

by | Judith Snyder ●●●●



KEEP 'EM READING READING ART

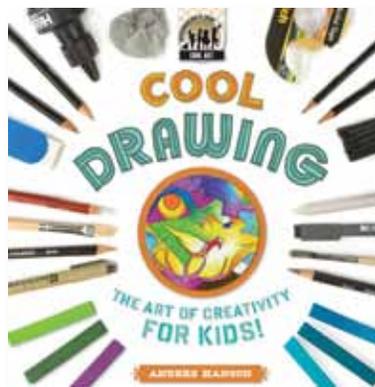
GRADES
1-5

Have you ever stared at a piece of art and let your mind meander through its colors, lines, and textures? Being involved in the artistic process or applying knowledge of the elements of design can develop skills in analysis and synthesis and promote the use of inference. Integrating art with reading, writing, social studies, and/or science units enriches the curriculum and encourages students to observe the world from different perspectives.

Reading to Create Art

Grades 2-5

A hands-on approach to introducing the art books in the 700s will give students the confidence to explore on their own. Arts and/or crafts can provide a springboard for creative thinking. It gives students a sense of accomplishment and opportunities for problem solving and exploration. With a little inspiration, not only will children find success in creating art, but they will be reading books to do it.



How-To Books

To emphasize the importance of precise wording of directions and the usefulness of picture models, try an experiment. Provide drawing materials to students. Giving only verbal directions, have them try to recreate a picture that only you can see. Let students compare their drawings with those of others in their table groups and then with the actual picture. The results demonstrate our ability to give and/or follow directions, as well as the ways our imaginations interpret the words.

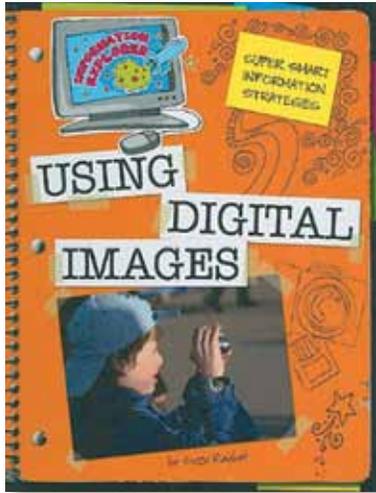
Apply this knowledge with the how-to-draw books in your collection, like the I Like to Draw! series from Looking Glass Library (a division of ABDO). Provide paper and pencils, and let students choose a book and a drawing activity. Encourage students to first read the introduction or the information at the front of the book about art basics, materials needed, or art terms. After choosing a picture, students should read the directions and follow the examples to complete their own drawing.

Arts and Crafts Books

Expand the last exercise using arts and crafts books. Find a craft that is simple to do in the library setting with materials that are easily available. This could be paper folding, nature crafts, collages, or crafts specific to a culture being studied. Display a picture of the final product. Read through the directions and distribute the materials before giving time for independent practice.

Reflections

Help students make the necessary connections between the art projects



and suggests where to look for the smaller stories within the bigger picture. She also includes questions for consideration and quotes from the photographer. Show two or three photos to the whole class, share information about them, and discuss the questions.

Once students have sufficient experience analyzing the photos and considering the questions, provide small groups with photos from the National Archives (<http://tinyurl.com/pb95gmh>); these can also be found on Flickr: <http://tinyurl.com/nqqvt9p>. Type a topic or historical period into the search box and browse through the photos until you find some with groups of people.

Ask small groups to discuss what they see in their photo. Tell them to consider the lighting, movement, color, contrast, and angle of the shot, as well as the content of the picture. After discussing it, groups should generate three questions that will help guide others who view the picture.

For students exhibiting high interest in photography, refer them to the book *Using Digital Images: Super Smart Information Strategies* by Suzy Rabbat.

Reading the Art in Picture Books

Grades 1–5

Picture books rely heavily on illustrations to tell the story. Sometimes the pictures expand the narrative or show a parallel story.

Exploring the use of illustrations can be a good incentive for older students to peruse picture books. Learning about an illustrator's intent and his or her effect on a story can also heighten younger students' appreciation of the images. For instance, in the book *All through My Town* by Jean Reidy, illustrated by Leo Timmers, the words are few but the illustrations are dense with action. Several side stories appear off and on throughout—the

turtle and its books, the cow and its spilled corn, a snake with a cupcake.

Use this densely illustrated book as a model to read and discuss as a whole class. (For other densely illustrated books, view the works of Jan Brett, Barbara Reid, Genevieve Leloup, Leo Timmers, David Wiesner, Graeme Base, Peggy Rathmann.) Then read a picture book with simple illustrations. Discuss how the illustrations complement the writing style and the mood of the story. Ask why a publisher would choose simple or dense pictures for a book.

Find a densely illustrated picture book for each student in the class. Task students with identifying side stories that occur only within the illustrations. They should write a few sentences describing what is depicted. Extend the activity using wordless picture books and asking small groups to write stories to go with the illustrations.

Reading Stories in Famous Paintings

Grades 4–6

Read portions of the books from the Gareth Stevens series *How to Look at Art* by Joy Richardson. Describe how to interpret the feelings or emotional states of the characters in a painting. Lines under eyes might indicate tiredness. The set of the mouth might suggest anger or joy. Even the type of clothing worn in a painting tells part of the story. Choose six to eight famous paintings that include groups of people, like Auguste Renoir's *Luncheon of the Boating Party* and Georges Seurat's *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. (Other possible artists: Horace Pippin, Jacob Lawrence, Mary Cassatt, Frida Kahlo.) Try to include both female and male artists, as well as artists from a variety of cultures.

When studying a particular culture, include art and its significance to the daily life, spiritual life, and creative spirit of the people. Comparing the artworks of different cultures can be a springboard into discussions of religious influences and economic and social issues.

Integrating art with curriculum content promises student engagement in abstract thinking and often produces unique presentations. Art helps students look beyond what is seen into their own imaginations. Giving students opportunities and tools for artistic expression will help them to discern and interpret the world using more than just words or numbers.



Divide the class into groups and give each group a different painting. Using the suggestions for how to interpret characters' emotions, the group should discuss the figures in the painting to determine their emotions and possible thoughts. After the discussion, have them develop a skit that tells the story of the picture.

In their skits, groups should recreate the scene with the body postures and expressions found in the painting. This will help students "feel" the characters' emotions. Groups either start or end their story skit in this tableau. After the skit, the class can ask about the clues in the picture that guided the group in developing the story.

Paintings like Emanuel Leutze's *Washington Crossing the Delaware* or John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence* and photos of important historical periods or events are excellent ways to integrate social studies units with art. Norman Rockwell's paintings of people from the 1930s–1960s also offer a wealth of possible stories. Find these in books or calendars, or access his "Four

Freedoms" paintings on the National Archives website (<http://tinyurl.com/qeup56v>; this page provides historical background information coupled with actual speeches by prominent politicians of the time).



Judith Snyder is a seasoned teacher/librarian in Colorado, as well as a professional storyteller and freelance writer. Judith is the author of the *Jump-start Your Library* series, three books featuring hands-on library lessons from *UpstartBooks* (2008), and a picture book, *What Do You See?* (2009), from *Odyssey Books*.

If your library does not possess a good selection of books showing famous artworks, consider starting a collection of famous art prints. A simple and inexpensive way to start this collection is to request used calendars from parents and friends that display a famous painting. Cut the calendars apart, laminate the pages, and voilà—you'll have an instant vertical art file.

