Storybook Illustrations
Grade Level: 4th – 6th grade
Author: Tracy Workman

Characteristics of Learners: This lesson is for 4th – 6th grade students (9 to 11 years of age). Students at this age are ready to develop specific competencies in art and are physically and mentally able to take on more complex art projects than younger students. Students at this age should have had considerable experience with art media and will have developed many skills in their use. With these more developed skills, students can better elaborate on their own ideas and interests in their work. These students are also interested in a much broader range of topics than younger children and are becoming more conceptually sophisticated. Because students are becoming more critical of their own work during this period, they are receptive to instruction in many technical aspects of art and are motivated to become skilled in making art that passes their own critical judgment.

Rationale: This lesson explores how artists can be storytellers by illustrating a central moment that stands for a whole story. When artists depict the most important scene in a story they help the viewer to understand what they think about that story. When these illustrations are accompanied by text the viewer gains a deeper understanding of the story, and when they are not, they allow the viewer to develop their own variant of the story. Both of these allow the artist to communicate in unique ways. In this lesson students will examine many different types of illustration throughout history and interpret various illustrations in terms of the stories that they tell. Students will write their own stories and then apply what they have learned about how central moments can stand for a whole story by creating their own storybook illustration.

Historical/Cultural Context:
The earliest forms of illustration were prehistoric cave paintings. Before the invention of the printing press, illuminated manuscripts were hand-illustrated. The earliest surviving illuminated manuscripts are from the period AD 400 to 600, and were primarily produced in Europe. During the 15th century, books illustrated with woodcut illustrations became available, and during the 16th and 17th centuries several other printmaking processes were used. Books with pictures for children were produced as early as the 1400s, but were available to very few. It wasn't until the 1600s that children's illustrated books began. Early chapter books were illustrated with simple woodcut illustrations and didn't last long because they were made from cheap materials, but they allowed many children the opportunity to have their own illustrated books. By the 1900s, illustration was a major component of popular culture and was seen in newspapers, mass-market magazines, and illustrated books around the world. Today, the presence of illustration is even more visible in our culture and there is a growing interest in collecting and admiring original artworks that were used as illustrations in books, magazines, posters, etc. Various museum exhibitions, magazines and art galleries have devoted space to the illustrators of the past.

Given the broad historical background of stories and storybook illustration, this lesson could easily be integrated across the curriculum. Illustrations could be made for specific historical, cultural, or fictional stories from other subject areas.

Sunshine Standards: Students will: (1) use and organize two-dimensional and three dimensional media, techniques, tools, and processes to produce works of art that are derived from personal experience, observation, or imagination; (2) use good craftsmanship
in a variety of two-dimensional and three-dimensional media; and (3) understand that subject matter used to create unique works of art can come from personal experience, observation, imagination, and themes.

**Objectives:** By the end of this lesson, students will be able to: (1) interpret various illustrations in terms of the stories that they tell, (2) write and analyze their own stories to determine which moment is the pivotal moment in those stories, and (3) demonstrate an understanding of how central moments can stand for a whole story by creating their own storybook illustration.

**Resources and Materials:** Slides, posters, transparencies, or digital images of various types of historical and contemporary illustrations such as the ones presented above and Arthur Rackham, James Christiansen, Randolph Caldecott etc. Background information from the websites: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illustration, and http://www.collectionscanada.ca/pagebypage/index-e.html, and also from the book “A Treasury of the Great Children’s Book Illustrators” by Susan E. Meyer can also be useful.

You will also need pencils, erasers, sketchbook paper, one piece of 11’ x 14” drawing paper for each student, writing paper, at least one thin line black marker for each student, a variety of colored pencils, rulers, one copy of the self-assessment form for each student, and one copy of the grading rubric for each student to be retained by the teacher.

**Vocabulary:**
- **Narrative Art** – art that represents a story or event.
- **Illustration** - a visualization such as a drawing, painting, photograph or other work of art that aims to elucidate or decorate a story, poem or other textual work, generally by providing a visual representation of something described in the text.
- **Illuminated Manuscript** - any decorated or illustrated manuscript from the Western or Islamic traditions.

**Preparations:** Arrange the tables in the classroom so that the students can be seated in groups and share materials. Prepare materials for drawing activity as necessary and arrange them so that they will be easily accessible. Prepare a chalkboard, marker board, or large sheet of paper to record student ideas about what makes a specific part of a story the most important part. For students with special needs, a familiar story can be illustrated rather than one that they have written themselves. If this will be needed, prepare copies of familiar tales for these students.

**Introduction:** (Day 1) Begin the lesson by showing images of several different storybook illustrations to the class. If possible, have some hung around the classroom throughout the lesson. Ask “What story do you see in this picture?” for a few different works. Have a classroom discussion on the topic. Present a short history of illustration with lots of pictures and examples. Explain that some artists can be storytellers by illustrating a central moment that stands for a whole story. Discuss with the class what makes a specific part of a story the most important part. Record student ideas on a board so that the whole class can see. Bring up a few well-known tales and ask which moment is the pivotal moment of those tales. Explain that the students will be writing their own stories and choosing a central moment to create a storybook illustration about.

**Procedures:**
(Step 1) Instruct students to write a short story based on one of the following three topics (or three topics that you have chosen beforehand):
1. If I could have one super power, what would it be? And what would I do with it?
2. One day, I turned into a cat, and then…
3. One day I went to the strangest place...

Stories should be long enough to have a clear beginning middle and end, a main character, and a climax: a page or two long. When the stories are completed instruct students to decide which moment in their story is the most pivotal. That will be the scene that they will draw for their illustration.

Model all of the following steps for the students and walk around the room to assist students who need help.
(Step 2) Have each student draw a pencil sketch of their illustration in their sketchbooks or on a separate piece of paper before they begin on their drawing paper. Look at each student's sketch before they move on to their final drawing and make any compositional suggestions that are necessary. When the students are satisfied with their sketches, they can move on to the next step.

(Step 3) Have the students draw their illustrations with a pencil on their 11” x 14” drawing paper. Make reference to storybook illustrations around the room and point out the amount of detail in works by Arthur Rackham, Randolph Caldecott, or James Christiansen. Encourage the students to take their time and include lots of detail. Students should also remember to fill the page and include a background. Rulers should be provided for those that need them.

(Step 4) When the students have a satisfactory pencil drawing, it is time to draw the outlines with a thin line black marker. Point out the outlines on the storybook illustrations around the room (or however you have them for display). Notice how some lines are thicker than others. Closer things usually have thicker lines, and the main characters or objects might have thicker lines. These differences in line width should be noticeable but not huge. Remember to include detail. When the marker is dry, students should erase their pencil lines.

(Step 5) Now that the outlines are done, it is time for the students to color their illustrations. Students should use colored pencils and should not feel confined to filling in each shape in their illustration with one flat color. Point out how works by Arthur Rackham or James Christiansen are colored. Encourage students to draw patterns and textures with their pencils (like fabric patterns), add one color over another (like red on the cheeks), and if they have already had lessons on shading, students can add shading. Show students the different effects that can be achieved by coloring lightly or pushing hard with the pencil. Encourage students to use these effects to their advantage. The only things that should be left white on the page should be things that are intentionally white in color.

**Distribution and Clean-Up:** If possible, have all the necessary materials that students will need for the day’s work on each group’s table before they enter the class. As an alternative, ask 1 – 2 helpers from each group to collect the materials from a materials station as they are needed during the lesson. For clean-up, students should place their materials back where they came from and store their drawing in their portfolio or wherever else student work is generally stored.

**Closure:** Allow each student to share his/her illustration with the class and describe what is happening in their story. If possible display the illustrations for the rest of the school to see along with a neat copy of the students’ stories. Have students fill out the self-assessment forms and turn them in along with their preliminary sketches and another copy of their stories.

**Assessment:** Questions to consider when evaluating students’ learning and performance in this lesson include: To what extent were students able to interpret storybook illustrations in terms of the stories that they tell? How successfully did students write and analyze their own stories to determine which moment is the pivotal moment in those stories? Did students demonstrate an understanding of how central moments can stand for a whole story by creating their own storybook illustration? Refer to students’ own self-assessments and worksheets in assessing the outcomes of the lesson. See
attachment for a rubric to assist in assessing the students' work from this lesson. (You may want to share this rubric with the students before they begin work on their illustrations).

**Extensions:** (1) Have students create a series of illustrations for their story. (2) Have students exchange their illustration with another student in the class and write a new story based on the illustration that they have now. (3) Have students present these stories to the class. (4) Have students draw a new illustration based on their new story. (5) Place students in groups and have them create a series of illustrations for a popular tale or fable. Students in a group should agree on which moment is the pivotal moment in that story, and make sure that someone in their group illustrates that moment.

**Adaptations:** For students with an autism spectrum disorder consider having student enter the classroom once the other students are seated in order to avoid encountering the upheaval and non-structured “setting-up and beginning” of the class period. In a similar fashion, student could leave a few minutes early. Additionally, these students should be seated in an area with limited distractions and visual clutter near a good peer role model. These students could be given a story that they are already familiar with to illustrate, rather than writing their own since writing can sometimes be time consuming and difficult for students with autism. This would also allow the student more time to complete their drawing since they could begin while the other students are writing, and allow the teacher time to demonstrate concepts for the student as needed.

It may also be useful to create and use a “Story Board” for outlining the instructional steps. The teacher will need to break the goals of the lesson into shorter, more precise sections and present the lesson’s concepts in clear concise terms. Repetition of important information will also help (such as reminding the student frequently or presenting the same information in a number of different ways). Students with autism may have difficulty interpreting what makes a specific moment in a story the “central” one; discuss what moment the student intends to draw before they begin. For assessment, consider removing all but one or two of the assessment criteria so that the student can focus on fewer ideas.

**Appendix A:**

**Bibliography:**


**Appendix B:**

**Handouts:**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Incomplete</th>
<th>Satisfactory</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Concept</td>
<td>Student’s sketches, notes, and/or illustration did not display an understanding of which moment in a story is the most central/pivotal</td>
<td>Student’s sketches, notes and illustration display an understanding of which moment in a story is the most central/pivotal</td>
<td>Student’s sketches, notes and illustration display an understanding of which moment in a story is the most central/pivotal and effectively communicate the story to the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of Process</td>
<td>Student’s illustration does not fill the page, has large white areas that do not belong, shows many preliminary pencil marks and/or has smudges. Thick and thin lines were not utilized at all. Little attention to detail is apparent.</td>
<td>Student’s illustration fills the page, does not show excessive pencil marks or smudges. Work shows some attention to detail and is thoughtfully colored.</td>
<td>Student’s illustration fills the page, shows little to no extraneous marks, has utilized thick and thin lines, shows attention to detail and is thoughtfully colored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time/Effort</td>
<td>Student spent little time/effort on this project, regularly distracted other students, or turned in sloppy or incomplete work.</td>
<td>Student spent class time working on project. Work reflects a fair amount of time and effort. Sketches attempted.</td>
<td>Student spent class time working on project and applied themselves consistently. Sketches are complete and well thought out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Student did not write a story.</td>
<td>Student wrote a story that was acceptable for the project.</td>
<td>Student wrote a story with a clear beginning middle and end, a main character, and a climax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation</td>
<td>Student did not complete self-assessment or did not display a thoughtful response to the questions.</td>
<td>Student took assessment seriously and was thoughtful.</td>
<td>Student was thoughtful, critical, and effectively justified his/her reasoning.</td>
</tr>
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Self-Assessment Worksheet
Answer the questions using complete sentences and justify your answers with specific examples or reasons.

1. What is good about your work?

2. How could you improve it?

3. Did you effectively represent the story?

4. What did you learn from this lesson?