

# Jacobs Art Integration Paper

For my integrated lesson, I chose to use and modify materials available to me in my classroom. My district uses elements of Expeditionary Learning, a Common Core aligned reading program. This particular unit focuses on reading and writing informational texts, using Frogs as a main component. Students have been reading *Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle*, by Deborah Dennard, a non-fiction trade book which portrays the life of a bullfrog by describing its habitat, predators, prey and life cycle. The reading unit focuses on close reading of an informational text, but the story is presented in a narrative, picture-book format. The guiding question for this particular set of lessons is: **What are the adaptations which allow frogs to frogs survive?**

*Animals have unique adaptations that help them to survive in various environments.*

- *3-LS-1 Develop models to describe that organisms have unique and diverse life cycles but all have in common birth, growth, reproduction and death.*
- *3-LS-3 Use evidence to support the explanation that traits can be influenced by the environment.*
- *3-LS-4 Use evidence to construct an explanation for how the variations in characteristics among individuals of the same species may provide advantages in surviving, finding mates, and reproducing.*

In addition to the reading and science skills this unit addresses, students are asked to think about what it means to become an expert on a topic and what it means to conduct independent research. Students are asked: **What do experts do to research a topic? How do I become an expert?** (*Experts use reading, viewing, and listening to gather and organize info from a variety of sources. RI.3.1, RI.3.3*) Students will learn that one important element to becoming an expert is to be able to share information learned with an audience through writing and speaking. (ELA CCLS W.3.2, W.3.3, W.3.4, W.3.5, and SL.3.3.)

For this reason, I have chosen to use a combination of **Reader's Theater** and **Drama** for my modified lesson. **Reader's Theater** is a type of performance which is characterized by a dramatic reading of a story by a group of people. In reader's theater, students do not need to have costumes or prepare sets. A reader's theater can be performed from any piece of literature, a script is not necessarily required—however, reader's theater can also be performed from a written script. Since the participants typically sit or stand in front of the class and read from their texts, reader's theater is a safer option for students who are hesitant to act in front of a group. The nuanced meaning of the text is conveyed through vocal inflection, not actual acting: instead of memorizing lines, students typically read from the text. In terms of classroom time management, less time needs to be spent on memorization and rehearsal. One additional benefit to reader's theater is that it addresses the Speaking and Listening ELA standards and allows students to practice reading fluently.

**Drama** is similar to reader's theater in that it is a performance-based art form. Students typically work from a script and memorize their parts in order to act them out for an audience. In drama, students typically create sets and costumes. A dramatic performance can take much time in the classroom, but can be beneficial to students in that it teaches them management skills and allows them to be creative with visual arts in terms of creating sets and costumes. The benefits to drama also include the ability to express yourself through movement and (possibly) song. Drama has been shown to increase student understanding of a topic.

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I chose **Reader's Theater** as my first option because it allows every single student to participate in the reenactment of the story. The book, *Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle*, is a vocabulary rich story, which includes exquisite details about the life and habitat of a bullfrog. Logistically speaking, I have a class set of this text and each student has access to the text, allowing all students to participate in the reading. An additional reason which this format is appealing is that I work with predominantly second language learners who often struggle with oral fluency. Having the ability to model fluent reading through a reader's theater presentation is very appealing in terms of supporting students' needs.

I chose to add **Drama** as a second option because within my classroom, I typically have some students who are more active. These students would benefit from the psychomotor elements of acting out a story. In order to implement drama in conjunction with reader's theater, I would encourage the students to do a dramatic reenactment. For example, while one group reads the text in a reader's theater manner, the second group could act out the motions without speaking. For this particular text, this type of combination may be most effective, playing on the strengths of both groups of students.

I feel that this combination of reader's theater/dramatic reenactment is an excellent way to get students invested in the content of learning about animal habitats and life cycles. I am a strong believer in integrating the arts into classroom instruction, particularly science instruction. What I love most about the arts is the wide variety of artistic disciplines available to use. Some teachers believe that just asking students to draw pictures is enough of an arts integration. I strongly disagree with this premise and believe that the creative elements of allowing, even requiring student to create meaning through artistic representation are essential to helping them retain and internalize information. For this particular lesson I chose dramatic arts, such as dramatic reenactment in conjunction with readers' theater. The reason I feel this is particularly effective in this instance is the fact that we are working with life cycles and habitats of living creatures. I believe that by putting themselves in the places of, reading from the perspective of, internalizing the life of these creatures, students will connect more viscerally to their struggles and will become better stewards of our environment. I know that this sounds rather dramatic in itself, but as a science educator my goal is for students to understand that science really does affect every single element of their lives.

As I work through the logistics of including drama in this particular unit of study, I can see how it would be possible to extend my lesson by asking students to write and act out skits detailing their lives as frogs. The experience they received by participating in a dramatic reenactment of *The Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle* would have helped to build a framework from which students could explore drama at a higher level. By asking students to create their own stories and skits about the life cycle of a frog or amphibian of their choice, students could internalize their learning and become the creature they've been learning about.

As I have already articulated, this activity provides exposure to informational text reading and expert research and writing skills required for mastery of Common Core ELA skills. Additionally, the exposure to rich vocabulary will help my ELL students with their speaking and listening skills. Overall, this is a fantastic addition to my unit on frog lifecycles and I am looking forward to implementing it in the coming school year.