



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume I: Writing, Knowing, Seeing

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## **Using Art to Encourage Effective Speaking and Writing Skills with ESL Students**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.01.08

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This unit is designed to bring my middle-school bilingual/ESL students to the place where the clarity of thought they possess as Spanish thinkers and speakers can be expressed in effective written English form.

Pedagogically, my students will have opportunities to see, hear, read, speak, and write in a safe, stress-free environment exploring the question, "What is art?" Art will provide creative ways to respond using language, creative skills, and critical thinking. Starting with the exploration of photographs of the 9/11 tragedy, students will become familiar with the elements and principles of design through oral and written verbal exercises.

Then, using these skills, students will apply them to opening up an art gallery in the classroom after defending a chosen piece of art, again using oral and written activities. Because the emphasis will be placed on the piece of art and not language as it is typically taught, students will feel a sense of freedom. Writing will not necessarily be under the microscope; students' ideas about the piece will be. Students will explore the artist's life, thus seeking answers through a biographic search using computer technology. These opportunities will better their chances at success with fluency and proficiency.

(Recommended for English Language Arts, grades 7 and 8)

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