

ACTIVITY 1 – “CAVE” ART



Description: Students create a piece of visual art that shows a day in their life in the manner of a cave drawing. It is up to the individual student to determine how much or how little they represent, how much of their canvas they apportion to a particular moment or event, and how they use colour, shape, and form to represent their activities or experiences. Once they have completed the piece of visual art, students then produce a written reflection in which they try to explain not simply what they have represented, but the process by which they came to represent it.

Skills: Self Awareness, Critical Thinking, Metacognition

Purpose: By the end of the activity, students should come to understand something about how they have represented themselves and their activities and experiences, how they have chosen to budget their visual space to this end, how they have gone about deciding what to include and what not to include, and what their piece of visual art does and does not say about them.

Critical Thinking Questions:

- Does my work of art tell a story?
- Does it represent me? Does it only represent some of the things that I do?

- When someone else looks at my work of art, will they understand something about me? What sorts of questions might they ask me?
- Is there a question that my work of art raises that is difficult for me to answer?
- How is my work of visual art similar to or different from a single panel graphic story or visual narrative?
- What are the limitations of this work of art in showing other people who I am?

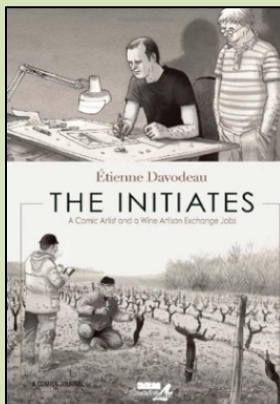
Metacognition Questions:

- What were the steps I took in putting my work of art together?
- Was there anything I wanted to show but decided not to? Was there anything I didn't want to show but decided to anyways?
- Was there anything that I might have embellished, misrepresented, took artistic license with in representing by day-to-day activities and experiences in this work of art?
- What was the most difficult part of putting together this work of art? What did I struggle with?
- What do I think is the most successful part of my piece artistically? What do I think is the most successful part of my piece in terms of representing who I am?

How Can Visual Narrative Foster Inquiry in This Activity?

Because students are creating a product that is ostensibly about them, that they generally care about, and that they are given a fair bit of freedom to put together, they tend to do a good job reflecting on what they have produced. However, the real power of the activity for me derives from what I learned this year from a student who was giving a presentation after engaging in a very similar activity. When asked to what extent the final amalgamation of images represented him, the student replied that he didn't think it much represented him at all. "However," he said, "if people could have seen the process I went through deciding what to include and what not to include—how I put everything together—they would have learned *everything* about me." Visual narrative and visual storytelling show us *so much* about what a writer and illustrator are thinking, feeling, seeing, and trying to articulate—what they value as a story and what they want us to see and experience.

Recommended Read for the Teacher



The Initiates: A Comic Artist and a Wine Artisan Exchange Jobs, by Etienne Davodeau, Translated by Joe Johnson

In this critically acclaimed graphic novel, Etienne Davodeau recalls the experience of learning the craft of wine making in the Loire Valley from vintner, Richard Leroy. At the same time, Davodeau gets Leroy to learn the art of creating and publishing graphic novels. The story is brilliantly told, and from it we come away with a genuine understanding of how much people from different backgrounds and occupations can learn from one another by seeing what actually goes into what they do.