Make Real Characters

UNIT PLAN RATIONALE: "MAKE-REAL CHARACTERS"
ALLAN ANDERSON
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Introduction
The title of this unit plan is "Make-Real Characters". It is essentially the same as makebelieve
except it takes the idea a step further from fantasy to the student's reality. The overall
unit is a combination of six lessons based around the idea of a playful pedagogy, allowing the
students to play with the make-believe and reappropriate it to fit their needs. The unit will aid
in the students discovering their own identities designed around a relevant and meaningmaking
curriculum. It will encourage them to critically analyze their daily lives and allow them
to revise and modify themselves through play and imagination. During this unit, students will
engage in dialogue about gender stereotypes as well as marketing and mass production.
Students will also be required to work collaboratively, promoting the value of coming together
in a safe environment where all are equal and every student has a voice. It will help them
embrace their individualities as well as feel a sense of purpose amongst their peers.

Playful Pedagogy Through A Relevant Meaning-Making Curriculum
Throughout the entire semester, our class has been focused on the integration of
popular culture inside the classroom. It is crucial that educators seek out the popularities that
attract their students. By doing this, it allows us to devise a curriculum of subject criteria that

can truly resonate with our student's needs. The objective is to formulate lesson plans that
contain such relevancy that it will compel students to engage in a more meaning-making
process. Using popular culture references to institute a playful pedagogy can provide ample
opportunities for the classroom.
This unit revolves around a theme obtained from popular culture. The first part of the
unit is a self portrait lesson. The project requires the students to discover their own character
self portraits by exploring their favorite characters from popular culture. It is meant to set the
stage for the rest of the unit. It initiates the conversation about characters while allowing the
students to assemble the unit through providing their own insight from popular culture. In the
article, "Popular Culture in the Classroom", the authors mention this in their findings from
researching a teacher's classroom; "selecting curriculum materials or popular culture texts for
literacy lessons must be made in collaboration with the students. " (Alvermann, Moon, Hagood
pg. 44) It is crucial that the students contribute. Although this may seem obvious to some,
many teachers implement outdated references in their curriculum without even knowing. In
contrast, this unit plan is built entirely on the initial popular culture suggestions provided by the
students in the first lesson.
The self portrait lesson begins the exploration into their identities. Having the students
indentify themselves with popular culture references will most likely instigate a conversation
about gender biases and stereotypes. With the exception of few, studies have shown that,
most youth are conditioned by society when it comes to gender

norms. "Children select their
subjects in accord with what they conceive to be the
appropriate subjects for their gender, and
consequently they find these rewarding. " (Duncum pg. 109) Not
only do children usually fall
into probable categories, society has conditioned them to feel
good about it because it is the
"right way" to be. Duncum's point on gender is an important
topic to discuss in class that can
serve as a valuable step into having your students analyze
their daily lives. With this particular
lesson, the students may fall into those norms and it will be
up to the teacher to engage them
in conversations about their choices. It is not as necessary
for them to break the norms as it is
for them to simply be aware of their decisions and know that
it is ok if they want to change
them.
Using popular culture references from their favorite
characters falls under the concept
of fanart which is where fans create art inspired by their
preferred characters from all types of
popular culture texts. In the article, "Enchanting Tales and
Imagic Stories", Manifold discusses
the opportunities and benefits that come from the art making
process of fanart such as
collaborative play with narrative making and art skill
building with rendering and copying. In
the brainstorming session of the first lesson, the students
are already extending their
foundational skills through drawing and conceptualizing their
designs. The second lesson
begins Manifold's suggestion of collaborative play through
narrative making.
Serving as the foundation of the unit, the second lesson is
based around the students'
own narrative from their daily lives. They are to take their

characters from fantasy and position
them into their own daily routines. In other words, their short stories consist of their usual
daily narrative but as their character instead of their normal selves. The concept behind this
lesson is fairly intricate, but through relevant material conducted in a playful pedagogy, it is
easily accomplished. McClure mentions her findings with children that are introduced to
collaborative play, "children, through their play, participate in the process of culture, and
translate, reconfigure, and construct identity. " (McClure, 2007) Her findings help summarize
the objectives of the unit in that it provides students with all the tools they need in order to
explore their worlds, finding their identities, and discovering the benefits of coming together.

Collaborative Work: Promoting the Value of Coming Together
Although the unit is based on a collaborative effort, the second half starts to focus more
attention towards it. Collaborative learning can help establish a strong classroom environment
where all students have a voice. In the article, "Social Effects of Collaborative Learning in
Primary Schools", the authors mention some advantages it brings; "improvements in
participants' conceptual grasp and application of skills, but also more positive social relations. "
(Tolmie, Kenneth, Topping, Christie, Donaldson, Howe, Jessiman, Livingston, & Thurston, 2010)
The second half of this unit focuses on allowing the students to build stronger social relations
amongst their classmates.
Lesson four begins conversation about coming together as a class while the students
begin mass producing their short stories to share with one

another. This particular lesson is
prime example of an extension that can derive from using popular culture material in your
curriculum. One aspect of this lesson is the implication of sharing that you see on the surface,
but it also provides a pathway to discuss topics such as globalization, marketing, target
audience, and consumerism. Some of the dialogue that comes along with this lesson requires
the students to think about why it is they chose their particular characters. This brings them to
explore how power house companies such as Disney are able to dominate such a wide range of
audiences and cultures through their products. These are valuable extension lessons that help
students critically analyze their surroundings, all deriving from popular culture within the
curriculum. By allowing students to explore these topics collaboratively, they will gain a
stronger comprehension of what is actually happening in their worlds.

Lesson five really hones in on the idea of building social relations in the classroom. Its
basis is around a collaborative mural that will essentially be the cover for the final product, a
book with each student's short stories. In this lesson the students are introduced to
community art. They are exposed to examples of public art projects and involved with dialogue
about the values of community art. The idea is that through community art, students can be
taught the meaning of equality, equity, and opportunity. These three concepts are ultimately
the deciding factor to discovering ones true identity and therefore stand as the glue that holds
the unit plan together. Alina Campana writes, "An important

prerequisite for meaningful selfreflection
and evaluation is empathy and awareness of others: being able both to relate to and
see oneself in relation to other people and groups. ” (Campana, 2011) To me this is the ultimate
goal of the unit plan, for students to explore their individualities as well as finding a sense of
purpose amongst their peers.
Art projects that implicate collaborative play and relevant material set the stage for
some exciting experiences not necessarily focused on the final product. Although the outcome
of the mural will prove to be an aesthetically pleasing work, it is the significance of the process
that holds the most value. Community art is about the people coming together to collaborate
on the project and experiences gained from the actual process. “The arts and creative process
are tools, or vehicles, to achieving other goals, such as dialogue, sharing individual experiences,
gaining and developing voice, envisioning alternatives to the status quo, and revealing hidden
assumptions and prejudices. ” (Campana, 2011) This unit plan is a suggestion to how this can be
accomplished in a fourth grade classroom. It is important to have our students put the needs of
others before their own. Every student should feel as if they have a voice.

Conclusion
I truly believe anything is possible if we as educators can focus on the main ideas that
are involved with this unit plan. In “Make-Real Characters”, the students will be challenged to
question their norms. They will discover their own identities as well as become a part of a
larger unit within the class. The criteria will be formed

around their own preferences which will
allow for the most accurate meaning-making experience as
possible. This material integrated
into a playful pedagogy permits the students to developing a
strong sense of self as well as
discovering the power of collaborative learning. I chose to
work with elementary students
because it is an area that I am still unfamiliar with. In
writing this unit, I am beginning to
understand the possibilities that are available for this age.
I will continue to tweak and modify
my unit as time goes on, but I do know that if educators can
focus energy towards these types
of programs the possibilities are endless.

Bibliography
Alvermann, D. E. , Moon, J. S. , & Hagood, M. C. (1999).
Popular culture in the classroom:
Teaching and researching critical media literacy. Newark, DE:
International reading
Association. (pp. 41-60).
Block, L. de & Buckingham, D. (2007). Global children, global
media: Migration, media and
childhood. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. (pp. 77-93)
Campana, A. (2011). Agents of Possibility: Examining the
Intersections of Art, Education, and
Activism in Communities. Studies In Art Education: A Journal
Of Issues And Research In Art
Education, 52(4), 278-291.
Duncum, P. (1997). Subjects and themes in children's
unsolicited drawings and gender
socialization. In A. M. Kindler (Ed.), Child development in
art (pp. 107-114). Reston, VA:
National Art Education Association
Manifold, M. C. (2013). Enchanting tales and imagic stories:
The educational benefits of fanart
making. Art Education, 66(6), 12-19

McClure, M. (2007). Play as process: Choice, translation, reconfiguration, and the process of
culture: Visual Arts Research, 33(2), 63-70
Pearson, P. (1993). Who cares about "Ninja Turtles?": Image making in the life of Iati.
Australian Art Education, 17(1), 14-22
Tolmie, Andrew Kenneth, Keith J. Topping, Donald Christie, Caroline Donaldson, Christine
Howe, Emma Jessiman, Kay Livingston, and Allen Thurston. "Social Effects of
Collaborative Learning in Primary Schools. " Learning and Instruction 20. 3 (2010): 177-91.
Web.

Curriculum Unit Theme: Make-Real Characters

Teacher: Allan Anderson

Grade Level: 4th Grade

State Visual Art Goals: VA3-2.1, VA3-2.2, VA3-2.4, VA3-3.1, VA3-3.3, VA3-4.2, VA3-5.1, VA3-6.1, VA3-6.3

State Media Arts Goals: MA3-1.1, MA3-1.2, MA3-1.3, MA3-1.4, MA3-1.5, MA3-2.1, MA3-2.2, MA3-2.3, MA3-3.1

General goals for the curriculum (describe in 2-5 sentences):
The purpose of this Unit plan is to aid in the students discovering their own selves designed around a relevant and meaning-making curriculum. The idea is to help them embrace their individualities and understand their place amongst their peers. They will discuss gender stereotypes during the unit as well as marketing and mass production. This unit plan will encourage them to critically analyze their daily lives and allow them to revise and modify themselves through play and imagination. Finally the unit requires the students to work collaboratively, promoting the value of coming together in a safe environment where all are equal and every student has a voice.

Lesson
Title
(name each

lesson to reflect a general unit theme)

Visual Exemplars
(list specific images and artists, TV shows, and/or books that you plan to use for each lesson)

Motivation / Dialogue
(list basic issues and questions to be explored during classroom dialogue and any other motivational strategies that you plan to use for each lesson)

Media / Process
(list artistic processes that your students will engage in during each lesson)

Concepts and/or Design Principles to be learned during each lesson

Closure/Assessment
(list an assessment strategy used for each lesson)

Lesson 1
Discovering Your Inner Character!
(3 class periods)

Pop Culture References:
- Ninja Turtles
- Disney (e.g. Frozen)
- Marvel Comics
(Discussion will include browsing for other characters that students may want to use)

Contemporary Artists:
- Melissa Chaib
- Duncan Beedie
- Alexandra Ball
- Gender stereotypes (e.g. Heroes and Sheroes)
- Why do you think that particular character is chosen to represent the comic/tv show/movie?
- Which character can you identify with the most? Why?
- What if you could become this character? What it be like? How would your appearance change?
- Be true to yourself. There is a place for every character.
- Students will be brainstorming and sketching favorite characters (free draw)
- Students will be Reappropiating characters in the exploration of self
- Students will build a Self portrait that

portrays likeness of both themselves and the character of their choosing

☐ Students will learn foundations of art through a fanart process

☐ Students will learn Drawing/Painting/Collage

☐ Students will study design and composition with utilization of the picture plane

Teacher Rubric:

☐ Did the student utilize learned foundations and does their portrait capture a likeness?

Self Evaluation:

☐ Why do you think you chose this particular character? How do you relate to her or him?

Lesson 2

What If? Everyday routine…

(4-5 Class Periods)

Pop Culture References:

☐ Examples from lesson 1 character self portraits

☐ Ninja Turtles

☐ Disney (e.g. Frozen)

☐ Marvel Comics (Discussion will include comics and graphic novel examples from character favorites in lesson one)

Illustrators:

☐ Will Eisner

☐ Andy Runton

☐ Kate Feiffer

Literature:

☐ "The Little Land" by: Robert Stevenson

☐ What did you do this morning? What activities do you participate in daily?

☐ How would those activities be different if you were your character self? (i.e. would you brush your teeth the same or would it be different? Would you still ride the bus to school?)

☐ What would that look like?

☐ How would this alter your life?

☐ Imagine that anything is possible! Can you illustrate this in a short narrative?

☐ Dialogue? Texts?

☐ Students will be devising a storyboard about their daily

routine while identifying with their favorite character.

☐ Students will illustrate their story within ten frames. (i.e. they will be producing their own short story on 10 pages)

☐ Students will be practicing foundations of art.

☐ The Students will learn how to create a storyboard and how to implement it into the actual production process

☐ Students will be exposed to various mediums such as drawing, watercolor, and collage.

☐ Students will also focus on design and layout of exemplar comics and graphic novels

Teacher Rubric:

☐ Did the student utilize foundations? Does their story establish strong imagination and critical

thought?

Self Evaluation:

 What was
your favorite
activity of the
day as your
character?

 Why did you
modify is in this
way?

Lesson 3
Finishing
Touch!
(3 Class
Periods)

Pop Culture References:

 Cover examples
involving characters from
the first two lessons.

 Mirage Studios Covers

 Disney Posters/Covers

 Marvel Comics Covers

Illustrators:

 Melissa Chaib

 Duncan Beedie

Literature:

 Owly by: Andy Runton

 The Snowy Day by: Ezra
Keats

 How can you best describe
or summarize your story in
one illustration?

 Or, what was your favorite
imagined activity? How can
you convert that into a cover?

 What type of font should
you use? How should it be

displayed and why?

 Who is your target
audience? What do you want
your reader to think when
they see your cover?

 What is a trademark? How
do you patent your
illustrations?

 What is a logo?

 Students will
produce their own
cover that embodies
the attributes from
their short stories.

 Students will be
scanning and editing
images in Photoshop.

 Students will
participate in layout
design and
placement of forms
on their covers.

 Students will learn
about trademark and
patenting their short
stories.

 Students will
establish a strong
understanding of
principles of design
with cover
production.

 Students will utilize
foundation skills
through various
mediums. (e.g.
drawing and painting)

Students will learn
basic Photoshop skills
 Students will learn
how to use a scanner
 Students will
explore vocabulary.
(e.g. Patent,
Trademark, Logo)
Teacher Rubric:
 Did the
student utilize
learned
foundations?
Does their
Cover capture
the audience?
Self Evaluation:
 Why did you
choose this
design for your
cover? Do you
think it best
describes the
overall
meaning?
Lesson 4
Going Global!
(2 Class
Periods)
Pop Culture References:
 Nintendo
 Disney Productions
 Pokémon
(Discussion will be focused
around artists who utilize
mass production)
Contemporary Artists:

Laughing Lion Design

 Mae Besom

 Tim Bradford

 Mass Production

 Marketing & Advertising

 Globalization

 How are companies such as
Disney and Nintendo able to
reach multiple countries
around the world?

 How do companies produce
enough quantity to reach their
audience?

 How would you advertise
your product around town to
get your target audience
interested in purchasing it?

 Students will be
scanning and editing
images in Photoshop.

 Students will be
discussing
globalization and
consumerism.

 The students will
produce multiple
copies of their short
story. (i.e. enough for
the whole class to
have a copy)

 Students will
establish Photoshop
foundations

 Students will
present knowledge of
vocabulary. (e.g.
Mass production,

Advertisement, Marketing, Globalization, Consumerism, Target Audience)

Teacher Rubric:
☐ Was the student able to comprehend Photoshop skills successfully?

Self Evaluation:
☐ Define the vocabulary terms for this lesson.

Lesson 5
Coming Together
(3 Class Periods)

Pop Culture References:
☐ Character Examples from previous lessons
☐ Marvel Comics (Discussion will include collaborative mural art from their own communities)

Contemporary Artists:
☐ Khaldoune Bencheikh
☐ Fintan Magee
☐ Creative Art Works (youth program)
☐ Philidelphia Mural Arts Program

- MAAA
- What is a community art and why is it important?
- How can we embody every student's short story into one cover?
- Who is our target audience?
- What message are we trying to get across?

Other topics:

- Coming together as one
- Equality
- Equity
- Opportunity
- Students will share short stories with the class
- Students will work together on a large mural that embodies all of their stories
- Students will have to learn how to collaborate and strategize as a team
- Students will practice various mediums such as drawing, painting, and collage. (as well as new media)
- Students will be working with principles of design.
- Students will also focus on scale and proportion. (they will

be working on a large surface that will be photographed and scaled down in developing a cover)

Teacher Rubric:

⬚ Participation: Did the student contribute to the project? Did they share?

⬚ Did the student show knowledge of foundations? Did they show innovation?

Self Evaluation:

⬚ What did you think of this process? Why is it important? Were there any challenges from working as a group?

Lesson 6

My life as…

(a collection of short stories)

(3 Class Periods)

Pop Culture References:

⬚Examples from short stories

⬚Legos

Smash bros
Avengers
(Discussion will include
book making
demonstration)
Contemporary Artists:
- Gene Luen Yang
- Doug TenNapel
- Jeff Kinney
- "Made by Hand" A Book
on Contemporary Makers
and Traditional Practices
- What does it mean to
complete a project as a team?
- Look at what we can
accomplish when we come
together
- Discuss each character in
relation to reality
- Every student has a voice
- Meaning-Making
- Equality, Equity, and
opportunity
- Community
- Hand-made
- 3D art
- Class will come
together as a group.
Each student's short
story will be laid out
in sections.
- Students will go to
each station and
collect every short
story.
- Students will
participate in a book

making process
where the combine
each story into a final
graphic novel.
(collection of short
stories)
☐ reflection
☐ Students will learn
a hands-on
3demsional art
process. (e.g. book
making, matting and
binding)
☐ Students will
develop a clean and
precise work.
☐ Students will
practice critique and
communication with
peers
Teacher Rubric:
☐ Did the
student create
a successful
final product?
(i.e. quality,
clean and
precise)
Self Evaluation:
☐ What did you
learn from this
the overall
theme?
☐ If you could
go back, would
you choose a
different

character?

Lesson # 5

Title: "Coming Together"

Grade: 4th

Teacher: Allan Anderson

Length: 3 Class Periods

State visual art goals: VA3-3. 1, VA3-3. 3, VA3-4. 2, VA3-5. 1, VA3-6. 1, VA3-6. 3

Objectives:

Students will begin by sharing their short stories with the classroom followed by group
discussion of each one. Students will learn about community arts and develop a
concrete understanding of the benefits and possibilities it can bring. They will
collaborate on a larger mural that will serve as cover for their final books. This process
is meant to help them value team work and coming together. The lesson is meant for
students to continue their exploration of self as well as discovering the value of every
student having a voice in the classroom.

Concepts and vocabulary:

Students will utilize their foundations of art in various mediums such as drawing,
painting, and collage. They will be working with new media and extending their
knowledge on principles of design. The students will also be focusing on scale and
proportion while working on the larger surface. They will have to strategize together in
devising the layout for their final cover. After this lesson, the students will be able to
extend their vocabulary with a better comprehension of; Community Arts, Target
Audience, Equality, Equity, and Opportunity.

Teacher materials:

– Computer

– Power Point presentation of Community Arts projects and Contemporary artists
(Khaldoune Bencheikh, Fintan Magee, Creative Art Works, Philidelphia Mural
Arts Program, MAAA)

– Camera & Tripod

– Yard stick

– Large Surface

– Stretchers bars

– Canvas

– Gesso

– Palette Knife

– Utility Brushes

– Handouts

Student materials:

– Short stories

– Tools/Utensils

– Pencils and Markers

– Brushes and Paint

– Magazines

– Scissors & Glue

– Rulers or Straight Edge

– Sketch Books

Procedures (detailed step-by-step description including dialogue):

-Day 1

– Students enter the classroom being presented with a fairly larger surface in the
front of the classroom. (Desks spread to the edges of the room)

– Brief discussion to see if they can guess what the large surface is for.

– Teacher passes out handouts with contemporary artists then gives power point
presentation on community arts.

– Students and Teacher discuss ways they can combine each

short story into one
cover all while focusing on vocabulary.
— Students practice drafting out various ideas in sketchbooks
— Class has group discussion on favorite sketches. (i. e. strongest most successful
designs)
— Collaborate on devising a strategy to work on the larger surface simultaneously.
-Day 2
— Class starts with a brief overview of ideas discussed
— Students are divided into groups
— Once all students are on the same page, groups begin working on the larger
surface (students who are not physically working on the mural will stand back and
participate through feedback and directional ideas for the mural)
— This will carry on to the end of class
— 10 minutes before class is over; Students will clean up materials and straighten
room.
-Day 3
— Students continue collaborating on the mural establishing the final touches.
— Midway through the class; class will critique the final piece in group discussion.
— Teacher will set up tripod and photograph the piece
— The picture will be entered into Photoshop and printed out for each student to
have a cover for their books.
-Dialogue
— What is community art and why is it important?
— How can we embody every student's short story into one cover?
— Who is our target audience?
— What messages are we trying to convey?
— Coming together/equality/equity/opportunity

Assessment/Closure:
— Teacher will grade students on participation. (i. e. whether or not the student
contributed to the project in a productive and sharing manner)
— Teacher will assess the student's knowledge of foundations.
-Students will have a self evaluation. (e. g. What did you think of this process? Why is
it important?)
Learning center/ back up activity (if any):
— If students miss class and are unable to contribute to making the cover, a possible
solution would be to add their designs digitally once they return.
— Teacher can hand them a print out of the collaborative cover
— The students who missed the activity can modify that print out
— The teacher can then scan that piece back in to form the new cover