



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2009 Volume II: The Modern World in Literature and the Arts

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## **Futurism: Capturing Modern Technology**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 09.02.02  
by Sara E. Thomas

Even through my lifetime of three short decades I have seen drastic changes in technology. When I was a kid we had a computer with 64MB of memory, far less than even a memory stick today would hold. ATM cards have practically replaced checks; GPS allows instant access to maps and directions. Cell phones, texting and chat functions keep us in touch. Myspace and Facebook offer constant updates about the lives of peers, family members and friends. Digital cameras and webcams invite information to be recorded and uploaded immediately. Students are extremely familiar with this technology and couldn't imagine their lives without it! Other technology is being created to make the world a cleaner place, like solar power and hybrid cars. Futurist artists working in the 1910s were exploring how to capture the new technology of their decade on canvas with paint, though their new technology was motion pictures, still-frame photography and the industrial revolution. I would like to challenge my students to capture the new technology of their generation while exploring how it has changed their everyday lives. While futurists were capturing the motion of the figure itself, how will students deal with the idea of capturing the movement of information that happens all around us, but we don't actually see?

My objectives for this unit have two distinct categories: technical and conceptual. On the technical side I would like students to analyze a subject as a whole and determine which basic shapes to break the subject down into. On the technical side, I would also like them to be able to draw and paint those shapes correctly, and to add volume to them using tints and shades. Lastly, I would like them to be able to capture motion using gesture drawing. On the conceptual side I would like students to be able to understand why an artist might want to represent a subject in a more simplified manner. I would also like them to think about how they might show movement related to today's technology. I am hoping to reach this objective by having students actually go through the process of creating a futurist painting, and to discuss how the abstracted work is different than simply a snapshot of the subject. We will discuss what further information an abstracted painting gives the viewer and why.

(Recommended for Art, grades 9-12)

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