

**Understanding by Design
Curriculum Unit Plan
With Differentiated Instruction**

Subject Area: Language Arts
Unit Title: What is Beauty?
Designer: Jenny Goff

Grade Level: 5th/6th grade gifted learners
Number of Days: 7-10, 90 minute class periods

Unit Summary:

What is beauty? Is it the calm of a quiet summer evening, the night sky aglow with the flicker of fireflies? Is it the sweet smell of your grandmother's rose garden? Is it the precious smile on the face of a new baby asleep in his mother's arms? Is it the sound of children laughing on the school playground? Maybe it's the steady stream of tears as they flow down the widow's face after she's received news that her husband has been killed in the line of duty. Perhaps beauty is in the war raging on the battlefield in a land far away as men and women fight for the freedom of those they do not even know. Is there beauty in the stench of an overflowing garbage can? A worn out work boot? A weathered old barn?

This unit will open the eyes of intermediate grade-level gifted students to the beauty around them every day. Students will work together in cooperative groups and independently to demonstrate their understanding of beauty through their writing, collages, and a photo essay. Throughout this unit, students will gain an understanding of figurative language – similes, metaphors, idioms, personification, and analogies; and will use this understanding to describe the photographs they capture for their final project.

Stage 1 – Desired Results

Established Goals (standards): By the end of this unit students will be able to...

EL.6.1.2 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development:

Identify and interpret figurative language (including similes, comparisons that use like or as, and metaphors, implied comparisons. Example: Understand descriptive metaphors, such as *The city lay under a blanket of fog.*

EL.6.2.8 2006

Identify how an author's choice of words, examples, and reasons are used to persuade the reader of something.

Example: After reading an article by one author on the reasons for repopulating western national parks with wolves and another article by a different author reporting ranchers' opposition to the program, describe the ways each author tries to persuade the reader.

EL.6.2.9 2006

Identify problems with an author's use of figures of speech, logic, or reasoning (assumption and choice of facts or evidence).

EL.7.1.1 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development: Identify and understand idioms and comparisons - such as analogies, metaphors, and similes - in prose and poetry.

- Idioms: expressions that cannot be understood just by knowing the meanings of the words in

the expression, such as *to be an old hand at something* or *to get one's feet wet*

- Analogies: comparisons of the similar aspects of two different things
- Metaphors: implied comparisons, such as *The stars were brilliant diamonds in the night sky.*
- Similes: comparisons that use "like" or "as," such as *The stars were like a million diamonds in the sky.*

EL.7.2.10 2006

Identify and explain instances of persuasion, propaganda, and faulty reasoning in text, such as unsupported or invalid premises or inferences and conclusions that do not follow the premise.

Essential Understanding (s)

Students will understand:

- Beauty exists all around us in the ordinary elements of our lives.
- Beauty truly **is** in the eye of the beholder – what many consider to be ugly can, with a simple change in perspective, be seen as beautiful.
- Beauty is not skin deep.
- Written communication is enhanced through the descriptive use of figurative language and intentional word choice.
- Beauty is represented through the symbolism and tradition of one's culture.

Essential Question(s):

- What is beauty?
- Who determines what others see as beautiful?
- How does one communicate feeling through writing?
- How is beauty represented in our cultures?
- Why is beauty so important in our society?

Students will know:

- There is beauty to be found in everything and everyone.
- Acknowledging and respecting the beauty in others is part of building positive relationships.
- Looking at things through a new perspective allows us to see a whole new angle.
- Figurative language enhances our writing and helps to make it meaningful to the reader.

Students will be able to:

- Identify, interpret, and use figurative language such as similes, metaphors, personification, idioms, and analogies.
- Identify and analyze how an author's choice of words, examples, and reasons are used to persuade the reader of something.
- Identify and articulate in writing what *they* believe to be beautiful (as opposed to what *others tell us* is beautiful).
- Look and people and objects in new ways and know that taking the time to understand others will lead to a greater understanding of oneself.

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Diagnostic Assessments:

- Pre-assessment of figurative language
- Exit cards
- Teacher observation
- Tiered lesson on identifying/using figurative language
- Photo essay

Key Criteria:

- Placement in tiered lesson
- Compacting

Performance Task(s): (*Summarize in GRASP form*)

Collaborative Collage: What is Ugly?

Goals: Student's task is to find images, words, etc. that they would consider to be "ugly" in magazines and/or newspapers. Students will create a collage of these items and defend their display to the class.

Role: Students will work in groups of 3-4. Students will search through print materials to find pictures and/or words that they will use in their "What is Ugly?" collage.

Audience: The target audience is the other students within the classroom.

Situation: The challenge is for students to find images of ugliness and defend their choices to the class.

Product: Students will create a collage depicting "What is Ugly?"

Standards: Two evaluations will be given – one group grade based on the effectiveness of the display; and one individual grade based on the students' independent understanding and defense of the items used on the display.

Tiered Lesson: What?!?

Goals: Student's task is to identify figurative language in poetry and articulate the meaning of various similes, metaphors, idioms, and/or analogies in a set of teacher-selected passages.

Role: Students will work independently on tasks that have been predetermined based on their placement in the tiered lesson. (See attached tiered lesson, entitled "What?!?")

Audience: The target audience is the teacher.

Situation: The challenge is for students to identify and define all of the examples of figurative language within a teacher-selected poem.

Product: Students will complete the figurative language log included with this unit.

Standards: Students will be evaluated on their completion of the figurative language log.

Photo Essay: What is Beautiful?

Goals: Students' goal is to find the beauty in their lives and photograph it.

Role: Students will work independently. Students will seek out the beauty in their own lives to capture in a photographic essay.

Audience: The target audience is the students' peers.

Situation: The challenge is for students to find things that represent their idea of what is

“beautiful” amongst the ordinary elements of their lives, and to describe each one using metaphors, idioms, similes, personification, and analogies appropriately and effectively.

Product: Students will create a photographic essay with at least 12 photos, including at least one of the seven types of photos that will have been discussed in class.

Standards: Students will be evaluated on their cohesive use of photographs to portray their ideas as well as their use of figurative language in the description of their photographs.

Other Evidence:

- Oral or written response to one of the essential questions
- Test on similes, metaphors, idioms, and analogies
- Journal entries

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Learning Activities: (WHERE TO elements)

W - Where are we headed?

Students will understand that beauty can be found all around them, and that looking at things through a different perspective can give things a whole new meaning.

Students will also be able to identify and effectively use figurative language orally and in writing.

H - How will students get Hooked?

Students will be engaged through cooperative work, thoughtful discussion, hands-on activities, and the creative use of technology.

E - What opportunities will there be to be Equipped, and to Experience and Explore key ideas?

- *What is Ugly?* collage
- *What?!?* activity
- *Encyclopedia of My Ordinary Life* entries
- *Persuasive essay*
- *What is Beautiful?* photo essay

R - What will provide opportunities to Rethink, Rehearse, Refine, and Revise?

- Additional practice in small groups as needed
- Acceleration and increased content
- Opportunities to share new understandings with students in “Buddy Classes”

E - How will students Evaluate their work?

- Students will complete Exit Tickets after various lesson
- Students will use a rubric to self-evaluate their photo essay
- Students will use a scale to rate their participation in group discussions

T - How will the work be Tailored to individual needs, interests, styles?

- Tiered lesson based on readiness (tiered in content)
- Compacting
- Acceleration
- Higher level content
- Individual, small group, and whole class activities

O - How will the work be Organized for maximal engagement and effectiveness?

Day One: Lesson One *Figurative Language Pre-Assessment & Intro to Similes and Metaphors*

Indiana Standards addressed in this lesson include:

EL.6.1.2 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development:

Identify and interpret figurative language (including similes, comparisons that use like or as, and metaphors, implied comparisons. Example: Understand descriptive metaphors, such as *The city lay under a blanket of fog.*

EL.7.1.1 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development: Identify and understand idioms and comparisons - such as analogies, metaphors, and similes - in prose and poetry.

- Idioms: expressions that cannot be understood just by knowing the meanings of the words in the expression, such as *to be an old hand at something* or *to get one's feet wet*
- Analogies: comparisons of the similar aspects of two different things
- Metaphors: implied comparisons, such as *The stars were brilliant diamonds in the night sky.*
- Similes: comparisons that use "like" or "as," such as *The stars were like a million diamonds in the sky.*

Objectives:

Students will be assessed on basic understanding of figurative language, including similes, metaphors, idioms, and analogies prior to beginning this unit of study.

Students will know how to identify similes and metaphors.

Outcomes:

Students will identify examples of figurative language in text.

Students will define examples of figurative language in text.

Students will use figurative language effectively in their own writing.

Procedure:

1. Students will be given the *Figurative Language Pre-Assessment* using the ActiveInspire student responders on the Promethean Board. This provides immediate data for the teacher, rather than traditional paper/pencil tests that would need to be graded. (15 minutes)
2. Upon completion of the pre-assessment, students will watch the BrainPop video online at <http://www.brainpop.com/english/writing/similesandmetaphors/preview.weml> . (5 minutes)
3. Following the video, students will have access to C.O.W.s (Computers on Wheels – laptop cart). They will use the C.O.W.s to find the lyrics to one of their favorite songs and identify as many similes and metaphors as they can find. (30-45 minutes)
4. Once students have had enough time to complete the task in #3, students will be called to the Family Room area of the classroom to share their findings. (20 minutes)
5. Students will complete an Exit Card on a sticky note with 2 things they learned, and 1 question about the lesson before leaving. (5 minutes)

Day Two: Lesson Two Tiered Lesson – What?!?

Subject: Language Arts

Grade: 5th/6th

Indiana Standards addressed in this lesson include:

EL.6.1.2 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development:

Identify and interpret figurative language (including similes, comparisons that use like or as, and metaphors, implied comparisons. Example: Understand descriptive metaphors, such as *The city lay under a blanket of fog.*

EL.7.1.1 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development: Identify and understand idioms and comparisons - such as analogies, metaphors, and similes - in prose and poetry.

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Key Concept: Students will be able to identify and define examples of idioms, similes, metaphors, analogies, and personification; and understand that figurative language is used to enhance our writing.

Essential Understanding: Written communication is enhanced through the descriptive use of figurative language and intentional word choice.

Background: Students understand how to identify, define, and use similes and metaphors. They have begun thinking about how word choice impacts the meaning of what we write. Now, they will learn how to use other types of figurative language.

Tiered in process

Based on readiness

All students will watch the BrainPop video on idioms and clichés at <http://www.brainpop.com/english/writing/idiomsandcliches/> & take the online quiz using the ActiveInspire student responders. (15-20 minutes)

Tier I

Students will visit the following website:

<http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/idioms/>

Follow the instructions to complete the activities for *Eye on Idioms*.

Students will be divided into pairs and given copies of the book More Parts by Tedd Arnold. Each pair will read the story together and talk about the idioms represented in the story and how the main character misinterprets them. They will then complete the Tier I Figurative Language Log (attached). Once the log is completed, students will choose their favorite idiom to illustrate both the literal and figurative interpretation.

Tier II

Each table of students will receive a set of poems to share and a figurative language log sheet for each member of the group. Then, students will work together to find as many examples of similes, metaphors, idioms, personification, and analogies as they can in the poetry selections. Students should use highlighters to identify the figurative language as they find it –

- Yellow – similes
- Orange – metaphors
- Green – idioms
- Blue – personification
- Pink – analogies

Once the group has marked all of the figurative language in the poetry selections, each group member will complete his/her Tier II Figurative Language Log sheet (attached).

Assessment: Students will be assessed on the completion of the Figurative Language Log sheets.

Day Three: Lesson Three & Four *What is Ugly?*

Indiana Standards addressed in this lesson include:

EL.6.2.8 2006

Identify how an author's choice of words, examples, and reasons are used to persuade the reader of something.

Example: After reading an article by one author on the reasons for repopulating western national parks with wolves and another article by a different author reporting ranchers' opposition to the program, describe the ways each author tries to persuade the reader.

EL.7.2.10 2006

Identify and explain instances of persuasion, propaganda, and faulty reasoning in text, such as unsupported or invalid premises or inferences and conclusions that do not follow the premise.

Objectives:

Students will be able to identify how word choice impacts how someone interprets a message. Students will understand how one's perspective can change the meaning of a message.

Outcomes:

Students will create a collage of pictures and/or words that they believe to be "ugly".

Students will carefully select words to "defend" their choices of pictures and words that represent ugliness.

Students will complete a writing piece in their "Encyclopedia of My Ordinary Life" journals on "What is Ugly?".

Procedure:

1. Talk with the students about the word "ugly". Have students brainstorm a list of things that they consider to be ugly. Put the list on the board.
2. Discuss with the students how what one person believes is ugly, someone else might believe to be beautiful. Explain that one's personal perspective greatly impacts one's beliefs about the world around them.
3. Have students use magazines and newspapers to cut out images and/or words that are ugly. Give students a 6x6 square of paper on which to glue their clippings.
4. Explain that students must be able to defend their selections and explain to others why their choices should be considered ugly.
5. Allow students time to share their collages and discuss what the class determines to be ugly.
6. Throughout the discussion, the teacher should look for every opportunity to play "Devil's Advocate" and turn the ugly into beautiful. For example, if a student cuts out a picture of a full trash can and says that it is ugly; the teacher could say that it is actually beautiful because it represents having had plenty to eat.
7. At the conclusion of lesson three, students should complete an Exit Card on a sticky note with something that they learned through the day's lesson.
8. **Lesson Four** – Revisit the main points addressed during the discussion of what is "ugly". Have students write an entry in their "Encyclopedia of My Ordinary Life" journal entitled "What is Ugly?". Students should be sure to include figurative language to give the reader a clear mental picture regarding what the author is trying to describe.

Day Four: Lesson Five *What is Beautiful?*

Indiana Standards addressed in this lesson include:

EL.6.2.8 2006

Identify how an author's choice of words, examples, and reasons are used to persuade the reader of something.

Example: After reading an article by one author on the reasons for repopulating western national parks with wolves and another article by a different author reporting ranchers' opposition to the program, describe the ways each author tries to persuade the reader.

EL.7.2.10 2006

Identify and explain instances of persuasion, propaganda, and faulty reasoning in text, such as unsupported or invalid premises or inferences and conclusions that do not follow the premise.

VA.6.7.4 2008

Demonstrate appropriate use of various media, techniques, and processes to communicate themes and ideas in artwork.

The following recommended media and processes are appropriate for a grade band of Grade 6 through Grade 8:

OTHER MEDIA: Media: computer, interactive computer programs, disposable camera, digital camera, video, photography, film Processes: computer processes in various open source and commercial programs

Objectives:

Students will be able to identify how word choice impacts how someone interprets a message.

Students will understand how one's perspective can change the meaning of a message.

Students will find examples of the seven types of photographs in print media.

Students will use prior knowledge of the seven types of photographs used in photo essays to create their own photo essay.

Outcomes:

Students will create a photo essay of the world around them in which they will capture the beauty in what other people might consider to be ugly.

Students will add captions containing idioms, similes, metaphors, personification, and/or analogies to their photos to add to the meaning of the snapshot.

Procedure:

Lesson Five

1. Review with the students the seven types of photographs including: Lead, Close-Up, Detail, Signature, Portrait, Scene, and Clincher.
2. Allow students time to work in table groups to find examples of the seven types of photographs in print media such as newspapers, *National Geographic*, *Time*, and *Smithsonian* magazines.
3. Allow students time to share their findings with the class and talk about why they labeled each picture as each type of photo.

Lesson Six

1. Brainstorm ideas of things that students could capture in photographs that support the theme “What is Beautiful?” as it pertains to perspective as discussed in class (ie: the full trash can).
2. Go over the photo essay rubric and give students the information regarding how to make a powerful photo essay. Review the information with the students, and be sure to answer any questions.
3. Give students time to bounce ideas off of one another regarding possible photo shots and captions.
4. Assign the photo essay project and give due dates.

Day Five: Lesson Seven *Ugly or Beautiful?*

Indiana Standards addressed in this lesson include:

EL.6.1.2 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development:

Identify and interpret figurative language (including similes, comparisons that use like or as, and metaphors, implied comparisons. Example: Understand descriptive metaphors, such as *The city lay under a blanket of fog.*

EL.7.1.1 2006

Vocabulary and Concept Development: Identify and understand idioms and comparisons - such as analogies, metaphors, and similes - in prose and poetry.

- Idioms: expressions that cannot be understood just by knowing the meanings of the words in the expression, such as *to be an old hand at something* or *to get one's feet wet*
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EL.6.2.8 2006

Identify how an author's choice of words, examples, and reasons are used to persuade the reader of something.

Example: After reading an article by one author on the reasons for repopulating western national parks with wolves and another article by a different author reporting ranchers' opposition to the program, describe the ways each author tries to persuade the reader.

EL.7.2.10 2006

Identify and explain instances of persuasion, propaganda, and faulty reasoning in text, such as unsupported or invalid premises or inferences and conclusions that do not follow the premise.

Objectives:

Students will be able to implement proper use of figurative language in their writing.

Students will discover for themselves how an author's choice of words impacts the reader's perspective.

Students will use prior knowledge of persuasion to persuade their reader of what they believe is either ugly or beautiful.

Outcomes:

Students will write a persuasion piece based on the ideas discussed in this unit – either what is ugly or what is beautiful.

Procedure:

1. Prior to class beginning, the teacher should collect several items (enough for every one-two students) to use as inspiration pieces. Ideas might include: a crumbled up wrapper from a food item, an old shoe or boot, a flower, a dirty coin, a dried leaf, etc. Items should include things that would be considered to be either ugly or beautiful, but taking the time to reconsider perspective might allow one to see the item in a new light.

2. Give students time to see all of the items displayed on a table or counter. Let the students pick the items up and look at all aspects of each thing if desired.
3. Tell the students that their task will be to write a persuasion essay about one of these items. If the item they select is beautiful, they must persuade the reader that it is actually something ugly. If the item is thought to be ugly, they must search for the beauty in it and persuade the reader that it is actually beautiful.
4. Refer students to the discussion about the full trash can, and encourage them to think of all of the possibilities before beginning their writing piece.
5. Give students ample time to consider their ideas and write the essay.

Figurative Language Pre-Assessment

Name: _____ #: _____ Date: _____

Choose the **best** answer for each question.

1. My cousin loves the water; she is a fish.
 - a. simile
 - b. metaphor
 - c. idiom
 - d. hyperbole
2. The shortstop was as quick as a cat to the ball.
 - a. simile
 - b. metaphor
 - c. personification
 - d. idiom
3. The saying, "It was raining cats and dogs" would be an example of which figurative language?
 - a. hyperbole
 - b. idiom
 - c. metaphor
 - d. alliteration
4. "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?" is an example of which type of figurative language?
 - a. metaphor
 - b. onomatopoeia
 - c. personification
 - d. simile

5. What does the following idiom mean? Explain: "I'm on top of the world"

6. Give two examples of a simile.

a. _____

b. _____

7. Which figurative language does the author use in this poem?

Lighthouse

*The lighthouse stands tall at the edge
of miles and miles of sand.*

*His tiny light guides mighty ships
and brings them safe to land.*

*He doesn't fear the night so dark;
Forever he will stand.*

- a. alliteration
- b. personification
- c. idiom
- d. simile

****Information from The Elementary Science Integration Projects**

<http://www.esiponline.org/classroom/foundations/writing/photoessays.html>

Photo-Essays

In the fall of 2002, ESIP first began to look more closely at photography and its possible uses in the classroom. ESIP staffers Leesa Green and Sutton Stokes presented some ideas for creative uses of the photographs in some of Seymour Simon's books at the 2002 "Science Stories, Classroom Stories" event. They were particularly interested in Simon's photo-essays, both for the power of the arresting photographs to attract reluctant readers, and for the unusual opportunities they offer for spicing up literacy instruction in the science content area. Building on this initial interest, they wondered what would happen if cameras were given to elementary students who were then encouraged to produce their own photo-essays. An opportunity came about to work with ESIP teacher Betty Lobe, her colleague Susan Katenkamp, and their third-grade students. What follows is the process by which Sutton, Betty, and Susan familiarized the students with photography and photo-essays before having the students make their own individual photo-essay books.

What is a photo-essay?

When we use the term "photo-essay" we are referring to a specific form of children's trade book. The word *essay* comes from the French term "to try." Writers often use the essay form to try out new ideas or explore other types of new territory. The word *photo* refers to the use of photographs rather than drawings or paintings to illustrate these books.

Teachers know that photographs and illustrations can support text, but in photo-essays that relationship is often reversed; the photographs lead the text. In photo-essays, you'll likely notice the photographs first.

- The photos are chosen with the same care and precision with which the writer chooses the words.
- The photos are high quality and are featured prominently in the page layout.
- Each photograph contains a wealth of information and may generate an equivalent wealth of questions and wonderings before the reader even approaches the text.
- Rather than merely providing a caption to the photographs, writers of photo-essays are often responding in depth to what the photographs make them feel or wonder.

Beginning activities with photo-essays

The combination of strong writing with intriguing photographs makes for a powerful teaching tool. You might consider using the photo-essay in part, perhaps using the photographs without the text.

- Have your students write captions for the photographs.
- Use the photographs as story starters. Ask the students-- what would you title this picture? What happened just before this picture was taken? What will probably happen next?
- Have your students look at the photographs. What do they need/want to know to understand the photograph better? What questions are raised by the photograph? What questions does it answer?

Making your own photo-essays

Before you can begin to have your students make their own photo-essays, they will need to be familiar with photo-essays, in general.

- Gather together a wide variety of photo-essays. Introduce them to your students. Draw attention to the photographs. Look at and discuss how the different books are formatted.
- Discuss relevant author's craft issues-- Does the author pick the pictures first and then write, or the other way around? How does a book illustrated with photographs differ from one that is illustrated with drawings?
- Ask the students why photographs might be used rather than illustrations. Keep a chart paper list of their responses.
- Ask the students to compile lists of what they might like to make a photo-essay of.
- Have the students compare different photo-essays on the same topic. How are they different? How are they similar?

Once the students have had a chance to read and browse through a wide selection of photo-essays, they will likely be interested in the photographic skills that were involved in the process. A basic understanding of photography skills will be needed to make the photo-essays.

- Have photography "how-to" books on hand for your students to look at
- Discuss the difference between candid and posed pictures and the advantages of each.
- Show examples of common photo mistakes-- heads cut off, backlighting, flash on windows. Ask the students-- Is everything in the picture? Where's the light? Was the photographer standing too close or too far from his/her subject?

Students will also need to be familiar with the cameras that you will be using, whether those cameras are disposable or digital.

- Explain and demonstrate how the cameras work

- Figure out the limitations of the camera.
- Give the students practice working with the camera, perhaps by having them work in groups to take pictures.
- Give the students particular assignments-- Each student must take one picture of a plant, one picture of a person, one picture of a non-living thing.
- After students have taken their pictures, have them self-critique. What stories do the pictures tell? Is that the story that really happened? Is it the story they wanted to tell? Is everything in the picture? Is the lighting right? Did the photographer stand the correct distance from the subject?

Once the students have learned some photography basics and have become familiar with photo-essays and their cameras, they will be ready to take the next steps toward making their own photo-essay. These steps may proceed at different speeds for different students depending on prior knowledge, writing ability, and other factors.

Planning:

- Students plan their topic as they would any piece of writing. What is their topic? What is their purpose? Who is their audience?
- Ask the students what pictures they plan on taking? (It's a good idea to set minimum and maximum number of pages for the books, although students should be encouraged to take a few extra or backup pictures.)

Storyboards:

- Introduce students to storyboards. Explain that a storyboard is how artists and authors get a sense of what a book will look like. Emphasize that it is a very rough draft. Have the students complete storyboards for their intended photo-essay.
- The storyboards are critiqued with the teacher and with fellow students. An "Acceptance" means that students are ready to move on.

Taking the Pictures:

- Students then receive their cameras. Give a refresher on how to use them. Have students revisit their storyboards to refocus on planned photographs.
- Firm dates should be established for film to be returned to class. Advise students that they might be disappointed in their photographs...it is a learning process.
- After photos have been developed, return them to the students. Students then select which photos are to be included in their books.
- Once photos have been selected, students work on the accompanying text...on scratch paper.

Final Steps:

- Once the text is completed and the final photograph selection has taken place, have students use Powerpoint (or other preferred program) to type their text and lay out their pages.
- Completed pages may be laminated, bound, or put online, as desired.
- Completed photo-essays are shared with classmates, perhaps a few at a time or at a special celebration of this large publishing event, complete with invited guests.

Why use photo-essays?

In these increasingly structured times, it may be hard for some educators to think of justifying the use of class time for a photo-essay/photography project. The important thing to remember is that photo-essays are not intended as a departure from or add-on to what you are already doing in your classroom. Rather, they are another approach to goals you already have to meet but for which you may be running short of new ideas. Photography, and the photo-essay, can be a means of introducing some variety into science, language arts, and other content areas while helping your students gain skills that will be applicable across the curriculum and –even better– in their lives outside of school. No matter what shape your photography/photo-essay projects take, they can be made to support any number of media literacy and art standards. Depending on which content area(s) your projects focus on, you can tailor your projects to fit subject-specific standards as well.

Media Literacy

We live in a media age. Students will experience millions of media images over the course of their lives. It is vital that they learn how to "read" these images, particularly when the majority of images are intended to change opinions, influence purchases, or otherwise get something out of the viewer. Students who don't receive instruction in media literacy will be at a great disadvantage.

What does media literacy instruction look like? Diverse organizations such as the Association of American Pediatrics (<http://www.aap.org>), the National Communication Association (<http://www.natcom.org>), the Look Smart Project (<http://www.ithaca.edu/looksharp/>) and Just Think (www.justthink.org) offer guidelines and suggestions that mesh with the photo-essay project.

Science

The photo-essay is definitely applicable to science standards, particularly the observation and inquiry standards propagated in the *National Science Education Standards (NSES)*.

Examples of applicable NSES standards: (From the NSES "Science as Inquiry" standard)

- "Fundamental abilities and concepts that underlie this standard include...employ[ing] simple equipment and tools to...extend the senses."
- "Fundamental abilities and concepts that underlie this standard include...communicate investigations and explanations." (NSES, 1996, p. 122)

How do science photo-essays support technology, the science curriculum and inquiry?
Students:

- develop questions about a particular topic or area of interest, conduct research, gather information, and explain their findings in their science photo-essay
- examine various photo-essays on the same topic and learn that there are many different approaches to a scientific subject
- are introduced to worlds outside of their own and examine connections between science and scientists and how their work is presented in the photo-essays.
- develop technological and scientific skills in the use of cameras, scanners, computers, and book binding machines
- consider the properties of light and motion and their role and effect in the photographic process

Language Arts

The photo-essay is definitely applicable to *IRA/NCTE Standards for the English Language*.

Examples of applicable standards include:

- "Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics.)"
- "Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes."

How do science photo-essays support the language arts curriculum? Students:

- gain experience analyzing the structures, conventions, visual features, and text features of the photo-essay and exhibit their knowledge and understanding of this particular literary genre by creating their own photo-essays
- use critical thinking skills to compare, contrast, explore, interpret, and critique their own writing and that of others
- draw upon what they have read, discussed, and experienced to plan, write, revise, and publish their own photo-essays with the aid of technology

- examine author's and illustrator's craft and reflect upon and discuss the many possible approaches and styles taken by authors and illustrators of photo-essays, including their own and that of classmates

****Information from The Collective Lens**

<http://www.collectivelens.com/blog/creating-photo-essay>

Creating a Photo Essay

September 23, 2007 - 12:40pm by [laurie](#)

Creating a photo essay is a combination of art and journalism. As with a written essay, the elements of a photo essay should be structured in a way that easily conveys a story to the viewer. Each individual photo contributes to the overall story, theme, and emotions of the essay. The photos you choose must not only be compositionally and artistically strong, but also informative and educational. Finding photos that have both qualities can be very challenging, but the result can be very powerful.

There are two types of photo essays: the narrative and the thematic. The narrative essay tells a story through a sequence of events or actions. They may follow an individual or activity over a period of time and present this story in chronological order. A thematic photo essay focuses on a central theme (e.g. homelessness, the environment, etc.) and presents photos relevant to that theme.

Regardless of what type of photo essay you choose to present, the following elements should be considered during its creation:

1. **The story-** Your essay should be able to stand alone, without a written article, and make logical sense to the viewer.
2. **A range of photos:** A variety of photos (wide angle, detailed, portraits etc.) should be included. See the types of photos section discussed below.
3. **The order of the photos:** It is important that the order of your photos effectively tell a story, in an interesting and logical sequence.
4. **Information and emotion:** Your photos should include both informational and emotional photos. Those essays that effectively evoke emotion while providing information tend to convey their messages the best.
5. **Captions:** In a photo essay, captions are your best opportunity to describe what is happening in words and ensure that the viewer understands. Include informational content in these captions if necessary.

Types of Photos

By including a variety of types of photos in your essay, you will ensure that it is both interesting and informative. The following types of photos, presented together, can create a successful photo essay. Not only is it important to choose powerful photos, but also to present them in an effective order. While the order of some photos (e.g. the lead photo, and the clincher) is set, the order of most types of photos in your essay is your preference.

The Lead Photo: Similar to the first two sentences of a newspaper article, your lead photo should effectively draw in your audience. This is usually the most difficult photo to choose and should follow the theme of your essay. It could be an emotional portrait or an action shot, but ultimately it should provoke the curiosity of the viewer.

The Scene: Your second photo should set the stage and describe the scene of your story. An overarching photo taken with a wide angle lens is often effective.

The Portraits: Your photo essay should include at least one portrait. Capturing an emotional expression or telling action shot can effectively humanize your story. These photos often evoke strong emotions and empathy in the viewer (whether it is a positive and enthusiastic emotion, or a sympathetic and concerned emotion.)

The Detail Photos: Detail photos focus in on one element, be it a building, a face, or a relevant object. These photos are your best opportunity to capture specific objects. The captions of these photos should be informative and educational.

The Close-up Photos: Similarly, close-up photos provide an opportunity to focus in on specific objects. These photos are tightly cropped, simple shots that present a specific element of your story. Again, this is an excellent opportunity to present information in the caption.

The Signature Photo: The signature photo summarizes the situation and captures the key elements of your story in a telling moment.

The Clincher Photo: The final photo, the clincher, should evoke the emotion you want the viewer to walk away with, be it a feeling of hope, inspiration, or sadness. Decide on this mood before you select this photo.

Remember, these suggestions are only guidelines. Photo essays are a form of art, and like any artistic creation, breaking the rules can sometimes create the most powerful result. Don't be afraid to try something different.

PHOTO ESSAY PROJECT

Name: _____ #: _____ Date: _____

Due Date: _____

You are embarking on a task to create a photo essay related to the theme “What is Beautiful?” You will put together a slide-show of your top 7-10 photos and present this to the class.

This assignment requires the use of a digital camera. You may need to bring one from home, or use an iPod, iPad, cell phone, etc to capture your pictures. You will be required to use your flash drive to store your pictures so that you can work with them both at school and at home. Your project should include:

- ~ A minimum of 7, but no more than 10 photos.
- ~ Captions for each photo written using various forms of figurative language. You may include idioms, similes, metaphors, personification, analogies, or any other forms that you have learned about previously.
- ~ An Introduction Slide – this includes your name, title of presentation, and date
- ~ A Conclusion Slide – this should have one statement that summarizes your presentation.

Electronic Device Use Guidelines:

Please read and sign that you understand the assignment and the use policy before starting the photo essay project.

1. If you bring an electronic device to school, it must remain in your locker while not in use for this project.
2. You are solely responsible for your electronic device. The school, your teacher, and the school district will not be held responsible for a lost, stolen, or damaged electronic device.
3. You are only to take pictures of school appropriate images!

My student and I agree to follow the guidelines above for this photo essay assignment.

Parent Signature: _____ Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

PHOTO ESSAY RUBRIC

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Technical	Essay contains 9-10 quality photos, including all 7 types of photos.	Essay contains 7-8 quality photos, including all 7 types of photos.	Essay contains 6-7 quality photos; or contains photos of less than good quality.	Essay contains significantly less than the required amount of photos
Creativity	Essay provides a unique and creative approach to the subject in photography, writing, and message.	Essay contains some unique aspects that add to the intrigue of the product.	Essay contains interesting elements that support the theme, but are not unique.	No evidence of unique or interesting elements that support the theme.
Writing	Essay contains effective use of figurative language in the captions on every photo that add to the power of the message.	Essay contains effective use of figurative language in some of the captions on most of the photos, adding power to the message of the theme.	Essay contains figurative language that is disconnected from the message of the scene.	Essay contains no figurative language.
Grammar & Spelling	Essay contains no spelling or grammar errors.	Essay contains less than 3 spelling or grammar errors.	Essay contains 4-5 spelling or grammar errors.	Essay contains many spelling or grammar errors.

TOTAL SCORE: _____

Notes/Comments:
