

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

CREATING A CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can you display your personal collection of objects to show people what they mean to you?

GRADES

K–3

TIME

One to three class periods

ART CONCEPTS

Collection, design, construction, assemblage, display

MATERIALS

Small cardboard boxes (purchased or recycled), multi-colored cardstock, various papers, transparency sheets, scissors, tapes (clear, double-sided, masking), glue sticks, and markers

TALKING ABOUT ART

View and discuss photographs of Guillermo del Toro's Bleak House interiors. What do you see? What similarities do you notice about the objects in the rooms? How are they arranged? What can you tell about the collector of these objects?

Guillermo del Toro began collecting and assembling objects that fascinated him when he was a child. His collection eventually grew so large that, as a successful adult, he devoted an entire house, called Bleak House, to displaying it. Every item in the collection is carefully arranged by the filmmaker and inspires him in his daily creative process. This house can be looked at as a "cabinet of curiosities", a 16th century term describing a space dedicated to the display of a carefully arranged collection of objects.

What do you collect or what would you like to collect? How do you store your collection? How would you like to display your collection? What does the way in which you display your collection say about what you like and what your collection means to you?

MAKING ART

Think about what you collect (or would like to collect). Some examples include comic books, playing cards, Legos, dolls, toys, rocks, and books.

Using a cardboard box and various kinds of paper, make a model of your ideal "cabinet of curiosities". Use pre-cut cardstock strips to make shelves/divisions in your box, attaching them with tape. You can also use transparency sheets to create doors and other fixtures for your cabinet.

Use the markers and various papers to color and decorate your cabinet to your liking. Keep in mind that your choices should tell a story about you and your collection.

MAKING ART (cont.)

Bring some examples from your collection to display in your cabinet or make models of objects that you would like to collect and display them in your cabinet.

OPTIONAL: Write two or three sentences about your collection and the way you would like to display it and why. What inspires you to collect these objects and why are they significant to you?

PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION

Display all the cabinets in the room. Take a gallery walk around. What do you notice about the different displays? What do they tell you about the different collections of your classmates? What object or cabinet are you most curious about?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.K-3

K-2.2 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media. K-3.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners. K-3.3 Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue. K-2.5 Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

SAMPLE ARTWORK



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

MONSTER LAB

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How can artists and writers work together to create monsters inspired by their imagination and life experiences?

GRADES

3–6

TIME

Two class periods

ART CONCEPTS

Creating, designing, writing, storytelling

MATERIALS

Index cards, pencils, colored pencils, and tape

TALKING ABOUT ART

View and discuss the Mako on the Stairs image from Guillermo del Toro's Notebook #5. Describe the images you see on this notebook page. What do you think happened to the creature at the top of the page? Where do you think you would find a creature's abandoned skeleton (i.e. in a forest, desert, mountain, etc)?

Take a moment to look at the girl in the central picture. Does she look happy or sad? What do you see that makes you say that? Notice the blue color that surrounds her—is it a warm or cool color? How does the color affect the mood of the image?

Guillermo del Toro brings his notebooks with him wherever he goes. His notebooks combine text (his notes, ideas, quotations from different sources, etc) and images to capture his ideas and various sources of inspiration. He then turns to a regular set of collaborators, people like artists and actors who work together, who help him realize his vision and make his ideas come to life.

When everyone works together, the end result can be very rewarding. With this in mind, let's enter an imaginary laboratory and collaborate to create some fantastical monsters.

MAKING ART

Inspired by your imagination or life experiences (at home or school, in dreams, books, films or video games) invent a monster or mutant. If you're having trouble, it might help to find an image of an animal, print, color, or shape from a magazine or one from online to use as your inspiration image. Then describe your monster on a 5 X 7-inch index card. The description should be listed in five numbered parts beginning with a physical description of the monster's 1) head, 2) body, and 3) limbs; and then proceeding to 4) your inspirations and associations for the monster and 5) the name of your monster.

After your description is complete, hand your card over to your instructor.

MAKING ART (cont.)

Next, the instructor will shuffle the cards and hand a card with another student's written description to you. Based on the description you've received, bring the creature to life by drawing the monster.

Once you have finished, write your initials and tape the index card to your drawing.

Next, write a story featuring the monster you drew as the main character. The story should contain 5 to 7 sentences and follow this format:

- Introduction
 - Introduce your monster by name
 - Describe his or her personality
 - Does your monster have special skills or powers?
 - Does your monster have a friend or friends?
- Setting
 - Where does your monster's story happen?
- Other Characters
 - Who are the other characters in your story?
- Plot (story)
 - Describe an adventure or other things that happen in the monster's life.
- Conclusion
 - Write an ending for your story. Is it happy, sad, or funny?

PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION

Present your monster and accompanying story to your classmates. Share how the monster was initially described on the index card and how it inspired your story. Did your monsters turn out the way you envisioned them? How did they change in the process of collaborating with others to bring them to life? How effective were your initial written descriptions? How did seeing the monster add to your understanding of who the monster was and how it would act?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING. 3-6

3.3 Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WRITING. 3-6

3-5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

4-5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.3-6

3-6.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.

Language. 3-6.6. Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate conversational, general academic, and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal spatial and temporal relationships.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

THE BOOK OF MYSTERIES

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How can you translate a written story into a compelling visual image?
GRADES	4–12
TIME	One or more class periods
ART CONCEPTS	Narrative in art, color, character, monoprint, graphic design, illustration, creative writing
MATERIALS	Pencils, pens, scratch-foam, printing inks, brayers, markers, cardstock paper, paper towels, and wet wipes
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>LACMA's special exhibition, <i>Guillermo Del Toro: At Home with Monsters</i>, highlights Guillermo del Toro's wide-ranging literary sources of inspiration. An avid reader, Guillermo del Toro's work draws from classic supernatural/horror fiction (like that of Edgar Allen Poe and Mary Shelley), literary art (like that of Odilon Redon), and comic books.</p> <p>View the print <i>A Mask Sounds the Death Knell</i> by Odilon Redon. This print is from a series of prints associated with the work of Edgar Allen Poe called <i>À Edgar Poe (To Edgar Poe)</i>, and <i>A Mask Sounds the Death Knell</i> loosely evokes Poe's poem "The Bells". Looking at the print without reading the poem, what do you think the poem is about? Who is the figure in the print and what does its action signify? What is the tone of the print? What questions do you have about the poem and/or the print? Does looking at the print make you want to read the poem?</p> <p>Read the poem "The Bells"; does it fit your expectations based on your observation of the print? How does Redon's artwork reference the poem? Do you think Redon's print accurately represents the story or the spirit of the story? If yes, in what ways is the Redon print true to the poem? If not, why not?</p>
MAKING ART	<p>Keeping in mind the work of Guillermo del Toro and Odilon Redon's literary prints, create your own printed book cover design based on a story of your choosing.</p> <p>Begin by thinking of a scary or fantastical story that you have read OR make one up OR use one of these examples as inspiration: a ghost appears to warn of something that happened in the past, a ghost haunts those responsible for its death, an ancient monster rises from the underworld to overtake the light of the world, a creature of the forest enters the city, or an insect is mutated into a monster by a waste treatment facility.</p>

MAKING ART (cont.)

Then, with pencil on paper, draw a sketch of a book cover design for the story you chose. How will you represent your story in a way that attracts potential readers? Once you are happy with your design, trace over your paper again with a ballpoint pen, this time ON TOP OF a piece of Scratch-Foam. Then, using a brayer, apply ink to your piece of Scratch-Foam. Try to apply the ink as evenly as possible. Finally, carefully place a piece of paper over your inked piece of Scratch-Foam, roll it, then gently peel your paper from the Scratch-Foam to reveal your print.

OPTIONAL: Write the story upon which your print is based.

PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION

Arrange a display of all the book cover designs around the classroom. Ask students to walk around and talk in pairs, answering these questions - What do you think the chosen story is about? Does the artwork reference or remind you of a story you know? How does the book cover signal the tone of the story? Do the book covers make you want to read their respective stories?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING. 6-12

6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.4-12

4-12.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners.

6.7 Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue. 7.7 Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium. 9-10.7 Analyze various accounts of a subject told in different mediums (e.g., a person's life story in both print and multimedia), determining which details are emphasized in each account. 9-10.9 Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING.6-12

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WRITING.4-7

4-5.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

MONSTERS OR BUST! 3D CHARACTER SCULPTURE

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	How can you create an imaginary character that feels real?
GRADES	6–12
TIME	Two or more class periods
ART CONCEPTS	Form, balance, sculpture, modeling, character development, realism
MATERIALS	White Model Magic® sculpting clay class pack, sturdy toothpicks, cardstock, scissors, tape, tacky glue, scratch paper, and pencils
TALKING ABOUT ART	<p>In his print series <i>Los Caprichos</i> Francisco Goya y Lucientes set out to ridicule prejudice, ignorance, and superstition. Instead he advocated the values of the Enlightenment whose proponents argued that without reason, evil and corruption would prevail. In keeping with this theme, Goya wrote the following caption for his most famous print from the series, <i>The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters</i>: “Imagination abandoned by reason produces impossible monsters; united with her, she is the mother of the arts and source of their wonders.”</p> <p>Look closely at <i>The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters</i>, taking time to identify its various components. What do you think is happening here? Where and what are the monsters described in the title? How would you describe them? Are they fantastical or ordinary creatures? Which aspects of the print are based in reality and which are based in fantasy?</p> <p>Goya incorporated the title of the print into the print itself. What, if any, effect does this have on the artwork?</p>
MAKING ART	<p>Del Toro has stated that each of his monsters is grounded in natural history, literature, myth, and art, as well as dreams, nightmares, and fears. Above all, he insists that his monsters make sense. As a part of this process, he always builds a maquette, or preliminary sculpture for his monsters. For this project, you will develop and create your own monster and partial maquette by making a bust of your monster using sculpting clay.</p> <p>Brainstorm ideas for your own monster by answering a series of questions either verbally or written such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What is your favorite animal?- What is your least favorite insect?- What kinds of characteristics make a character scary?- What is your favorite fairy tale and why?- What is your favorite mythological creature and why?

MAKING ART (cont.)

Begin to record your ideas for a fantastical creature of your own design. How would you describe its character? What does it look like? Research actual creatures from the jungle, forest, or desert, and think of what characteristics might fit and serve your creature. Where does it live? How does it move, act, and survive?

Create a simple stand for your monster's head by rolling cardstock into a cone shape and securing it with a dot of tacky glue and tape. The cone can be trimmed to your desired height.

Once your stand is complete and you have received your first package of modeling clay from your teacher, develop the shape of your monster's head. Then secure the head onto the cardstock stand to create the look of a bust. Next, use a second package of modeling clay to develop the features and details of your creature. (If you prefer, you may build down onto the cardstock form instead.)

After completing your project, describe your character in written or verbal format. Think about the logistics of your monster. How does it move and act? How do its characteristics affect or reflect its character? Write a brief caption or title describing your character on your sculpture's stand.

OPTIONAL: Pair up with another student in your class and write a short screenplay or story in which your monsters meet. Would they fight or work together?

PROMPTS FOR REFLECTION

Display and share your busts. Introduce the class to your monster and provide a backstory or profile for the creature grounded in your research of fantastical and scientific sources: Where does it live? What makes it special? What do you imagine the rest of your monster would look like?

Think about your design process. Did your design for your character change at all as you made your sculpture? Were there any features you decided didn't work after seeing them modeled?

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.READING.6-12

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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SPEAKING AND LISTENING.3-7

6-12.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WRITING.9-12

9-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources; integrate information into the [artwork] selectively to maintain the flow of ideas.

SAMPLE ARTWORK

