

Artistic Inspiration – Where Does It Come From?

*Patricia Gordon
Rogers CAPA*

Overview
Rationale
Objectives
Strategies
Classroom Activities
Bibliography
Appendices

Overview

This unit is an attempt to investigate those things and situations that inspire us to artistic creativity in the world of costume and fashion. I would like this unit to also make us look at other areas of personal creativity in our world. We, each of us, view the world around us in different ways. We are personally and culturally attuned to respond to stimuli in specific ways. This unit will be designed to encourage students to use an inner eye to see the usual in unusual ways, to break free of mundane thinking, to take what is already available and generate a new look. All students will be required to learn to use the many web sites that focus on costume and fashion.

Rationale

Inspiration. This word, according to the dictionary means, “A stirring of the mind or imagination that leads to action or creation.” Inspire, as defined in my thesaurus means “To arouse the emotions of, fire, impassion, embolden, stimulate, prod, provoke, and encourage.”

How artists get ideas should be examined at all grade levels and in all art forms. Activities should be structured around that which encourages original thinking and imagination. We need to understand that designers look for inspirational sources to re-invent the world around them.

All teachers of any subject should encourage their students to use their imaginations. Many studies of students’ learning styles state that as our students go through the school system their creativity is buried under the facts and figures of academic studies and standardized tests. In other studies it has also been

strongly stated that students of the arts learn and retain more in all areas of their education. I therefore think that we should encourage our students to exercise their imaginations and form opinions on all matter of subjects,

What inspires us to create the new and the bold? Is it the sounds around us? Music, water rushing over a waterfall, laughter, a baby's cry, the noise of a jackhammer? Is it the things we feel? The wind on our face, a kiss from a loved one, the texture of the objects we live around, the softness of cashmere, silk, and fur. Are we stirred by the tastes and smells we delight in or remember from times past? Do we become more creative when we see the colors of the sun rising and descending, or see the stars in a midnight sky? Does a tragedy give us the impetus to create for or does the museum with its multitude of art works both historical and modern present us with a bounty of ideas? Is it emotional or physical, the things that inspire us to genius?

I could ask questions like these forever and each one asked would have a different answer. Different things inspire us, each of us, at different phases of our lives.

Are you creative? What pushes your buttons and makes you want to create? And what would you create if you could?

Artists have always dealt with love, birth, sorrow, rituals and heredity and their environment. The themes don't change but our response to them does.

As one who is interested in fashion and teaches costume I am constantly amazed at what inspires my students to think outside of the box. This unit is designed to pull all that I have seen and that which I will learn together so that I will have a unit that focuses entirely on bringing out the creative genius of my students.

To do this I think students must be exposed to the art of many others in multiple areas. This means they should go to every cultural institution located in their city. I want my students to go to the museum to see the paintings, sculptures and specific exhibits. I want my particular students to go to the aviary and the zoo and the flower show to check out the colors of nature as seen in the covering of the birds, animals and flowers. I think these students should look at the architecture of buildings locally and world wide. Many fashions have been based on the Eiffel tower through the years, Maybe someone will design something based on the roman ruins or other historic building. Nothing is new under this sun; therefore, we put the same things together in a new way. I want the students exposed to this unit to come away with new ideas of how they can think about fabrics, clothing and costumes.

I think it is so very important to be a student of history if you want to be in the costuming/fashion industry. I insist that my students learn all they can of the lifestyles of the people in the eras we need to create clothing from. I don't see how anyone can be a designer of fashion if they have no historical base of information on fabrics, sewing techniques, styles of clothing and some knowledge of why people wore what they wore.

The techniques of sewing can be learned. It is the lack of creative ideas that prevents one from becoming a true artist. The students who are working on creating a new fashion look won't necessarily need to have proficient sewing skills. I can teach most people to make things with basic skills. I can also teach them to sketch well enough to get a design idea across. But I cannot give them ideas. They must work towards freeing up their ability to be creative. They alone are responsible for the direction their creativity takes. I can expose, they must propose.

Fashion students who discover they don't sketch bodies as well as they sketch clothing are encouraged to use a croicuz. This is a figure already styled that can be used with a light box or tracing paper. The body shows through and the person can sketch their ideas over the top without worry. This allows the clothing to be properly proportioned. It will also teach the student to begin to understand the lines and shape of the garment in relation to the body.

One of the areas we will use will be the trend services publications. These are services used by the professional design houses. They predict the newest colors, fabrics, and textures to be used in the upcoming season. This is of course someone else's idea. But, we might have an epiphany and be hit with fantastic ideas for the use of the same colors, etc., that others might use.

As a part of this unit all of the students will be expected to view and critique taped fashion shows, music videos, historic movies, futuristic movies and other shows that allow us to focus on the clothing worn. Focusing on the work of others as a way of understanding what they did and why we think they did it allows us to delve into our reason for what we design. All of us should come away with fresh insight into our type of creativity. Are we just copying the work of others or are we using their work as a springboard to establishing our own innovative way of doing things.

One other method I want the students to learn to use for inspirational use is an inspiration board or storyboard. This is made up from tear sheets taken from current publications. This will show current styles, colors, textures and other details that can influence or direct new fashions. The pictures taken out will be placed on a poster board, or foam board as one would when making a collage.

This technique allows the student to work out the factors visually, that they have been inspired to create.

When the students are trying to think of fresh new ideas they should be exposed to art museums, historic museums, nature museums, aviaries, botanical gardens, billboards, commercials, movies, plays, music of all types. They should read poetry and other written works that allow them to imagine the settings, the looks of the characters, and infuse their own thoughts into the personalities of each character.

Objectives

The main objective of this lesson unit is that each student will understand that inspiration can come from multiple sources. The secondary objective is that each student construct a wearable/useable object from a design generated via their inspired ideas. As we move from being inspired to designing and constructing the project, other objectives pertinent to the individual lessons for each student will arise. These objectives will be the following but not necessarily in this order. Each student will make a pattern. Each will use a new fabric technique to enhance their end product. All will learn the sewing techniques needed to complete their product i.e. zippers, pockets, collars, sleeves, etc. Each will develop the ability to evaluate critically the quality of their own work.

Because most lessons have multiple educational outcomes we need to focus on areas outside of costume that of necessity become a part of the costume lesson. Costume is an ongoing history and literature lesson. This allows us to focus on the district incentive to push reading and comprehension. Because the students, as part of their research, will write information found about their personal sources of inspiration we feed into the directive to encourage writing skills in each area. The students will learn to work cooperatively and give positive criticism. They will also learn to take constructive criticism.

The final objective of this lesson is that all students will publicly display the work they produced from conception to completion

Strategies

In my classroom the student and teacher both will each examine what inspires them to creativity. We will allow ourselves to be less than perfect as we explore this aspect of our creative growth. I believe it is important to review what we consider to be our less than stellar results as we move along. Students need to understand that it's alright to come in second and that this should be an opportunity to learn and grow. Besides many of the successes of the world started

out to be something else. In other words they were the mistakes. This allows students' fragile egos to expand and encourages them to continue working.

When we focus on inspiration we need to have daily sessions of discussions to share our ideas. The students ask each other how they came up with ideas for a particular look. We must be able to explain the rationale behind the piece. The idea may come out of the fabric they are using. It might come from something else we saw or heard, but we must be able to explain it. This daily moment should create a hospitable atmosphere of collegiality for the students. Some students will become known for their ideas and others will come to them for advice. Others will have artistic skills that complement their ideas. This creates an atmosphere much like the working world they will enter.

One strategy that will be a part of my class is a bulletin board that can be used to generate ideas when we are stuck. This board will be a word wall / color board/fashion timeline/picture gallery/poetry corner. We will, as a group, select the information that will grace this area. Some of the words and topics that I would contribute to encourage their thinking would be: sounds from nature and music, dreams, fantasy, symbolism, emotions, and mythology.

Tear sheets from current magazines will be used to bring our focus on the clothing styles of the day. Pictures of historical clothing, using a fashion timeline, will address the issues of style recycling. Everyone needs to be aware that clothing styles recycle every 20 to 30 years.

The words from poetry, and music generate many, many ideas for clothing,. As we read or listen we can visualize clothing that floats or restricts shows the joy or the anger the sounds and words are trying to convey. As fashion designers we create for the audience of the day. What music are the young people listening to, what movies/videos are they looking at? These greatly influence how and what we design.

Color has a language all of its own. When we look at colors we perceive certain feelings. Whether we know it intellectually or not we have gut responses to colors that affect how we decorate our houses, how we adorn our bodies, and how hospitals decorate for the secure feelings of patients to mention a few. Color reflects much of what we find comfort in and much of what we reject. A study of the language of color and use of a color wall are tools we will employ in our focus on inspiration.

Books and web sites will play a large part of the students' at home research. It is important that each student be given an opportunity to think away from the distraction of classmates. This cannot always happen in class. So one of the things

will be for students to work at home and bring ideas into the classroom to share. Part of the at home information will come from viewing movies of a particular genre. The students will be given a video/movie information sheet to turn in and we will discuss the differing reactions to the piece that was seen. The students need to experience the feelings, ideas their classmates received from the pieces they viewed. Its often surprising how many ideas one picture generates from a room full of people. Students are often surprised that no one else sees what to them seems obvious. They are also frequently surprised that they didn't see something else a classmate points out. It becomes a real lesson in seeing past what we are familiar with.

Museums and art galleries are and have been a major source of inspiration for artists. As we wander around looking at pictures, statues, photographs, works from fiber artists, and works from metal sculptors we can visualize new from the already established.

Three places I want my students to visit are the botanical gardens [Phipps Conservatory] here in Pittsburgh, the Aviary bird sanctuary, and the Pittsburgh Zoo. These visits will coincide with lessons in taking an animal, a bird, and a plant and design a series of fashions using the look, colors and skin designs from their choices. I would be interested in how the students used the texture patterns, and shapes of their choices in designing clothing and accessories.

Along with these three places to visit I think a walk in the nearby neighborhoods and parks could inspire. As a child did you lie on the grass and look for shapes in the clouds? Did you take apart the leaves of a flower or blow away the fluff of dandelions or watch it rain or rainbows after the rain?

The buildings that we pass by each day of our lives are works of art. How frequently do we stop to actually look at the structure of these buildings? How many of us know what the upper floors of most buildings look like? Do we focus enough to see the special carvings and specially made tiles that adorn many structures?

The keyhole pattern found on the clothing of nobles during Roman times is often seen on buildings and on the tile in bathrooms. This shows the students that something as usual as the buildings we visit can generate inspiration for fashions and wearable art.

Something that I encourage the use of in my classes are comic books. These publications while not on the required reading list in the language arts classroom have some of the most innovative futuristic clothing to be seen. While most of us

cannot or would not be caught in the fashions in these books there is much to learn from them as a source of inspiration.

Another area of inspiration for fashion students comes from recycling and the possibility of fewer resources in the future. What new innovative supplies can we use to make clothing? Paper has been tried. The tabs from soda cans have been tried, paper clips and plastic have been tried. None of these lasted for more than the time it took for another fad to take over. What will this generation of students think of to save the ecology? A part of this unit will be at least a discussion of the possibilities. If time would permit, the students would create something to display on our half sized body forms.

All of the designs the students experiment with will be made for the half sized body forms. This allows them to see how it might look without wasted time and resources for ideas that don't pan out. Many times designers put ideas to paper and it looks marvelous only to discover after constructing it, the reality is not so wonderful.

Classroom Activities

The costume classes of Rogers Performing Arts meet daily. The sixth grade meets two periods a day for a total of ten periods a week. The seventh and eighth grades meet together for three periods a day or fifteen per week. For this project we will meet three days per week. This will be Monday, Tuesday and Friday. Wednesdays and Thursdays will be days the classes focus on learning basic sewing skills. Fridays are the designated day for field trips

For the benefit of anyone who might use this unit to encourage inspirational creativity I will separate the three classes when we discuss the specific activities required for grading purposes.

This unit will be our first major work. We will spend three days per week for the first six weeks of school focused on how one becomes inspired to create new fashions, fabrics and accessories. For the next three weeks we will work on creating the piece we were inspired to design. Each student will be required to write weekly in their journal about that week's classes. This is part of the districts literacy program.

Week one – All classes will discuss the word inspiration. We will brainstorm what we think it means to each of us individually. The students will create separate class word walls from these brainstorming sessions. Each class will discuss the effect words have on our imaginations and the types of visuals

conjured up by words. These images will be written out by the students to be referred to as we work through that which inspires. This will be the week we read poetry. Each student will be required to bring in a poem to be shared with the class. We, as a group, will analyze what the poem makes us see and feel. Our at home work will be to select a picture of clothing that we think represents our personal feelings about the poem. We will explain the why of our choice. This is the first time for many of the students to share like this so it might be less than we want but it opens up new doors for sharing in a safe environment. [posting form appendix b]

Week two - The classes will focus on colors. The students will learn the meanings colors have for different groups of people. We will use the color wheel. We will view a video that discusses color. Using large fabric swatches all of the students will focus on favorite colors and colors they think look good on them. They are not necessarily the same. The discussion of colors must give some space to how colors make us feel. Each student will collect and properly post in a binder swatches of the colors they feel most positive and most negative about. Part of the at home work this week will be to read excerpts of plays gotten from the drama teacher that generates a feel for the colors the characters should wear. The students' color decisions will be turned in on a teacher prepared form. [see appendix c]

Week three – All groups will focus on music. Music has many moods and generates lots of feelings. I can think of music that causes me to think of water running, of quiet times, of floaty fabrics, or to think of dark places and therefore dark colored pieces. We will listen to classic, swing, jazz, rap, Gregorian chants, white noise and other types of music. This will be discussed in light of what it makes the students think of artistically. Each student will be required to sketch or find a picture that defines their feelings about one piece of the music we are listening to. [posting form b]

This week the classes will take a field trip to the Carnegie museum and the Phipps Conservatories current flower show. At the museum we will focus on paintings, both traditional and abstract. The section on sculptures will also be a section to focus on. The students will be encouraged to write in their journals the feelings they get from the varieties of floral offerings at the conservatory and the pieces seen at the museum of art and history. We will take Polaroids and digital pictures of the offerings from both places for further study and reference.

Week four – The classes will discuss the works of art and plants seen last week.. As we look at the pictures taken and revisit the exhibits we must of necessity discuss color, shape, form, texture, line, proportion. Does this sound familiar?

These are the elements of art and are found in everything we see and do as we paint, build, sew, and construct.

This week the students will visit the zoo and aviary. This will hopefully generate some ideas that can be used in designing new projects. The discussions will work around attitudes, movement, fabric, colors and articles used to accessorize our fashions.

Weeks five and six - the students will create an illustration board. This is a board made with a poster board as the backing with pictures arranged in a collage on the surface. The pictures are to be of anything the students think inspires them to creativity. The board should have a theme such as , specific holidays, colors or color combinations, words, music titles, plants, animals, birds, and or pictures of fashions from current fashion magazines or historical times. The students will stand in front of their peers and explain the rationale for their board.

This board will be the basis for a design the student will create in their class in the next few weeks. An illustrative example is this – Valentines day the color is red. One of the major shapes are hearts. Cupid is a popular sight. Flowers and ribbons are a part of this vision. I will construct a red dress left shoulder out Roman style. The right shoulder will have a scarf of soft floaty fabric with a design of red hearts and cupids on a creamy white background. This scarf will be tied at the shoulder and hang over front and back 8 to 10 inches. The dress will be slim with a trumpet hem. It will stop just below the knee to show off pretty legs. The hem will be sewn so as to resemble the rippled effect of a flower petal. This is what the children will be required to do with a sketch and with written explanations as a part of their inspiration project.

The week end of week five will be a field trip to the Black Fashion Designers Museum or to Kent State University's costume museum. This will expose the students to the creativity of others.

Our outside activity for week six will be the Ebony Fashion Fair Show which comes to Pittsburgh every year this time. The students should be exposed to professional shows because we are often inspired by the works of others

During weeks five and six the students will separate and begin to create and work on their grade level.

Grade six

Because these students might not be as sophisticated in their construction skills yet their creations should be something simple. I will allow students who have shown more skill to upgrade their creative selections to more difficult pieces.

Once the boards are done the students are given three class days and the weekend before to decide what they will do for a project. They must have two to three selections to choose from. I would suggest a simple top or bottom in closely woven fabric with very little drape. They could also make a scarf, hat, and or bag. The fabric can be the focal point of suggestion [animal print, etc.] or the design can be placed on the fabric to be the focus point [tie dye, marbling, appliqué etc.]

The grade for the students will come from the following. They will keep a journal of what we have seen and discussed for the first six weeks. They must have kept sketches and pictures and swatches as required. They must have turned in an illustration board They must have sketches of their proposed designs. They must have transferred that conceptual design into reality by constructing it in class.

Grade Seven

The seventh grade students will by this time have reviewed their skills of last year and been working on newer skills so their ability to construct will be on a higher level as will my expectations for them. These students will continue to need to use adjusted commercial patterns to construct their designs. Several patterns will be used to get the look they want.

After they have shown and discussed their boards the students will be given a week to come up with the designs for their project. They must come up with several sketches to choose from. For this level of student I won't suggest they do anything less than what they want. By this time they have constructed a shirt, jeans, simple pajamas, and jacket. They have not done set in sleeves, cuffs, plackets or shirt collars. They have worked with knit fabrics and some light weight fabrics. I trust them to have some idea of what they can handle at this time. I will provide suggestions and backup.

The seventh grade students will use patterns for half sized bodies. They will make the design of their choice for these dolls . During this time they will make needed adjustments to their design. After adjustments are made they will increase the pattern to full size [math works here] and make the garment for themselves.

The finished product should reflect the theme of the inspiration board and should look like the design as sketched. Their grade will reflect the same as listed for the sixth grade

Grade Eight

The eighth grade students have had considerable experience for people of this age. They should have experienced by this time all of the basic sewing techniques. They have not done linings or tailored suits. At the beginning of this eighth grade year they have done jeans, pajamas, swim suits, other active wear, a skirt, set in sleeves, collars, and a man tailored shirt . Much of this is because they must make costumes for the drama and dance productions in our school. It is often trial by fire and learn quickly on the job for these students. We can't be faint hearted.

This group too will explain the rationale of their inspiration board. After this explanation they will share their design. They are required to make two or three sketches of their visions based on the boards. These students will use the resources on hand to make their patterns. In my department I have two varieties of computer generated pattern makers for the students to use. The cost for the hand set is minimal. Several years ago it was \$49.00. The computer pieces are more expensive.

When the pattern is made students will make necessary adjustments before cutting permanent fabric. Construction will follow the guidelines for well made clothing. The students will include the necessary seam finishes as they are graded on how the garment looks underneath also.

These students are encouraged but not required to use softer fabrics when possible. These designs are expected to be more radical than those of students in the other grades. I expect more flair and unusual use of fabric. The young men will generally make tops, jackets, or active wear for themselves. Again the grading evaluation will reflect the same set of requirements as listed for grades six and seven but on a more rigorous basis.

Bibliography

A. Newspaper articles

1. Moore, Dave The Columbia Daily Tribune Staff Thursday 3/13/2003
Wynton Marsalis Draws his music from resources in art,& life

B. Books

1. "Costume" Pepin Press 2001
2. Dorian Ross "Wrapped in Style" UCLA 1998
3. Exploring Textile Arts Creative Publishing, Minnesota 2002
4. Johnston, Susan Godey's Lady's Book, 1840-1854 Dover Publications
N.Y. 1977
5. Joslitt, Jenna Weissman "A Perfect Fit, Clothes, Character and the
Promise of America Henry Holt Co. 2001
6. Mary Wolfe "Fashion" Goodheart- Wilcox 2002
7. Tharp, Twyla "The Creative Habit"
8. Tucker, Andrew & Tamsin, Kingwell, Fashion a Crash Course, Watson-
Guptil, N.Y. 2000

C. Current Fashion Publications

1. Lucky – shopping fashion magazine focused on younger adults
2. Seventeen – teen fashions
3. Shop – focused on latest in personal fashions/ makeup / home fashions
4. Any Brides Magazine - wedding information
5. Sew News – home sewing magazine/ latest techniques and supplies
6. Shuz – four times yearly magazine whose total focus is shoes
7. WWD the Magazine –Women's Wear Daily
8. Jane – lifestyle magazines for women 18-34

D. Trade Publications

1. WWD, the Daily Newspaper, Fairchild press New York, N.Y.
2. Stitches Magazine, Overland Park, Kansas
3. Apparel News – California based trade paper
4. DNR –news magazine of men's clothing – www.dailynewsrecord.com

Webb Sites

www.dailycandy.com - upbeat information on the fashion industry and its designers

www.fasahionbliss.com -

www.metrofashion

www.pantene.com -latest information about color
www.barbie.com - design clothing/hair/make-up from pre-selected pieces
www.myscene.com - design your own outfits/paper doll printouts
www.fashiom-icon.com - fun site of fashion news from street style to leading designers
www.guppy22.com - fastest growing teen clothing site
www.fgi - Fashion Group International – industry news/trends/forecasts, job listings

Videos

Footloose & Fancy Free sec. 1-4 – Historical look at clothing through the ages from the vantage point of shoes
Why Man Creates – sec 1-8 teaches problem solving in creativity
Inspirations – exploration of the creative process – seven diverse artists [David Bowie , Roy Lichtenstein etc.] discuss how and why they work the way they do
Color
Annie Hall, - shows the baggy look
Amadeus, - shows historical use of ruffles and brocades
Flashdance – ripped sweats look
Grease, - shows how clothes were worn in the fifties
Any other video that has a specific costume focus

Miscellaneous Resources

Apparel Marts across the country
Ex. 1. Pittsburgh Expo Center
Monroeville, PA.

2. Magic International – worlds largest market for family apparel
www.magiconline.com

Fairchild Books – online catalog of fashion publications and visual media
Amazon.com – online booksellers
Barnes & Noble Booksellers

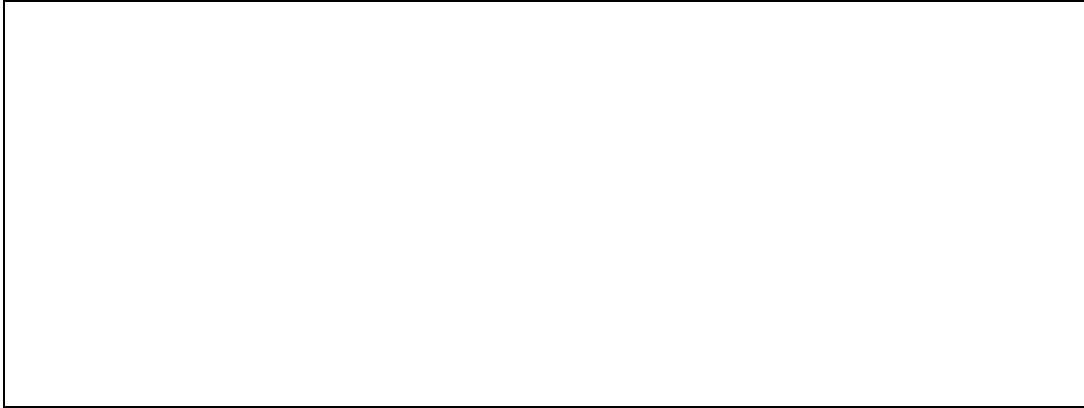
Appendix

A. Supply lists

Poster boards
Glue sticks
Paper scissors
Fashion magazines
Old pattern books
Textbooks for copying
Fabric
Fabric paints, crayons, dyes, and markers.
Commercial Patterns
Pattern paper with 1 inch squares
Pattern making videos
Computer generated pattern makers
Sketch books and pencils
Colored pencils
Water colors
Paintbrushes
Large three ring binder for fashion morgue
Paper for binder
Camera and film
Misc. fabric for swatches

Appendix B

Poem/Music

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to input a poem or music.

Picture

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to input a picture.

Rationale

Positive Colors

--	--	--	--

Rationale

Negative Colors

--	--	--	--

Rationale

Appendix D Assessment Tool

Grade yourself on the following A to E

1, Creativity [originality – relates to inspiration board] student _____ Teacher _____

2. Details in design [use of line, pattern, texture, & clear focal point
Student _____ Teacher _____

3. Effort and time on task [careful attention focused energy on project] Student _____ Teacher _____

4. Craftsmanship [neatness, professional presentation] Student _____ Teacher _____

Answer the following questions

1. What influenced your design?
2. Describe the elements you chose from the original and explain how and where you incorporated them into your design.
3. What risks did you take to make your design bold?
4. Were you satisfied with the way your design was rendered?
5. Would you do anything differently if you had another chance?