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Seedfolks: An Integrated Literature and Visual Art Unit

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Seedfolks: And Integrated Literature and Visual Art Unit

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This integrated unit is taught over a period of three weeks, 1-2 hours each day depending on the activity or activities. It is designed and can be adapted for grades 4-8; ages 9-13.

Description:

The book Seedfolks takes place in Cleveland, Ohio, in an inner-city vacant lot. The story develops through a series of 13 vignettes, each culturally isolated character bringing his/her unique perspective and contribution to the story as the trash-ridden lot slowly develops into a community garden.

Students will:

- 1) read and discuss the book *Seedfolks* with a focus on character development and the theme of a diverse and disconnected neighborhood building a sense of community in a common space.
- 2) investigate character and write in the voices characters in the text.
- 3) become familiar with collage artists and the collage as a medium, with a focus on the work of Romare Bearden;
- 4) experience a collaborative process that mirrors the themes of the story, inspired by the vignettes in *Seedfolks*. Students work together sharing ideas and a variety of materials to create a collaborative collage mural.

Materials:

- *Seedfolks*, by Paul Fleishman
- *Romare Bearden: Collage of Memories*, by Jan Greenberg
- Other examples of Bearden's and other collage artists' work, especially representations of cityscapes and city life.
- 9" x 12" drawing paper
- Butcher paper
- Scissors
- Glue
- Variety of magazines for cutting color, shape, etc.
- Fabric and paper scraps – variety of color, pattern, texture
- Tempera and watercolor paints

- Paintbrushes
- Chalk or other Pastels
- Pencils
- Water containers
- Other materials as needed or contributed by students

Enduring Understandings:

- People can learn and grow from reaching out and interacting with others different from themselves.
- Fear and stereotypes can be broken down through open communication.
- Powerful stories can be expressed through a variety of media.
- As diverse individuals can come together to create a collaborative community garden, so can a group of children with a variety of materials work together to be to create a collaborative work of art. Art mirrors life.

Student Learning Assessment - Visual Arts

** HOM: Habits of Mind*

Learning Objectives <i>What I want my students to know and be able to do.</i>	Assessment Criteria <i>What I will observe in my students – traits that can be seen and/or heard.</i>
1. Become familiar with collage as an art form, including the work of African-American artist Romare Bearden and other collage artists. <i>(HOM* - Understand Art World)</i>	1. Small group and whole group discussion, listing characteristics of Bearden's and other artists' work.
2. Identify and apply elements of design in collage: Balance, pattern, form, texture, space, overlay.	2. Whole group discussions, partnering to identify criteria in other artists' work.
3. Use written text as a source for expression through visual arts. <i>(HOM – Express, Envision, Imagine)</i>	3. Reading and re-reading text, discussion, planning and final product.
4. Collaborate with classmates to create a collage from a variety of materials using given criteria. <i>(HOM - Develop craft, Collaborate)</i>	4. Discussing and drawing individual plans, verbal and visual references and reflection on criteria and vocabulary during collaborative process. <i>(HOM – Reflect)</i>
5. Observe and identify criteria in work of other students. <i>(HOM – Observe)</i>	5. Partners identify given criteria in each others' work. Whole group reflection, discussion of all works when mounted.

Vocabulary:

Language Arts Terms and Concepts: vignette, character, setting, voice, metaphor, analogy, simile, summary, infer, elaborate, re-telling.

Art Terms and Concepts: Collage, spatial relations, balance, pattern, texture, line, shape, form, overlay/overlap, layering, composition, landscape, portrait, contrast, variety, proportion, critique.

Week 1: Seedfolks – The Story

Introduce unit: What do you think “Seedfolks” means? What does the cover tell us about the book?

The unit begins with reading the book to students over 4-5 days. Class discussions focus on character and setting, and the interrelationships that develop as each vignette builds on the previous one. Students are asked to visualize the layering of the story, the characters as relationships interconnect, and the garden as it develops. As each character is introduced, discussions broaden into the relationships between characters. Teacher provides background information regarding culture and historical context and that gives students a broader understanding of the stereotyping, misconceptions, and misunderstandings that occur, as well as the significance of the connections that and relationships that develop over time.

When the reading is completed, teacher and students discuss character development, author’s purpose, and the garden as character, as well as:

- How can gardens facilitate connections between people and communities? Have you seen this happen in your own community? If so, where, and how?
- How is the setting in the story different from where we live? How does that change the story, and how might the story be different if it were placed here?
- Can you think of a moment where you learned something about someone that changed your understanding about who they were?
- What other situations have you experienced that have inspired more positive connections between people of different backgrounds?

Community connections: Visit a local community garden or other collaborative community project. Invite a guest speaker to share a community-building action or experience. Ask students to use the questions above to interview someone they know. The have students share their experiences with class.

Week 2: Artist: Medium and Method

Introduce plan for the next two weeks: "Each of you will choose one character vignette from the book with whom you identify or are inspired." Students are given copies of the vignette and asked to "get to know" the character by reading the story several times, and answering questions about the character and the contribution that character brings to the community. "How is your character related to the other characters in the book?" Students then write/retell the story of their character in their own voice, with the freedom to infer, elaborate. (Language Arts)

- Introduce the work of Romare Bearden, using the book *Romare Bearden: Collage of Memories*, by Jan Greenberg, as well as other examples of Bearden's and other collage artists' work, especially representations of cityscapes and city life. Ask why Bearden might have been chosen as an inspiration for this collaborative art project and expand on students responses (African-American, work reflects the diversity of the book and place). As Paul Fleishman has layered the stories in *Seedfolks*, collage artists layer a variety of materials.
- Have students look at the work of Romare Bearden in small groups and list characteristics of collage, returning to the whole group to share what they notice.

Ask "What materials do collage artists use?" "What techniques do you notice?" "What elements of composition do you notice?" "How is collage like the book *Seedfolks*? Explain your thinking." Add to discussion, introducing art vocabulary (see above), part to whole, overlapping, connecting, balance.

- Model envisioning – what do you imagine? Students work in small groups to discuss what they have learned and envision plans for collage portrayals of their character and that characters' place in the story and in the collaborative mural.
- During this week, in preparation for the collaborative project below, give students opportunities to free-explore collage-making independently or with partner.

Formative Assessment Checkpoints:

Objective #1:

Become familiar with collage as an art form, including the work of African-American artist Romare Bearden and other collage artists.

- *Criteria:* Small group and whole group discussion, listing characteristics of Bearden's and other artists' work.
- *Process:* Room scans, small group written lists, whole group discussions

Objective #2: Identify and apply elements of design in collage: Balance, pattern, form, texture, space, overlay.

- *Criteria:* Whole group discussions, partnering to identify criteria in other artists' work.
- *Process:* Class discussions, partnering to identify criteria addressed, exit slips.

Week 3: Envisioning, Layering and Collaborating

- Revisit a few examples of previously viewed collage works.
- Whole group – Model sketching out plan for collage. Students sketch out a plan on 9" x 11" paper that reflects their chosen vignette, and his/her role and/or contribution to the story and the garden.
- Model choosing colors, patterns, designs from magazines and scrap paper. Talk about and demonstrate the use of different kinds of paper and scraps for different purposes, color contrast, balance, shape, etc. as well as laying out pieces before gluing. Demonstrate tearing and cutting as options.
- Whole group – Students discuss and decide on conceptual design background for mural. Small groups take turns working on background.
- Students, over a period of 3-4 1 hour periods, plan, layout, and construct their collages from provided and donated supplies.
- Small groups work together to arrange placement of piecework onto mural background.

Formative Assessment Checkpoints

Objective #3: Use written text as a source for expression through visual arts.

- *Criteria:* Reading and re-reading text, discussion, planning and final product.
- *Process:* Written work, drawn plans, room scans

Objective #4: Create a collage from a variety of materials using given criteria.

- *Criteria:* Drawing plans and creating collage works according to criteria.
- *Process:* Individual conferencing, checklist, self-evaluation

Objective #5: Observe and identify criteria in work of other students.

- *Criteria:* Partners identify given criteria in each other's work.
- *Process:* Observation, individual student check-ins.

Culmination/Presentation/Evaluation

Final product is completed and displayed with written work for sharing at a culminating event with parents, community members, and peers.

Daily closers include: partnering to reflect on days work and/or learning, group gathering to reflect on individual and collaborative work, share learning and work, reflection on process, and preview the next day's plan.

Students self-evaluate based on:

Criteria for Individual and Small Group Work:
(to be explained at the beginning of the process and revisited daily)

1. Identifying and apply at least three elements of design in own collage work: Balance, pattern, form, texture, space, overlay.
2. Identifying 3 additional and specific examples of at least 3 elements of design (balance, pattern, form, texture, space, layering, overlapping) in completed collaborative collage work.
3. Using at least 3 different media in their work.
4. Articulating specific examples of how s/he contributed (listening, contributing ideas, explaining, showing flexibility) to the collaborative process in his/her small group.
5. Articulating specific examples of how others contributed (listening, contributing ideas, explaining, showing flexibility) to the collaborative his/her small group.

Note:

This unit has been implemented in the past with students creating their own individual collages rather than a collaborative work.

