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# METAPHORIC INTERPRETATIONS OF A SOCIAL ISSUE

By

Kristina L. Hobby

Under the Direction of Dr. Melody Milbrandt

## ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a study on how fourth graders can learn and use metaphor to create meaningful and expressive artworks. It is intended to investigate how students can understand the idea of metaphor and how they can use it to illustrate their own thoughts and ideas within their artworks. Jean Piaget believes much abstract thinking does not occur until the Formal Operations Stage of eleven to thirteen years of age. This study sought to question the ideas of Piaget by introducing the abstract thought of metaphor to fourth graders who are at the approximate age of nine. It set out to demonstrate that students may understand the idea of metaphor while applying it to create meaningful artworks that demonstrate their own opinions, thoughts and beliefs. Concepts about metaphor were introduced to the students through a number of interactive lessons to develop their ability to implement metaphor into their own artworks. This unit taught students how to interpret metaphor and apply the use of metaphor to their own artworks.

INDEX WORDS: Metaphor, Creativity, Student Learning, Piagetian  
Theory of Abstract Thought, Evaluation of Learning Process,  
Cognitive, Social Issues

METAPHORIC INTERPRETATIONS OF A SOCIAL ISSUE

by

KRISTINA L. HOBBY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Art Education

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007

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2007

METAPHORIC INTERPRETATIONS OF A SOCIAL ISSUE

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## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Need for the Study**

Throughout my five year teaching career I have noticed many children come to art with a preconceived notion that art is a talent. They believe that art is something that they are born with and if they cannot draw or be “artistic” they do not want to participate and will often neglect to even try in the class. Most students do not understand that art is something that is learned. Art is a vehicle for self-expression than can often help students resolve issues that confront them on a daily basis. Students need to be provided with guidance on how to create art. They need to be shown the technical aspects of how good art is created and how to transform their ideas and thoughts into a visual form.

In today’s society, most children are exposed to the idea that art is something that is hung on the wall to be admired for its aesthetic value. They are not taught how to interpret its meaning and therefore cannot fully appreciate its entire value. In my class I often try to teach students to understand art for its meaning. I ask the questions of “What is this artist trying to say?” and “Why do you think the artist created this artwork?” I want my classroom to be a place where students can be challenged to think creatively and to create a meaningful experience that relates to their own lives.

I believe metaphor plays a crucial role in understanding and creating meaningful artwork, the idea of metaphor allows students to perceive visual images in alternative ways. The use of metaphor allows students to perceive visual images in alternative ways. The use of metaphor requires the transfer of one idea to another based on the association of similar characteristics between two objects. Visual metaphor allows artists to portray

ideas and thoughts in multiple forms. In my Review of Literature I describe how metaphor can help students better understand why artwork is created and how they, as students, can create artwork that is individualized and meaningful to their own lives. The literature review is organized to (1) describe metaphor and Piaget's theory of abstract thought (2) present the idea of metaphor as an avenue for creating more meaningful artwork and (3) provide case studies of how metaphor has been used in the art and regular classroom setting. The purpose of this study is to show that with art instruction students eleven years of age and under may be capable of learning, understanding and applying the idea of metaphor to visually represent their thoughts, ideas and feelings when creating their own artwork.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research was to field test a unit of lessons developed to instruct fourth graders to use metaphor to create meaningful and expressive artworks. I wanted to investigate how students might understand the idea of metaphor and how they can use it to express their own thoughts and ideas within their artworks. Many philosophers and idealists, including Piaget believe much abstract thinking does not occur until the Formal Operations Stage of 11-13 years of age. This curriculum developed for fourth graders who are approximately nine years old, reveals that students have the capability to learn, understand and apply the abstract thought of metaphor to their artwork enabling them to create a more meaningful and expressive experience.

This study demonstrates that given appropriate art instruction students can understand the idea of metaphor and use it to create meaningful artworks that

demonstrate their own opinions, thoughts and beliefs. Students participated in interactive art lessons to develop their ability to implement metaphor into their own artworks.

Through the art curriculum, I taught students how to use metaphor and create an artwork in a two-dimensional form that exemplifies a contemporary social issue. Students researched the topic of their artwork by finding images and written articles on the social issue of their choice. Students were able to create images and illustrations using metaphor to show how they feel about their issue and/or current event. These metaphorical devices helped students decipher meaning within their own lives and helped in their application of interpretation of their world around them.

## **Chapter 2**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways do art lessons that engage fourth grade students in understanding metaphor assist students in creating meaningful and expressive artworks?
2. In what ways are students at the age of nine able to decipher and interpret metaphorical thought?

#### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The idea of metaphor was introduced to the entire fourth grade class at Youth Elementary School. There were four classes which I saw on a four day rotation. All four classes reflected in their journals, researched a social issue, and created a two-dimensional artwork that exemplified their ideas, thoughts and feelings of that issue. All students were exposed to the ideas of metaphor and utilized its ideas in their final project to illustrate their ideas on a social issue. I analyzed my notes, student-teacher discussions (via videotape), student journal entries and reflections, assessments, and student artwork to create my conclusions.

#### **Participants**

The participants of this study were nine and ten year old fourth grade students at Youth Elementary School. The study took place during April 2007. The school's demographics consist predominantly of Caucasian background (92%), with a small percentage of Hispanics (2%) and African-Americans (2%). The fourth grade class

consisted of seven classes where four classes were randomly picked to participate in this study. Each class contained approximately 28 students, which provided the study with 112 students. There were 58 girls and 54 boys used in the study.

This study took place in my own classroom. The fourth grade was rotated every four days; therefore, I saw the same class once every four days for 50 minutes. On two research days I saw the classes for 90 minutes.

### **Limitations**

There are a few limitations that could inhibit this study. First of all, the student's amount of previous exposure to metaphor could be an issue. I assumed that all of my students had very little knowledge of metaphor; however, this was based on the curriculum that is taught within our school. The fourth grade curriculum does not address metaphor nor does the curricula of any previous grade levels. However, I had no way of knowing if a student had been exposed to the concept of metaphor within the home or elsewhere.

My school has little cultural diversity and that could provide limits on the answers I might receive. If my classroom were more culturally diverse, many other opinions, belief systems and ideas would be presented. These ideas and belief systems could alter the group's idea on their social issue and change the very course of the group's opinion on the social issue itself. In conclusion, cultural and environmental factors such as previous knowledge and ethnicity might affect previous knowledge of the use of metaphor.

Finally, time can be seen as a limitation. There is limited time that students are able to be exposed to the ideas of metaphorical interpretations. As students progress into fifth grade, they can envelop a more concrete idea of metaphor because the teacher can elaborate more on its meaning and implications for use. The unit taught in this study is only taught over the duration of one month. If students had more time, their use of metaphor would be more developed and their ideas would be stronger.

**Timeline**

This study will take place in the 2006-2007 school year. The research and all class studies will take place during April 2007. All studies using the fourth grade students at Youth Elementary School, who are studying metaphor and its importance on art production, will take place at this time. Students will learn about metaphor, implement its meaning and create artworks in two-dimensions by April 2007.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Throughout my career as a teacher as well as a perpetual student, teaching and learning about the arts, I have encountered many preconceived ideas on art and how it relates to the public and the individual that created it. Ever since I was a child, my artistic talent was said to be a talent that I was born with, especially since no one in our family was artistic. I grew up believing I had a talent but no direction on how to use it as something to express my thoughts, ideas and feelings.

As an undergraduate student, who majored in art education, I learned the technical aspects of art. I learned how to throw on a wheel, to use watercolors, to draw two-dimensional pieces, what negative and positive space was and so on. I learned little on how to create art that could be expressive of myself. I believed art was a reflection of the world around me; however, it was only a reflection of what I saw and not how I felt. Not until I was a graduate student at Georgia State University, did I realize art was so much more. I held many misconceptions of art including that all artwork was supposed to be realistic and if it was not realistic it could not be labeled as art. In my teaching philosophies class I was exposed to some articles that explored the idea of metaphor in art. These articles led me on my own personal discovery of metaphor, where I began to use it in the creation of my own artwork. It opened a door that I never knew existed, therefore, my artwork became more reflective of my own ideas, thoughts and feelings. Art became a vehicle of self-expression, a place where I was free to think whatever I wanted, that is what I believe, now, art should be.



Today, as a teacher, I see many of my students struggling with the same ideas I had as a child. Occasionally students believe that they are artistic and can create art that reflects the world around them, often creating in a more literal sense. Other students believe that they have no artistic value whatsoever and struggle with capturing anything on paper. I believe every child can create art; they just need to be provided the avenues to explore and to conquer. I also believe metaphor can create an avenue for children to be able to better express themselves through a visual medium. My ideas of teaching metaphor to fourth grade students can be assumed to be a difficult task. According to some psychologists, children are not capable of constructing and developing an abstract thought such as metaphor. I believe fourth grade students are capable of understanding and interpreting the idea of metaphor with a lot of focused and determined instruction. Students at this age are capable of anything if the teacher is willing to give the students the confidence, information, and understanding of the topic to allow their creativity of metaphor to soar.

Within this Review of Literature, I will first explore the idea of metaphor by unraveling the definition and considering its impact on literature and art and the ability of students to use and decipher its meaning. Furthermore, I will discuss how metaphor is created and its potential to influence the artist and how they depict ideas and thoughts within their artworks. Finally, I will explore a number of case studies that have used metaphor and how the participants felt about its implementation. In conclusion, this Review of Literature is to help develop an understanding of how metaphor can create meaningful artistic experiences through the creation of artwork and develop awareness

that children, at a very young age, can utilize and implement the ideas of metaphor in their own artworks.

When asked what art is or what art is for one would receive a multitude of answers. According to [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), art is “the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance”. This definition says little of the expressive qualities that art can have on its creator and on its audience. A person who is not educated within the ideals of art often has a perception that art is primarily used for aesthetic purposes only; to be used for decorations and adornments to brighten walls of houses and buildings never knowing the meaningful content it withholds. In conclusion, the idea of art is defined within what a person believes art is to them, but often art receives a multitude of misconceptions and misrepresentations.

The purpose of art education is to allow students to understand the meaning of art and to create their own definition.

“It is important for educators to realize that children’s art has a different purpose than fine art and the goal of art education for young children is strengthening of their individual capacities for the organization of experience. For children, work in art should combine mastery of skill and knowledge, expression of feelings and the creation of symbols in a synthesis directed towards understanding themselves in their world.” (Pariser, 52)

Often times, art education’s primary focus is on the technical aspects of creating art such as form, shape, color and line. Students should be shown how to create art but they

should also be given the tools to create art that allows them to freely express themselves and to have the freedom to show their idea of art to the world.

My goal is for students to create art that is meaningful to themselves and other people by applying and utilizing the idea of metaphor. “In the acquisition of knowledge, students try to translate their complex feelings, thoughts and experiences into visual imagery that can often result in simple, clichéd images”.(James, 2000, p.6) Students will revert to literal or realistic interpretations that often do not illustrate their ideas or thoughts the way they would like them to be represented. “ A key to engaged student artwork is a deeper understanding of metaphor.” (James, 2000, p.6)

### **What is Metaphor?**

Throughout history, metaphor has been defined and explained. Its idea and use is defined predominantly within literature. According to Aristotle, the definition of metaphor can only be applied to a figure of speech “When Homer says that Achilles ‘Leapt on his foes like a lion’ it is a simile; but when he says ‘he leapt, a lion, on his foes’ it is a metaphor” (Gombrich, 1985, p.12). Aristotle believed that “to be a master of metaphor is....a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implied an intuitive perception of the similarity of the dissimilars.” Aristotle described how metaphor can be used from a literary standpoint, but his definition can also define the meaning of metaphor from a visual standpoint.

A metaphor has multiple meanings including something that can take the place of something else or a relation that can combine elements that holds one characteristic as similar or equivalent but different in many other ways (Mattano, 2004, p.2). In visual representations, metaphor uses two images that are very different and substitutes one for

the other based on one similar characteristic. Not only is the creator of the artwork using life experiences to create their artwork they are transforming those experiences into other images to convey a deeper meaning. “The conceptual structure of a visual metaphor suggests that doing art enables the artist to dialogue with the self through a medium, to come to know the self, and to better understand the self’s relationship to the world and the relationships within the world” (Serig, 2006, p.233). Metaphor can be considered an essential process and product of thought. The power of metaphor lies in its potential to further our understanding of meaning of experience, which in turn defines reality.

“In art and language, metaphor urges us to look beyond the literal, to generate associations and to tap new, different or deeper levels of meaning. The metaphoric process reorganizes and vivifies; it paradoxically condenses and expands; it synthesizes often disparate meanings. In this process, attributes of one entity are transferred to another by comparison, by substitution, or as consequence of interaction.” (Fernstein, 1982, p.45)

### **Theories on the Capability of Metaphorical Interpretation in Children**

Metaphor is a representation of abstract thought. Abstract thought is characterized by a thought that is not associated with a concrete image. Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist who provided many central concepts in the field of developmental psychology, proposed that children are not capable of abstract thought until they are in the Formal Operations Stage, which does not happen until they are eleven years old. Abstract thought “is characterized by acquisition of the ability to think abstractly and draw conclusions from the information available” (Winner, 2002, p.56). Piaget was one

of the many who proclaimed children below the age of eleven were incapable of thinking abstractly while others tend to disagree.

Some argue that metaphorical thought often begins in early childhood.

Psychologists argue that metaphorical thinking does not begin until a child is at least four years old, while some would argue that “pretend play” in children is a non-verbal expression of metaphor. (St. Clair, 2000, p.43). During the years of early childhood children become fluent and inventive users of symbols, including gestures pictures, spoken words and written ones (Dyson, 1990, p.49). With metaphor often leading to symbol creation, one would propose that children have a capability to create metaphors early on. Initially, children act on the world directly. If they are given a marker, a child may grasp it, shake it, and taste it bringing the marker into the early multi-sensory world of infancy (Dyson, 1990, p.49). According to Piaget, as children participate in the recurrent activities of their lives, they come to understand that people and objects have an existence of their own. Each medium offers children distinctive physical and visual properties to explore. In time, children discover a link between a salient feature of a medium and a salient feature of their experiences (Dyson, 1990, p.51). Children soon use these tools to transform their experienced world into imagined ones where they are in charge. (Dyson, 1990, p.51) This idea essentially conveys that children use metaphor to transform their everyday experiences.

Children are often times believed to be incapable of learning about abstract thinking, such as metaphor, because they have not yet learned or acquired enough information to associate similarities between objects.

“Metaphor comprehension requires a recognition that things in the world are classified into separate domains....Children must be able to make a preliminary delineation of the contents of these domains (e.g. inanimate matter, living matter, physical matter, mental matter) their physical appearance, internal structure, boundaries and functioning. There are no inherent limits to the kinds of similarities children can construct. All that is necessary to map the appropriate vehicle properties onto the topic domain is sufficient knowledge about the domains involved” (Winner, 2002, p.432).

If a child is prepared with the knowledge and understanding of a certain topic or idea then a child is capable of producing a metaphoric interpretation. Children must be equipped with the knowledge to create such associations. “If children fail to understand because they lack the ability to perceive certain types of similarities, it is metaphoric ability per se that is incomplete. But if children fail only because they lack sufficient knowledge of the topic, it is domain knowledge and not metaphoric ability that is incomplete” (Winner, 2002, p.432).

Children are often prone to errors when it comes to metaphoric interpretations and creations. “They use similarity in their interpretations, but fail to locate the intended similarity on which the metaphor was based” (Winner, 2002, p.433). Children who do not have the knowledge of a certain subject or idea can misinterpret or not recognize what was trying to be expressed within the metaphor. For instance, if someone were to say “the prison guard has become a hard rock”, a child might think that the prison guard had really strong muscles rather than that he was unfeeling (Winner, 2002, p.435). If a student had never been exposed to the idea of “unfeeling” then the child could not

interpret what was being said accurately. Thus, the problem of understanding metaphor is not based on its conceptual meaning but on the amount of knowledge exhibited, which limits the child's potential to understand specific metaphors.

Metaphors are created cognitively to assimilate a person's experience and previous knowledge. Metaphors represent what a person knows and how they transfer that past knowledge onto their occurring experiences. Throughout childhood we are faced with experiences that guide and impress images into our brain. In these instances we have something like synaesthesia (joining together of sensations that are experienced separately) (Gombrich, 1985, p.13). Often times, these experiences are linked to emotion. The more emotion felt during the experience the more likely a metaphor can be created for it. Fainsilber and Ortony (1987) found that participants generated higher proportions of metaphorical language when verbally describing their intense feelings than when they verbally described their actions (Lubart, 1997, p.5). It is important to note that emotions are relevant to both the generation of metaphor and the interpretation and appreciation of metaphor (Lubart, 1997, p. 5).

Students who do not know how to handle their emotions can use metaphor as an outlet to express themselves and create artwork that is meaningful and beneficial to their lives. Metaphor allows for creative problem-solving while engaging the imagination. Students can create imaginary objects from real ones. Metaphorical thinking allows different meanings to be exposed and goes beyond its own limits because it allows one to shift from one thing to something else (Mattano, 2004, p.1). It allows the feeling or experience to be disguised with something else that bears its same characteristics.

According to aesthetician Arthur Danto (1980) those who study metaphor usually link it with meaning and with processes of making meaning (Stankiewicz, 1996, p.4).

Our own personal experiences often influence how we interpret artwork and all of the visual images that surround us everyday. Students are constantly bombarded with visual images everyday and often do not know how to decipher their meaning. “Through a paradoxical process that condenses and expands meaning, metaphor enables us to generate vivid associations and develop insightful, deeper and more personal understandings” (Fernstein, 1982, p.12) If students are involved in creating metaphor they will be more prepared to decipher and interpret metaphor in other incidences. As a student learns that metaphor is the substitution of one object for another, they will be able to apply it to other mediums and understand that metaphor is a universal tool to be used in deciphering many thoughts and ideas conveyed in many ways.

### **Implications of Metaphor in the Classroom and Case Studies**

Metaphor can help students in so many ways, but often teachers neglect to teach its meaning and how to use it. To unveil its meaning in the art classroom is a wonderful and magnificent place to teach its beginnings. Many works of art contain metaphors and students can learn how to decipher the metaphors and apply metaphorical thought to their own artworks. Art teachers can help students not just understand metaphor but apply it to the world around them. They can help students understand the meanings which undergrid cultural symbols and make objects which include symbols’ culture (Stankiewicz, 1996, p.4). Not only can metaphor help students understand other cultures but it can be cross-curricular. Students can learn how metaphor can be applied to other subjects and be able to decipher meanings and contexts within other subjects. Essentially



teachers can use metaphors to help students and ourselves to understand abstract concepts and big ideas (Stankiewicz, 1996, p. 4). “Any curriculum that encourages students to bring their own interests (through metaphor) provides opportunities for deep engagement....in such engagement, the art instruction becomes dialectic then didactic. The art room/studio becomes a place for material and conceptual exploration, to question generation and discoveries in a planned an unplanned environment- planned in that the curriculum provides a structure, unplanned in that the structure is open to the unexpected” (Serig, 2006, p.245).

Many studies have shown that utilizing metaphor within artworks can help children explain their emotions, feelings and ideas of what is happening in their day to day lives. One study was described by Coles in 1967 which told the story of a young black girl (Ruby) who was the first child to desegregate her school in the South. “Ruby’s artworks were analyzed and often showed sketches of black adults typically as incomplete and ambiguously dark skinned whereas whites were anatomically complete and unequivocally light skinned.” (Pariser, 2005, p.52) Ruby would often represent herself as she represented other black people, incomplete and not of one color. One day Ruby was asked to draw a picture of her grandfather, this following describes her artwork:

“She drew an enormous black man, his frame taking up quite unusually about the entire sheet of paper. Not only did she outline his skin as brown; every inch of him was made brown except the black belt that lay across his midriff. His eyes were large, oval lines of black....the arms were long, stretching to the feet, ending in average hands; the left one had its normal complement of fingers, but the right

was blessed with six. The legs were thick and ended in heavily black boots (which usually were portrayed by a frayed shoe or bare feet)” (Pariser, 2005, p.52)

This story exemplifies a child’s use of metaphor. Unconsciously, Ruby was unaware of her use of metaphor but the picture of the grandfather displays its utilization. Ruby thought very differently of her grandfather. She believed that he was a strong and proud black man. This was exemplified in her picture showing that her experiences and opinions of her grandfather could be shown through metaphor within her artistic representation.

Another study on metaphor was done by Patricia James, a professor who taught academically under prepared students a number of exercises to lead her students into metaphorical exploration. She wanted her students to explore the ideas of metaphor, which can serve as a foundation for generating artistic ideas, as an entry into thinking about works of art, and as a way to construct a classroom environment in which students can feel comfortable working with personal levels of meaning (James, 2000, p.6). She began her class with a photomontage project where she showed students how to practice metaphoric thinking by doing an “I am” writing project about a work of art. She suggested that they look at a number of artworks and pick a portrait that best exemplified themselves. The students were asked to explain how it would feel to be in that portrait.

Many students found that writing about the portraits not only gave them insight into the portrait but allowed them to be reflective of themselves. They used their own previous knowledge of their own experiences and life events and began to apply them to the pictures that lay before them. Many students explanations used metaphor to explain

the many visual cues within their chosen artworks. One student wrote about the American Indian in Frederick Remington's *A Figure in the Night* by describing details and relationships within the painting metaphorically that made the painting more meaningful to him.

Students continued their exploration of metaphor by becoming an object in the paintings and making links to themselves by answering questions "How are you like the portrait?" Some students constructed meaning from the portraits and applying it to crisis within their own lives. One student "constructed a metaphor about his own depression:

I am searching for meaning in what seems to be a dark, cold forest.

I know there is life and beauty all around us but it is not reaching me.

I am only looking straight ahead, at the path that seems so misdirected.

I am alone in my thoughts, unable to free them from that which protects me."

(James, 2000, p.8)

This use of metaphor allowed the student to transfer his own feelings into an artwork that initially he may have not been able to relate with or interpret. Metaphor allowed this student to take his knowledge of his own depression and speak about it in reference to another person's creation of art.

Once the students had written about their artworks they were asked to compare and contrast views of the artwork with a peer. They both had written about the piece and began to share their insight into those pieces. One student proclaimed that they "...had a new appreciation for the piece. He showed me what I did not see. As he read what he wrote about his painting. I was more into the painting...he made me feel the pain and the sorrow of the person depicted" (James, 2000, p.9). Allowing students to share with

others gives them new insight into the paintings, because each child imposes their knowledge of life onto the works which therefore makes everyone's explanation different.

In conclusion, students learned that metaphor is a vehicle for self-expression; it allows the artist and its audience to construct meaning. This study showed how students can use metaphor to write about and interpret other's artworks and how it can relate to their own lives. I believe that students will now be more inept at producing their own artworks that are more meaningful through the use and exploration of metaphor.

Metaphor is a way of transferring our ideas, feelings and emotions into a visual sense. It allows us to form ideas by using the characteristics of one object and attributing them to another. Our students need a way to express their emotions and through metaphor this can be accomplished. Children below the age of eleven are capable of learning, interpreting, and incorporating metaphor as a vehicle to express their own ideas and thoughts. Metaphor can allow our students to create more meaningful artworks and apply that to their everyday lives and how they interpret the visual world that surrounds them.

## Chapter 4

### INSTRUCTIONAL LESSONS

“Any curriculum that encourages students to bring their own interests (through metaphor) provides opportunities for deep engagement....in such engagement, the art instruction becomes dialectic then didactic. The art room/studio becomes a place for material and conceptual exploration, to question generation and discoveries in a planned an unplanned environment- planned in that the curriculum provides a structure, unplanned in that the structure is open to the unexpected” (Serig, 2006, p.245).

Metaphor can be a powerful tool that can help students create artworks that provide deeper meaning and understanding of their own thoughts and ideas. The quote above provides the idea that a curriculum, such as one that explores the idea of metaphor, can better enrich a student’s experience while in the art room. Many times teachers, psychologists, and even parents believe that students at the elementary school level are incapable of creating abstract thoughts such as metaphor. Students, between the ages of nine and ten, are at a stage where their art making is more literal and not expressive of their feelings, emotions, ideas or thoughts. They are categorized, according to Piaget, as being in the concrete operational stage, where a concrete image must be established and seen by the student in order for understanding to occur.

Metaphor is not a concrete image, it is an abstract thought. Piaget believed that children are not capable of abstract thought until the age of eleven. This study sought to prove that children, at the ages of nine and ten, are capable of abstract thought. The lessons that were taught actively explored the idea of metaphor, an abstract thought, and taught students how to use it in their own artworks to convey their own thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas on a social issue.

## **Lesson One**

### **What Current Events/Social Issues Affect our World Today?**

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

#### **QCC Guidelines:**

1. Develops and applies criteria for judging personal decisions and artworks.

#### **Theme:**

Current events are defined as something that has occurred in our surroundings (i.e. nation, world, etc.) that can be disastrous, beneficial, or critical to the world as we know it today. Students will be actively exploring different current events and how they affect their world. Furthermore, students will reflect on their feelings about a current event/social issue that evoke the most emotion.

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will understand and define the terms current event and social issue.
- Students will convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings on certain current events.

#### **Resources:**

Pictures of Current Events

Articles on select Current Events

#### **Introduction/Motivation:**

The teacher will distribute a journal that will record the student's thoughts, ideas and feelings while chronicling their use of metaphor. Students will write a short reflection of the day's current events and how they feel about one of those current events. Students will also reflect at the end of class, using the information provided during class instruction, to more actively explore their ideas of today's current events. Students will review and discuss a PowerPoint on Current Events. Students will discuss as a group the PowerPoint and all of its elements.

#### **Content Paper:**

Most of the information presented in this lesson plan is based on my paper "Metaphoric Interpretations of a Social Issue".

#### **Outline (As followed in the PowerPoint presentation) in Appendix One:**

##### **What is a Current Event?**

- Something that has occurred in our surroundings in present day (i.e. nation, world, etc.) that can be disastrous, beneficial, or critical to the world as we know it today.

##### **What is a Social Issue?**

- Something that has become a problem, which needs help or concern, within the community or world. Many current events are a part of a social issue.

##### **What are some current events/social issues that are happening today?**

- War
- Poverty
- Environmental Issues (i.e. Global Warming, Pollution )
- Animal Extinction
- Homelessness

**Many pictures will be presented that illustrate many of events/issues above. When the various pictures are presented the following questions will be asked:**

- What do you see?
- What current event/social issue is being displayed in this slide?
- How does this image make you feel?
- How do you think this event affects the world?
- Is this event/issue helpful or destructive to the world around you? How?

**Instructor's Procedures:**

1. The teacher will instruct students to reflect in a journal distributed to them as they walk through the door. This journal will record their thoughts and ideas through this metaphoric expedition. The teacher will direct the students to some questions on the board to help direct them in their reflections. The questions that will be posted are:
  - List some current events that are happening in the world today.
  - Pick one current event/ social issue that you know the most about and describe it.
  - How do you feel about this event? How do you think the event affects the world?
  - Do you think this event can be helpful or destructive to our world? Please explain how it can help the world or what you can do to help change it.
2. Once students are finished reflecting, the teacher will invite them to the floor to discuss a PowerPoint Presentation the teacher has created that shows pictures of various current events/ social issues happening in the world today.
3. The teacher will present the PowerPoint presentation. The teacher will use the PowerPoint to facilitate discussion on current events/social issues.
4. The first slide will inform the students that they will be discussing current events and social issues that are happening in our world today. The teacher will ask the students:
  - What is a current event? (Answer: Something that has occurred in our surroundings (i.e. nation, world, etc.) that can be disastrous, beneficial, or critical to the world as we know it today.)
  - What is a social issue? (Answer: Something that has become a problem that needs help or concern, within the community or world.)
  - What is the difference between the two? (Answer: A Current event is a small issue that is occurring in the moment, whereas, a social issue is something that the world/nation has been battling over an extended period

of time. A current event could be something that happens within a social issue.)

5. The second slide thru the eighteenth slide displays different pictures of current events and social issues. The teacher will ask a number of questions at each slide to solicit conversation and discussion about the images presented. Some of the questions included are:
  - What do you see?
  - What current event/social issue is being displayed in this slide?
  - How does this image make you feel?
  - How do you think this event affects the world?
  - Is this event/issue helpful or destructive to the world around you? How?
6. Once the teacher and students are finished with their discussion the teacher will dismiss the students to their seats and ask them to reflect in their journals again. The teacher will ask the students to use the same questions on the board which they used during the first reflection. She will ask them to rerecord their ideas on a current event or social issue that affected them during the PowerPoint presentation. Once the students have completed their reflections they may line up to conclude the class for the day.
7. The teacher will review the definition of current events and social issue with the class. While the students are lining up for dismissal she will ask them to go home and either watch the news, research on the computer or read in the newspaper about a current event or social issue that they are interested in. She will inform them that they should have one current event to share the next time they come to class.

### **Materials:**

Student Journals, Pencils, Computer, PowerPoint Presentation of “Current Events and Social Issues of Today” in Appendix One. Students will be seated and facing the projector screen for the duration of the lesson.

### **Student Procedures:**

1. Students will reflect in their journals about their thoughts, feelings and ideas about a current event in the nation or world today.
2. Students will discuss with the class their definitions of current events and social issues.
3. Students will look at various pictures of current events/social issues presented in a PowerPoint presentation by the teacher.
4. Students will look at various images that illustrate war, poverty, homelessness, etc. They will discuss their ideas, thoughts, emotions and feelings on the pictures presented.
5. After the teacher-student discussion students will return to their seats and reflect in their journals. They will reflect their on their thoughts, feelings and ideas about a current event/social issue that they saw in the PowerPoint that had an affect on them.



**Closure/Review:**

The teacher will review the definition of current events and social issue with the class. She will ask them to go home and either watch the news, research on the computer or read in the newspaper about a current event or social issue that they are interested in and to be able to share about it the next time they come to class.

**Assessment:**

1. Did students discuss and understand the definitions of current event and social issue? Can they identify the difference between them?
2. Did students reflect in their journals about a current event? Did student's knowledge on current events improve once the class had discussed some events/issues while in class?

**Assessment Instrument:**

Upon the student's arrival during the next class period, the teacher will ask the students to reflect in their journals. The following questions were used as benchmarks to measure student learning:

1. Describe what a social issue is
2. Describe what a current event is.
3. What is the difference between a current event and a social issue?
4. Describe a current event/social issue that you saw in the news, in a newspaper or on the computer that interested you since the last time you were in my classroom.

## **Lesson Two**

### **What is Metaphor?**

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

#### **QCC Guidelines:**

1. Develops and applies criteria for judging personal decisions and artworks.

#### **Theme:**

Metaphor surrounds us everyday. It is important to be able to decipher what an artist or writer is trying to convey in a piece of art or work of writing. Encourage students to understand the use of metaphor by discussing the ideas of metaphor, how to create metaphor and understand how writers use it in their works.

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will understand and define metaphor
- Students will learn how to create a metaphor
- Students will know how to decipher and comprehend metaphor in written form

#### **Resources:**

Picture of a Bird

Picture of a Train

Quotes by Imogene Bolls and Robert Frost

#### **Introduction/Motivation:**

The teacher will distribute a journal that will record the student's thoughts, ideas and feelings while chronicling their use of metaphor. At the beginning of each class, students will write a short reflection of the day's current events and how they feel about one of those current events. Students will also reflect at the end of class using the information provided during class instruction to more actively explore their ideas of today's current events. Students will review and discuss a PowerPoint on "Using Metaphor in Art". Students will discuss as a group the PowerPoint and all of its elements.

#### **Content Paper:**

Most of the information presented in this lesson plan is based on my paper "Metaphoric Interpretations of a Social Issue".

#### **Outline (As followed in the PowerPoint presentation) in Appendix Two:**

##### **What is a metaphor?**

- A comparison between two things based on similarity (how they are alike).
- A device (something) for seeing something in terms of something else.

### **How can you create a metaphor?**

By looking at something and finding its characteristics, by simply describing, you can find things that have the same common characteristics and in turn use them as a metaphor for the original object.

### **What is a metaphor for a bird?**

To find a metaphor for a bird, you must first describe its characteristics.

A bird's characteristics could be as follows:

- It has feathers
- It has a beak
- It sings
- It lays eggs

Once you have listed a bird's characteristics, you must take that characteristic and think of something that has that same characteristic.

- Has feathers → a pillow
- It sings → a person (talks or performs)

Once you have figured out the characteristics of an object and portrayed those characteristics on another object, you have utilized the idea of metaphor. However, the hardest part is allowing others to see the same metaphor that you are trying to express.

### **What is a metaphor for a train?**

To find a metaphor for a train, you must first describe its characteristics.

- It is fast.
- It holds many people.
- It makes noise.
- It blows smoke.

Once you have listed a train's characteristics, you must take that characteristic and think of something that has the same characteristic.

- Is fast → a cheetah
- Makes noise → a bullhorn

### **How can you use metaphors to describe feelings?**

- To describe feelings, you must think of the characteristics of those feelings.
- If you are describing being sad, you must first understand what it is like to feel sadness.
- Once you understand the idea of sadness, you can begin to characterize that feeling.
- Once you find sadness' characteristics, you can then find a metaphor that illustrates the idea of sadness.

### How do writers use metaphor?

Writers use metaphor to describe, to allow the reader to understand more vividly what they are trying to convey.

### Two writers that use metaphors in their written work:

- **Immogene Bolls** A poet who was a professor and received a number of awards for her notable writings.
- **Robert Frost** A very well renowned poet that struggled throughout his life. Frost never in truth had any jobs, except being a poet, but he published many poems in his lifetime. Some of them are: *The Road not Taken*, *The Raft of Flowers*, *The Pasture*, and others. Frost won four Pulitzer awards and read *The Gift Outright* at the inauguration of John. F. Kennedy.

### Instructor's Procedures:

1. The teacher will ask students to reflect in their journals on their previous days learning activities. She will ask the students to record their answers to the following questions in the journal:
  - Describe what a social issue is.
  - Describe what a current event is.
  - What is the difference between a current event and a social issue?
  - Describe a current event/social issue that you saw in the news, in a newspaper or on the computer that interested you since the last time you were in my classroom.
2. Once the students have completed their answers she will ask the students to reflect in their journals about the two questions written on the board. The question are:
  - What is a metaphor?
3. Once they have completed their journal writing they will all come sit on the floor have a brief discussion on the definition of current events and social issues. The teacher will ask the following questions:
  - What is a current event?
  - What is a social issue?
  - What is the difference between a current event and a social issue?
  - Does anyone have a current event/social issue they would like to tell about to the class?
4. The teacher will inform the class that they will be picking a social issue group today. She will explain that this group will be working together to research a social event and will be creating, as a group, an artwork about that issue. The teacher will have already compiled a list of eight options that the class may pick from. These groups include: War, Terrorism, Poverty, Homelessness, Global Warming, Pollution, Animal Extinction, and Obesity. The teacher will ask them to close their eyes and she will poll them. They are to raise their hands for three issues and one of those issues will be the one that they will be researching. When the polling is over she will announce what group each student is in.
5. The teacher will present a PowerPoint presentation. The teacher will use the PowerPoint to facilitate discussion on metaphor.

6. The first slide will inform the students that they will be discussing metaphor in art. The teacher will ask the students:
  - What is metaphor?
7. The second slide will describe what metaphor is. The teacher will ask the students to read the definitions silently and interpret their meaning. The teacher will then ask the students to describe to the class what they think metaphor is.
8. The third slide will show a picture of a bird. The teacher will ask the students to list some characteristics of a bird. A student will be asked to write the classes responses on the board. Once the students have listed the characteristics the teacher will ask the students to think of some things that have those same characteristics. Their answers will be recorded next to the corresponding characteristic.
9. The fourth slide will show a picture of a train. The students will follow the same procedure as described in step five to find corresponding characteristics.
10. The fifth slide will ask the students to find metaphors for their feelings. As listed in the previous two steps, children will list the characteristics of their feelings and find things that have those same characteristics. The teacher will ask the students to describe what it is like to possess those feelings (i.e. How does it feel to be sad? How does it feel to be mad? How does it feel to be scared?)
11. The sixth slide will ask the students to describe what they think the poet Imogene Bolls was trying to say in the following quote “Scratching at the window with claws of pine, the wind wants in.” She will ask them to close their eyes while she reads the poem aloud to them. The teacher will ask them to describe the metaphor being used and to discuss what the poet was trying to convey.
12. The seventh slide will ask the students to describe what they think the poet Robert Frost was trying to say in the following quote: “The clouds were low and hairy in the skies...like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.” The teacher will ask them to describe the metaphor being used and to discuss what the poet was trying to convey.
13. The teacher will review the ideas of metaphor; the ways to use them and the ways writers incorporate them into their own works.
14. The teacher will ask the students to write another reflection in their journal. She will ask them to answer the following questions:
  - What is a metaphor?
  - Could you use metaphor to express your social issue? If so, what could be some metaphors for your social issue?

### **Materials:**

Student Journals, Pencils, Computer, PowerPoint Presentation of “Using Metaphor in Art” in Appendix Two. Students will be seated and facing the projector screen for the duration of the lesson.

### **Student Procedures:**

1. Students will reflect in their journals about the previous days learning activities. Each student will answer some questions about current events and social issues.
2. Students will try and answer the question “What is Metaphor?” in their journals.

3. Upon completion of their reflections, students will decide on what current event or social issue they would like to research. They will pick three different issues during a student poll given by the teacher.
4. Students will discuss their own ideas on metaphor.
5. Students will read and interpret the definition of metaphor the teacher provides for them.
6. Students will look at a picture of a bird. They will list the characteristics of the bird on the board and list things that exhibit those same characteristics.
7. Students will look at a picture of a train. They will list the characteristics of the train and write on the board things that have those same characteristics.
8. Students will have a discussion on how metaphors could be used for different feelings. The three feelings they discuss will be being scared, being mad and being sad.
9. Students will discuss two different writers writing. They will discuss two different quotes and decipher what the writer was trying to say through metaphor.
10. Students will review the idea of metaphor.
11. Students will reflect about the same ideas that were previously written at the beginning of class, but this time they will use metaphor to convey those ideas.

#### **Closure/Review:**

The teacher will ask the students a number of review questions once the lesson has been completed. She will ask them:

1. What is a metaphor?
2. What are some ways that you can come up with a metaphor?
3. How can we use metaphor to show our feelings?
4. How do writers use metaphor?

#### **Assessment:**

1. Did students discuss and understand the ideas of metaphor?
2. Did students learn how to create a metaphor?
3. Did students describe how metaphors could be used to show feelings?
4. Did students analyze how writers use metaphor in their own artworks?

#### **Assessment Instrument:**

Upon student's arrival in the next class period, the teacher will ask the students to reflect in their journals. The following questions were used as benchmarks to measure student learning:

1. Describe what a social issue is
2. Describe what a current event is.
3. Describe the difference between a current event and a social issue?
4. Describe what a Metaphor is and to give one example.

### **Lesson Three**

#### **How do artists use Metaphor in their artwork?**

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

#### **QCC Guidelines:**

1. Examines selected artworks based on questions related to art theories:  
Is the artwork trying to express a feeling or emotion?
2. Produces artworks and graphic designs that use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message.
3. Recognizes how artist use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message.
4. Describes similarities and differences between two works of art of the same style but produced by two different artists.

#### **Theme:**

Artists use metaphor in their own artworks to convey meaning. Artists incorporate metaphor to show what they are feeling or to relay a message. Metaphor is a device to allow a viewer to search and decide what an artist is trying to say. Students will incorporate metaphor into their own artworks to communicate a social issue/current event. Students will understand and interpret how artists use metaphors in their artworks and how they can use those ideas and apply it to their own thoughts.

#### **Objectives:**

- Students will discuss the idea of metaphor
- Students will explain how artists use metaphor in their own artworks.
- Students will discuss various artist's use of metaphor in their artworks

#### **Resources:**

Marc Chagall's "I and the Village"

Marc Chagall's "The Juggler"

Frida Kahlo's "Self-Portrait"

Other Contemporary Artworks that illustrate the use of metaphor

#### **Introduction/Motivation:**

PowerPoint on "How do Artists Use Metaphor?" in Appendix Three. Students will discuss as a group the PowerPoint and all of its elements.

#### **Content Paper:**

Most of the information presented in this lesson plan is based on my paper "Metaphoric Interpretations of a Social Issue."

#### **Outline:**

##### **Who is Marc Chagall?**

- Was a Russian born French painter and designer

- Recognized as one of the most significant painters and graphic artists of the 20th century
- His work treats subjects as fantasy that draws deeply on the resources of the unconscious
- Born on July 7, 1887 in Vitsyebsk, Russia
- Did many works that reflected his own life including the village he grew up in and often did biblical scenes

#### **What did Marc Chagall's artwork look like?**

- Reflected dreamlike images often illustrating surrealism
- Often show vivid recollections of Jewish-Russian villages
- Shows happiness and optimism by using vivid bright colors
- Often he paired himself with his wife, showing them together in many paintings
- Many things were used over and over again, showing metaphor. Some of the items include a tree which could be used as a metaphor for life, a fiddler which could be a metaphor for a crossroad marking birth, a wedding or death, a flying fish could be a metaphor for his father working in a fish factory, and a pendulum clock which could be a metaphor for time

#### **Who was Frida Kahlo?**

- Frida's life began and ended in Mexico City, in her home known as the Blue House.
- Frida has a life of turmoil. She had polio when she was a small child and was injured in a bus accident later on in life.
- Frida let out all of her emotions on a canvas. She painted her anger and hurt which consumed the majority of her life.
- Was married to Diego Rivera

#### **What did Frida Kahlo's artwork look like?**

- When Frida was a small child she was diagnosed with polio. She was confined to her bed and would often paint self-portraits.
- She proclaimed that "I paint self-portraits because I am so often alone, because I am the person I know best."
- Often used metaphor to show her distress and her unhappiness within her life

#### **How do other contemporary (artists today) artists use metaphor in their artworks to explain their views, ideas, feelings and emotions? (View remaining slides)**

#### **Instructor's Procedures:**

1. The teacher will distribute the student journals and ask students to record their answers to the following questions:
  - Describe what a social issue is.
  - Describe what a current event is.
  - Describe the difference between a current event and a social issue.
  - Describe what a Metaphor is and to give one example.



2. The teacher will instruct students that they will be discovering how artists use metaphor. She will ask them to divide into their social issue groups.
3. The teacher will pass out a reproduction of a PowerPoint presentation to each group that will be reviewed at the end of class. The teacher will ask the groups to answer a number of questions about the artwork in the PowerPoint that will potentially facilitate discussion within the groups. The following questions are:
  - What objects do you see?
  - What colors do you see?
  - What kinds of activities do you see?
  - Is there anything unusual in the painting?
  - Do you think the artist used metaphor?
  - What do you think the artist was trying to say by using metaphor in their artwork?
4. Once the students have concluded their group work the teacher will ask the students to turn their papers in and return to the floor to discuss the PowerPoint discussion.
5. The teacher will present the PowerPoint presentation. The teacher will use the PowerPoint to facilitate discussion on how artists use metaphor.
6. The first slide will review what the students have learned so far about metaphor. The students will discuss their definitions with the class.
7. The second slide will reemphasize the definition of metaphor.
8. The third slide will facilitate a discussion on how students think artists might use metaphor in their own artworks. Students will give their opinions on how artists could use metaphor.
9. The fourth slide will show a picture of Marc Chagall. The teacher will give the students some background information on Marc Chagall. Furthermore, she will share that they will be looking at two of Marc Chagall's paintings that incorporate metaphor.
10. The fifth slide will show "I and the Village" by Marc Chagall. The teacher will ask the students to first look and describe what they see. The teacher will ask:
  - What objects do you see?
  - What colors do you see?
  - What kinds of activities do you see?
  - Is there anything unusual in the painting?
 The students will discuss these questions and the teacher will ask them:
  - Do you think the artist used metaphor?
  - What are some of the metaphors do you think he was using? And what was he trying to convey?
 Once students discuss metaphor in "I and the village" the teacher will ask:
  - What message do you think this artwork is trying to convey?
11. The sixth slide will show "The Juggler" by Marc Chagall. The teacher will ask the students to first look and describe what they see. The teacher will ask:
  - What objects do you see?
  - What colors do you see?
  - What kinds of activities do you see?

- Is there anything unusual in the painting?

The students will discuss these questions and the teacher will ask them:

- Do you think the artist used metaphor?
- What are some of the metaphors do you think he was using? And what was he trying to convey?

Once students discuss metaphor in “The Juggler” the teacher will ask:

- What message do you think this artwork is trying to convey?

12. The seventh slide shows one of Frida Kahlo’s self-portraits. It asks the students “How can an artist use their artwork to express themselves?” The teacher will ask the students this, reminding them of the use of metaphor, and lead them into a discussion about Frida Kahlo’s self-portrait. The teacher will facilitate the discussion by asking:

- What kinds of metaphors do you see in the artwork? What do they mean?

13. The eighth thru the tenth slide display how contemporary artists use metaphor in their artworks. The teacher will ask the students:

- What objects do you see?
- What colors do you see?
- What kinds of activities do you see?
- Is there anything unusual in the painting?

The students will discuss these questions and the teacher will ask them:

- Do you think the artist used metaphor?
- What do you think the artist was trying to say by using metaphor in their artwork?

14. The teacher will inform the students that they will be creating an artwork, with their group that uses metaphor to show their ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions on their social issue. She will instruct them to think about kind of metaphors do you think you could use to illustrate your social issue/current event?

15. The teacher will ask the students to write another reflection in their journal. She will ask them to answer the following questions:

- Describe what a Metaphor is and to give one example.
- Describe how artists use metaphor in their artworks.

### **Materials:**

Computer, PowerPoint Presentation of “Using Metaphor in Art” in Appendix Three (Students will be seated and facing the projector screen for the duration of the lesson), Student journals, and pencils

### **Student Procedures:**

1. Students will reflect in their journals. The students will answer the following questions:

- Describe what a social issue is.
- Describe what a current event is.
- Describe the difference between a current event and a social issue?
- Describe what a Metaphor is and to give one example.

2. Students will receive a reproduction of a PowerPoint representation. Students will divide into their social issue groups to answer a number of questions that will facilitate discussion within their groups.
3. Once the students are finished in their groups the students will come together as a class and discuss the PowerPoint presentation.
4. Students will review how metaphor is defined.
5. Students will look at a picture of the artist Marc Chagall and listen to some background information about the artist.
6. Students will discuss Marc Chagall's "I and the Village". They will analyze the different metaphors within the painting and decipher the meaning the artist was trying to convey.
7. Students will discuss Marc Chagall's "The Juggler". They will analyze the different metaphors within the painting and decipher the meaning the artist was trying to convey.
8. Students will discuss a self-portrait by Frida Kahlo. They will discuss the metaphors Kahlo used to express herself.
9. Students will look at a number of artworks created by contemporary artists. Students will analyze the metaphors the artists used and try to interpret their meanings.
10. Students will reflect in their journals about the ideas of metaphor and how artists can use them to illustrate their ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions.

#### **Closure/Review:**

The teacher will ask the students a number of review questions once the lesson has been completed. She will ask them:

1. What is a metaphor?
2. How do artists use metaphor in their own artworks?
3. Can metaphor be used help convey a message within an artwork?

#### **Assessment:**

1. Did students discuss and understand how artists use metaphor?

#### **Assessment Instrument:**

The next class period, the teacher will ask the students to reflect in their journals. The following questions were used as benchmarks to measure student learning:

1. Describe the difference between a current event and a social issue?
2. Describe what a Metaphor is and to give one example.
3. How do artists use metaphor in their artworks?

## **Lesson Four**

### **Using Metaphor to Show Views on World Issues**

**Grade Level:** 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

#### **QCC Guidelines:**

1. Examines selected artworks based on questions related to art theories:  
Is the artwork trying to express a feeling or emotion?
2. Produces artworks and graphic designs that use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message.
3. Recognizes how artist use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas, to communicate a message.
4. Describes similarities and differences between two works of art of the same style but produced by two different artists.

#### **Theme:**

Artists use metaphor in their artworks to convey an emotion, idea or struggle. Metaphor can be used to portray a person's view on a particular issue or idea. Metaphor is often used to educate a viewer on what a person believes about the world and to communicate a message about that issue. Students will create an artwork by using metaphor to communicate how they feel about a world issue.

#### **Objectives**

- Students will learn how artists use metaphor to convey their ideas on global and social issues
- Students will discuss what issues the world is faced with today.
- Students will create an artwork that demonstrates their ideas and feelings on a social issue by implementing metaphor.

#### **Resources:**

Computer and "Researching your Issue" Worksheet

#### **Introduction/Motivation:**

Students will reflect in their journals about global issues and research their issues with a group to collect information and photographs. Students will create an artwork that is reflective of their group's ideas, thoughts, emotions and feelings of that social issue while utilizing metaphor.

#### **Content Paper:**

Most of the information presented in this lesson plan is based on my paper "Metaphoric Interpretations of a Social issue".

#### **Instructor's Procedures:**

1. The teacher will ask the students to reflect in their journals about the social issue that exists in our world today. They can write a paragraph about it and then if

they would like to draw a sketch about it they may. This is to test how much knowledge exists before research has begun.

2. The teacher will review with the students the idea of metaphor and how artists use it in their artworks.
3. Teacher will review with the students how artists use the idea of metaphor to illustrate their views about national issues.
4. The teacher asks the students to discuss some of the social issues that we are faced in our world today. For example, she will ask “What are some issues that we have that involve the environment?” The students will review their issues with the class.
5. Once the class has discussed the various social issues the teacher will pick an issue that no one in the class will be studying and how they can create a metaphor it. The teacher will ask:
  - How could you use metaphor to illustrate this social issue?
  - What characteristics does that issue have?
  - What are some metaphors you could use for the issue?
6. Once the students have completed the discussion, the teacher will inform the students that they will be creating an artwork that expresses their view on their social issue. The teacher will ask the students to get together in their groups and talk about their issues. The class will go to the computer lab to research their issue, to gain insight, collect pictures and pertinent information that could help express their issues in their artworks. The teacher will have a handout for the students to help guide them in their pursuit of knowledge on their issues.
7. Once the students have researched their issue the students will be directed to create some metaphors for their social issue. They will brainstorm on a piece of paper the different characteristics their social issue has. They will then list the different metaphors they could use to illustrate those issues. They will be asked to incorporate their metaphors into their own artwork to express their view on the social issue.
8. Students will draw out their artworks and get approval of the teacher.
9. Students will create a two-dimensional representation of their artwork.
10. Students will complete a self-assessment of their work.

### **Materials:**

Computer, computer lab handout, pencils (provided on Page 38), colored pencils, magazines, 12 x 18 paper

Students will be seated and facing the teacher for the part of the lesson, for the rest of the lesson students will be working at their tables on their artworks.

### **Student Procedures:**

1. Students will reflect in their journals about social issues.
2. Students will review the idea of metaphor and how artists use it in their artworks.
3. Students will discuss various social issues that the world faces in today’s society. They will list them on the board.
4. Students will discuss a social issue, its characteristics and how to create metaphors for it.

5. Students will go to the computer lab to research and brainstorm about their issues.
6. Students will brainstorm to create a number of metaphors for that issue.
7. Students will incorporate their metaphors into an arranged artwork which will voice their ideas and concerns about that social issue.
8. Students will sketch their ideas and show them to the teacher for approval.
9. Once the students are approved to go on with their project, the teacher will ask the students to draw out their picture on a piece of 11 x 18 papers.
10. Upon completion of drawing out their pictures, the students can use any medium to complete their pictures. Those mediums include crayons, colored pencils, colored paper, magazines, or paint.
11. Once the students have completed their artworks they will reflect on their pieces and complete an assessment.

**Closure/Review:**

The teacher will ask the students a number of review questions once the lesson has been completed. She will ask them:

1. What is a metaphor?
2. What are some ways artists can use metaphor in their artworks?
3. How can an artist use metaphor to illustrate their view on a social issue?

**Assessment:**

1. Did students discuss and understand the ideas of metaphor?
2. Did students discuss how artists use metaphor to display their ideas on a social issue?
3. Did students create an artwork that demonstrates their ideas on a social issue?

**Assessment Instrument:**

Self-Assessment



how they could be changed into metaphors for your issue.

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4. How does your group feel about the issue?

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5. What are some metaphors that you could use to show your feelings on the issue? List below. \_\_\_\_\_

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6. What would you like to say about your issue in your artwork? What kind of metaphors will help you show those thoughts/ideas?

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DRAW OUT SOME IDEAS FOR YOUR ARTWORK. TRY TO USE METAPHOR TO SHOW THOSE IDEAS. You may use the back if you need to. (Show Ms. Hobby when you are finished for help and approval).

## **Chapter 5**

### **DATA / REFLECTIONS**

#### **Reflection of Lesson One**

The first lesson was meant to teach students how to define the term “current event” and “social issue”. In order for the students to be able to create metaphors about social issues they must first understand and comprehend the definitions of a current event and a social issue. I wanted to equip them with not only the terminology but to create an idea of what the terms encompassed. However, before we begin to discuss the world’s current events and social issues I wanted to see how much information the students already knew about the subject. I asked the students to record in a small journal the answer to the following questions:

- List some current events that are happening in the world today.
- Pick one current event/ social issue that you know the most about and describe it.
- How do you feel about this event? How do you think the event affects the world?
- Do you think this event can be helpful or destructive to our world? Please explain how it can help the world or what you can do to help change it.

I received a number of different answers. The first asked the students to list some current events that are happening today. The answers I received included the war in Iraq, hurricanes, robbing banks, killing, tornadoes, global warming, train wrecks, beluga whales (Baby), salmonella in peanut butter, babies being born at sixteen pounds, and Anna Nicole Smith’s death. Overall, the current event most known by the students was Anna Nicole’s death. They could provide a lot of information on this subject but when asked about the war in Iraq, the tornadoes in Alabama, or Hurricane Katrina students

were very limited in their knowledge and understanding of those events. This shows that students are not informed about things that are happening in the world around them.

The second question asked students to pick one of the current events that they knew the most about and to describe it. Many answers were left blank. It seems they have merely heard of these events/issues but can not explain about them in detail. Most issues that were explained were vague ideas of the Iraqi War and Anna Nicole Smith's death.

Examples of their explanations included:

"The Peanut Butter that has salmenelya in it. the three digits are 2111. Plus it has to be Peter Pan or great value to have Salmenela in it. But it might not." -DA

"The Iraq War. It has been going on since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is mainly roadside bomb attacks. There maybe Iraqi gunmen, but mostly roadside bombs." -AN

"Iraq War. Bloody, no one wants to be in it". -CS

"Global Warming is causing a lot of animals to go extinct in the world." -AM

"Anna Nicole died like Meriline Monrowe died, drugs in apartment, with blood in her lungs and stomach." -KL

"The U.S. is in a war with Iraq over freedom. Many soldiers on both sides have been engered and killed. The war started with the twin towers in 2001." -AM

"The war in Iraq. The war has been going on for a while and first my friends dad fought there and now my uncle. So far they both survived." -IP

"Global warming is causing people to get sick. We are causing Global Warming by littering, polluting, and wasting. It we want this to go away then we should stop doing all of the above." -MM

"Irack not releagus people they not care about anything but themselves." -GL

"The war in Irac minie people been killed and most of the people are dead in Irac." -CA

The third question asked students how they felt about the current event and how they thought it affected the world. Their thoughts on their feelings were very limited. At this age, having an opinion or emotion about something is very hard, especially since they know very little about the issue/event that they are talking about.

Answers included:

“I feel mad about this event. I think it makes the world unpeaceful.” –HB on war

“Shortens the population.” –RR on war

“Yes. Because some people don’t know about it and it might hurt someone in a big way it could kill them.” –DO on Salmonella in Peanut Butter

“I don’t think it is great. The Iraqis to me are chickens.” –AN on War

“Not the best thing that’s happened to either country. It will help Iraq’s government.” –CS on War

“I feel really bad about her dieing but it probly won’t effect the world at all.” –KJ on Anna Nicole Smith’s death

“I feel sad about it. It affects the world because a lot of animals live here on earth.” –AM on Global Warming

“It doesn’t affect the world and I don’t really cared that she died because I didn’t know who she was.” –KL on Anna Nicole Smith’s death

“I don’t like it because many people like peanut butter and they don’t deserve to get sick.” –BB on Salmonella in Peanut Butter

“I don’t like this event. I think that it effects the world because eventually Iraq might be a free country or the U.S. will no longer be a free country.” –AM on War

“I think it is bad. It will make the people population go down.” –MM on Global Warming

The final question asked them to reflect in their journals if they thought their event could be helpful or destructive to our world. They were then asked to explain how it could help the world or what they could do to help change it. When going over the reflections I found students were incapable of reflecting on how they feel because they lack knowledge on the current event begin studied. Their answers were again very vague and quite limited. Examples of their answers included:

“It is very destructive because it is killing many men.” –AN on War

“It will help Iraq’s government.” –CS on the Iraq War

“It is distructive because these animals need to live a life like we do.” –AM on Global Warming

“It can be helpful to our world because people can have more friends. You can help it change by not eating too much.” –KC on Obesity

“I can’t do anything, it doesn’t change the world and it doesn’t help it. This cannot be destructive or helpful.” –KL on Anna Nicole Smith’s death

“I think that it can be helpful or destructive because of the way the war ends. If I could change anything it would be to stop the war and end it in peace not fighting.” –AM on the Iraq War

“I think it’s destructive and the only way I could change it is to go to the president.” –IP on the Iraq War

“It is destructive to our world and we can change it by not littering, polluting, and wasting.” –MM on Global Warming

“this is very destructive because they are trying to kill all our people.” –GL on the Iraq War

Once the students had finished their reflections we returned as a group to discuss the ideas of current events and social issues as a class. The class started a PowerPoint Presentation which began by asking the class to define what a current event was. We defined a current event as:

- Something that has occurred in our surroundings in the present day (i.e. nation, world, etc.) that can be disastrous, beneficial, or critical to the world as we know it today.

We discussed further what a social issue was. We defined it as:

- Something that has become a problem, which needs help or concern, within the community or world. Many current events are a part of a social issue.

Once we discussed the definition of the two, I asked them what the difference between a current event and a social issue was and I received the following answers:

“A current event happens inside a social issue. A social issue is like war and homelessness. A current event is something that happened today like in the war or in homelessness.”

“A current event is small and a social issue is something big.”

Once we concluded our discussion of current events and social issues I asked the students “What kinds of current events do we have going on in our world right now?” Much discussion encompassed the issues that they wrote about in their reflections. The biggest current event the students discussed was Anna Nicole Smith’s death. In order to provide my students with a better picture of what was occurring in their world around them I decided to provide them with a PowerPoint Presentation that displayed a number of different images. These images displayed current events that reflected the world’s social issues such as war, poverty, homelessness, and pollution. The students were asked to look at the different images and answer the following questions:

- What do you see?
- What current event/social issue is being displayed in this slide?
- How does this image make you feel?
- How do you think this event affects the world?
- Is this event/issue helpful or destructive to the world around you? How?

The students reflected on and discussed a number of different slides. One slide showed three soldiers, in uniform, who had lost their legs in combat. I asked the students to reflect and to discuss the image itself, their reactions, and how it makes them feel.



Figure 5.1

I asked the students “What do you see in this picture?” Student described the picture to include the following: Soldiers that fought in the war in Iraq, they look happy, they look like they are clapping for other soldiers, they have no legs, they don’t care that they lost their legs because they were fighting for our country, their wives are happy they came home alive and that they were probably hit by bombs. Students were then asked what current event/social issue was being displayed in this picture. All of them proclaimed it was war. Students described that this picture made them feel sad for them because they have no legs. They also described that they felt proud because they fought for our country. Students explained that the people in this picture looked happy even though they had no legs. As the discussion ensued, many of the students felt that this image affected our world because it lets people see how war can hurt people and it can show how dangerous war really is. This picture facilitated a lot of discussion and the students felt compassion for these men.

Another slide displayed an image of factory pouring dense thick smoke into the atmosphere through its smoke stacks. I asked the students to reflect on this image and to discuss what they thought the image was about and how it made them feel.



Figure 5.2

Students described a picture of factories that were causing pollution. They compared the factories to car exhaust and called it “Nasty Smoke”. This image allowed the students to feel sadness because they knew the damage that it could do. The students believed this pollution could potentially cause global warming and air pollution that could cause the ice caps to melt, the oceans to start rising, animal extinction, less land, disease, and dirty air. Students knew the most about pollution and realized that we need to do something to create pollution’s extinction and suggested to stop using cars, clogging up the factory pipes and to stop using plastic.

There were a total of fourteen pictures the classes viewed. Most classes finished up around the eighth or ninth slide with a couple of minutes remaining. As a class we briefly touched on the last five slides. Once we concluded our discussions I asked them to return to their desks and reflect in their journals. They were asked to review the questions written on the board, and try to facilitate what they knew about current events after they had some exposure to some different current events/social issues. The questions the students were asked to reflect upon were the same questions the students answered upon their initial arrival. I wanted to document their growth in knowledge once the students were involved in the current event discussion.

The discussion made me realize how little they do know about their world around them and the things that are occurring on a global basis. Students knew some facts but they were vague and minute. Their reflections in their journals, following the discussion were a little more in depth, but not by much. Research into these issues will definitely help their ideas and feelings on at least one of the issues confronted by our world today.



This exercise was to help facilitate their ideas on what current events or social issues they may be interested in and researching for their future artworks.

### **Reflection of Lesson Two**

In this lesson my main objective was to expose the children to the idea of metaphor. To allow them to define it, explore it, and apply it. I thought the best way to allow them to “explore” the idea of metaphor was through a PowerPoint presentation. I used the PowerPoint to lead the class in a discussion of defining for themselves what a metaphor is, how to create metaphors for objects, and how interpret a written verse containing metaphor.

Before I began my unit I wanted to see how much my students already knew about metaphor. I assumed that most of the children had never been exposed to metaphor but I wanted to see if they knew what it was and could possibly define it. They recorded their answers to the previous day’s lesson (questions) and reflected on their ideas of metaphor in their journals. I asked them a number of questions to help direct their journal entries. The first question asked them to describe what a social issue is. Most students described a social issue as something that is happening in the world that has been happening for a long time. They explained it as something that we are trying to fix but have not been able to. Other answers explained that a social issue is something like war, poverty and homelessness; something that goes on that we would like to stop.

The second question for their journal entries asked them to describe what a current event is. Most students described a current event as something that is happening right now in the news. Things that are happening in the world today, that could be part of

a social issue. I then asked the students to describe the difference between a current event and a social issue. They explained that a current event is something happening now and a social issue is something that has been going on for a long time. The final question consisted of them being able to describe a current event/social issue that you saw in the news, in a newspaper or on the computer that interested you since the last time you were in my classroom. Many answers involved the social issue that the current event was exploiting such as war, poverty, homelessness, and pollution. Some students talked about the tornadoes that impacted the lives of many people in Alabama while others discussed more in-depth stories of the salmonella epidemic in peanut butter.

Once the students had completed their answers about the previous lesson, which showed considerable growth in their knowledge of current events and social issues, I asked them to define the word metaphor. According to my knowledge students had received no previous instruction on the ideas of metaphor and how to use it. The following were their answers with no previous exposure to metaphor in my classroom. Most students wrote that they did not know what metaphor was.

“I don’t know” –BD

“No Clue!” – RR

“Who knows?” –HB

Some showed they knew part of the definition. They could explain it was a comparison but did not take it any further.

“Calling something something by comparing” –JH

“Calling something something different.” KC

“Calling something something else.” –BM

Only a few gave definitions that were fairly close.

Saying something is something that is like a simile except it does not use like.  
Ex. The rolling hills of green which means the leaves on trees.” –AM

“The comparison of likenesses and differences.” –AN

As soon as I presented the PowerPoint presentation and led the discussion the students developed some clarity in their understanding of metaphor.

Once students completed their journal entries I asked them to think about several social issues that they would like to research. I informed them that they were going to form interest groups. I asked them to place their head on the tables and raise their hands to indicate their interest in three topics. The following topics were their choices:

1. Global Warming
2. Pollution
3. War
4. Obesity
5. Homelessness
6. Animal Extinction
7. Censorship
8. Poverty

I believed these issues were appropriate for their age and would allow them exposure to events that are affecting our world today. Once I had recorded their three choices I broke them up into their assigned groups. I explained to them that they would be working as a group to research their social issue and would be eventually creating an artwork together to illustrate their social issue. Once group arrangements were

completed I lead the class in a PowerPoint presentation about metaphor which designed to help students better understand metaphor and its characteristics.

The first slide in the PowerPoint presentation asked the students “What is a Metaphor”? I asked the students to describe a metaphor. They speculated that metaphor is a painting and a way of creating art. Once the students had finished guessing I revealed the accepted definition of metaphor. I asked them to read it for themselves, process it, and then asked one of the students to read it out loud. Students were struggling with the idea of metaphor, therefore, I asked them a number of questions that would help provoke thought and elicit ideas.

I asked them to discuss what similarities did I and a young boy in the class have in common. They were quick to give answers such as we were both humans, we could communicate with each other, we had brains that let us think and we could eat and drink. After we concluded the small discussion, I wanted them to see how two totally different things could have something in common. So I asked them “What do I and the dry erase board have in common?” They sat there for a minute and one girl raised her hand and proclaimed:

“You both teach 1<sup>st</sup> grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 5<sup>th</sup> grade!”

I thought this was very insightful because written on the board are my essential questions arranged by grade level. Other class members continued on by saying that we both shared knowledge, etc.

Once we concluded our talk on similarities, I shifted our discussion back to metaphor. I informed the students that metaphor is trying to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange and to find the similarities between two unlike things. To better

reiterate this concept I asked them to look at a picture of a bird, which was on the PowerPoint presentation. I instructed them to look at the bird and asked them:

“What things could be like a bird?”

I further directed them to think about this bird. What kinds of characteristics does the bird have (i.e. feathers, clawed feet, it flies, has a beak, lays eggs, builds nests, sleeps, etc; all were answers from the kids)? Then I asked them to explore what things could have those same characteristics by asking them “What things have feathers?” The answers consisted of pillows, a duster, and other birds. I asked them “What things can fly?” Their answers were airplanes, helicopters, and squirrels. They soon began to see that birds have attributes that may be associated with other objects.

The next picture on the PowerPoint was a train. This elicited a huge response. I asked the children to look at the train and describe what they saw. Students explained that they saw tracks, smoke, wheels, an engine, and passenger cars. I then asked them to create a metaphor for the train and they exceeded all of my expectations! Some of the metaphors they created for the train included

1. a flashlight because the light on the train shows the train the way to go
2. a chimney because it has smoke that pours out of the top
3. a ship because it can hold people and goods
4. a whistle because it makes loud sounds to signal it is coming
5. a food store because of the different departments
6. a puzzle because the train cars fit together like the pieces of a puzzle  
fit together
7. a roller coaster because it travels on a track

8. shopping carts because they hold things and fit together

Once we concluded our discussion on trains, I asked them to create metaphors for feeling words. I asked them what could be some metaphors for feeling mad, feeling sad, and feeling scared. The idea of feeling scared elicited the least response in metaphor creation. They initially wanted to describe the feeling of being scared by explaining things that made them scared. So I asked them what happens to you when you are scared. They described the feeling as it causes you to shake, leaves you with a feeling to hide or run and that you can't think. I then asked them to think about what kinds of things shake? What are some things that hide? What are some things that run? Could they relate to being scared? They answered me with

1. an earthquake because it rattles everything and creates chaos
2. a washing machine because it shakes when it is washing clothes just like you shake or tremble when you are scared
3. a train track because you never know when it will happen just like you never know when a train will come
4. a bow and arrow because it is tense like when you are scared
5. a hard rain
6. a bear trap because it is like chattering teeth

They soon understood the correlation and their responses were amazing! Once we finished with being scared we moved onto being mad. I had to do little prompting with the idea of being mad and their metaphor they created were spectacular! Student metaphors for feeling mad or angry were a train, a fire, a volcano, an army (stomping

feet), thunder, a car slamming brakes, a crane knocking down a wall, a landslide, an explosion and a heated oven.

Once we finished with the feeling of mad we moved onto being sad. They struggled with this one too. Students may struggle with the idea of being sad because they may really know and understand what it is like to be mad, but sadness and being scared may not as prevalent within their lives, so it makes it may cause those feeling to be harder to relate to. Sad metaphor responses included rain, an owl, rivers, fogginess, thunder, lightning (because it comes so fast), an empty jar, an empty room, and a top of a mountain (because you are isolated).

Once we concluded our discussion about feelings, we discussed how two writers, Imogene Bolls and Robert Frost, used metaphor in their writing. The students really could relate to the verse by Bolls. They understood that the excerpt “Scratching at the window with claws of pine, the wind wants in” was about the wind blowing so hard that the trees were hitting the window. Students deciphered the written verse quickly and efficiently. However, Robert Frost’s quote was very hard for them to comprehend. The excerpt “The clouds were low and hairy in the skies...like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes” really stumped them. They struggled with deciphering whether the author was talking about the clouds or a person. Students may not have understood the wording or definitions of some of the words proposed in the passage, therefore, students had trouble interpreting the metaphors presented. This passage may have been a little too difficult for their age level.

Once the students completed the PowerPoint presentation I asked them to once again reflect in the journals. I asked them to write their answers to the following questions:

- What is a metaphor?
- What is your current event/social issue that you will be studying? Students described their current event/social issue that they will be researching with their groups.
- Could you use metaphor to express your current event? If so, what could be some metaphors for your event/issue?

Students elicited more in-depth ideas on their definitions of metaphor. Their definition and idea of metaphor had drastically changed since they had participated in the discussion on metaphor and how it can be used in writing. Some examples of answers that were in their journals consisted of:

“It is a figure of speech that is used for something like describing a word.” –KJ

“Comparing two things.” –CS and HB

“Comparison of something alike and different from something else.” –KL

“The comparison between likenesses and differences.” –AN

“Something that tells what something else is representing.” –IP

“Something that matched the characteristics of someone or something.” –BM

“Metaphor is describing something while comparing it to something else.” –RI

“Comparing one object to another.” –DC

“The describing of something by using something very different that has the same characteristics as the thing you are describing.” –AM

“When you use figurative language to describe something.” –BL



Six percent of the students wrote that they did not know what metaphor is. I assume these students struggled with the idea and could not comprehend its meaning.

Students were asked if they could use metaphor to express their current event.

They were also asked if they could, what were some possible metaphors for their event/issue. Some examples of answers that were recorded were:

“Since I am doing animal extinction, I could say it is mean like a bull, as violent as a war, scary as a stormy night, or it is a scary horror movie. It makes me sad as a drop of rain, a stormy day, burning ears, and tear drops.” –BB

“Yes, I can use metaphor. Metaphors are an empty room, empty wallet, old dog, money collection on the street, and ripped up walls. It makes me sad like a flowing river, ocean of tears.” –AM on Homelessness

“Metaphor can show my feelings, how dangerous it is and by showing it in a creative way. Some metaphors for Global Warming are a hot monster, a strong wind sweeping all of the creatures off of the planet, a cold fire going away with hot water, a slow rain storm going through a heart, or a hurricane that travels all over the world. My feelings on this is it makes me sad which could be shown by a slight shower going through my mind and it also makes me scared which can be shown by a thunderstorm in my body.” –AM on Global Warming

“I can use metaphor to compare two things. Metaphors for animal extinction are a cars tank dripping on empty, death is a dark storm, extinction is a dark cloud. Animal Extinction makes me sad as a rain cloud.” –DQ on Animal Extinction

“I could use metaphor to show homelessness as a turtle in a cardboard box. Living in a box, uncomfortable and in cold water.” –RI on Homelessness

“Metaphors for War could be running with a knife.” –BM on War

“Pollution can be explained by using metaphors. It is not healthy like a baby, that does not know what he is doing, who goes in the kitchen and is eating raw eggs. “ I think this student was trying to say is that people pollute the air not knowing what they are doing just like a baby can go in and eat raw eggs not knowing what they are doing. Furthermore, this student explains “Pollution makes me mad, at builders and company owners, like a raging bull. It also makes me feel horrible like a mom that just accidently smothered her baby.” –MM on Pollution

“I feel like war is very bad toward everyone like a big ball of smoke choking everyone and destroying our ozone. It is like lightning striking down. A giant gray cloud, a rainy day.” –IP on War

“It is a dark black fog rising over the earth as all the sweet things disappear. It is a sweet candy that had instantly gone bitter.” – KL on Animal Extinction

All and all, I was amazed at the capabilities of my students. Using metaphor is a hard element to use and decipher. However, the majority of my students understood it, and learned how to use it while other students struggled with the ideas of metaphor and how to associate it with a current event. Some students described their current events through metaphor as the following:

“I don’t know.” – CA

“no homes-living in the road-turtles-living in a box.” –RI on Homelessness

“the way you can help your body is that you can stay off eating junk. Being skinny.” –KC on obesity

Most groups who were going to research the issue of obesity struggled with creating metaphoric interpretations of the issue. Students created more literal and stereotypical images to illustrate their metaphoric ideas. Although, some struggled with the ideas of metaphoric interpretations, over half of the students produced artworks that displayed metaphorical illustrations.

I really thought this was going to be extremely hard for them; however, it just goes to show that we often may underestimate the abilities of our children. Students at the age of nine can comprehend ideas of abstract thought. In their final reflection, students showed that they are capable of taking metaphor and applying it to their own ideas on an issue. They have shown that they are capable of utilizing metaphors meaning and applying it

abstractly to express their own thoughts and ideas on their issues with little instruction or research into that issue.

### **Reflection of Lesson Three**

In this lesson I wanted students to look at how artists used metaphor in their own artworks. Artworks that were shown were by different artists I believed used metaphor to convey life experiences, their ideas and thoughts of events that were important to their existence of themselves and the world around them. Artists I included were Marc Chagall, Frida Kahlo and a few contemporary artworks produced by an unidentified artist. Students were asked to reflect on these artworks and pick one that they would like to decipher it's meaning. Once students completed their questions I asked them to review the PowerPoint Presentation as a class.

The first slide in the PowerPoint presentation asked "What is a metaphor?" The students proclaimed:

"Taking two things and finding how they are similar."

I then asked them "How do artists use metaphor?" They explained:

"To show their feelings"

"To describe what they are trying to say about their feelings or beliefs."

"To show what they are going through their life."

"To create a better picture of what they are saying."

"To give away what is going on without coming out right and saying it."

"To tell a story."

These were great answers considering we had not reviewed any insight into why artists use metaphor. I then asked the students to look at a number of different artists and

their styles. The first artist we examined was Marc Chagall and his artwork titled “I and the Village”.

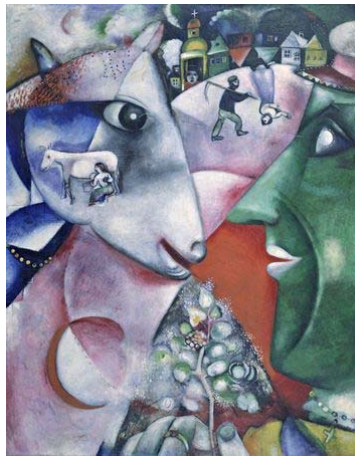


Figure 5.3

I asked them to explain what they saw in this painting. Student answers consisted of a horse, a bull, a woman milking a cow inside a cow's head, a man carrying a huge hatchet, a woman upside down, a man carrying a tree, a row of houses where some are upside down, a sun, and a face. I then asked them to contemplate what these items could be metaphors for. Student answers collected were:

“Upside down things showed their lives have been in trouble, turned upside down, they were going good and then something came along and caused unrest.”

“The Upside down houses could have families that are having problems.”

“The tree is for peace.”

“The lady is milking the cow in the head of the cow. I think the cow is remembering an event of a time where it was milked. It could be a memory.”

“The overall theme is life can change but you will always have something good to help you through.”

Students did a great job at deciphering the images within the painting. Students tended to break down the individual images and interpret the metaphors one by one. Students had a

difficult time understanding the meaning or the message of the painting. They often struggled with applying their own ideas to the overall meaning of the picture.

Once the students concluded their discussion on “I and the Village” I challenged them to decipher Marc’s Chagall “The Juggler”.



Figure 5.4

I asked them to explain what objects they saw. The students explained that they saw a clock upside down, a hunched over lady with a horse, a man who looks like a chicken with human legs and a chicken head. I asked them to describe how the pictures in their entirety could be metaphors. Answers received were:

“The clock upside down could mean that time is not going the right way, that time is not being nice to the juggler.”

“The time is not right.”

“A man who looks like a chicken could not know what is going on. He could be absent-minded.” Once the student completed their interpretations of Marc Chagall’s painting I asked them to look at one of Frida Kahlo’s self-portraits.

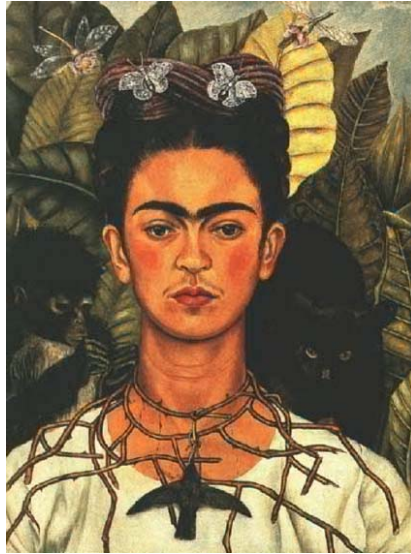


Figure 5.5

I asked them to study the picture and tell me what they saw. The students proclaimed to see a woman with a solemn look, jungle animals, a panther, a monkey, a lot of plants, a vine around her neck, and a bird on her chest. Students deciphered these images and explained that metaphor can be used to show many ideas and thoughts. Their thoughts included:

“The monkey could show that she is always being watched.”

“A Panther hunched over could mean she is discreet or she is always on her guard.”

“The panther is laying low in the grass which means she is constantly watching her surroundings.”

“The vines around her neck mean she feels as though she is suffocating; she is trapped and confined.”

“The bird on her chest is holding it close to her heart which means she longs to be free.”

“Her life has been hard.”

“Her life is a struggle.”

Once the discussion of Frida Kahlo's work had concluded, I asked the students to reflect on a number of contemporary artworks. One artwork showed a pig with a boat's characteristics displayed upon it.



Figure 5.6

I asked the students to describe what they saw and the students explained to see a pig, an oversized pig, a ship on the pig's back, a pig cage, mud, canons, and a ship deck. I then asked the students to describe what metaphors the artist was using and the students provided the following answers:

“A ship that could be stranded in shallow water, or in mud.”

“The ship is stuck, it is heavy (like a pig) not moving.”

“The ship is stubborn, it is a fighting ship therefore it is not going anywhere.”

“A ship might have sunk because the pig is oversized comparing a pig to an oversized ship.”

The final slide in the PowerPoint showed a Planner held up by a man. I asked the



Figure 5.7

students to decipher its meaning by contemplating the metaphors. The following answers received were as follows:

“This is what you have in life, enjoy while you can.”

“This man is trying to balance his life. He is holding up a date book that is holding a car, boat, money, which are the things in life everyone wants to have and by holding it up he is placing a metaphor that he is trying to balance his life.”

“They have so much money they want to spend it on all of the good things in life.”

“The artist is saying the man balances his life by the times he has which includes leisure time, work time, and home time.

“He is a very organized sales man who sales cars, boats, tickets, pens, credit cards, houses and is very strong.”

“Life is an organized suitcase. It holds everything you need in life to live. Life is an organized suitcase that holds all your hopes and dreams. They are trying to tell you that this is all that you need in life. You should enjoy it while you have it. You need strength to go through life.”

Throughout the PowerPoint Presentation students showed their knowledge of metaphor and how they can apply it to artworks. Students showed that they are capable of deciphering meaning and acknowledging ideas and thoughts artists are trying to convey through their artworks. Students should be equipped to translate their own ideas and incorporate them visually into their own artworks. Over the next two days students



will research their social issues in the computer lab by finding images that could help facilitate their own declaration of how they felt and thought about their social issue.

#### **Reflection of Lesson Four**

In this lesson students were directed to research images and publications on the internet and in magazines to expand their knowledge on their social issues. Students had two days to research issues. Most insight and information came from encyclopedia sites and kids research engines such as [www.yahooligans.com](http://www.yahooligans.com). Students were requested to go home and receive help from their parents on these issues and bring in further information to their next class section. Very few came back to class with more information, however, some did and it became pertinent information in their exploration of knowledge on their issues.

The students wrote much of their research on a handout to organize their thoughts and ideas while they were researching. Students worked together to collect information and pictures. The students collected enough information to begin brainstorming their ideas for their artworks and soon found that their ideas were not only describing their social issue but they had begun using metaphor to help portray their ideas and thoughts on that issue. The handout provided many questions that the students were able to answer through their research.

One of the questions asked the students to explain what they found out about their social issue through their research. The following were some of the answers received:

“War is about death where guns, bombs, tanks, and knives. People fight for their freedom, religion and beliefs”.

“Homelessness is when you can’t afford a home. You live in poverty where they dig food out of the dumpster. They are homeless because of low paying jobs or they can’t find a job.”

“Some things that help in making animals extinct are poaching, global warming, pollution, habitat destruction, loss of food, nets, importing, humans transferring diseases, people destroying their homes, too many non-reusable sources, and no recycling. Animal Extinction is where animals no longer are alive.”

“Things we found out about global warming is that it is caused by rising temperatures that cause the greenhouse effect. It causes the weather to change. It is caused by human influences, it reduces the ozone layer and causes glacier retreat. It also causes animal extinction, floods, and pollution. It is hot and horrible.”

“War is destructive because they cause death by using guns, bullets, tanks, jets, bombs, jeeps, ships, dune-buggies which leave blood and death.”

“Pollution is caused by smoke, gasoline, acid, litter, chemicals, carbon monoxide, leaks, and loud noise. The U.S. and China are polluting the air. Other things that pollute the air are factories and disasters like hurricanes and tornadoes. Things like sewage water and radiation poisoning can cause diseases.”

The students found a number of pictures and many ideas that illustrated their social issue. The students needed to create metaphors using the characteristics of their social issue. Students worked together in their groups and created metaphors for their social issue which conveyed their ideas displayed their feelings. Some of the metaphors developed were:

“Loud noises are an ear infection. Sewage is a dirty diaper. Hurricanes are a whirlpool of disaster.” -A group on Pollution

“Pollution is a butterfly that changes. It goes backwards from the life of a butterfly. It changes from the butterfly to the caterpillar, taking something beautiful like the earth and putting into a dirty stage.”

“Pollution is snow in spring.”

“Pollution is a horror movie playing over and over again scaring everyone.”

“War is a black hole that never ends.”

“Homelessness is a waterfall.”

“Obesity is a rainstorm of sadness that fights and wrestles with itself.”

“War is a mousetrap that slams shut and kills.”

“Pollution is a black ocean full of all the worlds litter.”

“We hate pollution as a cat hates mud.”

These answers gave students a solid starting point to begin contemplating their ideas for their artworks. Students learned how to take their ideas of their social issue and their feelings for that social issue and convert it into metaphor. Students now had to create an artwork, as a group, to illustrate their social issue through metaphor.

Students sketched out some ideas for their artworks about their social issue. Students struggled with how to pull all of the ideas into one artwork that would illustrate their ideas and thoughts while using metaphor. I would often help them brainstorm different ideas by asking them questions such as:

- What are the characteristics of your issue?
- What kinds of things can be used to describe your issue?
- What are some metaphors for those characteristics?

After initial help from me, students quickly were at work and on their way to creating their ideas for their final artwork.

## Chapter 6

### ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

During this study students completed a series of lessons for a unit that explored how to identify and incorporate metaphor in their own artworks. The study sought to determine if a unit of art lessons could equip children under the age of eleven to interpret and incorporate metaphors in art. This project consisted of four lessons that provided students with a foundation of different current events and social issues in the world today, the definition of metaphor, how writers and artists implement metaphor into their work and how students could use metaphor to display their own thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions on a social issue plaguing our world today.

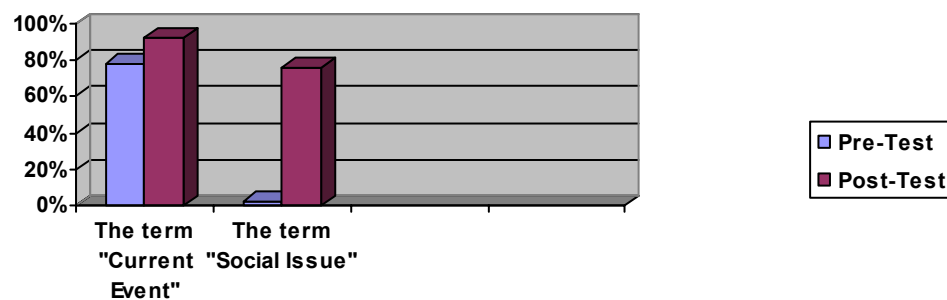
The student's first lesson allowed students to look at a number of current events and discuss different social issues and ideas that are in our world today. Before learning commenced I wanted to explore how much previous knowledge existed by administering a pre-test that allowed them to define the terms "current event" and "social issue" and their initial differences. Pre-test answers concluded that 78% of students knew the correct definition of a current event which is defined as "something that occurs in our surroundings during present day time". Some of the answers excepted included:

- "Something that happens in the news today." –DQ
- "An event that affects the world that happened today." –MM

At the conclusion of our discussion a post-test was administered and 92% of the students successfully wrote the definition of a current event. After I asked students to write the definition of a "current event" I asked them to define the term "social issue". This seemed to be difficult for the students and 82% of the pre-test answers were left blank.

Only 2% correctly defined a social issue as “something that has become a problem, which needs help or concern, within our community or world.” Following the conclusion of the discussion student’s post-test answers soared to include 76% of students correctly defining the term “social issue”. Students proved that they had no initial exposure to the term social issue, but the discussion helped them define it and in essence use it in their artworks. The following is a chart to document student knowledge of the terms “current event” and “social issue”.

**Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test definitions of  
“Current Event” and “Social Issue”**



Students deciphered the difference between a social issue and a current event which allowed them to decide on what issue they would like to study and research for their artwork. Finally, they concluded their journal entries by explaining a current event they learned about during the classroom discussion.

The second lesson allowed students to reflect their knowledge about the previous lesson and students were introduced to the idea of metaphor. Students were asked at the beginning of the lesson to reflect on their ideas of metaphor. I wanted to test their previous knowledge on the ideas of metaphor, which essentially became a pre-test. I asked them to describe in their journals the meaning of metaphor, essentially to define the

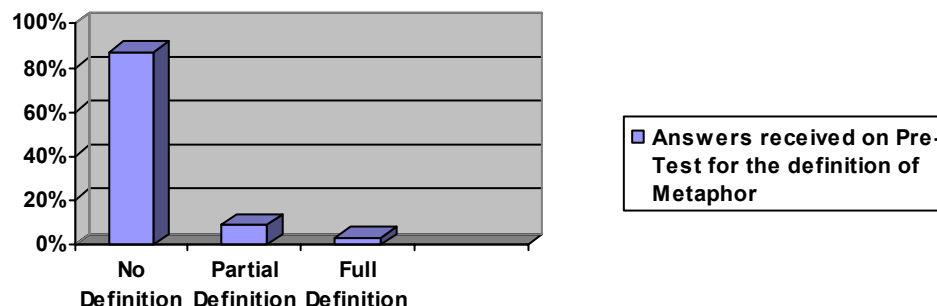
word “metaphor”. I rated each student’s answer based on a standard dictionary definition. The following table illustrates how I ranked student knowledge of metaphor:

**Assessment Instrument to Rank Student Knowledge of Metaphor**

<b>Student Response / Indicator</b>	<b>Teacher Ranking</b>
Left answer blank or indicated no knowledge of the definition of metaphor	Having no knowledge of the definition of metaphor
Defined half of what a metaphor is by simply describing it as a comparison	Partial knowledge of the definition of metaphor
Defined metaphor as a comparison of two things based on similarities	Full knowledge of the definition of metaphor

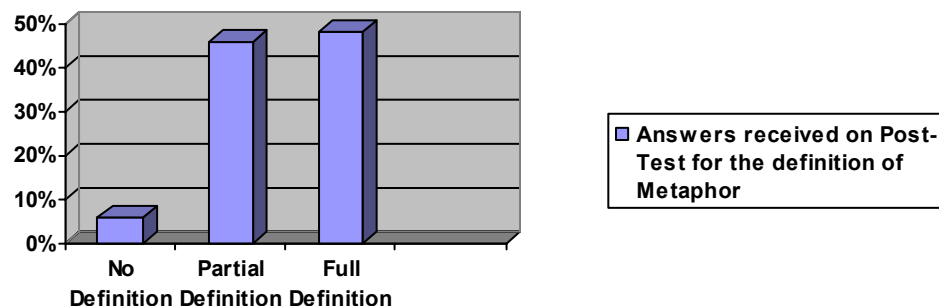
An analysis of their pre-test answers concluded that eight-seven percent of students demonstrated that they had no knowledge of the definition of metaphor. Nine percent partially demonstrated their knowledge of the definition of metaphor by listing it as “a comparison”. Three percent of the fourth graders acknowledged metaphor as a comparison of two things based on their similarities, showing that they had full knowledge of its definition.

**Pre-Test Results for Student Knowledge of Metaphor**



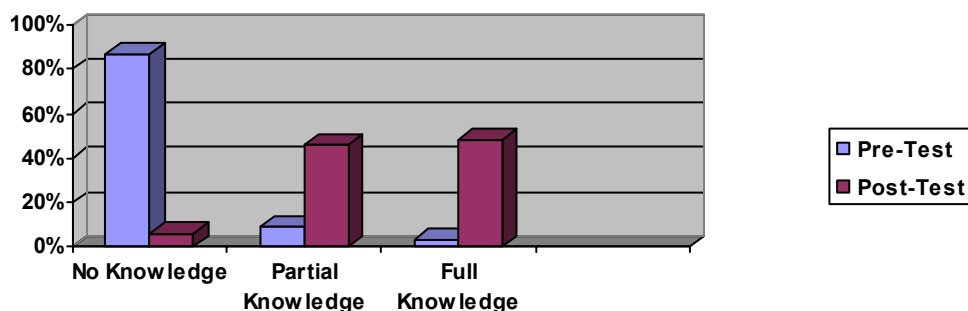
Throughout the PowerPoint lesson on metaphor, my expectations were exceeded when I saw them make connections between characteristics of unfamiliar objects to represent their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and emotions. When asked to develop a metaphor for an emotion, the feeling of being angry or mad elicited the greatest response. I wondered if this was an emotion they knew well and had strong associations with. During the lesson there were a few students who did not seem to understand the ideas of metaphor, however, most students could decipher visual meanings and analyze the meaning of a painting one visual cue at a time. Once the PowerPoint lesson concluded, I asked the students to redefine metaphor as a post-test to test their acquired knowledge. There was a huge increase in the number of students who now could describe metaphor's meaning. Forty-eight percent could now describe metaphor as a comparison between two objects based upon their similarities and forty-six percent could partially define metaphor.

#### **Post-Test Results for Student Knowledge of Metaphor**



There was a substantial amount of growth; however, some students still did not understand metaphor in its entirety.

#### **Comparison of Pre-Test and Post –Test Results for Student Knowledge of Metaphor**



My student expectations were exceeded when I saw them make connections between characteristics of unfamiliar objects to represent their thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions. The idea of being mad elicited the greatest response, I wonder if this is the emotion they know the best and can associate with the most. Most students could decipher visual meanings and dissect paintings one visual cue at a time; however, a few students had trouble deciphering the images in the paintings because I do not think they understood the definition of metaphor.

The final lesson allowed students to research their issues in groups of four. I recorded the social issues students were interested in researching and devised a list of groups based on those choices. Each group was given two days to research their issues. Their assignment was to find images and information on their topic that could help them devise an artwork that provided information about their issue while displaying their feelings and emotions. Students came together as a group, found images and information and created artworks that used metaphor to show their ideas and feelings on their social issue.

Students researched issues such as war, pollution, global warming, and animal extinction. Each group used metaphor in different ways to project their ideas and feelings of the issue they were illustrating. I wanted to assess how well students utilized



metaphors in their artworks so I rated each artwork on their effectiveness of implementing metaphor. I rated each group in one of four categories which included: highly effective use of metaphor, somewhat effective use of metaphor, a little use of metaphor and did not use metaphor (all literal). The following table demonstrates how artworks were rated and calculated based on their use of metaphor:

**Assessment Instrument to Rank Metaphoric Use in Student Artwork**

<b>Characteristics of Student Use of Metaphor</b>	<b>Teacher Ranking</b>
Students incorporated more than four or more effective metaphors	Highly effective use of Metaphor
Students incorporated three or less effective metaphors	Somewhat effective use of Metaphor
Students incorporated one effective metaphor	A little use of Metaphor
Students incorporated NO effective metaphors	No use of Metaphor

Exactly half of the student artworks exhibited highly effective use of visual metaphors. One example of an artwork that displayed a highly effective use of metaphor was one group's image (Figure 6.1) that illustrated how war fundamentally destroys the earth and everything in it.



Figure 6.1

The students in this group described war as “a violent place to be”. War was described as ultimately using bombs, nuclear bombs, tanks, helicopters and machine guns to frighten and kill people. Students explained that people who were dying in the war were not just soldiers but many innocent civilians. They metaphorically illustrated their idea of war through its destructiveness by placing a mouse trap on the tank to suggest that war is a tool that can have lethal consequences. Furthermore, students visually described war as a deadly factory smokestack that pollutes the air just like war destroys the human race. The smoke coming from the smokestacks illustrates pictures of war. The images of war portray death and destruction that war projects on the human race just as the smoke from the factories project death and destruction of the earth.

Another group who demonstrated a highly effective use of metaphor was a group of students who illustrated global warming (Figure 6.2).



Figure 6.2

This group did an excellent job incorporating many individual metaphors to illustrate their ideas. Students explained that they were providing their viewers with a message that Global Warming is scary because it makes people sick and can cause the ice caps to disappear if we don't take steps towards conservation. The group disclosed that they used a horror movie as a visual metaphor to explain their idea that global warming is dangerous to watch. They also incorporated a black butterfly to demonstrate that global warming pollutes the air causing "beautiful things to turn black and ugly". Furthermore, the group included a raging bull to show how angry they felt about this issue. At the top of their artwork students presented an illustration of an animal and human war that is developing. Students explained this war began because the humans are living and the animals are dying due to the global warming issue. The students did a really great job of

devising individual metaphors; however, they did not use metaphor effectively to present their overall opinion on the issue.

One other group that illustrated a highly effective way of implementing metaphor was a group that illustrated animal extinction (Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3

This group did a wonderful job of effectively incorporating metaphor into their artwork to represent their ideas on animal extinction. They wanted to provide the viewer with the message that animal extinction is cruel. They explained that “animal extinction

is our fault because we are taking away the animal's homes by cutting down their trees and destroying their environment with pollution". The students further explained that we are also killing the animals by utilizing nets in the ocean and rivers, inhaling smoke coming from factories, and consuming polluted water. One other way that animals are becoming extinct is that humans kill them for their fur, tusks and/or skin. This group used metaphor to convey their anger at the issue by incorporating a volcano into their picture. Their volcanic eruptions exploded out of the top of their factory smokestack into the sky above. These volcanic eruptions are so violent that the animals that are becoming extinct from pollution are now falling out of the sky causing disorder and chaos. They are falling down to show that they are becoming extinct as quickly as the rain falls. They also placed a literal interpretation of two fishermen fishing into a polluted river without any fish. Students explained that the fish have become extinct because humans have polluted the fishes' habitat which leads to a metaphoric interpretation that the only thing the fisherman can catch is their own destruction!

Twenty-five percent of students were somewhat effective in their use of metaphor and eighteen percent displayed a little use of metaphor. Both of these groups did not fully develop a metaphoric visual. Within these groups students used one or two examples of metaphor, but did not apply it to the overall concept of the artwork. A group that created an artwork that rated as somewhat effective in the use of visual metaphor addressed the topic of homelessness (Figure 6.4).





Figure 6.4

The students in this group illustrated homelessness with a display of a dumpster exploding. This image provided a metaphor to express their feelings about the idea of homelessness. The metaphor depicted the group's frustration at the lack of help for the homeless, suggested by the illustration of the dumpster. The students in this group placed images of bananas, garbage bags and other trash expelling out of the top of the dumpster. The only metaphor used within this artwork was the dumpster while the other images in the picture were more literal. This picture is a good example of the difficulties students face trying to transition their ideas into metaphor. Like this illustration students would often use one image as a metaphor, but even these less complex artworks provided evidence that students are capable of consciously producing and incorporating the use of

metaphor. Students may still lack information and exposure on a variety of social issues to be able to extensively correlate the issue's properties into a metaphoric interpretation.

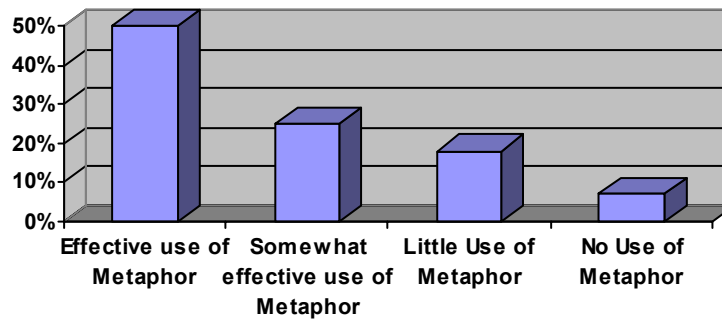
Finally, only seven percent of the students did not use any metaphoric representations, essentially using literal images to illustrate their social issues. These students struggled immensely with the concept of metaphor. They did not understand the correlation of similarities between two objects that needed to be created; instead they substituted stereotypical images and symbols to illustrate their thoughts and ideas on their social issue. The group who worked on the topic of obesity became very frustrated and incapable of producing metaphoric images in their artwork. The idea of obesity seemed to restrict their construction of images and they were only able to portray the definition of obesity (Figure 6.5). The following artwork illustrates a project in which there were no metaphoric images used:



Figure 6.5

Overall, 93% of the students incorporated some form of metaphoric interpretations into their artworks. The following graph represents the use of metaphors within the student artworks as rated by the teacher:

**Comparison of Use of Metaphor in Student Artworks**



Once the students were finished creating their artwork and providing their explanations of its metaphoric content students were able to walk around and view other metaphoric interpretations of other social issues. I felt most students were very proud of their artwork and were able to decipher and interpret the meanings of other artwork in the classroom. I hope metaphor will provide these students with a tool that can help them interpret the images that surround them everyday and create artwork that is a reflection of themselves.

As a teacher I was very pleased with the outcome of the student work. Overall, students seemed to understand the idea of metaphor and incorporate it some way into their artworks. I do believe that metaphor provided another way for students to show their ideas and feelings on issues. I further believe that they can apply metaphor to many other avenues in their lives and can help provide an alternative if they find that they are having issues portraying their own ideas or thoughts.



## **Chapter 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This thesis originated from the idea that students needed another way to express their thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions. The ideas grew from my own experiences in my life and within my classroom. I wanted to equip students with a tool that could help students translate their own ideas and thoughts onto paper. The idea of metaphoric interpretation became the tool that students needed to create artwork that is meaningful and expressive of themselves.

Jean Piaget, a Swiss Psychologist, believed that children under the age of eleven are incapable of using abstract thought. By teaching metaphor, an abstract thought, to fourth grade students, who are at the approximate age of nine, somewhat contradicts the idea of Piaget. Most students learned the idea of metaphor, absorbing its idea and used it to create artworks that were expressive of their ideas and thoughts on a social issue. Although, some students did not envelop metaphor completely ninety-three percent did incorporate at least one metaphor to represent their social issue into their artworks.

Metaphoric Interpretation was taught over four lessons where each lesson built upon the other to define and utilize the idea of metaphor. In a number of lessons that taught how writers and artists use metaphor gave students a background of information that could help them in their future metaphorical artworks. The final lesson presented students with a project of incorporating metaphor to express a social issue. Each student was placed into a group with an assigned social issue such as war, poverty, animal extinction and homelessness. Each group was responsible for creating an artwork that illustrated their ideas, thoughts, feelings and emotions on that particular issue.

Students produced images that were simple but reflective of some use of metaphor. Overall, students placed individualized metaphoric images within their pictures to illustrate their ideas. To place metaphorical thought as an entire message for the artwork was too complex for their age level; however, metaphorical interpretation was present and implemented in the student's artworks. Students verbally understood metaphoric interpretations and verbal language, however, conscious use of metaphor maybe too complex in the creation of art. This study has given insight that metaphoric interpretation can be present in students under the age of eleven, but at a nominal level. Its elements can be understood, utilized and possibly implemented in a creative process.

Students may need more knowledge of metaphor to understand its full potential. Students who are exposed to the idea of metaphor in the fourth grade could learn how to use it orally and within a written form. Fourth grade students may need another year to be able to consciously apply its ideas in a visual sense. Students at the fifth grade level with previous exposure to metaphor, both verbally and in written form, I believe will be able to consciously use metaphorical interpretations to represent their ideas and thoughts on issues that concern themselves and the world around them.

These strategies of teaching metaphoric interpretations can be used in other areas of instruction, especially within literary interpretations. This could lead to further research on how they can transfer visual and verbal metaphoric interpretations into other subjects for further understanding.

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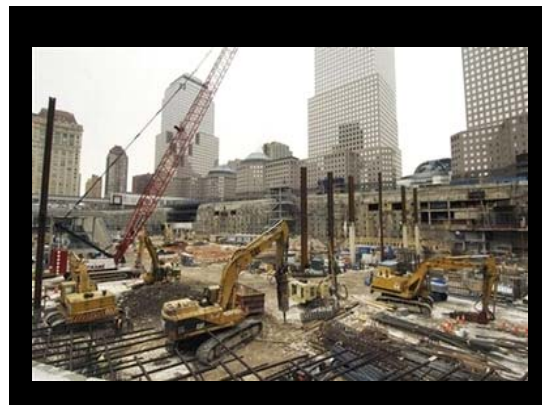
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix One:

A PowerPoint Presentation on Current Events and how they affect our world today –  
Lesson One

### Current Events and Social Issues of Today







Appendix Two:  
A PowerPoint Presentation on “What is Metaphor?”  
Lesson Two

## Using Metaphor in Art

### A metaphor is:

- A comparison between two things based on similarity (how they are alike).
- A device (something) for seeing something in terms of something else.

What would be a metaphor for a bird?



What things are a bird like?



What would be some metaphors  
for a train?



What would be some metaphors for:

- Being Scared
- Being Mad
- Being Sad

What is a metaphor for wind?

What is the writer using a metaphor for?

"Scratching at the window with claws of pine, the wind wants in."

-Imogene Balls

What is a metaphor for clouds?



What is the writer using a metaphor for?

"The clouds were low and hairy in the skies....like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes."

-Robert Frost

### Appendix Three:

A PowerPoint Presentation on how Artists Use Metaphor  
Lesson Three

## Using Metaphor in Art

### A metaphor is:

- A comparison between two things based on similarity (how they are alike).
- A device (something) for seeing something in terms of something else.



How do artists use  
metaphor?



Marc Chagall



How do artists express themselves?

How can an artist create an artwork that tells something about  
themselves?



