

# A Thousand Ways to Speak

Grade Level 7-12  
Visual Arts

## Lesson Description:

Text produces parallel visual symbols and images that we interpret through personal experience. We live in a world where words, phrases, and texts have become primary survival skills; our own safety may depend on how we interpret written statements. Students work in teams to produce a visual narrative of conversations, dialogues and/or monologues that provide an audience with visual imagery that can be textual. Students produce a series of digital and hand made installation works of art that use text as the vehicle of communication.

Artists such as Jenny Holzer draw on text to decode political/ social power and literary resources, projecting aphorisms about the human condition. On Kawara organizes a journey of ritual “todays” that span over 2,000 date paintings. Conceptual artist, Joseph Kosuth creates digital print texts that are definitions of objects, which generate mental images in the minds of the viewer. Ed Ruscha applies ambivalence as a factor in his paintings that combine image and text.

## Objectives:

- Students examine distinctions between four artists who use text with or without images in their work.
- Students work in teams to generate text as a dialogue among the group on a topic of their choosing.
- Students create a series of text with or without images that can be used for an installation. Students manipulate scale and space as factor in their work using digital media, collage and graphics.

## Materials and Resources:

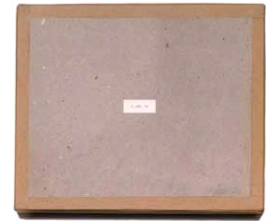
Newspapers, Writing Samples, Collage Materials, Large-scale Paper, Markers, Stencils, X-acto Knives, Cutting Pads, Digital Cameras, Laptops, Printer, Digital Projector, Glue and Brushes (with water clean up).

- Joseph Kosuth: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/artist/4974>.
- Ed Ruscha: [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/egg/genre\\_painting3.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/egg/genre_painting3.html).
- Jenny Holzer: <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/holzer/>. [http://www.yvon-lambert.com/jenny\\_holzer-A26.html](http://www.yvon-lambert.com/jenny_holzer-A26.html). <http://www.heimread.com/artists/jenny-holzer/>.
- On Kawara: <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2001.228a-pp>. [http://moma.org/collection/browse\\_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A3030&page\\_number=&template\\_id=6&sort\\_order=1](http://moma.org/collection/browse_results.php?criteria=O%3AAD%3AE%3A3030&page_number=&template_id=6&sort_order=1)

## Critical Questions:

- How do media and processes drive creativity and negotiations with audiences in the visual arts through text?
- How do we transform communication inside, and outside of the visual arts, in our current time period with traditional and current text styles?

## Activities:



On Kawara,  
5 JUN.68, E.U. El senador  
Robert F. Kennedy..., 1968,  
Liquitex on canvas

- Select team members and dialogues, phrases or quotations that direct conversation using print media.
- Discuss possible conditions for text in visual dialogue, such as close proximity, over lapping, spread-out, high, low, bold, and soft text. Discuss media possibility such as digital, drawing, painting, cut paper or mixed media. Select materials that transition verbal dialogue into actual visual form.
- Demonstrate digital methods for masking text with images.
- Determine cardinal points or locations for each participant text before beginning construction and installation. Discuss stylistic qualities such as tight refined fonts, loose, rapid lettering and joined or traditional sentence structure for expressive purposes.

**Assessment:**

- Dialogue among the teams is constructive and exploratory (solutions arrive from examination, partnership and revision).
- Sources of text are creatively manipulated for the cause of the installation.
- Participants go beyond routine use of the gallery or space as a canvas for the text.
- Students understand the rigor that is needed to induce mental images based on text and reasons why artists work with text.
- Overall installation has the consistency of group dialogue, through placement, scale and other formal sensory standards.

**National Standards:**

**Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes**

5-8.1 Students select media, techniques, and processes; analyze what makes them effective or not effective in communicating ideas; and reflect upon the effectiveness of their choice

9-12.1 Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks

9-12.2 Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use

**Using knowledge of structures and functions**

5-8.3 Students select and use the qualities of structures and functions of art to improve communication of their ideas

9-12.3 Students create artworks that use organizational principles and functions to solve specific visual arts problems

**Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas**

5-8.1 Students integrate visual, spatial, and temporal concepts with content to communicate intended meaning in their artworks

5-8.2 Students use subjects, themes, and symbols that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, values, and aesthetics that communicate intended meaning in artworks