

## Integrating Arts to Increase Reading Comprehension, Oral Proficiency and Vocabulary Retention



### Using Art Interpretation to Deepen Understanding of Curriculum and Increase Retention of Vocabulary

**Purpose:** To increase reading comprehension and oral proficiency. Research on teaching via arts interpretation has shown increases in student motivation, participation and corresponding improvement in performance. Research has also shown that associating words with movement aids in retention.

1. **Method:** Identify target vocabulary, or juicy words. Divide the text into no more than seven chunks. Three might be best for beginning students. Each part will need a title and summary, teacher or student generated. Groups discuss and plan their presentations via one or more of the following modes: soundscape, visual arts, poem or dance, tableau, theatre or scenes. All presentations include an oral component.
2. **Juicy words:** Students act out definitions of words. Group mirrors. Need cards with the target words and a definition, done by teacher or students, in class or as homework. Upper level students will use the dictionary or thesaurus to find definitions, and highlight the one which corresponds to its use in the text. Example: down.
3. **Presentation modes explained.**
  - a. **Soundscape:** Students correlate sounds to the text segment using any available materials or musical instruments. Example: Rain! The rain pushes the spider down.
  - b. **Visual Arts:** Students create pictures or collages to depict main ideas of a text. Visual arts can also support vocabulary and themes.

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- c. Poetry: Students write poems (pattern, shape, diamante, haiku, free verse or found poetry) in response to the text or theme. Sentence structure can be fluid in the poetry format.
- d. Tableaux: Students represent a text or part of a text using fixed or photographed scenes. Example:
  - A. Emancipation Proclamation - Abraham Lincoln decreed that all slaves would be free.
  - B. Action now! - We have come to demand our rights.
- e. Theater or scenes: Students create scenes based on action and dialog culled from the text.

You can use multiple actors and change actors in each scene. Students or teacher can write the scenes (drawing on the book). Teachers must have final edit. Oral proficiency will be enhanced if scripts are used during performance.

Example from Robert Frost's poem

*My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year. (2)*

Question: The horse wonders why they stopped.

Rider: You seem to find it queer that we stopped here.

Horse: Why are we here? There is no farmhouse near. It's freezing and dark tonight.

4. Application using the template.

*If you wish to have copies of this document, or the lesson templates in English, French or Spanish, (or if you translate them to another language and wish to share) please contact us at [Iran\\_A\\_Amin@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Iran_A_Amin@mcpsmd.org) or [Agnes\\_C\\_Loomis@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Agnes_C_Loomis@mcpsmd.org) Thanks!*

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Beginning Text: *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* (attribution unknown-1962? Mother Goose?)

The itsy bitsy spider **went** up the water spout. (1)  
**Down** came the **rain**, and washed the spider out. (2)  
Out came the **sun**, and **dried** up all the rain  
And the itsy bitsy spider went **up** the spout again. (3)

1. UP. The spider goes up the spout.
2. Rain! The rain pushes the spider down.
3. Up again. Thanks to the sun, the spider can resume its course.

Intermediate Text: *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village, though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow. (1)

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year. (2)

He gives his **harness** bells a **shake**  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake. (3)

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep. (4)

Advanced Text: *I Have a Dream* speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.

...Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the **Emancipation** Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. 1) Emancipation Proclamation: *Abraham Lincoln decreed that all slaves would be free.*

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly **crippled** by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition. 2) Far from over: *One hundred years later, the descendants of slaves are still suffering from injustice, setting them apart from other Americans.*

In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." 3) A bad check: *The equal rights guaranteed by the constitution have never been delivered to people of color.*

But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so, we've come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice... 4) Action now: *We have come to demand our rights.*

# down

1. from a higher to a lower place; toward the ground
2. depressed; dejected
3. inoperative; the computer is *down*
4. completed; finished four *down*, six to go
5. in writing; on record take *down* his name

## Integrating Arts to Increase Reading Comprehension, Oral Proficiency and Vocabulary Retention



A. Book, short narrative or text title: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Genre: Fiction    Non-Fiction

C. Theme or topic: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Juicy Words (essential vocabulary) :

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ |          |

D. Choose a chunk to present to the class.

Via: Scene    Tableau    Soundscape    Visual arts    Poem    Dance

Title	
Summary	
Dialogue	
Characters	
Setting	
Props	



A. Book, short narrative or text title: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Genre: Fiction    Non-Fiction

C. Theme or topic: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Juicy Words (essential vocabulary) :

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ |          |

D. Choose a chunk to present to the class.

Via: Scene    Tableau    Soundscape    Visual arts    Poem    Dance

Title	
Summary	
Dialogue	
Characters	
Setting	
Props	



A. Título del libro o del texto: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Género: Ficción-Realidad

C. Tema: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Palabras sabrosas (el vocabulario esencial):

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ |          |

D. Elige una parte para presentar a la clase.

Modos: Escena    Cuadro    Sonido    Artes Visuales    Poema    Danza

Título	
Resumen	
Diálogo	
Personajes	
Escenario	
Herramientas	



A. Titre du livre, récit ou texte lu: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Genre: Roman Documentaire

C. Thème ou sujet: \_\_\_\_\_

D. Mots croquants (le vocabulaire essentiel) :

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ |          |

D. Choisissez une partie que vous présenterez à la classe.

Moyens de présentation: Mise en scène – Tableau – Son  
 – Arts Plastiques - Poème - Danse

Titre	
Résumé	
Dialogue	
Personnages	
Situer l'action	
Accessoires	