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# Super SHARING STRATEGIES

CRISS in the High School Art Classroom

I took my first CRISS workshop in the summer of 2004 with Bonnie Valdes (CRISS Master Trainer). It was a two-day workshop aimed specifically at the art curriculum. I have to admit I was a little skeptical at first, thinking I had little room to incorporate more reading into my already packed curriculum. I also felt the art room should be more geared toward hands-on activities.

Our workshop started in the Salvador Dali Museum (the first day) and ended in the Tampa Museum of Art. We discussed the various CRISS strategies and learned how to apply them to the art classroom. The techniques were easy to understand and flowed well with the content. My attitude toward reading was slowly transforming, and I started to realize its importance with any subject matter. More importantly, I became inspired with new and creative ways of incorporating it into my classroom. I decided to go slowly, applying the strategies to one class at a time. Creative Photography 2 was the class with which I started.

Collages are a big part of my photography class. They provide an easy way to teach students how to visualize their ideas. When I thought about it, CRISS strategies do the same thing—get the students to form a mental picture of what they are reading. It became clear to me that I was already using a lot of these concepts in the art room. CRISS focuses on teaching students that reading is more than words, and my photography class teaches students that art is more than pictures.

The first project I assigned to students was called “Poetry Collage.” The idea is to take the imagery within a poem and illustrate it by creating a collage. Each student makes a total of eight poetry collages during the semester. After they are all completed, students bind them into a book. In the spirit of creating an interdisciplinary lesson, I invited eight English teachers to submit copies of their favorite poems for us to use.

I start the lesson by having the students silently read the poems. As they read, I asked them to selectively underline words or phrases that created a mental image. Once they were done, we discussed the poem (instructional conversations!), focusing on the imagery and possible meanings of the poem. The students then planned what kinds of images they could use and how they could arrange them for the most effective collage. Next, they cut images from magazines and newspapers that illustrated the imagery in the poem. Some students chose to draw and paint objects, while others brought in leaves, string, beads and other materials to incorporate into their collages.

In a way, art is the ideal subject for using CRISS strategies. It goes beyond helping students retain and visualize what they are reading by challenging them to express that mental imagery through drawing, painting, photography, collage, or other mediums. I feel we all have something to learn from each other. Learning CRISS strategies has opened new doors for me, giving me another way to inspire and challenge my art students. In turn, I think teachers of all subject areas could borrow ideas from the art room to make their reading lessons even more effective for their students.



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