

Title: Junior's Drawings: Exploring the Visuals in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

Time: 50 minutes

Setting: Tenth grade classroom with 25 students

Theory Into Practice Background

1. This lesson was designed as a way to explore the use of visuals in a text. In the story, drawing is a big part of Junior's life so we thought it might be fun for students to put themselves in Junior's shoes and try to figure out why he draws and to see the effect those drawings have on his story. Students will essentially be "expanding the text" by creating drawings for scenes that do not already have artwork. They will discuss their drawing process and the decisions that go into representing an idea visually. Having students focus on the visual aspects of the text is supported by Jim Burke who says, "The guiding principle in graphic English is that we think differently when we transform our ideas into images and patterns than when we use words to express our thoughts. We are using the metaphorical mind that seeks to make connections between the initial idea being examined—for example, freedom, family, gangs—and its associations" (248). Students will create and share their drawings but they will also answer questions about the text and its use of visuals. Burke says that while "visual thinking" is helpful for getting students engaged he "often [feels] compelled to make them go deeper and to do so individually and in writing" (249). The questions on the Junior's Drawings worksheet will provide students the opportunity to write about some of the ideas that may have occurred to them through the drawing activity.

The lesson expands on a lesson by Jacklyn Ippolito in her unit on *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. In her plan she did not provide specific details for this particular lesson but the concept interested me so I decided to flesh it out. Her plan gave me the idea to have students turn one of the text's drawings into a poem; this activity is based on a line in the book where Junior says his artwork is kind of like poetry. By going from text (what the book says) to drawing (visually representing what the book says) to text (poem based on a drawing), students will fully appreciate the connection between the visual and textual representation of ideas.

2. This lesson takes place near the end of the unit but is not directly related to any of the previous lessons. In this lesson students will look at the text as a whole and analyze its visual aspects.
3. Most of the work in this lesson is guided by the "Junior's Drawings" worksheet. The worksheet provides students the details/expectations of the lesson. It also includes discussion questions which will give students the opportunity to engage in thoughtful

analysis of different visual elements. The questions make students think about the characters and the plot as well as the larger question of the different ways a story can be told.

4. This lesson comes near the end of the unit so it will be used as a kind of review of the text. This will help students as they begin their final projects because they will refresh their memories by looking through images/passages in the book. Specifically, analysis of visual elements can help those students who decide to create a graphic novel/other visual presentation as their final project.

Objectives:

1. Students will use drawings to expand the text and represent ideas visually.
2. Students will identify the effects of drawings on storytelling and the interpretation of ideas from a text.

Materials:

5 boxes of markers/colored pencils

Blank Printer Paper

Junior's Drawings worksheet (See attachment 1)

Document Camera and Screen

Preparation:

Before class make copies of the "Junior's Drawings" worksheet. Arrange desks into groups of five. Pre-select five groups of five students and put the names of the group members on each group of desks. This way students can find where they are supposed to be seated as they come into the class. At each group of desks place one box of markers/colored pencils and at each desk place a blank piece of paper and a copy of the "Junior's Drawings" worksheet.

Procedure:

1. (Before the bell rings) Tell students to find their seats by looking at the lists of names at each group of desks.
2. (3 min) Explain to students that we will be focusing on Junior's artwork in today's lesson. Tell them that they will be creating their own artwork for the book and will be exploring the effects that the artwork has on the text as a whole. They will turn in their work at the end of the lesson or finish it for homework (See Assessment section for more details). Refer students to their copies of "Junior's Drawings" and read over the directions for the first activity with them. Tell students to take out their copies of *Part-Time Indian* if they have not already done so.
3. (15 min) The "Junior's Drawings" worksheet provides students with a list of chapters without artwork. They will choose a sentence they think is important from one of these chapters and then will use their blank paper and markers/colored pencils to create a visual representation of the sentence. While students are working on their drawings, move from group to group to monitor their progress and keep students on task.

4. (5 min) When students are finished, tell them to share their work with the other members of their group. Ask them to share what sentence/scene they drew, why they chose to draw it, and how they decided to draw it the way they did. Ask the groups to choose their favorite drawings (one from each group) and use a document camera to share those drawings with the rest of the class. Again, ask students to share what sentence/scene they drew, why they chose to draw it, and the decisions that went into choosing how to represent the idea visually.
5. (12 min) Refer students back to their “Junior’s Drawings” worksheet. Allow them time to answer the questions regarding Junior’s artwork, writing their answers in the spaces provided. Students may work together in their groups but everyone must have their own worksheet filled in.
6. (15 min) When students have answered the questions, direct them to the last activity on the worksheet, Art as Poetry. Read the directions with students and have them open their books to page 95. Have someone read the quote near the bottom of the page which reads “My cartoons weren’t just good for giggles; they were also good for poetry”. Considering this quote, students will pick out a drawing from the book (or they can choose the drawing they made in class) and write a poem about it in the space provided on their worksheet. When students are finished, ask them to turn in their drawing and “Junior’s Drawings” worksheets. Students may complete any unfinished work for homework to be turned in the following day.

Discussion Ideas

1. What sentence/scene did you draw? Why did you choose this scene? What decisions did you make in choosing how to represent the idea visually? Why?
2. Why does Junior draw? How does Junior’s artwork help him?
3. Note the style of Junior’s drawings. What kinds of drawings does Junior make and what are the effects of the styles he uses? Why do you think he uses different styles for different drawings?
4. How are Junior’s drawings related to the text? Do they add to its meaning or distract from it? How? Compare and contrast the way that drawings and words convey meaning.

BILINGUAL/ESL AND ENGLISHES ACCOMMODATIONS: Spanish and AAVE

Spanish: Our student who speaks Spanish and is an English Language Learner can use Spanish-English dictionaries to translate the “Junior’s Drawings” worksheet, class discussion and to help him when he is creating his poetry. We can also provide him a translator if necessary. For this lesson, all students

are allowed to complete their work at home if they need more time. This will take some of the pressure off of this student if he needs to translate his work and does not have time to finish in class.

AAVE: We will discuss that answers to the questions on the “Junior’s Drawings” worksheet are to be written in Standard English but other forms of English can be used during class discussion and for the students’ poems.

Special Education Accommodations:

Autism: “Autism is a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences” (<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/categories.htm>).

Our student with asperger’s syndrome will be given accommodations throughout the lesson. Since making instructions clear is especially important for students with asperger’s syndrome, all the instructions will be written out on the “Junior’s Drawings” handout and will also be discussed verbally. If the student is feeling overwhelmed by the amount of activity during any portion of the lesson they will be allowed to move their desk away from their group or they may wear headphones (except during the discussion portions of class).

Assessment

When students have completed their “Junior’s Drawings” worksheet they will turn them in with their drawings. They will be graded according to their completion and demonstration of effort on the worksheet (see attachment 2).

Extension Ideas

- In our unit assessments, students will be given the option to explore Junior’s artwork and the role of artwork and literature in greater depth.
- We might also allow students to create a graphic novel interpretation of *The Catcher in the Rye*

Source of Activity

This lesson is adapted from lessons created by Jaclyn Ippolito. Jim Burke deserves credit for providing a wealth of ideas and strategies for creating and implementing our lesson. I would also like to thank Professor Lisa Monda-Amaya for her suggestions on how to accommodate students with Asperger’s Syndrome.

Resources and References

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2007.

Burke, Jim. *The English Teacher's Companion: a Complete Guide to Classroom, Curriculum, and the Profession*. 3 ed. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2008. Print.

Illinois State Board of Education: Illinois Learning Standards .2010. Illinois State Board of Education. < <http://www.isbe.net/ils/ela/standards.htm>>

Illinois State Board of Education: Special Education Categories.2010. Illinois State Board of Education. <<http://www.isbe.state.il.us/spec-ed/html/categories.htm>>

Ippolito, Jacklyn. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian Lesson Plan Unit*. Lesson plan. 2008.

Illinois State English Language Arts Goals

STATE GOAL 1: Read with understanding and fluency.

1.C.4e Analyze how authors and illustrators use text and art to express and emphasize their ideas (e.g., imagery, multiple points of view).

Students accomplish this goal by looking at the visual aspects of the text and discussing the effect they have on the reader. They will also determine differences and similarities between the visual aspects of a text and the written aspects by writing about images, creating their own images, and creating poetry out of images.

STATE GOAL 2: Read and understand literature representative of various societies, eras and ideas.

2.B.4a Critique ideas and impressions generated by oral, visual, written and electronic materials.

Students will accomplish this goal by answering questions about the drawings in *Part-Time Indian*. The questions have them think about the effect that the images bring to the text. Also, students will create and share their own images based on the text and discuss how and why they chose to create their drawings. By creating their own image, they will need to think about the effect they want that image to have and how to achieve that effect.

ATTACHMENT 1

Junior's Drawings

A lesson in three-parts

NOTE: You will turn in this worksheet as well as your drawing at the end of class to be graded. You may also finish uncompleted work for homework and turn it in tomorrow.

Activity 1: Create your own *Part-Time Indian* artwork

Instructions: Pick a chapter in the book that has no artwork (see below). Choose a sentence or paragraph in that chapter that you think is important and draw a picture on your blank piece of paper that represents that sentence/paragraph. You can use Junior's drawings for inspiration or you can use your own style. Think about how you want to represent the scene visually...will you use a lot of detail? A little? Will you draw a cartoon or something more realistic? Do you include text with your drawing? When you are finished drawing, you will share your creations and we will talk about the answers to these questions.

The following chapters contain no artwork: "Tears of a Clown", "Halloween", "My Sister Sends Me an E-mail", "Don't Trust Your Computer", "And a Partridge in a Pear Tree", "Rowdy and I Have a Long and Serious Discussion About Basketball", or "Talking About Turtles".

Activity 2: Discussing Junior's Drawings

Instructions: Answer the questions below. You may work as a group to come up with answers but everyone needs to write down the answers on their own worksheet. You are also welcome to work on your own if you prefer.

Why does Junior draw? How does Junior's artwork help him?

Note the style of Junior's drawings. What kinds of drawings does Junior make and what are the effects of the styles he uses? Why do you think he uses different styles for different drawings?

How are Junior's drawings related to the text? Do they add to its meaning or distract from it? How? Compare and contrast the way that drawings and words convey meaning.

Activity 3: From Image to Poem

Consider this quote on page 95 of *Part-Time Indian*: "My cartoons weren't just good for giggles; they were also good for poetry". Choose an image from anywhere in the book (or you may use the drawing you created) and turn that image into a poem. Think, "if this image was a poem, what would it say? How is this image like poetry?" Your answer will be your poem! You may write in any style of poetry you choose.

The image I chose is on page _____

Write your poem in the space below:

ATTACHMENT 2

Junior's Drawings rubric:

	2	1	0
Drawing	Drawing is visually appealing, good use of color, clearly connected to chosen passage.	Drawing is visually sparse and connection to text is tenuous.	Drawing is missing or completely unrelated to the text.
Questions	Questions are answered thoughtfully and completely, uses examples to support answers.	Questions are partially answered with few examples.	No questions are answered or are answered in a brief sentence or two.
Poem	Page number of image is provided, poem is clearly linked to image.	Poem is sort of linked to image, page number of image may or may not be provided.	No poem, no page number of image.

Total: ____/ 6 A:5-6 B:4 C:3 D:2 F:0-1