

Krista Nichols  
Art 400  
Week 1 Reading and Response

These reading assignments all dealt with what's happening in the brain in terms of development during teenage years. Nothing about any of the readings really surprised me because I work with teens regularly at a dance studio, and I vividly remember my middle school and high school experiences. I will be using both sources as a way to associate and relate my responses.

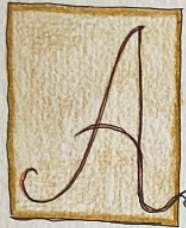
In another class last semester, I read about the brain of a toddler, which I found very interesting. Their brains are, of course, less developed, and so their reactions to things around them are more simple, they use the right side or the left side, the top or the bottom of the brain. When a toddler or young child is upset, they are in "fight or flight" mode and unable to calm down because they are using the wrong side of their brain. Their brain hasn't developed what it needs to rationalize, think past the moment they are in, and our job as an adult is to calm them down by empathizing with them, speaking softly, getting them to use the correct side of their brain again.

It makes sense that during puberty/teen years the brain is more developed but still has a ways to go. Something I found interesting from the Atlantic article was how adolescents gravitate towards thrilling experiences. This explains a lot and why I believe it is good for teens to be active in healthy activities like sports, etc. As a former dance student and now as a dance teacher working with children and teens, I know what they experience when they are on stage performing for a packed audience. I understand why students enjoy team sports in school and competing. It is unfortunate that an athlete might only have one game a week, and why some dancers only have one performance opportunity a year. Once they've experienced the rush from performing, they have to wait an entire year to feel that again, leading them to feel "bored" a decent amount of the time.

In my tenure as a dance teacher, I have experienced the "moody teen." Someone I knew just a few short years ago as an enthusiastic, silly, eager to learn individual is now more quiet in class, easily frustrated when they don't get things right on the first try, addicted to rolling their eyes at me, hot headed and short tempered at times, etc. My strategy for this student has been to call them out on their behavior appropriately. "Katie, I know you're frustrated with this, take a deep breath, shake it off, and try again." I always try and empathize, especially during the pandemic when their lives got turned upside down. Little did I know that the student who had been giving me trouble most recently, was just a few short weeks away from an unexpected move across the country where they would be leaving their friends and their school to go someplace new and they were nervous about it. I never hold a student's unwelcome actions against them because I don't know what they are going through outside of our studio.

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Week 2 Reading Response

This chapter covered a lot of area, in great detail. Beginning with what art teachers are tasked with: getting students to find their originality and expressing themselves to the highest extent possible. This is something I sort of knew about but wasn't sure how to accomplish in a classroom. The steps involved all made sense and I found very informative. From there the chapter discussed the importance of art history and appreciation as well as the problems art faces in the US, mainly that rich historical sites are few and far between compared to our European counterparts. The Process of Viewing Art came next which was groundbreaking for me because I have experienced art in some of these terms before, mainly Hedonistic and Contextualistic, while the rest are still a bit of a mystery to me. For me, this chapter felt like the most important, relevant, and informational reading I've had since starting this program last fall. The question I've had in regards to secondary education, is how and what to teach them. At this point in their lives they will have had that foundational knowledge about the elements and principles, etc. And looking back to my high school career, I can't recall a single assignment that we had as a class. There were often discussions about larger ideas and our teacher would come around and talk one on one with students about what they were working on and give advice, suggestions, inspire us to take our work in a direction that make sense for us, and suggested artists for us to look into. The passage from page 31 was an "aha" moment for me because I recall having the exact opposite experience in my secondary education: "Many art teachers only become concerned with developing skills in handling media and never let students do any art.... afraid to let students think, feel and perceive on their own and to express this in a creative and personal way." This chapter also just plainly pointed out what the students are there for; to solve the "problem." The problem being for them to "express one's self aesthetically at the highest human level." By working collaboratively with my students, I hope to guide them towards this goal like my high school art teacher did for me. I enjoyed reading about the Knowledge of the Field of Art because I feel it is definitely going to help me with my rubric planning. I also found the Processes of Viewing Art very interesting. I have experienced the Hedonistic and Contextualistic Approaches before but I feel I am less confident in my understanding of the Organistic, Normistic and Eclectic Approaches. Another area from the chapter which gave me that "aha" moment was in the section on Art in Our Culture. Of course kids in this country don't have the same appreciation for the arts as kids say in Paris or Italy. I actually recall in undergrad sitting in an art history class going over all of the amazing sites in Italy and Rome and becoming very angry at the fact that I could not see these places because they were so far away. I also became very thankful for my mom - who is the reason I became so interested in art and introduced me to different artists and mediums outside of the art room. The only major disagreement I had with the chapter, came at the beginning. The text mentions that art teachers should not try and dissect art with their students in order for them to understand the art. I don't know that I fully agree with this notion because if the student is struggling to understand something, I would want to break it down for them so that they eventually did understand.



# Philosophy Concerning Art

3 basic approaches to producing + viewing art

## ART AS AN INSTRUMENT

art teachers that use this approach are concerned more with the student than with their art. more about building their confidence, promoting creativity, developing sensitivity + aesthetic awareness

I believe in this approach greatly at the secondary level. I feel that all students should feel confident and valued as a member of the classroom community. Grades should be less about "talent" or "skill" and more about dedication, commitment, and ideas.

## ART AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION

art teachers using this approach are focused on inspiring students so that they have something they want to say or express.

Of course I want to inspire individuals in my classroom and throughout my life. I hope I am as inspiring in an art room as I am in the dance studio. To do this, I think I'll need to get to know my students, what their interests are, and then make connections to art/history to inspire them.

## ART FOR ARTS SAKE

art teachers are concerned with the production, quality of work despite students skill level, confidence or background. Only concerned with knowledge of art and quality of work produced by students.

I agree with some aspects of Art for Arts sake theory. I think its important to know the formal aspects of art (what art means, elements + principles, etc) However I don't believe that to know all of these things means you must also produce great work. Ok if you are very talented, but don't know everything there is to know about art, that's okay too. If you're finding your own way + developing your own unique style then that has value also.

## 1 Sensitivity

Aware of all aspects of a situation. Walks into a room + recognizes poor design + decor. Includes social, perceptual + aesthetic. Aware of needs of people, environment, + anything odd/unusual. More aware of details = more aware one becomes.

## 2 Fluency

Ability for creative person to think rapidly + imaginatively. Things flood especially well @ the beginning of any art experience + Creative flow

## 3 Flexibility

Ability to adjust when internal or external changes occur. Flexible people take advantage of "happy accidents"

## 4 Originality

Uncommonness/ uniqueness of ones response to given stimulus. Good exercise is to do automatic drawings

## 5 Analysis

Details: whole → abstract. Observing everything from the whole to its parts. See the tree as a shape, then notice limbs, leaves, bark, etc

## 6 Synthesis

Happens simultaneously w/ analysis. Brings several elements into a new, meaningful whole. Happens when we create artwork b/c of combination of lines, shapes, colors, textures



## 7 Redefinition

Using old familiar things in new ways. Repurposing buttons in to eyes for a collage. Paint lines/ areas of color on canvas are read as people, landscapes, etc

## 8 Consistent Organization

Saying the most - with the least. A creative person can organize all aspects so that all parts relate to one another. If any parts were to be changed, the situation/art would appear unbalanced



# GRADING STUDENT ARTWORK

Carole Henry lays out important ideas towards evaluations + assessments. None of which came as a total surprise because these ideas were covered in class. A few important ones that stood out to me were:

- Some art educators do not recommend letter or numerical grades, although as Chapman cautions, grading must conform to school policy.

~ This is a dilemma! I agree students should be graded more about their ideas + effort, but also understand that schools have policies + therefore teachers must conform.

- The making of an artwork, can be viewed primarily as a subjective experience. Art is based on the ideas ~~that~~ and emotions of the individuals engaged in the artistic process.

~ Yes. yes. yes! This is what I was just talking about. I feel ~~that~~ though, that if teachers give grades based on their ideas (the students'), and if the student receives a bad grade, then the student may feel that their ideas are invalid.

- Subjectivity is an integral and desirable quality of art that makes possible creative + divergent expression. Lansing + Richards argue that this subjective aspect of art can be addressed, however, in carefully formulated objectives.

~ I feel like this is the key to tie the ideas in this chapter all together. We want students

to be creative + take risks. If we have to give students grades, we can do that through objectives. If a good objective addresses imagination + emotional content in addition to skills learned or terminology learned, then grading can be done.

- Elementary art teachers evaluate student progress, but do not necessarily grade student artwork.

~ I like this idea. It is illustrated easily for me because I have a dance student who makes a little progress each week. She is not on the same level as her classmates though so I guess my question is: Are elementary students graded on individual scales or the same scale? Because this seems like they are on individual scales.

- Assignments must have clear, well-defined objectives which can be measured.

~ How many times have we heard this!?

- A specific number of points can be earned for simply completing an assignment... Additional points can then be assigned to each objective.

~ This is something that hasn't been covered yet but I think could be hugely helpful w/ grading / rubrics



### Questions for Students

Is this art? Is it good or bad?

Who gets to decide if it is art or not? Is it good art or bad art?

If this photo was originally not intended as art, but after becoming published and more well-known and celebrated... did it then become art?

Does the passage of time affect the perception of worthiness as art?

What art movement is this photo most closely related to?

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- Initial reactions to the setup. Text and Imagery.
  - Wall color
  - Sitting Areas
  - Text Arrangements

I liked the flow and the layout of the exhibition. I found it interesting that the center of the exhibition held Jacob Lawrence's work, and on the outside edges of the show, were the additional works by the other artists. I imagine it like a spider web, and Jacob Lawrence's work is in the center. On the outer edges the other artists are trapped in the web, relating them to the central focus at the center of the web. I found the colors the curators chose for the walls very warm and inviting, they were reminiscent of Lawrence's work and complimented the work well. I thought it was a smart move on the curators' part, someone coming into the show with no knowledge of the artist will feel welcomed by the space, but then once they see the work and begin to understand it, the colors seem like a betrayal because the subject matter is difficult. This is the perfect opportunity for someone to sit down in the chairs at the center of the rooms. The way they are positioned invites conversation, and if someone has trouble understanding the artwork, perhaps they will be better at deciphering the text next to nearly every work. I especially liked the text which would quote someone who relates to the work, it gave the experience more relevance for me, and if we can't know what the artist was thinking when he made the work, we can at least understand some of what he might have been feeling based on the text provided alongside the works.

How do these works present a different version of history than what we are generally taught?

Quite often, the history taught in US education often only tells one side of the story. The "happier" version. I still think about my junior year of high school history class, and learning about the Civil War. A classmate behind me had just moved to NY from Georgia, and when our teacher told us that the North won the war he was confused, because he was taught back in Georgia that the South had won. This was my first experience among many where I realized that not all schools are teaching the same things, and those subjects can be skewed in ways that favor certain people. By having the text on the wall next to the artwork, themes like the African American experience, history, and struggle puts plainly into view the artist's perspective on his lived experience.

- Note the additional works included by Bethany Collins, Henry Willis Thomas and Derek Adams. Consider the following in each:
  - What Personal response Is evoked by this room?
  - What kind of experience does this work present?
  - How Does it engage with the work of Lawrence?

Bethany Collins

At first, I didn't think there was anything in the room that held Bethany Collins's work, other than the book in the middle of the room. My first impression was that the room felt sterile because of the white walls, but then I noticed how the benches were arranged, and it reminded me of church pews. Then upon closer look I noticed the quaint and dainty raised flowers. It made me feel calm. When I learned that the book in the center of the room was a songbook it really clicked for me that this room could be perceived as a

church. I was a little lost at how her work related to Jacob Lawrence at first, but after giving it more thought, I realized that for a lot of African Americans, especially in the South, church is very important and part of the American experience. The themes of song, church, and the African American experience is what tied the two artists together for me.

Hank Willis Thomas

At first, I didn't get the work in Hank Willis Thomas' room. What I did notice was the lighting, and that the room was more or less cast in shadow. This made it hard to see the work, which once I clicked to learn more I thought perhaps was intentional. His process is interesting to me, finding works that relate to his life experience and making them his own. The connection to Lawrence was made after I learned the titles of the works in the room, particularly "My Father Died For This Country Too/ I Am An American Also." Reading this put a pit in my stomach. It also solidified the connection between Thomas and Lawrence, both wanting to belong in this America that they built.

Derrick Adams

I would have loved to have been able to go into the room to view this. I always get excited when I see something dance related. My first thoughts were; 'why aren't they wearing tap shoes? I like the sound these little plastic disks are making regardless, are the tappers on beat with the person singing or not?' Adams' and Lawrence's work relate to me because both are about perseverance. Despite not having tap shoes, the feet in Adams' video sound great, I didn't even really notice by the end that they weren't wearing tap shoes.

•Read the NYRB article on Jacob Lawrence attached here. Write down and submit three themes you can find in the article that would be appropriate to build lessons upon for a secondary classroom.

3 themes for lessons:

- 1) If you had an exhibition titled "American Struggle" what would your work look like, what themes/ subject matter would you use? How would it compare to Lawrences work?
- 2) Curation lesson? There was a lot of emphasis on *how* the works were displayed because of Lawrences use of tempera, mat vs no mat, glass frame vs no glass, sharp white frames, etc. A lesson on curation where students discuss how they would have displayed Lawrences show, and whether or not they feel that the mats and frames detract from the work. Does the way works of art are displayed impact the work itself? Etc.
- 3) Elements and Principles/ Style lesson. The article mentioned the use of red, and how at times it felt unnecessary. Do the students feel the same way? Perhaps there could be a lesson on symbolism and when to use it. Similarly, Jacob Lawrence's artistic style is defined as cubist/expressionist. Maybe there could be a lesson on cubism and/or expressionism. How does Lawrence's work compare to artists who work in the same style? How does the students' personal work compare/contrast?

**Answer the following questions after going through the exhibition:**

1. How do the artworks of Lawrence differ from conventional histories of the United States?

Again, knowing what I learned in school, and what I learned out of school, the works in this show lie somewhere in the middle for me (perhaps slightly skewed in the post-school direction) historical events are being depicted from the perspective of African Americans. Based on my history textbooks from school, the images that Lawrence created might not fully align with what was written in the books.

2. In what ways do these works and this exhibition have relevance for people today?

For me at least, and hopefully more people now than in years past, are familiar with the “other side” of history. For those that aren't aware, maybe this show could serve as an awakening for them. The works are a reckoning of sorts. It's not hard to imagine if Lawrence were still alive, what inspiration he might be using from present day's current events.