



**2012 Minx M. Auerbach Award Recipient: Brandy M. Noody
Fredonia Central Schools, N.Y.
Lesson: Heroes (for High School)**

Overview:

Brandy Noody adapted parts of *The Dinner Party Curriculum* as a semester-long unit, using the enduring idea, “Art has been used throughout history to immortalize.” The unit, *Heroes*, included a detailed classroom facsimile of Judy Chicago’s installation, the creation of banners featuring a personal hero, a whole-class quilt project, and visits from local artists who demonstrated needlework techniques. Brandy also kept a visual journal of the semester, and noted her observations, questions, and reflections on the class.

Through in depth use of *The Dinner Party Curriculum*, Brandy Noody set the following curriculum goals:

- to promote gender equity
- to shift from product-making to meaning-making
- to establish a group atmosphere

Brandy describes: “I began the school year focusing on the big idea of heroes. The enduring idea I sought to instill in my students was, ‘Art has been used throughout history to immortalize.’”

Essential questions addressed were:

- What is a hero?
- What qualities does a person need to be classified as a hero?
- In what way do we immortalize our heroes?

Brandy adapted several different Encounters from the curriculum to suit these goals. In particular, she used the following Encounters, in this order: [2](#), [8](#), [7](#) & [10](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#) & [6](#), [1](#), and [13](#). All the encounters are linked here: http://judychicago.arted.psu.edu/?page_id=142

Introduction

Objectives:

- Students will consider the idea of heroes, and what qualities make a hero.
- Students will identify a personal hero that is female.
- Students will depict their hero in sketchbooks, in the media of their choice.

Brandy Noody showed her students the popular YouTube video of artist Michael Israel painting a portrait of his father, a firefighter, holding a child he saved:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZFkZiwMLZ4>

Ask students to work in groups discussing the film and making two lists: a list of qualities a person needs to be a hero, and a list of heroes they know. Follow with whole-group discussion and comparison of the individual lists. Looking for commonalities, generate a class list. Ask students to work in their sketchbooks and identify and depict a *female* hero of their choice. It is possible that students will already have been thinking of male heroes, and this is a good time to discuss gendered terms. Discuss the word *heroine*. Can students think of heroes as female? Do they need the word heroine to do so? Note instances of non-gendered terms such as artist, boss, fullback, Kindergarten teacher, general, point guard, and doctor. Can students think of both males and females in each of these categories?

Give students a printed invitation for a private viewing of *The Dinner Party*, to be viewed the next day. Note: By giving students an actual printed invitation, Brandy Noody set an excited tone of curiosity and anticipation regarding the artwork.

Assignment: In sketchbooks, students visually depict their hero with any media.

An Invitation

Objectives:

- Students will explore a classroom facsimile of *The Dinner Party*.
- Students will share their visual depiction of a hero.
- Students will pose questions about *The Dinner Party*.

Note: Brandy Noody made a detailed facsimile of *The Dinner Party* in her classroom. She arranged the desks in a triangle, created and hung large printed entry banners, made colored photocopies of each place setting, and placed them on the triangular table. When students walked into the classroom, they walked into an installation that recreated *The Dinner Party*.

Alternatively, images of the work could be used in a PowerPoint or other visual display.

Give students time to examine images from *The Dinner Party*, or the recreated installation of *The Dinner Party*. Ask students to sit at the place setting of their choice. Share with students an overview of the work: the time it was made, and the purpose of its creation. Give each student a blank invitation, and allow time for students to fill out the invitations for their chosen hero. Then, have a group discussion and let students share their sketchbooks and their choice of heroes.

Ask students what questions they would pose to Judy Chicago about the artwork. Create a classroom question list: have students write their questions on post-it notes and group them on a class board. Refer to the board throughout the semester so that answers, as they are encountered, may be added.

Research

Objectives:

- Students will research a woman from the place setting of their choice.
- Students will share the information with their peers.

Give students time to prepare research on their own. In a group, have students share their research about a woman from the table. Note: when asking students to share during various times

in the semester, Brandy Noody began with sharing her own “homework” to get things started and to set an example of how to proceed.

Questions for the next class:

- Why is research important in creating a work like *The Dinner Party*?
- How does an artist conduct research?

During the next class, show the DVD *The Making of The Dinner Party* to show Judy Chicago’s research process. Note: Brandy Noody stopped the film after the scene where Chicago gets angry with some of the participants who are hesitant about the required research on women in history. Noody’s students had many questions about Chicago’s anger, which led to a discussion about feminism: what it is, and what the stereotypes of feminists are. This discussion continued throughout the semester.

Disrupting Stereotypes

Objectives:

- Students will become familiar with definitions of the word feminism.
- Students will consider gender discrimination in their own experience.
- Students will create a collage that challenges gender stereotypes.

Note: Based on discussions begun during the viewing of the film, Brandy Noody introduced an exploration of gender stereotypes, including stereotypes of feminists, in her next class. She also continued to research feminism on her own, to inform her teaching.

Start class with the question, “Were you ever told you couldn’t do something because you are a girl or a boy?” Invite students to share such instances. Have students work in small groups to create lists of culturally inherited gender roles. Have students make three lists: one list for acceptable roles for women, one for acceptable roles for men, and one that lists acceptable roles for either. Using gathered images from magazines that represent common gender roles, have each group examine and discuss an image. Let each student choose an image as the starting point for a collage that disrupts the stereotype depicted. Have students create collages. Collages can be displayed and shared in the next class.

Continuing Research

Objectives:

- Students will create a research plan for a long-term work: a hanging banner, which will symbolically immortalize their hero.
- Students will consider the idea of table as a metaphor.

Continue the discussion of the necessity for research as a means to fully understand and intelligently represent the subject of the intended artwork. As students research, explain that they are using a studio practice of Judy Chicago. (Chicago also inculcates the practice of researching the content of proposed artworks in her students when she teaches at colleges as a visiting artist.)

Research methods may include:

- Interviewing the subject or someone who knew her
- reading about the subject

- gathering images

Ask students to create a sketch about a table that was or is significant in their lives, which will be shared during the next class. During the next class, discuss the use of the table as a metaphor in *The Dinner Party*. Discuss the potential of using visual metaphors in their banner projects.

Banners

Objectives:

- Students will create a hanging banner, in the media of their choice, as a visual testament to their hero.
- Students will practice careful craftsmanship in the presentation of the banner.
- Students will demonstrate intentional research and planning in the presentation of their banner, with sketchbooks and written reflections as additional evidence.

Creating banners that represent their personal hero, in their choice of media, is the next studio portion of the lesson. Examine and discuss plans and ideas with individual students. Brandy Noody made classroom materials available to students, and discussed other options, including obtaining their own materials, with them. Plan on in-progress critiques during studio work, and encourage students to question, discuss, and share their next steps with each other.

Assessment:

Objectives:

- Students will explain and critique their artwork through a written reflection.

When students finish their banners, have them fill out a reflection sheet with the following questions:

- Who is your hero? What qualities does she possess that led you to classify her as your hero?
- Describe how you visually represented your hero in your work.
- What type of research did you conduct in order to create your artwork?
- Do you plan to share this artwork with your hero? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, what is the most successful part of your artwork?
- If you were to remake your artwork, what would you do differently?

Learning Together: Needles and Crafts

Objectives:

- Students will learn needlework techniques from local experts, and experiment with those techniques.
- Students will consider the terms *art* and *craft* and discuss their various meanings.
- Students will suggest reasons why needlework is featured in *The Dinner Party*.

Brandy Noody says, “Learning about *The Dinner Party* has given me a greater appreciation for what is commonly considered ‘craft’ by the art world.” Brandy wanted to teach her students about needlework techniques, but felt she needed help from experienced needle workers in the community. Several volunteers came into the classroom to demonstrate techniques. Needlework

may include sewing, embroidery, knitting, crochet, weaving, applique and patchwork, and quilting.

Arrange for guest teachers to demonstrate needlework techniques to the class. These will eventually be used to create a patch for the class quilt. Note: if you are already familiar with needlework techniques, it can still be valuable for students to have guest artists demonstrate their work, and thus students may recognize artists within the community, and needle workers (also called textile artists or fiber artists) as artists. Meanwhile, have students investigate meanings and associations connected to the words *art* and *craft*. Gather objects and images of objects and have students decide whether each is art or craft. Brandy Noody notes that students proceeded confidently based on their definitions of *craft* as functional versus *art* as a form of human expression, until they looked at a Tiffany lamp. Encourage the questioning of the definitions of art and craft, why needlework has been considered a lesser art, and why Judy Chicago highlights needlework in *The Dinner Party*.

A Class Quilt

Objectives:

- Students will locate a quote with the theme of equality, from a song, poem, novel or other source.
- Students will visually depict the quote in a quilt patch, using two or more demonstrated needlework techniques.
- Students will work together to arrange the quilt patches into a unified composition.

Introduce the next long-term studio project to students: they will depict text in a visual form, using needlework techniques, on a square of fabric. The text should have a theme of equality. The squares will eventually be joined to form a quilt. Have students choose a quote from a song, poem, novel, or other source. In a group discussion, teacher and students share quotes and talk about how they may be depicted visually.

When students have a quote and an idea for its depiction, each may use a 12 inch square of fabric for the base of their design. The matching squares can then be sewn together to form a quilt top. Note: Brandy Noody was fortunate to have a community volunteer who sewed the quilt for the class. However, this could also be a whole-class effort.

Unit Assessment:

Looking back to the original objectives of the unit, it should be evident that students have

- considered the meaning of the word *hero*
- considered issues of gender equity
- focused on meaning-making in their studio work
- worked as a group to learn about gender issues and to achieve studio goals

Source: <http://judychicago.arted.psu.edu/>