, when you also are going to kill your mother and father?” Julian was scared that what the deer said would come true if he stayed with his parents, so he ran away without telling anyone where he had gone. He became a soldier, and married a rich wife. During this time, his parents looked and looked for him. Finally, they found out where he had gone. They went to his house, but Julian was away. Instead, his wife welcomed them and let them sleep in their bed. When Julian came home and saw two strangers in his bed, he immediately killed them. When his wife told him what he had done, Julian almost fainted. To make up for what he had done, Julian and his wife left their rich house, and opened a shelter by a river and took care of all the poor travelers that came by for the rest of their lives (Ryan, 2012, p. 127-128)

The educator will ask the students to connect their observations with the context provided in the stories. Provide time and questions that help children pay attention to details that will help them make connections, but don’t ask leading questions: What did you see in the painting that connected to the story? Do any of the images in the painting connect with the stories I just told? Educator may give students additional quiet looking time to reflect on any possible connections. Educator will ask students to explain how the image reflects the story by describing the image and using details. Towards the end, educator will ask the students if the story shaped their thinking: did it change their idea of what was going on in the painting?
**Introduce saints & martyrs and attributes.** To introduce the concept of symbols and attributes, begin with halos. If the students noticed the halos during the observation discussion, remind them of this observation. Alternatively, educator will ask students to notice the halos. *What do you notice around their heads? What does this tell us about these characters?* The educator can introduce the vocabulary word “halo” if students do not know the term.

*The halos mean that Sebastian and Julian are saints.* The educator will refer back to the conversation during the “1st Classroom Visit: Book Discussion” about Saint Giles: *What does it mean to be a saint? How did Crispin view Saint Giles? How was Saint Giles important to Crispin? When you see someone with a halo in medieval art, they are either a saint or some type of good person in the Christian religion. Saints in this type of art often hold items that tell us about what good deeds they did, who they were, or how they were killed.* Educator will tell students that there are other items in the painting that tell us who the characters are. The educator can draw on what students have noticed previously. The educator can also ask students *Do you see anything that might be hinting at who these two characters are?* Potential attributes are: bow and arrows representing the tools of Sebastian’s death and martyrdom, a hawk representing Julian’s nobility, a sword representing Julian’s sin and crosses on hats representing their holiness.

*Guided partner activity and share-out.* The educator will ask students to recall what type of characters existed in the Middle Ages in the large group: *What were some types of people in the Middle Ages that we talked about when we discussed Crispin (Avi, 2002). Who were the poor people? The rich people?* Ask partners to look for these different types of people in the painting, and discuss how to classify them.
Share-out and review. Ask students to share what they found. What types of people did you find in this painting? Can you show us? How can you tell what classification of person this is? After this discussion, the educator will transition students to the next work of art: We talked a lot about the different types of people depicted in this painting. Now, we are going to push this a little further by looking at a different work of art.

2nd Stop.

(Fig. 2) The Villaroya Master. Archangel Michael. [Tempera on wooden panel]. (Late 15th century). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/20393

Goal. Students are introduced to the context of medieval religion and society.

First impressions. Turn and talk: What’s your reaction to this painting? Share-out.

Facilitate looking and give context from observations. Educator will ask students to describe what the characters look like. How could we describe what the characters in this painting look like? What types of people or creatures do you see? What do you see that makes you say that? Ask students to use what they’ve learned from discussing the Retable to talk about how these characters are represented.

Introduce the subject of the painting: Archangel Michael. The educator will ask students to make connections between content and imagery. The angel in the armor is a figure in Christianity: he’s named Michael. He is an “archangel” or a head angel. Michael was a warrior angel. Medieval people believed that Michael fought the devil in
the form of a dragon, and he will fight him again in the future. Michael was also thought to help souls get into heaven, by weighing them and judging whether they should be let in. Does any of this information connect with what you see in the painting?

**Ask students to question.** This would be in a church for everyone to see. Why would the Church want lots of people to see this?

**3rd Stop.**

(Fig. 3) Saint Michael. [Wood with polychromy and glass]. (Late 15th c.). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/22253

**Goal.** Students identify that symbolism in art compensated for illiteracy.

**Compare and contrast with The Villarroya Master’s Archangel Michael.** The educator will ask students to sit in front of statue. Educator will ask students to notice similarities and differences between the two Michaels. Then, educator will ask students to turn and talk with partner, then share-out.

**Context.** Educator will ask students about the meaning of symbols and imagery. *Why is it important that a character is represented in the same way by different artists? What does that mean for the people who look at art?*

**Reflection and conclusion.** Educator will ask students how medieval art differs from what art that they’ve seen or made in school. This is a conversation to assess how the students are thinking. The educator will use this information to help facilitate the next museum trip. The educator should ask students to use specific details from the works to explain their ideas. *How is the medieval art we’ve looked at different than art that you’re*
familiar with? Does it look different? Is it about similar or different things? Next time, you all are going to work independently with partners to look even more closely at the medieval art here in this gallery.

**Standard Connections.**

**Common Core State Standards.**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose
2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy.

**Lesson Summary.** In this trip, students will work in small groups to explore the medieval collection. The educator will choose several objects that are the most accessible beforehand for students to work with. The educator will create several activities at three “stations.” Students will rotate around the gallery, choosing which activity they would like to engage in. Students will record their findings and explorations in their student portfolio notebook.

Students will work to create a resource of ideas, strategies or themes of ideas that these works are trying to communicate: “Medieval Art: Themes and Ideas.” The educator will then identify the anchor of the culminating project, using the input from the students: art work can communicate ideas. Whoever makes the artwork is in charge of deciding what ideas get communicated, and can influence others’ opinions. Thus, power is inherent in art.

**Materials.**

Student portfolio notebooks

Clipboards

Pencils

Worksheet 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 (see Appendix B)

(Fig. 4) Annunciation. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (Late-15th-early-16th-centuries). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/20210
(Fig. 5) Saint James Under a Canopy. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain].
(ca.1450-1500). Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/31808

(Fig. 6) Reliquary: Martyrdom of Saint Stephen. [Copper with gilding and champlevé enamel]. (ca.1200). Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/22311

(Fig. 7) Game Box. [Bone, tortoiseshell, and wood]. (ca.1440-1470). Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/28297

(Fig. 8) Genealogy of Kings of France and England. [Illuminated manuscript scroll on vellum]. (1470-1483). Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/53825

**Goals.** Students will engage in guided investigations of artworks that explore the ways in which images were made for communication. Students will consider how works of art were used to preserve and enforce medieval power dynamics. Students will summarize the ideas they’ve explored in a list of themes.

**Lesson.**

**Introduction.** The educator will meet the students in the medieval galleries, standing near the three objects discussed during the last visit in the small exhibition space. The educator will review the last two sessions. *Does anyone remember the works we looked at last time? What did we talk about when we looked at those pieces? What details do you remember talking about with these pieces?* The educator can ask students
to look briefly at the works of art they discussed during the last visit, since they will be standing within viewing distance of these pieces. *You will be exploring these themes and ideas today in small groups.* The educator will introduce students to the independent work of this visit, explaining how the stations work.

**Student Partner Work.** Student pairs will engage in a timed rotation between three stations around the room: each rotation will last approximately ten to fifteen minutes. At each station, partners will have a choice of activities with which to engage with the artwork. Prompt worksheet and activity baskets will be stationed at each selected work (see Appendix B). Students will record their work in their student portfolio notebooks. Students will be asked to work cooperatively on these activities, and alternate choice if there is a disagreement about the preferred activity.

**Stained Glass.**


A. Activity Goal: Students will consider how religious art communicates a text.

Activity Objective: Students will compare the Annunciation to the text, and identify what portions of the text are or are not included in the work.

Activity Resource: Worksheet 1 (See Appendix B)

(Fig. 5) Saint James Under a Canopy. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (ca.1450-1500). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/31808
B. Activity Goal: Students will explore the ways in which important people were celebrated in medieval art by paying close attention to the way Saint James is represented in this work.

Activity Objective: Students will help their partner blind-sketch the work with a verbal description.

*Enamel Box.*

(Fig. 6) Reliquary: Martyrdom of Saint Stephen. [Copper with gilding and champlevé enamel]. (ca.1200). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/22311

A. Activity Goal: Students will learn that art can be used to communicate stories or essential events.

Activity Objective: Students will sketch a design of their own box with scenes from their own life that they think are important and want to communicate.

Activity Resource: Worksheet 2 (See Appendix B)

(Fig. 7) Game Box. [Bone, tortoiseshell, and wood]. (ca.1440-1470). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/28297

B. Activity Goal: Students will compare the reliquary with the game box and will investigate ownership.

Activity Objective: Students will discuss and record their observations of both chests, using the guiding questions provided.

Activity Resource: Worksheet 3 (See Appendix B)
**Manuscript.**

(Fig. 8) Genealogy of Kings of France and England. [Illuminated manuscript scroll on vellum]. (1470-1483). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/53825

A. Activity Goal: Students will learn about the importance of royal lineage.

   Activity Objective: Students will engage in observation and discussion of the imagery of the scroll.

   Activity Resource: Worksheet 4 (See Appendix B)

B. Activity Goal: Students will explore the complexities in royal lineages through comparison with another genealogy scroll:


   Activity Objective: Students will discuss and record their comparison, using the guiding questions provided.

   Activity Resource: Worksheet 5 (See Appendix B)

**Reflection and conclusion.** Now, the educator will call all the students together. As a group, the educator will facilitate reflection and recording so that the class can create a list of themes or ideas that they discussed or uncovered in their explorations. This ‘Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” list will be used in future lessons. The educator will provide some guiding questions to facilitate students’ thinking about the place of art in medieval power relationships. So far in the curriculum, the students have talked about the limited life options of a medieval serf and the ways the rich Church and nobles used
artworks to influence serfs’ values, religious understanding and thinking. These guiding questions should help students think about how power is represented in medieval art.

*We’ve explored art in lots of different ways. We’ve looked at paintings, statues, stained glass, enamel boxes that held relics, and scrolls. What are some things you noticed about the art you looked at? What is something you discussed at more than one artwork? What connections can you make between artworks? What did you and your partner talk about when looking at the art today? Why were these artworks made? What did these artworks show to medieval people? Almost all of the artworks we looked at had something to do with communicating information visually: what other similarities did we find? You can look in your notebooks.*

Sample list:

Saints are important

Art gives us examples on how to be a good Christian person, like the saints

Medieval art communicates religious text

Art communicates stories

Art tells you about religion

Rich people owned art, not the poor

Kings used art to show their power

Kings are in power because of their lineage/heritage
If the students don’t recognize that art communicates ideas that the powerful want to control, then the educator will ask more specific questions to encourage this realization. *Why would someone decide to make artwork like the Archangel Michael painting or the Retable with Saints Sebastian and Julian? Why would kings and nobleman want to keep a richly illustrated genealogy in their homes to show everyone? Why would church leaders think it was important for the average, poor Christian serf to see works like the Annunciation stained glass or the Saint Stephen reliquary when they go to church?* The educator can ask students to look at works again, or share their sketches and pictures of works, during this discussion. The educator will connect student’s contributions to contextual information about medieval art by incorporating the students’ ideas into the historical context: *Remember, we learned about how art in the Middle Ages was usually controlled by the rich noble and religious patrons who would request an artist to make a work and tell him what to include. In addition, the Church used art to teach people lessons or religious history, or to enforce religious ideas, like how to pray to holy figures, how to behave in life and the power of priests.*

The educator will summarize the list that the class came up with. Then the educator will share an anchor and summary of the upcoming project. *Soon, we will work on a project that explores some of the ideas we listed here. Art can show us a lot of ideas. In medieval art, these ideas were about Christianity or about royalty. Whoever made the artwork or paid for it decided which ideas got to be shown, and they had a lot of control over what people were thinking about in the Middle Ages. As we learned, if you were an average person, you would be thinking about religious stories, what characters were important in Christianity, how to act like a saint, or what you have to do to get into*
heaven. The kings and religious leaders who were in charge wanted normal people to be thinking about these things. In the next few times we meet, we will explore how images today also give us ideas and influences what we think about. We will then work on a group project where we will get to make creative projects and hold a Presentation Day, where we will interpret everything we’ve been learning.

**Standard connections.**

**New Jersey Social Studies Standards.**

6.2.8.D.4.c Analyze the role of religion in shaping empire’s social hierarchy

**Common Core State Standards.**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2 Analyze ideas presented in diverse media and formats

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source
Lesson summary. The museum educator will lead an art-making workshop at the school. This time is a reflection period. In the art-making task, students will be asked to apply the purposes of medieval stained glass to the modern day in creating their object, by depicting modern stories and using modern symbols and imagery. This is a flexible component: the teacher and educator may decide during their planning that this lesson can be moved after the “3rd Classroom Visit: Comparing Art and Ads”, to become a more essential part of the culminating project.

Materials.

Student portfolio notebooks

(Fig. 4) Annunciation. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (Late-15th-early-16th-centuries). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/20210

(Fig. 5) Saint James Under a Canopy. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (ca.1450-1500). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/31808

Projector

Access to a chalk- or dry erase-board/presentation paper

Sketching paper

Pencils

Tissue paper or cellophane
Black construction paper

Scissors

Glue

Art pens

**Goals.** Students will negotiate with the themes created in the “2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy” by applying them in a personal context through an art-making activity.

**Lesson.**

**Discussion.** The educator will visit the students’ classroom in order to facilitate an art-making activity. The educator will display projected images of:

(Fig. 4) Annunciation. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (Late-15\(^{th}\)-early-16\(^{th}\)-centuries). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections(objects/20210

(Fig. 5) Saint James Under a Canopy. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (ca.1450-1500). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections(objects/31808

The educator will ask students to look through their portfolio notebooks for their notes and work completed during the “2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy” on the subject of the stained glass works. The educator will give students some time to reference their notes in order to answer the question: *What kinds of subjects or stories were depicted in stained glass?* The educator will lead students in a discussion
on this topic. Further questions the educator can pose to encourage discussion are: *What work did you do at the stained glass station during your last trip to the museum? What are similarities or differences you found when you looked at the two stained glass windows during your last trip to the museum? What did the artist include in the work that communicated the story or subject that the artist intended?* The educator will write students’ answers as a record to display in the classroom during the rest of the activity.

**Preparation.** The educator will explain the art-making activity to the students. The educator will discuss stained-glass technique with students by referencing the images of the *Annunciation* and *Saint James Under a Canopy* that are projected in the classroom. The educator will ask students to describe the stained glass examples, paying attention to features and details. *How does stained glass look different from, say, a painting? How do you think an artist makes a stained glass window? How would you describe the way a stained glass window looks?* Small, individual glass shapes are defined and outlined by black lead. The educator will ask students to include these same details in their project. The educator will then explain and show examples of the art-making project:

1. Students, using a sketched plan as a reference, will cut out black pieces of cardboard paper into the outlines of shapes.

2. Students will tape or glue pieces of tissue paper or cellophane to the back of the cut-out shapes.


In their art, students will adapt the subjects of medieval stained glass. The educator will ask students to brainstorm, through sketching, how they could change the
subjects and stories of a stained glass window so that they have a personal meaning to the students. Ask students: *What details can you include in your art that will communicate the full meaning of the story or subject you choose to depict? What symbols can you use in your art work?*

**Standard Connections.**

**New Jersey Social Studies Standards.**

6.2.8.D.4.j Compare the cultural contributions of the civilizations of this period

**Common Core State Standards.**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2 Analyze ideas presented in diverse media and formats

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source
3rd Classroom Visit: Comparing Art and Ads

**Lesson Summary.** The educator will visit the class, and ask students to look at modern images, like advertisements, posters and propaganda. The students will try to answer the questions: “What are these images trying to tell us? What are they trying to convince us of?” The educator will facilitate a whole-class discussion of one image, and then the class will engage in small-group explorations of another image and report back to the class. The class will create another resource of ideas, strategies or themes that these objects communicate (as a comparison to the list made in the “2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy”).

The educator will present the resource of ideas developed in the last museum visit. Students will pick a theme or an idea for their project. The educator will lead a work period where children begin their projects: in this session, they will be tasked with brainstorming objects to use, and how these objects could be used with the form of project they select (see below). The students will be tasked to finish their research by the next meeting with the museum educator.

**Materials.**

Access to projector

Images of advertisements (Educator will search for appropriate images for the individual class needs)

Student portfolio notebooks

“Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” list from “2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy”
Access to a chalk- or dry erase-board

Presentation paper

**Goals.** Students will compare medieval art to contemporary advertisements by exploring how each medium communicates with an audience, and what purpose each image represents. Students will gain a greater understanding of the ways that art represents values and ideas of its culture, and the importance of symbols for cultural conceptions.

**Lesson.**

**Introduction.** The educator will review the work that students have completed thus far in the curriculum, and will ask students to make connections between two forms of images: medieval art and contemporary advertisements. Educator will display the “Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” list that students created during the “2nd Museum Trip: Focus on Exploring Power and Hierarchy”. Educator will ask students to review the ideas on the list. The educator can project the works if appropriate.

**Introduce modern images.** The educator will ask: *What kinds of images do we see everyday in our modern lives?* The educator will project an advertisement for inquiry. The educator will ask: *What kind of image is this? What is advertising? Why is there so much advertising in our lives? What is an advertisement that you have seen lately? Did it affect your thinking?*

**Object exploration.** Educator asks students to brainstorm in their notebooks one word they would use to describe the projected advertisement, and then have all students share-out. Educator will record all responses on the board. Educator will ask students to
find themes in this list, and summarize. Educator will then ask questions such as: *Who is making this ad? What are they trying to sell? How are they trying to sell it? What are they doing to make you think of the product in a certain way?* The educator will ask for specific visual evidence to support claims.

**Partner exploration.** Educator will have students split up into pairs or tables. Educator will provide groups with baskets of modern images and this lesson’s guiding questions: *Who is making this ad? What are they trying to sell? How are they trying to sell it? What are they doing to make you think of the product in a certain way?* Students will be asked to look at the advertisements and discuss these questions, and any other noticings. Students will share-out at the end.

**Reflection and application.** The educator will present the “Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” list from the last museum visit. Educator will ask students to report themes or ideas that arose in their exploration of modern imagery and visual culture to create a second list. The educator will record these themes on presentation paper to create a document titled “Modern Ads: Themes and Big Ideas.”

Sample list:

Advertisements are trying to sell things

Advertisements affect the way we think or look at ourselves

Advertisements make us want to buy things

Advertisements try to convince us

Big companies make ads
The educator will ask students to compare the two lists. *What’s different? What’s the same?* Using the format of a Venn diagram, the educator will facilitate a whole-group discussion to collaborate and record the information on presentation paper from the two theme lists “Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” and “Modern Ads: Themes and Big Ideas.”

**Start project.** Educator will start students on the project. Educator will introduce the Culminating Project (see below). Educator will ask students to pick a big idea from the list and to choose images of advertisements that illustrate this idea during the rest of this session.

**Standard connections.**

*Common Core State Standards.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2 Analyze ideas presented in diverse media and formats

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose
Culminating Project

Students will be challenged to develop a creative project that explores how modern images communicate power, values and beliefs, and the ways that these modern objects compare with the medieval objects. Students will choose one modern image, like an advertisement or propaganda poster, and one medieval image. Students must discuss the differences and similarities between modern and medieval art and objects. Different ways that students can satisfy this project are with:

- Art work (can be an extension of previous art-making activity, but will need to be developed on a more complex scale)
- Podcast
- Interviews (audio/video)
- Skit
- Presentation
- A mini-exhibit
- Diary
- Interactive activity
- Other

Students will prepare a short one-minute presentation for a “Presentation Day”. Students must also prepare to answer any questions that viewers may have about their project. These presentation skills are part of the project, and will be fostered by the educator and the classroom teacher.

The educator will work with the students on their projects during the “3rd Classroom Visit: Comparing Art and Ads” and the “4th Classroom Visit: Work Session,”
and will ask the classroom teacher to continue the class’s work on this project. The projects will be displayed at a “Presentation Day” (see below).
4th Classroom Visit: Work Session

Lesson Summary. The educator will visit the classroom to help facilitate work on the project. This visit will be structured like a work session.

Goals. Students will work on their projects and engage in cooperative discussions with their peers, while they continue to explore symbols in art and visual culture, and the values that this imagery communicates.

Lesson. During the work session, the educator’s task will be to question students and to help them to push their work further. The educator will visit each student, and ask them to explain what they are doing and why they are making certain choices in their chosen direction.

Towards the end of the work session, the educator will facilitate collaborations between students, so they can discuss their projects and engage in conversation about their project. The educator can create random collaboration groups, or match students together based on their observations during the session. The educator will instruct students to (1.) Introduce their projects, including what works they are covering and their chosen format (2.) Report on their progress (3.) Discuss what’s going well, and what is challenging (4.) Relate their plans for completing the project. Group members are then asked to ask questions and make suggestions. The educator should encourage students to take notes for their project. The educator will time these discussions, so that every student gets the same amount of time to report and receive feedback.

At the end of this session, the educator will preview students’ responsibilities during the “Presentation Day.” Students will display their projects and their peers will
circulate the room. Students will present their projects. The educator will ask that students prepare a short 1-minute introduction to their project, and prepare potential questions that viewers may pose and the answers. Students will work on the presentation further individually and during any further classroom work times determined by the classroom teacher. It is soon after this visit that the students need to finish their project, and the classroom teacher will be responsible for giving their students a deadline for the project.

**Standard connections.**

**Common Core State Standards.**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose
**Presentation Day**

The educator will help the classroom teacher organize a presentation day, where students present and display their projects. The presentation day will be held at the school. The educator should encourage co-workers to attend the presentation day, and speak with students about their work. The educator will also encourage the classroom teacher to invite parents and other classes.

The presentation day will be structured as a timed rotation. Students will display their projects on tables around the classroom, or another larger space that can be arranged at the school. One-half of the class will be stationed around their projects while the rest of the class can circulate freely, looking and asking questions. Students will engage in informal, conversational presentations.

**Standard connections.**

*Common Core State Standards.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose
3rd Museum Trip: Application and Reflection

Lesson summary. This museum visit will be a reflective period, where the many threads of this curriculum are tied together. In this trip, the educator will facilitate an introductory large group discussion, followed by independent small group exploration in several galleries of the museum. Finally, the educator will ask students to reflect on what they’ve learned over the curriculum. The goal is for students to apply what they’ve learned in a relaxed environment.

Materials.

Student portfolio notebooks

“Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” list

“Modern Ads: Themes and Big Ideas” list

Venn diagram comparison list

Paper

Clipboards

Pencils

(Fig. 9) Peale, C.W. George Washington after the Battle of Princeton. (1779-82). [Oil on canvas]. Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/45234

(Fig.10) Guanyin seated in Royal-ease pose. [Wood with traces of blue-green, red and gold pigments on white clay underlayer with relief designs]. (ca. 1250). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23888
(Fig. 11) Pair of tomb guardians. [Earthenware with silver, gold, and painted decoration]. (Mid-8th century). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/55280

(Fig. 12) Tomb Figures. [Gray earthenware with white slip, red paint]. (220-589 AD). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23439

(Fig. 13) Couple with Peonies and Rabbits. [Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk]. (undated). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23503

Goals. Students will apply their understanding of the manner in which art represents the values and ideas of its culture by exploring diverse works of art in the museum’s collection. Students will explore what art can tell us about a society and culture.

Lesson.

Introduction. The educator will ask students: What are some of the things we have learned together? What did we learn about how art can be used? What did we learn about the purpose of art or images like ads? What are some ways art or images serve a purpose? The educator will engage students in a review discussion using these questions, after which the educator will introduce the task of this lesson, incorporating the information provided during the discussion. The educator will explain to students that they will explore how the themes and ideas they’ve discussed are present in all works of art. Keeping these ideas in mind, students will look at new and different works of art.

First gallery.
(Fig. 9) Peale, C.W. George Washington after the Battle of Princeton. (1779-82). [Oil on canvas]. Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/45234

The educator will begin the exploration of *George Washington after the Battle of Princeton* with the entire group in an introductory looking session. The educator will elicit the noticing of details by asking the students to look at the work for one minute, after which they will share details they noticed. The educator may ask students for three, two or one more detail to notice as the minute runs out in order to promote close noticing. After several students share details, the educator will ask small student groups (2-4 students) to discuss how these details may be important to the painting. The educator will also ask these groups to share any questions with each other. The class can try to answer any unanswered questions when they return to a large group discussion. The educator should give the students about ten minutes to talk in groups, longer if the groups are engaged.

After this time, the educator should pull the class together, and ask groups to share what questions they had, what they talked about and what details and evidence from the painting they used to back up their ideas. The educator should ask the group if they have any unanswered questions. For any questions proposed, the educator will elicit the class’s opinion by asking questions such as: *In your opinion, how would you answer that question? Can you help your friends answer this question? Did you and your group talk about this question? Do you have the same question, or any related questions?* The educator should give students thinking time to consider these questions. Some questions may have no right or wrong answer, and some questions may ask for more context. The educator may provide historical context if the students request it, but historical context is
not the goal of this museum visit. The educator should let students answer their own questions first: this session should be structured by the students’ questions and answers. The educator’s agenda is to encourage conversation, noticing and hypothesizing.

Second gallery.

(Fig.10) Guanyin seated in Royal-ease pose. [Wood with traces of blue-green, red and gold pigments on white clay underlayer with relief designs]. (ca. 1250). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23888

In this gallery, students will look at art from a non-Western culture. In the Asian gallery, the educator will gather the class together around Guanyin seated in Royal-ease pose and will engage in a short discussion of formal qualities as a warm-up to the works in the exhibit. The educator will ask students what they see, and provide looking time. During a share-out, the educator will ask students: What details in this work of art grab our attention? How are these details important? After this brief exercise, the educator will introduce the next activity.

The educator will ask students to recall the themes that the class previously recorded in other sessions and that were found during their culminating project. The educator may display the Venn diagram developed during the “3rd Classroom Visit: Comparing Art and Ads” comparing material from the “Medieval Art: Themes and Big Ideas” and “Modern Ads: Themes and Big Ideas” lists. Students can reference their student portfolio notebooks. The educator will ask small student groups to pick a theme and find a piece in the Asian gallery that they can use as an example of the theme: Draw a draft of a poster that identifies the ways your work fits in a particular theme. Please
*sketch your object, and pay attention to detail.* The students will draw a draft of a poster that explains how the work fits the theme. The educator will encourage creativity during this activity.

*Suggested objects.*

(Fig. 11) Pair of tomb guardians. [Earthenware with silver, gold, and painted decoration]. (Mid-8th century). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/55280

(Fig. 12) Tomb Figures. [Gray earthenware with white slip, red paint]. (220-589 AD). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23439

(Fig. 13) Couple with Peonies and Rabbits. [Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk]. (undated). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23503

Students will present their findings and poster to the group.

*Reflection.* Students will assess what they’ve learned over this unit. The educator will ask students to get in their small groups. Using their student portfolio notebooks and engaging in discussion with their partners, the educator will ask the students to compare how they look at art and other visuals now and at the beginning of the curriculum. The educator will ask students for examples from the activities and their notebooks. If students need more guidance, ask them to compare how they looked at advertisements before and after the project, or to compare what they thought when they looked at medieval art on their first museum trip compared to this trip. Ask students to look at what they were writing and drawing in their notebooks at the beginning of the curriculum and
what they were writing and drawing at the end of the curriculum or when they were planning their projects. Students will share out their comparisons as a whole group.

As an extension, the educator can take photographs of student learning throughout the unit. During this reflection period, the educator can print these pictures out and ask students to respond to the pictures in a quick write in their student portfolio notebooks: *What were you doing in this picture? What were you learning about in this picture? Did this activity change how you looked at art or other visual mediums?* The students will use their quick-write notes in a large group discussion as they share their reflections (Freidus, 2010, p.192).

**Standard connections.**

*New Jersey Social Studies Standards.*

6.2.8.D.4.c Analyze the role of religion in shaping empire’s social hierarchy

6.2.8.D.4.j Compare the cultural contributions of the civilizations of this period

*Common Core State Standards.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2 Analyze ideas presented in diverse media and formats

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.5 Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a source
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose
Applications

This curriculum, “Through the Ages: Images that Communicate,” is appropriate to be offered to local middle schools in areas near the Princeton University Art Museum. Museum educators will promote this curriculum with grades that study the Middle Ages as mandated by the New Jersey Social Studies Standards. To implement this curriculum, it is important that the museum educator develops a relationship with the classroom teachers they work with. The museum educator is responsible for leading this curriculum, but will suggest that the classroom teacher independently implement several portions of the curriculum.

The novel *Crispin: The Cross of Lead* (Avi, 2002) was selected for this curriculum because of its appropriateness for the middle school literary program. Reading this book will benefit the students as they engage in the museum curriculum, but will also complement the broader study of the Middle Ages covered in the school’s social studies curriculum. Another aspect of this program that can be extended by the classroom teacher is the culminating project. The teacher can choose to modify this project in a variety of different ways: this project can be made a larger-scale assignment if the teacher values the project-based structure. The culminating project assignment could potentially ask students to compare medieval art and advertisements with other genres as well.

The teacher can select what advertisements students will explore in this project; through this choice, the teacher can control the direction the project takes. In selecting the advertisements students will explore, the teacher can also apply his or her knowledge of their students: images can be chosen that will be particularly resonant with certain students. In controlling the range of advertisements in this way, the classroom teacher can
take advantage of this project to develop social-emotional skills that are appropriate for their unique classroom.

These options require the museum educator to be an accessible contact. At least one preliminary meeting that will serve as both an orientation for the teacher and a chance for the museum educator to learn about the classroom students is essential. In this meeting, the museum educator will ask the classroom teacher to disclose the sequence the class will undertake in their work with the Middle Ages historical content. The educator and the teacher will plan the four classroom visits, three museum trips and the presentation day around this sequence. It is recommended that the students engage in this curriculum after, at least, initial coverage of the Middle Ages in their classroom. A basic level of contextual knowledge will benefit the students as they begin their explorations in this curriculum. Through understanding the teacher’s teaching sequence and other classroom needs, the museum educator will be better equipped to facilitate a dynamic, approachable and challenging curriculum.
References


Housen, A. Aesthetic thought, critical thinking and transfer. Arts and Learning Journal, 18(1), 99-132.


## Appendices

### Appendix A: Images

(Fig. 1) Despallargues, P. (Late 15th-early 16th Century.) Retable: Saints Sebastian and Julian. [Tempera on Wooden Panels]. Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/28874.

(Fig. 2) The Villaroya Master. Archangel Michael. [Tempera on wooden panel]. (Late 15th century). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/20393
(Fig. 3) Saint Michael. [Wood with polychromy and glass]. (late 15th c.). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/22253
(Fig. 4) Annunciation. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (Late-15<sup>th</sup>-early-16<sup>th</sup>-centuries). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/20210

(Fig. 5) Saint James Under a Canopy. [Pot-metal and colorless glass with silver stain]. (ca.1450-1500). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/31808
(Fig. 6) Reliquary: Martyrdom of Saint Stephen. [Copper with gilding and champlevé enamel]. (ca.1200). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections(objects/2311

(Fig. 7) Game Box. [Bone, tortoiseshell, and wood]. (ca.1440-1470). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections(objects/28297

(Fig. 8) Genealogy of Kings of France and England. [Illuminated manuscript scroll on vellum]. (1470-1483). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections(objects/53825
(Fig. 9) Peale, C.W.. *George Washington after the battle of Princeton*. (1779-82). [Oil on canvas].
Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/45234

(Fig.10) *Guanyin seated in Royal-ease pose*. [Wood with traces of blue-green, red and gold pigments on white clay underlayer with relief designs]. (ca. 1250). Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23888

(Fig.11) Pair of tomb guardians. [Earthenware with silver, gold, and painted decoration]. (mid-8th century). Retrieved from
http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/55280
(Fig. 12) Tomb Figures. [Gray earthenware with white slip, red paint]. (220-589 AD). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23439

(Fig. 13) Couple with Peonies and Rabbits. [Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk]. (undated). Retrieved from http://artmuseum.princeton.edu/collections/objects/23503
Appendix B: Worksheets

The angel came to Mary and said, “Greetings, you who are highly favored. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.” When she saw him, she was troubled by his words, and considered in her mind what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Listen, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there will be no end.” ...Mary said, “I am the servant of the Lord. May it be unto me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.


Read the quote: What details do you see in these stained glass windows that are from the quote? What details are not from the quote?

Identify details: Draw lines connecting details from the window to the text. Identify details not mentioned in the text by circling these sections in the image.

Discuss: Talk with your partner what these details could possibly be about.
Reliquary

A reliquary is a container that holds a relic, or an item from a holy person’s life, that people in certain religions worship.

Saint Stephen

It is believed that Saint Stephen was a martyr, and was stoned to death for his Christian religion.

This box shows a scene from Saint Stephen’s life. Inside, it held an item that Christians thought was precious because it belonged to Saint Stephen.

Design: Draw your own box that holds something special to you.
Look: Compare the reliquary with the game box.
   How are the boxes different?
   What types of people are on the boxes?
Discuss: Using what you know about people from the book Crispin: The Cross of Lead (Avi, 2002), talk with your partner about who you think owned each box.

Genealogy of Kings of France and England
This scroll records the names of the king’s ancestors to show that he was the true king. Kings and nobles had scrolls like this made to display in their homes.

Discuss: Why do you and your partner think the artist included pictures in this family tree? What are in the pictures? Why are these pictures important? How is this scroll different from a normal book that we read?
Genealogy: A record of your ancestors.

Discuss: With your partner, compare these two genealogy scrolls. How do they each record the king’s ancestors and family tree? How are they similar? How are they different? Why is it important to have such detail?
### New Jersey State Social Studies Standards

#### Content Area | Social Studies
---|---
**Standard** | **6.2 World History/Global Studies** All students will acquire the knowledge and skills to think analytically and systematically about how past interactions of people, cultures, and the environment affect issues across time and cultures. Such knowledge and skills enable students to make informed decisions as socially and ethically responsible world citizens in the 21st century.

**Era** | **Expanding Exchanges and Encounters (500 CE-1450 CE)**

**Grade Level** | By the end of grade 8

**Content Statement** | Strand | CPI# | Cumulative Progress Indicator (CPI)
---|---|---|---
4. Expanding Exchanges and Encounters | A. Civics, Government, and Human Rights | 6.2.8.A.4. a | Analyze the role of religion and other means rulers used to unify and centrally govern expanding territories with diverse populations.

The emergence of empires (i.e., Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas) resulted from the promotion of interregional trade, cultural exchanges, new technologies, urbanization, and centralized political organization.

The rise and spread of new belief systems unified societies, but they also became a major source of tension and conflict.

While commercial and agricultural improvements created new wealth and opportunities for the empires, most people’s daily lives remained unchanged.

D. History, Culture, and Perspectives | 6.2.8.D.4. c | Analyze the role of religion and economics in shaping each empire’s social hierarchy, and evaluate the impact these hierarchical structures had on the lives of various groups of people.

6.2.8.D.4. j | Compare the major technological innovations and cultural contributions of the civilizations of this period and justify which represent enduring legacies.
Common Core State Standards.

Reading strand.

Key ideas and details.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Integration of knowledge.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9 Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

Writing strand.

Research to build and present knowledge.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7 Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

Speaking & listening strand.

Comprehension and collaboration.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.B Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2 Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue under study.

*Presentation of knowledge and ideas.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.5 Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

*Literacy in history/social studies, grade 6-8.*

*Key ideas and details.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

*Craft and structure.*

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).