INCORPORATING NARRATIVE LITERATURE IN THE SECONDARY ART CLASSROOM

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A PROJECT IN LEIU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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Summary of Project in Lieu of Thesis
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INTEGRATING NARRATIVE LITERATURE IN THE SECONDARY ART CLASSROOM

By

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Abstract

Through this project in Lieu of Thesis, I created an online resource to guide art educators in expanding the possibilities for art engagement in the secondary art classroom by exploring the use of narrative art literature to supplement the art curriculum. I argue that reading narrative art literature to the secondary art classroom will provide the means for students to further explore big ideas, expand their interests in art-related topics, extend their creative process, and “get to know” artists throughout history. In addition, reading in the secondary art classroom will provide opportunities for students to further their literacy skills and encourage lifelong reading in art. My research addresses the question, “How can secondary art educators effectively incorporate narrative literature into their classrooms?” In order to answer this question, I explored the ways in which reading narrative literature can connect to students’ artistic selves as well as how art educators can create a culture of reading in the secondary art classroom. After gathering information regarding the connections between the narrative and learning, adolescent reading behavior and
motivation, and reading in the classroom, I read ten narrative art trade books and determined their educational value.

My Project in Lieu of Thesis resulted in an online resource for secondary art educators who wish to incorporate narrative literature in their classrooms. This website includes a list of narrative art literature art educators can use to help accomplish curriculum goals in their classrooms. Art educators will also find specific teaching strategies to employ in their classrooms such as classroom read-alouds, literature circles, and dramatizations, complete with essential and discussion questions pertaining to the text. Through these literary works, students will engage with art in a new way that will allow them to expand their understanding of the subject. This mode of art learning is particularly important for adolescent students who value the type of shared experiences reading as a class would provide and wish to further explore the subject of art.
Incorporating Narrative Literature in the Secondary Art Classroom

Chapter 1

By Monica Patterson

It was the usual story: Claude never knew when to stop working, he let himself be carried away by the desire for immediate certitude, the urgency of proving to himself that this really was his masterpiece. Now, after a momentary feeling of satisfaction with the sitting, he was assailed by doubt and despair. Ought he to have given so much prominence to the velvet jacket? Was he going to be able to find the note he wanted to give the nude figure of the woman? And he would rather have died on the spot than not have the answer at once (Zola, 1886, p. 41).

These words from The Masterpiece (Zola, 1886), though fiction, gave me more insight into the character of Paul Cezanne than any lecture or textbook throughout my years as an art student. Written by Emile Zola, this novel follows the artistic endeavors of Claude Lantier, a character loosely based on Cezanne, Zola’s personal friend. I first learned of this novel from an informational book about Cezanne, and felt a desire to learn how a contemporary and friend would portray this artist.

Because of Zola’s story, I was able to grasp Cezanne as a real person, and even determined that he and I would probably not have been friends. After engaging with him through this narrative, I identified with his struggles as an artist and came to understand the life, motivations, and aspirations of an artist during the Impressionist period as I never had before.

This experience inspired me to search for further literary works that would allow me to engage with artists and art ideas
in this way. I was convinced this would prove to be a fruitful and enjoyable experience for art students, and began compiling a list of similar literary works (Figure 1) to include in my future classroom.

![Book Covers](image)

**Figure 1 – Book Covers**

My research resulted in an online resource for secondary art educators that provides a list of art-related narrative literary works related to art and accompanying teaching strategies and lessons. My goal is to encourage high school art teachers to use this resource to bridge reading and art in ways that create a lasting impact on art students by furthering their knowledge of art content as well as encourage lifelong reading behavior in art.
**Statement of the Problem**

Many educational polls and scholarly investigations reveal that student interest in reading begins to decline following elementary school (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009; Delo, 2008). This trend continues so that by high school many students do not consider themselves readers in or outside the classroom (Whittingham & Huffman, 2009, p. 130). Reading is a fundamental learning skill and a means for gaining knowledge and exploring ideas across the curriculum. For this reason, all educators should feel a responsibility to cultivate positive reading habits in their classroom. Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George (2001) state, “When students see literacy as a powerful tool, they seek to use literacy abilities beyond the confines of the classroom and curriculum” (p. 166). Art educators should work to counteract the typical decline in reading habits among their adolescent students so that they may continue to learn about art through reading even after they have left the secondary art classroom.

In a 2011 pilot study, I discovered that secondary art educators typically facilitate reading experiences that involve research or reference (Patterson, 2011). Literature for this purpose is often expository and the act of reading is conducted individually. The decline in classroom reading of narrative tradebooks from elementary to secondary school is evident in content areas across the curriculum, such as science (Delo, 2008). This is often attributed to perceived lack of time in the curriculum to include reading, but educators should not neglect such a valuable source of content knowledge.

Many scholars, such as Nathanson (2006), Walsh (2006), and Egan (1989, 1992, 1995) have conducted research on the connections between story and learning. These studies show that learning through story results in more meaningful and salient
learning because the reader actively engages with the text. I believe secondary art educators currently miss the opportunity to provide their students this type of rich learning experience offered by narrative literature. For this reason, my Project in Lieu of Thesis focuses on the question, “How can secondary art educators effectively incorporate narrative literature into their classrooms?”
Chapter 2
Literature Review

The overarching goal of my Project is to foster lifelong reading in art. I began pursuing this interest during the fall of 2011 by taking a children’s literature seminar through the University of Florida’s College of Education. My classmates and I discussed the importance of using literature to teach content area knowledge as well as compiled lists of children’s books titles for use in content area classrooms. This was helpful to orient my thinking surrounding the possibilities for learning from literature, but I needed to apply this specifically to art education at the secondary level to accomplish my goal. In order to develop effective strategies, I conducted a literature review to investigate the relationship between the narrative/story and learning. I explored literature surrounding the facilitation of reading in the classroom by searching through online article databases and consulting books from the College of Education’s library.

The Power of Narrative

Trelease (2001), Egan (1989, 1992), and Nathanson (2006), among others, agree that it is through narrative that one makes sense of the world. Narratives are not only “a means for understanding the events of their lives,” but how they communicate personal experiences to others (Hokanson & Fraher, 2008, p. 28). People seem naturally wired to receive and organize information within this structure, leading scholars to believe in the power of narrative as a learning tool.

Nathanson (2006) argues that story, or narrative, is the most powerful learning tool “because of its ability to hook audiences, activate the pleasure principle, and facilitate
In this way, narratives serve to organize facts so that they become meaningful and relevant to the reader. Egan (1992) remarks that humans have known and utilized this idea for centuries, using oral storytelling to pass on cultural knowledge and moral lessons to future generations. These messages had to be remembered easily by the storyteller yet also captivate the listener—they needed to be narratives. He believes educators should apply this same thinking in the classroom. Egan adds, “...the story is the greatest tool we have for ensuring meaningful memorization of its contents,” suggesting the power of narrative for salient learning (Egan, 1992, p.172).

Scholars have found two characteristics of narrative that contribute to its success as a learning tool: 1) narrative provokes an emotional, or aesthetic, response in the reader; and 2) narrative contextualizes facts and ideas. Stories are about emotions, or “affective matters,” engaging the reader emotionally with the characters and events (Egan, 1989, 1992). The connection between emotion and memory has been researched by many psychologists, such as Kensinger and Corkin (2003), who found that from a random list of disparate words, people were more likely to remember those that carried an emotional weight. This suggests that the emotional, or aesthetic engagement with a narrative text allows readers to make meaning of presented facts and ideas in such a way that will be remembered, and remain meaningful, long after reading.

Narrative works are unique in that the reader personally identifies with the characters of the story, resulting in an active reading experience (Nathanson, 2006). Walsh (2006) agrees that the decoding of narrative text is a “two-way recursive and dynamic interaction” between reader and text (Walsh, 2006, p. 25). Wolfe (2000) attributes this to the “interior point of view,” or getting inside the character’s head to know their
thoughts and feelings. This, combined with the mention of status details and cues, results in an interaction with the text in which the reader is constantly comparing themselves with the characters. Egan (1989, 1992) believes it is the emotional power of narrative that allows for this connection and active interaction with the contents of the story that leads readers to become invested in its outcome. Not only does this engagement motivate the reader to continue the story, the emotional construction of meaning from its contents will be remembered even after the act of reading is completed.

Through sequencing and detail, narrative also “contextualize[s] meaning and reinforce[s] understanding” (Martin, 2000, p. 359). Readers are able to organize information into a structure that is not only familiar, but makes the ideas more concrete and therefore memorable. Egan (1992) suggests that people are more likely to remember things they can imagine through visualization. Readers typically visualize ideas, places, events, etc. from narratives because they are placed within a larger context, allowing the reader to form a more complete and connected visualization and understanding. Egan (1992) points out that images generated by the imagination in this way are also more memorable because they “evoke[s] an affective condition” (Egan, 1992, p. 70), further emphasizing the power of emotional as well as contextual engagement in meaning making and memory through narrative.

The Adolescent Reader

Many educational polls and scholarly investigations reveal that student interest in reading begins to decline as students enter middle school (Strommen & Mates, 2004; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009; Delo, 2008). This trend continues so that by high school age many students “do not see themselves as readers and
view reading as a chore. . .” (Whittingham & Huffman, 2009, p. 130). This noticeable decline in reading interest among adolescents has prompted many scholars to investigate how to counteract these attitudes.

In 2004, Strommen and Mates interviewed a group of adolescents to determine what contributed to the forming of one’s identity as a reader at this age. They found that for adolescents, surrounding themselves with a social circle of readers was a major factor. A recent National Geographic article on the teenage brain also notes that this age group tends to gravitate toward each other to create a circle of friends, resulting in healthier, happier, and more successful teenagers (Dobbs, 2011). When their peer groups are reading, adolescents are more likely to find enjoyment in the activity, resulting in a greater chance of seeking out repeated reading experiences in the future. Interviewees reported having conversations surrounding the books they read and constant recommendations for new reads, leading Strommen and Mates (2004) to believe this was an enjoyable and thus important part of the readers’ experience. Cornett (2006) supports this claim by noting, “The power of a shared story emotionally bonds listeners as they vicariously solve problems that propel fictional plots” (Cornett, 2006, p. 236).

Strommen and Mates (2004) found that another major contributing factor for developing lifelong reading behavior was the presence of an adult reading role model. For some, this can include family members at home, but all students should benefit from an enthusiastic adult reading role model in the classroom. Strommen and Mates (2004) noted that while most of the students interviewed had access to a variety and abundance of reading materials, only those with adults modeling reading behavior grew to consider themselves readers. This was especially significant
in overcoming the age when most students exhibit a decline in reading for pleasure (immediately following elementary school). This suggests that for a successful culture of reading in the secondary classroom to occur, the teacher must model a genuine love for reading in addition to having literary works available.

Bull (2011), Brozo and Flynt (2008), and Beers (1996) note the power of student choice in fostering an enjoyment of reading, particularly during the adolescent years. Asking students their opinions on the text and using this feedback to shape the choice of reading materials demonstrates the importance of their voice in the classroom (Beers, 1996). More specifically, allowing students to choose the books that they read gives them ownership and increases their motivation for reading as well as their engagement with the text (Bull, 2011). Educators will need to have a variety of narrative literature available for students so that they have opportunities to make these choices.

**Reading in the Classroom**

Creating a culture of adolescent readers that utilize the power of narrative for learning entails more than the presence of physical texts available for classroom use, but rather the effective facilitation of shared literary experiences.

Cox (2012) and Unkovich (2011) stress the importance of integrating such stories into lesson plans rather than having students read as isolated experiences. The meaningfulness of classroom reading engagement is highly dependent on the teacher’s implementation of activities and discussions related to the text. Unkovich (2011) suggests beginning with goals for the reading and developing essential questions to guide the experience as well as determining activities and further questions to help students identify with the stories.
After reviewing the literature pertaining to the adolescent reader, it seems that class read-alouds and small literature circles or book clubs would prove most helpful as shared peer experiences for creating a culture of reading in the secondary classroom in which students can learn content knowledge through narrative. Read-alouds take place in a large group where one person reads from the text so that everyone else can hear the story. In contrast, reading in literature circles or book clubs takes place in small groups. Trelease (2001), Zher (2010), and Beers (1996) discuss the benefits of reading aloud to adolescents, despite the stereotype that this reading experience is more appropriate for elementary students. Trelease (2001) in particular urges both parents and teachers to resist the urge to stop reading to adolescent students. Beers (1996) found that adolescent students, regardless of whether or not they consider themselves readers, in fact do enjoy being read to.

Read-alouds can act as a classroom equalizer, as students of multiple reading levels will be able to successfully comprehend the text. Trelease (2001) suggests that there is often a difference between reading ability and listening ability; students’ listening ability is typically higher than their reading level. This implies that all students should benefit from a read-aloud experience in the classroom, regardless of their individual reading ability.

Class read-alouds also act to equalize the class in that all students will hear the story at the same time, removing the possibility for students arriving to class unprepared for discussion (Zehr, 2010). In addition, students are able to ask questions and clarify ideas as they listen during read-alouds, enabling the teacher to check for group understanding before moving forward.
Smaller group shared reading experiences also prove valuable for the adolescent reader. Though an entire class read-aloud cannot always cater to individual students’ choice in text, literature circles or in class book clubs, will afford students the choice of literature that piques their own interests. This allows them to take ownership of their reading and leads to an investment in their learning.

Literature circles or book clubs provide the adolescent reader with the peer interaction they crave while sharing ideas, asking questions, and engaging in discussion. Whittingham & Huffman (2009) found that students were more likely to interpret these small group sessions as social gatherings rather than imposed academic assignments, emphasizing reading as a positive experience. These literature circles or book clubs create a sense of belonging, membership, and invitation to a peer group, something particularly important to readers at this age level (Trelease, 2001; Whittingham & Huffman, 2009; Kooy, 2003). Whittingham & Huffman (2009) also believe that discussing books with peers results in readers who are more likely to be motivated and engaged with what they are reading.

The classroom should be a safe and encouraging space for readers who have “the common urge to share stories of books and reading” (Kooy, 2003, p. 141). Within the small peer group of literature circles or book clubs, students will have the opportunity to share their ideas regarding texts and gain respect for multiple viewpoints and opinions from their peers. In addition, discussions within these small groups require students to build on each other’s ideas, engage in critical thinking, and take ownership of their own opinions and ideas (Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George, 2001). Demonstration of these skills allows the educator to check for student understanding,
as they require comprehension of the text at a deep and meaningful level.

**What Does This Mean for Secondary Art Education?**

High school art students should engage in reading that builds their content knowledge in art. This means reading literary works that pertain to specific works of art, artists, and/or artistic styles as well as museums, the creative process, and/or art-related professions. Providing a variety of appropriate literature, while important, is not the only duty of the art educator in guiding reading experiences that connect with students’ artistic selves (Sipe, 2001).

Johnson (2011) discusses the connection between sites and selves, arguing that each person has multiple selves tied with respective and particular sites. She frames this idea in terms of the *reading self*. Students may be efferent readers (reading for information) in one site and aesthetic readers (connecting emotionally to the text) in another. Johnson (2011) believes adding aesthetic reading experiences in school are the key to creating lifelong readers, but the classroom is typically perceived only as a site for efferent reading. She claims the only way to change student perceptions of self in a particular site is to facilitate repeated experiences that contradict initial misconceptions. First, art educators will need to foster a *reading self* that is tied with the art classroom. Unkovich (2011) calls upon the art educator to accomplish this by making classroom reading experiences repeated ones, as frequency of reading in the art classroom is more likely to contribute to creating lifelong readers. Strommen and Mates (2004) agree, noting that the students who identified as readers recalled regular reading routines as the first step to making time for reading beyond the classroom.
Once a reading self is established in the site of the art classroom, art educators should work to facilitate both efferent and aesthetic reading experiences for art students, keeping in mind Johnson’s (2011) recommendation that aesthetic reading experiences are most likely to create lifelong readers. Rosenblatt (1994) believes that active imagination in reading comes from this combination of efferent and aesthetic reading.

In addition to building content area knowledge, the act of reading is especially relevant for the art classroom because it is believed to develop the imagination of the reader—something highly valued in art education. Narrative texts help foster students’ imaginations because they must visualize details of a story and fill in the textual gaps to create meaning (Dart, 2001). As Eisner says, “The reader starts with the writer’s words and ends with vision” (Eisner, 2002, p. 89). Opportunities for imagination development through reading should occur even at the secondary education level.

As discussed earlier, class read-alouds and small group literature circles or in class book clubs seem apt for structuring reading engagements for adolescent readers. These shared experiences would particularly benefit high school art students in a class typically focused on individual artistic processes. The dialogue generated from these shared reading experiences mirrors that of conversations during classroom critiques. Students will gain familiarity with sharing opinions, taking ownership of ideas, critiquing the ideas of others, and treating others with respect through discussion within their literature circle or book club.

Secondary art educators should utilize this power of narrative in the classroom to build content knowledge in art. Both the act of reading and shared reading experiences recommended for the high school classroom have relevance to art
students. Art educators should model positive reading behavior and work to create a culture of reading in the art classroom in order to build lifelong readers in art that may continue to benefit from narrative art literature throughout their lives.
Chapter 3

Research Design

The overarching goal of my Project is to encourage lifelong reading behavior in art. In order to accomplish this goal, I believe secondary art educators must begin by establishing a culture of reading in their classrooms. I chose to pursue this goal by creating an online resource that provides teachers with a means for incorporating narrative literature into secondary art classrooms in such a way that will enhance students’ understanding of art content.

After exploring the connections between narrative and learning, I read ten art tradebooks designed for young adult or adult readers (see Figure 1). Several scholars discuss the need for choosing quality literature for use in the classroom. Albright (2002), Cox (2012), Sipe (2001), and Unkovich (2011) all provide suggestions for selection criteria, which I considered when constructing my own. I began by determining if they should be included in secondary art classrooms by asking, “What are we learning about art from this book?” If the answer was of value, I proceeded to evaluate the literary work according to the following criteria:

1. The literary work must be written as a narrative.
2. The literary work must be of high literary quality (Albright, 2002).
3. The literary work must appeal to a variety of students.
4. The literary work must yield itself to a range of classroom follow-up discussions and activities.

Each of the titles included on my website, http://thereadstudio.weebly.com/, meet these criteria. It is worth noting that two of the novels I began reading did not lend themselves well to the initial question, “What are we learning
about art from this book?” and were therefore abandoned as part of this project.

After reading articles by Whittingham & Huffman (2009), Beers (1996), and Zehr (2010), I determined that read-alouds with the entire class and small literature circles or book clubs would be the best method for encouraging narrative reading in the art classroom. As Whittingham & Huffman (2009) suggest, adolescent readers find motivation in shared reading experiences and place extreme importance on peer interaction. Both class read-alouds and literature circles satisfy this need and help to build a classroom community of artists as readers.

As I read each of the books chosen for my website, I marked pages of interest with color-coded tabs so that I could return to them later and develop essential questions, discussion questions, and ideas for classroom dramatizations. These excerpts included notable quotes, mentioning of specific artists and artworks, and ideas or theories pertaining to art. As I read, I also took notes on my computer, with separate document tabs for each novel. I kept a running list on my computer of answers to the question, “What are we learning about art from this book?” Once I finished reading each book, I went back through my tabs to record notable quotes and ideas on my computer documents. From these, I began to think of essential questions and discussion questions for each story.

From my frequency of color-coded tabs, I was able to reflect on major themes or big ideas in each story. From these big ideas, I developed essential questions pertaining to art. I used the discussion questions as a way to approach answering these essential questions and also provide opportunities for students to share their personal opinions and ideas surrounding the text. For The Lacuna (Barbara Kingsolver) and Girl with a Pearl Earring (Tracy Chevalier) I consulted online interviews
with the author to aid in discussion question development. Brief searches of the remaining novels online also supplemented my own ideas for discussion questions. After recording these questions on my computer, I began to conceive of ways for art educators to check for student understanding through dramatizations.

I chose to frame the suggested classroom experiences in terms of dramatizations, a popular reading strategy for the classroom because dramatizations based on the text bring the story into the classroom that can bring the story into the classroom (Collins, 1992). Students take ownership by becoming a part of the story through kinesthetic learning experiences that require deep comprehension and internalization of what was read (Mason, 1996). Art educators can check for student understanding by focusing on dramatic experiences that require higher order thinking, such as prediction and inference by extending the story and embodying characters. Students should not only focus on what happens in the narrative, but also on why these events occur and how they affect the story. Collins believes that interpretation of the text through dramatization greatly outweighs strict fidelity to the text, saying the goal of a dramatic activity should be to help students “develop a better understanding of the text they are reading” (Collins, 1992, p. 152).

To meet this goal, I used reenactment to place students into the dramatization not as actors on a stage but rather as artists in an arranged studio. For example, one type of dramatization experience I suggest requires that the art educator recreate the circumstances under which artists in the narrative literature created artwork. This could involve rearranging the room, providing specific art making materials, recreating catalysts or motivation for creation, and so on. By allowing students to live through a similar experience, students
can identify with characters and bring new insight to discussion of the narrative art literature.

For the literary works that do not involve an artist in the act of creation, I suggest exploratory dramatization through improvisation and extending the story. In this type of dramatization, students will embody characters from the story and use their knowledge of their personalities and motivation to improvise new interactions and circumstances as well as extend the plot forward or backward in time. These dramatizations require that students make judgments, hypothesize, and make inferences about the text.

I referred to the big ideas and essential questions I developed for each story as well as my notes and tabs to decide which ideas would be best for dramatic classroom activities to check for student understanding. Additionally, I listed three student objectives for each dramatization to accompany the instructions for the activity. All of the dramatization experiences are designed to help students build a deeper understanding of the narrative, increase student engagement with the text, and further develop their artistic selves.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Once I evaluated each literary work and developed accompanying questions and strategies, I made the information available to secondary art educators across the world by creating an online resource. I chose www.weebly.com as my design interface due to administrator ease and professional appearance. The resulting website, The Read Studio (http://thereadstudio.weebly.com), includes the list of narrative art literature and accompanying teaching strategies and classroom lessons I created.

When art teachers visit The Read Studio (http://thereadstudio.weebly.com), they will be welcomed to The Read Studio with a home page (Figure 2) stating the goal of the website. They will find my goals for creating this online resource under the “Rationale” tab (Figure 3), where I list three reasons why secondary art educators should encourage reading in their classrooms: 1) “People organize the events of their lives and communicate them to others through narrative – we are naturally wired to receive information through story,” 2) “Narratives engage our emotions, resulting in deeper, lasting knowledge of what we read,” and 3) “Reading narratives fosters students’ imaginations as they visualize the details of the story to create meaning.” I follow up this list by noting, “We want to provide students with positive reading experiences in art class so that they will be motivated to read as a way of learning about art beyond the classroom. This also provides students with the opportunity to practice and build their literacy skills so they will be successful in seeking art knowledge through text.”
Figure 2 - “Home” Page
After recalling my own positive experiences as part of a small classroom literature circle, I decided to contact my former English teacher, Vicki Close, who had facilitated this classroom experience for our tenth grade class in Stavanger, Norway in 2003. She told me the rationale behind her choosing to organize our class in this way by stating some of the generally agreed upon benefits of learning through literature circle discussions. This conversation prompted my own research on literature circles and book clubs in the classroom.

After consulting multiple sources, including those by Trelease (2001), Collins (1992), Mason (1996), Raphael, Florio-Ruane, & George (2001), and Polleck (2010), I compiled a list of concise suggestions for facilitating reading experiences such as these to share through my website. I included information about each strategy under the “Classroom Strategies” tab (Figure 4).
begin by explaining what each strategy is before providing suggestions for their use in the classroom. I define read-alouds as a “type of reading experience [that] involves the entire group. The teacher or student volunteers read aloud from the text while the rest of the class listens”. For successful incorporation of this strategy in the classroom, I suggest: 1)“Arrange students in a comfortable way that facilitates group listening and participation,” 2) Before each read-aloud session, prepare students by giving them some things to be looking for or paying attention to in the story as you read,” and 3) “Get students to volunteer to read aloud by letting them choose when to read, knowing they will all have to read at some point before the book is done.”

On the same page, I define literature circles or book clubs as a “type of reading experience [that] takes place in small groups composed of 5 or less students. Students can meet in these groups to read and discuss literature that meets their mutual interests” (Patterson, 2012). I go on to explain that through these small group reading experiences, “students take responsibility for their learning as they share ideas and opinions with their peers” (Patterson, 2012). For successful incorporation of this strategy in the classroom, I suggest: 1)“Students should choose their own group and the book to read,” 2) “Assign each member a role/responsibility for each meeting,” (followed by a list of possible roles), and 3) “Make sure each member asks at least 3 questions to keep up the discussion.”

Further down the “Classroom Strategies” page, I suggest dramatizations as a way of checking for student understanding of the text. I explain that students will demonstrate their understanding by, “inferring, hypothesizing, predicting, and applying their knowledge as they enact parts of the text through studio experiences and embodying different roles.” This section
explains dramatization as a classroom strategy and prepares the art educator for the “5 Ways to Use Art Stories” page where I suggest their use for each book.

Figure 4 – “Classroom Strategies” Page

The website design allows teachers to view book titles in two ways: 1) searching by curriculum goal under “5 Ways to Use Stories,” which will also show accompanying classroom applications, or 2) searching a complete title list arranged in alphabetical order under “Browse All Titles,” where I list what can be learned about art from each book and link to Amazon.com for purchasing and summary information. This design allows for educators to explore at their own pace and utilize the resource in a way that best meets their classroom needs.

Though I read a variety of literary works with stories about many different subjects, I was able to determine five
overarching curriculum goals that an art educator could meet by reading the titles included on the website in their classroom: 1) Explore a big idea; 2) “Get to know” an artist; 3) Investigate an artwork; 4) Introduce a lesson; and 5) Expand the scope of the curriculum. The art educator can click on each of these tabs and discover particular titles I suggest for meeting each curricular goal. Some titles appear more than once, as they can be used to accomplish multiple goals in the classroom. After browsing the recommended titles, the art educator will find a series of essential questions, quotes, discussion questions, and suggested classroom dramatizations specific to each text.

One example of a dramatization I suggest (Figure 5) as part of The Read Studio comes from reading The Yellow House (Martin Gayford, 2006). In this narrative, artists van Gogh and Gauguin find themselves sharing a sitter and making portraits of the person at the same time on multiple occasions. I suggest the art educator set up a similar situation in the classroom, having students draw the same subject in the center of the room but from different viewpoints. I list three student objectives that will check for student understanding of the text for this dramatization: 1) Students will draw from observation and participate in class critique, 2) Students will set artistic goals for themselves, and 3) Students will apply ideas from collaboration to meet their own artistic goals. In The Yellow House, van Gogh and Gauguin note the differences in their portraits of the same person and how the view of the pose, style in which it is rendered, and composition can change the character of the piece. Students should critique their artwork from this exercise and determine how their position in the room and personal style affected the outcome of their work as compared to others. Most importantly, however, students should engage in the type of collaboration that van Gogh and Gauguin
embodied in their relationship. These artists looked to each other for suggestions and took ideas from one another’s artworks to move their own artistic practice forward. I suggest that during critique, students also determine specific characteristics or ideas in a classmate’s work they find favorable and use them to meet their own artistic goals in the next sitting of the same exercise.

Figure 5 – “Get to Know” an Artist page

Another example of a dramatization (Figure 6) I suggest comes from reading The Masterpiece (Emile Zola, 1886). In this narrative, Claude Lantier and his friends meet regularly to discuss their goals for moving art forward. They consider
themselves “brother artists” and think collaboratively to
determine the way art should be, as opposed to the way it was at
the time. I suggest the art educator check for student
understanding of these artists’ motivations and ideas through
the dramatization of students starting their own artist
revolution. I list three student objectives for the
dramatization: 1) Students will determine definitions and
criteria for “art,” 2) Students will research and evaluate
contemporary artworks and the ideas behind them, and 3) Students
will collaborate to expand their idea of art and move art
forward through their own artwork. Students will start their
artist revolution as a result of collaboration with the entire
class or small groups. Students should make a manifesto
declaring their new ideals for art and how and why they are
breaking from the artwork of today. After creating artwork to
represent their new artist revolution, students should display
their artwork in the school for the “public” to judge, as if
they were exhibiting work in the Salon in the novel. Once the
artwork has been critiqued by the public and by the individual
artists, students should determine the success of their artist
revolution.
In the final section of my website, “About Me,” visitors can read about my background as reader and how I came to be interested in this topic. In addition, I’ve included my email address so that teachers can provide narrative art literature suggestions and classroom ideas that I can add to the website in the future. My hope is that The Read Studio will be an online resource that continues to grow as I read and collaborate with other art educators.
Chapter 5
Conclusions

My overarching goal for my Project was to encourage lifelong reading in art. I found motivation from various sources reporting a decline in reading behavior among students during adolescence. Since reading is a fundamental skill for learning and a way to gain knowledge in art beyond the classroom, my research goal was to establish a culture of reading in the secondary art classroom. Art educators can begin to foster lifelong reading behaviors in this way by engaging students through art stories and facilitating positive, shared reading experiences.

I strove to accomplish my research goal of creating a culture of reading in the secondary art classroom by developing an online resource that provides suggestions of stories to read in the art and how to utilize them in the classroom. Through the creation of The Read Studio, I prove to the art educator not only the value of reading in the art classroom, but that it can be incorporated into their curriculum in a manageable way.

Throughout my Project, I was aware of the reservations art educators might have regarding time in the classroom. Many believe that secondary art educators would not want to sacrifice studio time to include lengthy readings in their curriculum. While this initially did not prevent me from moving forward with my project, I did question how to balance the addition of reading with the existing studio curriculum.

From the beginning of this project, I had believed that students would supplement and expand their art education with narrative art reading through discussion and discovering new art content knowledge. I approached development of essential questions and discussion questions for each novel the way an art
educator would for a studio lesson, meaning it was less likely that these discussions would steal time from making art. However, after the course of the project, I have come to understand that students can and will also enrich their studio experiences through reading in the art classroom.

After reading a chapter by Collins (1992), I better understood that the goal of dramatizations, even reenactment, was not fidelity to the text through re-reading dramatically, but rather comprehension and internalization of the ideas presented in the text. It was then that I realized reading art stories would naturally lead to studio dramatizations, where students enact artistic ideas and circumstances. Incorporating narrative art literature in the secondary art classroom does not need to compete for studio time, it can enrich the curriculum with studio activities as well.

Areas for Further Study

I plan to continue to add to The Read Studio as I read narrative art literature throughout my art education career and incorporate the ideas from my project into my classroom. I would especially like to add stories that surround other art media. My hope is that visitors to the website will contact me with suggestions for new literary works and classroom ideas which I can add to this ever growing resource.

The idea of online collaboration toward a goal of incorporating narrative art literature in the secondary art classroom appeals to me. I hope to explore this further in the future so that it may lead to an online book community for art educators and students alike. Reading Cassandra Scharber’s Online Book Clubs: Bridges Between Old and New Literacies Practices (2009) and quickly perusing the Internet for book club forums has sparked a few ideas that I plan to study further.
Appendix
Oral Defense Script

Once upon a time.

Just four little words, but you already know what is coming. You know that I am about to tell you a story, and what is more – you are naturally prepared to listen to it, make meaning from it, and remember it even after this presentation is over. How do I know this? I’ll get to that, but first, let me tell you my story.

Once upon a time, my brother, Ross, and I loved to go to the library with my mom. We were young children in elementary school, and we would check out as many books as our arms could carry. This is not an exaggeration. We read together at night with my mom and would always look forward to our next chance to check out books.

As we got older, books got longer and reading became a silent, individual activity. Neither Ross nor I spent much time at the library or reading anymore, but we could still pick out a few favorite books we managed to read in upper elementary and middle school. For me, those included *Just as Long as We’re Together* and *The Face on the Milk Carton* series. As for Ross, he turned his attention to series such as *Animorphs, Artemis Fowl,* and *The Golden Compass.*

For a period of time, my brother and I shared a room. We were transitioning between one of our many moves and found ourselves sleeping in Ross’s red childhood bunk bed. Every night before we fell asleep he would hang his head over the top bunk and try to persuade me to read these books because “he wanted to talk to me about them.” However, I didn’t want to spend time reading his books when I could be hanging out with friends and doing other social activities. Looking back, I now know that
what he was trying to do was make reading these books he loved into a social experience too.

Now, hindsight is 20-20. It was not until researching for this project that I realized his motive. In fact, he never succeeded in persuading me at the time to read any of those novels. It took me 12 years to read *Artemis Fowl*, which I read this semester as part of my children’s literature seminar. I suppose we will finally be able to have that conversation after all!

People naturally want to engage in conversations about what they are reading with their peers or people they are close to. In fact, researchers Strommen and Mates have identified this as a key factor in developing life long reading behavior. Kooy says that we all feel this “common urge” to share, and since I am no exception to this phenomenon, let me tell you about the book I read that sparked the idea for my entire project.

It all started two years ago when I was student teaching at Austin High School in Texas. The only class I never got to teach was the AP studio art class, which met the first period in the morning. I was more of an observer and was able to engage in many conversations with the AP students. That’s how I met Emiliano. He and his twin brother, Santiago, were from Argentina and arguably the most passionate people I have ever met. Santiago’s obsession was math and physics, but Emiliano’s was art, specifically impressionist and post impressionist painting. In fact, when I asked him if he would be majoring in art in college, he replied, “Miss Patterson, is there anything else?”

He spent hours at home reading about and looking at paintings and even spent his free periods coming to Art I to listen to me teach his brother’s class about Impressionism. One morning, Emiliano and I began talking about Cezanne. I told him I had a book on Cezanne but that I had not had time to read it
yet. Emiliano was indignant, how could I possibly let a book on Cezanne just sit on my shelf gathering dust when I could be reading it?! He was right, I was supposed to be the teacher in this situation wasn’t I? That night, I finally pulled the book off my shelf and read 90 pages of it. In those pages, I learned that Emile Zola, a well-known author was a childhood friend of Cezanne and had actually written a story loosely based on him. I became curious to see how a friend would portray this artist and felt compelled to read this book.

*The Masterpiece* allowed me to experience the Impressionist movement through the eyes of Claude Lantier, the character loosely based on Cezanne. The story brought him to life. He became a real person to me, I knew his thoughts, his concerns, and participated conversations between him and his so called “brother artists” as they tried to show the public and Salon committee they were fools stuck in the past. I now understood the goals behind this Impressionist revolution and the vulnerability and persistence its artists demonstrated in a way I had never before in all my years as an art student.

BUT WHY?

Why was this story so effective at engaging me and capturing my attention and why will you remember my story after my presentation is over?

Kieran Egan would say that it is because stories engage our emotions. They connect us emotionally to the characters and events in such a way that they become meaningful and memorable long after we hear “the end.”

Humans have known and utilized this idea for centuries. Before written language, this was how we passed down our culture, morals, and histories. Even today, people organize the events of their lives and communicate them to others through narrative.
Tom Wolfe would say the power of story lies in the sequencing of events and the interior point of view. We get into the head of the characters, know their thoughts, feelings, and even witness their conversations almost as if they were our own.

Though at the time I could not have told you exactly why the story was so captivating, I believed high school students would be interested in the drama behind Impressionism and the stick-it-to the man attitude of the characters in The Masterpiece. I knew I would have to include it in my future curriculum, and began to search for other art novels written as stories. I was sure these pieces of literature would help me to show my students the wonder of art and provoke them to want to continue learning about it beyond the classroom.

As an art student and future art educator, I would consider myself someone who has a desire to learn about art beyond the classroom and for the rest of my life. However, my so-called dormant reading behavior has, until now, limited my access to this knowledge. Once I leave the university setting, how likely am I to pick up a book to learn about art (rather than just let it sit on my shelf)? More importantly, how likely are my students to seek this knowledge through reading?

I began to realize, our goal, as art educators should be to encourage life long reading behavior in students so that they will have access to the wealth of art knowledge lying in text long after they leave our classrooms. But how do we do this?

Strommen and Mates conducted a study in 2004 where they interviewed adolescents about their reading behavior. This is typically the age when reading tends to decline, so they were interested to learn how some students became life-long readers despite the trend. They found that for adolescents, surrounding themselves with a social circle of readers was a major factor. Having positive reading experiences with peers and engaging in
conversations about these books contributed largely to adolescents seeking repeated reading experiences in the future.

In 2011, Johnson wrote an article discussing the connection between sites and selves, arguing that each person has multiple selves tied with respective and particular sites. She frames this idea in terms of the reading self. Students may be efferent readers (reading for information) in one site and aesthetic readers (connecting emotionally to the text) in another. Johnson notes that most students view school as a site only for efferent reading, but that aesthetic reading experiences— or reading narratives— in school are the key to creating life long readers.

So the question becomes, “How can secondary art educators effectively incorporate narrative literature into their classrooms?”

To answer this question, I conducted a literature review surrounding reading in the classroom. Keeping in mind the importance of shared reading experiences, I determined from this research that read-alouds and literature circles or book clubs would be the best way to engage students in reading art narratives.

Read-alouds are large group reading experiences in which one person reads from the text while the rest of the class listens. Literature circles or book clubs are small group readings composed of 3-5 students that share a particular interest to explore through literature. Both of these strategies encourage peer conversation about what students are reading.

I read ten narrative art novels over the course of the semester within the context of their future use in the secondary art classroom for read-alouds or literature circles/book clubs. I read one novel at a time and flagged notable quotes, passages, or items of interest.
My goal was to show art educators a manageable and valuable way of using each of these books in their classrooms. I developed essential questions and discussion questions related to each of the novels as well as dramatization opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding.

Dramatizations are a popular classroom strategy to accompany reading in the classroom at any age. I took a children’s literature seminar class last semester where we discussed this strategy, but I held the misconception that this entailed dramatic re-readings and acting out of the lines in the story in front of the class. While these are dramatization activities, the concept is actually much broader and can be valuable for the art classroom. I decided not to think of students as actors on a stage during dramatizations, but rather as artists in an arranged studio. In other dramatization activities, I suggest students extend the story, create alternate endings, or embody character roles by reenacting their motivations, aspirations, or art professional responsibilities.

In order to share these ideas with art educators, I created a website, The Read Studio. On the The Read Studio art educators will find a rationale for why reading in the high school art classroom is a worthwhile endeavor. I provide a few key points on the power of story as a learning tool as well as mention my overall goal of encouraging life long reading behaviors so that students can continue to learn about art through reading once they leave our classrooms.

For art educators who may not be familiar with them, I also created a classroom strategies page to inform about class read-alouds and literature circles or book clubs. I provided a few suggestions under each strategy to help the art educator use them effectively in their classroom.
The art educator can search for book titles two different ways on my website. They can search under “browse all titles,” which lists all 10 books in alphabetical order, or they can search based on what they would like to use the books for in their classroom. I came up with 5 possible curriculum goals that could be accomplished using narrative art literature. They are: Explore a Big Idea, “Get to Know” an Artist, Investigate an Artwork, Introduce a Lesson, and Expand the Curriculum. They can choose any of these from the drop down menu and find ways to use the books I chose for each. For example, when the art educator clicks on Explore a big idea, they will find the book *Strapless*.

Here is an example of a dramatization activity I recommend for this book. (Explain).

Now let me show you another example, but with a dramatization activity that involves a studio experience. When the art educator clicks on Expand the curriculum, they will find the book *I Was Vermeer*. This book tells the life story of Han van Meegeren, the legendary Dutch forger. I suggest for a dramatization activity, that students become forgers and use this to create their own artwork. (Explain).

On this and some other pages, I have included links to websites that will either serve as resources for dramatization activities or fall under other notable items related to the book. You will see here, I link to Analia Saban’s artist page to see an example of an artwork that was created by forging lines from other artists.

My hope is that the website will continue to grow as I read more books, which I plan to do throughout my career. I put my email address on the last page so that art educators can contact me with their own ideas to include on the website as well.
There are still some things related to reading in the art classroom that I would like to explore further. I want to take this shared reading experience to another level and explore the possibility of an online book club for art educators that centers around narrative art literature. I would like to think that this would not only build a community of educators interested in reading in the art classroom but also lead to dialogue and new insights for how to use these books, and new books in the classroom. Teachers could post about their own classroom reading experiences as they happen and discuss the students’ responses.

I would also like to look into Louise Rosenblatt’s transactional theory between reader and text. Her name came up a lot as a reference in articles I researched for this project, and I would like to know more about her ideas.

My ideas about reading in the art classroom have changed throughout the course of this project. For example, I realized that meaningful studio experiences can result from the text as a way for students to demonstrate their understanding and further their art knowledge.

I also understand the extreme importance of an adult reading role model in encouraging life long reading behavior. It is more than providing students with opportunities to read and books to explore, teachers need to show an enthusiasm for reading in the classroom. I think I can do that…

Art does not just appear on the wall or in the gallery, there is always a story behind its creation and it often involves dramatic circumstance, interesting characters, perseverance, and an endless list of inspirations worth reading about. These stories shed new light even on artwork we thought we were familiar with and makes them more meaningful and perhaps even more interesting. They are likely to captivate our
attention and emotions, show us the amazing and the sublime human endeavor that we call art, and therefore further compel us to learn about art throughout our lives.

What is more, positive, shared reading experiences during adolescence will provide the tools and – and the desire – to seek this information, to fulfill the need to learn about art, through reading.

The end.
List of References


Biographical Sketch

Monica Patterson can still remember her first art class. She was living in Louisiana at the time, and the class was held on the second floor of a large yellow house. To this day she can still picture the room where the class took place - the room where she drew the giraffe. She does not remember how she landed on a giraffe as her subject matter, but at five years old she found herself coloring the animal with chalk pastels. It did not matter that its neck was disproportionately thick or that it’s head was facing the wrong direction, Monica’s mother declared that giraffe worthy of a frame, and it hung proudly on her bedroom wall for years. In her mind, Monica was an artist. She was hooked.

Since the days of the big yellow house, Monica has moved eight times, attended three high schools, and two universities. Though she will probably always claim roots in Texas, she currently lives in Gainesville, Florida. Monica is a graduate student at the University of Florida where she calls herself a printmaker as well as an art educator. Throughout her two years as a proud Florida Gator, she has had the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant in the printmaking studio as well as a graduate assistant in the Art Education offices. Monica has an unquenchable thirst for art knowledge and has been known to attend extra classes, art education conferences, art history symposiums, and spend a few extra dollars on an art book, even if they sat on her shelf unopened for months. As a dormant reader, she always knew those books had potential to teach her about the subject she loves, but now she has unlocked the secret to reading about art – that secret is story.