

The University of the Arts  
The College of Art and Design  
The Graduate Program in Art Education

Exploration of Personal Identity in Teenagers  
Through Storytelling and Journaling in the Art Room

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

Middle school students are faced with challenges and experiences every day that make them question their identity and purpose. Utilizing journaling and storytelling in the middle school art classroom creates an opportunity for students to be exposed to meaningful art experiences. This mixed methods, action research study set out to discover the benefits of middle school students creating autobiographical visual journals and artwork, to discover if visual journaling aids students in creating more self-reflective artwork and if students increased the use of their sketchbook as a result of visual journaling. A series of art lessons were implemented that focused on telling one's self-identity and experiences. After completing the art lessons many benefits emerged, such as the students' ability to understand how their artwork helps them to understand themselves better and students saw an increased use of their sketchbook. As a result of the art lessons, students started an inner dialogue.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The most challenging period of life for many individuals is their teenage years. Adolescent students are struggling with many facets of life from friendships and family, to changes in appearance, which all comes back to the central question of one's search for and development of identity. As an educator it is important to challenge students to develop their own thoughts and opinions, and to begin their journey towards discovering themselves. As stated by Van Manen (1994), "Self-knowledge is related to the search for one's own life story" (as cited in Cara, 2011). Visual journaling provides students with a tool, guiding them towards finding their own life story. Visual journaling is self-reflective, develops an inquisitive mind and can start the student's journey towards self-discovery.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Identity defines an individual, and the time that most individuals begin discovering who they are starts as teenagers. Adolescents struggle to find a way to link and express their inner thoughts and feelings with the world that takes place around them (Burton, 1984). During these tumultuous years, teenagers are constantly thinking, feeling and obsessing over each and every moment but do not have much practice at communicating these feelings (Thomas, 2011). Visual journaling can be a tool and outlet for these thoughts and feelings as teenage students can use their journals to help express and discover who they are as individuals. Students can address big questions such as; "Who am I? Where am I going? Why?" and begin to uncover the answers to these



questions. As many middle school students struggle with identity, self-discovery and self-acceptance, it is pertinent as an educator to provide opportunities for teenage students to discover, express, and explore their sense of self.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this research was to discover how an art curriculum that focuses on visual journaling and storytelling helps middle school students to create more self-reflective artwork. The findings aim to understand the impact of utilizing the subject of self in storytelling and visual journaling in the art classroom and if it affects how teenage students portray themselves in artwork. By incorporating visual journaling and storytelling into the art curriculum, teenage students' artwork should show the students' sense of identity, self-discovery, and self-acceptance.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of having middle school students create autobiographical visual journals and artwork?
2. Does utilizing visual journaling aid students in creating more self-reflective artwork?
3. Does visual journaling promote an increased use of the sketchbook for middle school students?

### METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data through a mixed methods, action research approach. First, two surveys were sent out to students that

address how students feel about creating artwork that features the self as the subject, students' attitudes towards working in a sketchbook, and the way students view themselves. During the art lessons included in this research study, non-formal observation of students' attitudes towards lesson content and utilization of the sketchbook as a journal were recorded. Upon completion of the art unit focusing on the self in visual art journaling and storytelling, written student reflections were used to assess changes in students' sense of identity, self-discovery, and self-acceptance in their artwork. Additionally two student surveys were completed at the conclusion of the unit to reflect on any changes due to self-reflective art journaling.

#### DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Egocentric:** Thinking only of oneself, without regard for the feelings of others.

**Identity:** Comprising of one's set of beliefs, ideas, personality traits, background, challenges, physical appearance and attitudes.

**International Baccalaureate:** An international education curriculum founded in Geneva, Switzerland that encourages students to think beyond their community and to see themselves as members of a global society.

**Pedagogy:** The method or practice of teaching.

**Visual journal:** Visually representing, expressing and recording one's life experiences, memories, and feelings within a sketchbook. A journal can encompass a diary, sketchbook, or notebook (New, 2005).

### LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitations of this study were that the study was completed using a small population of 47 students attending middle school, grade 7. The study was performed in a charter school providing an International Baccalaureate education to urban and suburban students. Therefore, there is a limited surveyed amount of quantitative data due to the inability to access multiple populations of middle school age students from varying schools.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

“Who am I? Where am I going? Why?” These are questions that many people ask themselves throughout their lifetime. The desire to understand the answers to these questions usually begins in early adolescence. Middle school students are faced with challenges and experiences every day that make them question their identity and purpose. To assist students with discovering and expressing their sense of self, art educators can provide opportunities for students to share their life experiences and personal stories through artwork. The narrative impulse is innate in humans and begins in early childhood and lasts a lifetime (Carroll, 2003). Using visual journaling as a tool, students can link their inner thoughts and feelings in their journal to help express and discover who they are as individuals.

The sketchbook is a tool that teenage students can use to help discover, express, and explore their personal identity in the art room. Throughout time the possession of a sketchbook was a rare privilege but was considered an important development for early artists (Camhy, 2016). Drawing has always been used to record, document, and draft images that the artist has imagined, recalled, observed or copied (Grove Encyclopedia, 2008), and the ideas for a drawing are typically developed within a sketchbook. The sketchbook is a place where students can record images that come from their unique backgrounds, memories, and experiences and can help students to understand and develop their sense of self while telling their life story. As stated by Camhy (2016), “Sketchbooks can also be private journals where artists maintain ongoing commentaries

and visual diaries. Opening an old sketchbook of this type can be like remembering a long forgotten dream” (p. 23). Students can utilize the sketchbook as a form of visual journal and teachers can guide students through their journey of self-discovery through written and visual prompts.

Many writers, artists, and scientists have used journals throughout history to record their thoughts, feelings or observations. Amongst the most famous and descriptive of writers is Henry David Thoreau. His written journal-turned book titled *Walden* was kept during his time spent near a Massachusetts lake in the woods and is highly revered. As stated by New (2005), “Every writer who has followed in Thoreau’s footsteps has done so with eyes wide open, intent on seeing things previously unnoticed” (p. 15). This concept of seeing things that were previously unnoticed is why many writers and artists use journals. Sketchbooks originally were used as a model book or pattern book but at the start of the early Renaissance transformed into a modern sketchbook full of visual responses to natural phenomena, events or imaginary concepts captured on paper (Grove Encyclopedia, 2008). Some journal keepers create artwork inside their journals or sketchbooks in the form of both written and visual content. Additionally journal keepers may respond to their surroundings by drawing and painting through observation. For example, Leonardo Da Vinci kept a sketchbook of both what he observed and his inventions that he imagined. The subjects of Da Vinci’s sketchbooks mirror his interest in anatomy, water, urban planning, flying machines, properties of color and light, and Da Vinci left behind thousands of sketches (New, 2005). See examples of Da Vinci’s drawings in Figure 1 and Figure 2 in-text.

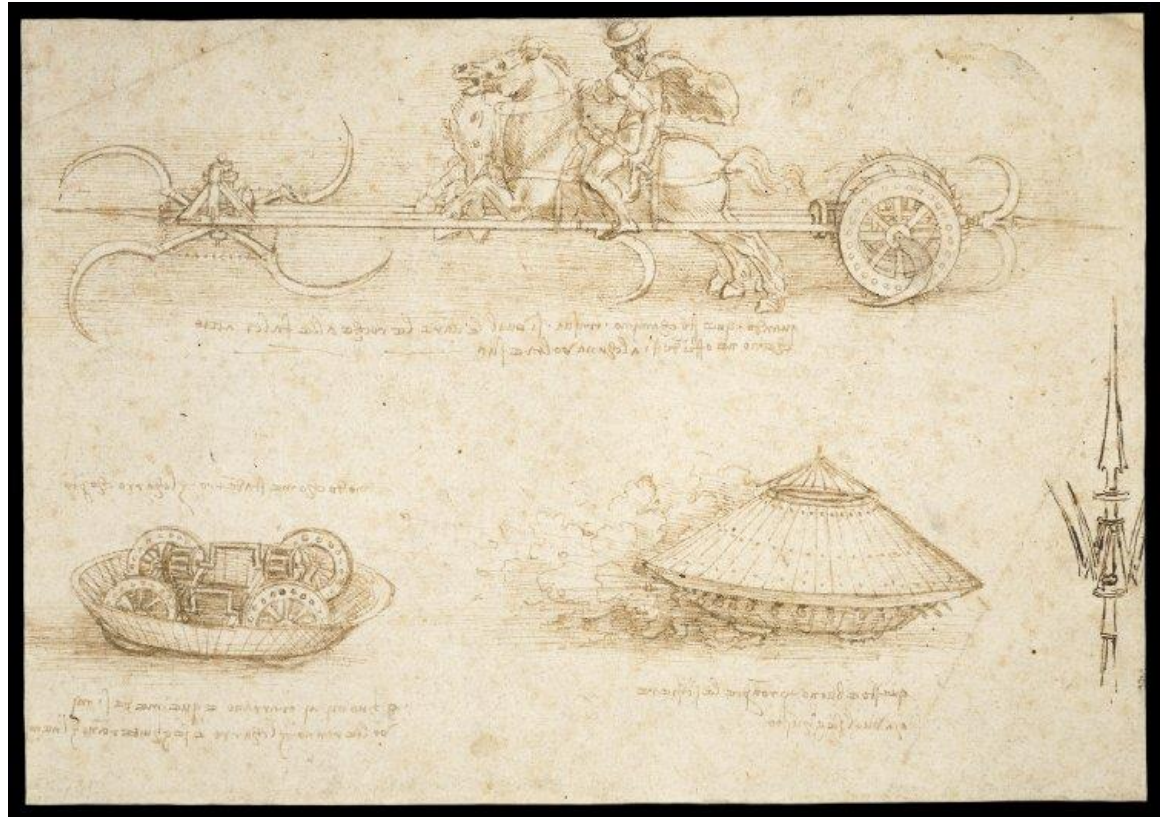


Figure 1: Leonardo da Vinci, *Military Machines*, 1485 circa, Pen and Brown Ink,  
The British Museum



Figure 2: Leonardo da Vinci, *Sheet of Studies (Recto)*, 1470-1480, Pen and brown ink over black chalk and laid paper, The Armand Hammer Collection, National Gallery of Art

Historically Thoreau and Da Vinci have been seen as exemplars of written and visual journals. Throughout history, and still today, many artists and scholars continue to use sketchbooks.

Despite how each discipline individually utilizes the sketchbook, all people creatively use the sketchbook as a storage vessel to record thoughts, observations, and ideas within one place (Bartram, 2014). Within the school setting, often-times the sketchbook is underutilized by art educators. Sketchbooks are used as a place to occupy students when they are finished early or to solely draw their initial designs for artwork. In the art classroom sketchbooks are full of potential to be a meaningful tool in the curriculum. Working in sketchbooks as a means of visual journaling should not be an isolated task that is separate from classroom discussions or activities. Instead it should be incorporated into the curriculum content (Cummings, 2011). Transforming the use of the sketchbook to an imperative part of the art curriculum will help students to see its importance to their personal development as an individual and as an artist.

Often adolescent students struggle to see the importance of what they are learning in their education and question why things are being done. Many middle school students tend to be egocentric in thinking and in actions and are therefore only concerned with the now and the things that are occurring around them. Additionally many adolescents are trying to figure out who they are and who they want to be as a person and tend to get caught up in what their peers and society tell them they should be. To reach maturity adolescents need to learn how to construct links between both their inner and outer worlds, and the arts can be a vehicle to assist students with shaping themselves (Burton, 1984). Visual art is often used by individuals in a therapeutic sense to express what they



are feeling in their inner world and to relay this with themselves and others in a visual format. “Adolescents need to understand that works of art are essentially valid modes of organizing and expressing feelings regardless of the style” (Burton, 1984, p. 34). A sketchbook is a place where students can feel secure that their inner worlds can be exposed and relayed only to their own eyes and those of trusted individuals. A sketchbook that functions as a visual journal can be key to student emotional development.

Identity is at the core of most journals. Questions that many journals ask are usually, Who am I? Where am I going? and Why? (New, 2005). The journals that the students work on should focus on major themes revolving around identity. Journal prompts given to students should be thought provoking, evoke memories, and be self-reflective. What will end up happening is that the journal work created by students will contain stories that come from deep inside and are created from the students’ inner voice essentially creating a dialogue with themselves (Carroll, 2003). This dialogue will help students to become more self-reflective with their thoughts and feelings. “It also encourages students to know themselves on a deeper level, reflecting on personal strengths and challenges, values and concerns, and desires and dreams for the future” (Cummings, 2011, p. 28). These findings from working in their journals revolve around the quest for one’s identity.

There are many benefits to incorporating a visual journal in the art curriculum. A journal is a place that students create only for themselves, where there is no pressure to show their work to others or to receive outside criticism of their work (Apter, 2016). This freedom and safety allows students to be more open to experimentation and creativity.

Additionally art journaling offers students a place to try out new techniques and media as well as play with new concepts and ideas (Apter, 2016). Utilizing an art journal allows students to have a safe space to create personal artwork while additionally providing a great tool to reinforce art concepts and techniques. However not all students will use an art journal to its full potential if they are not guided and challenged by the content of the journal itself. As stated by Cope and Kalantzis (2001), “Open ended tasking that promotes students’ personal expression can empower learners to use process and product to represent meaning, and encourages developmental benefits which may not be accessed with traditional print form only” (as cited in Cara, 2011). Giving students the opportunity for open ended art journal tasks allows students to work on their problem solving skills as they develop, design and create their visual journal entry page as well as express their personal story.

Student journal prompts should not only be open ended but should also give students the opportunity to tell their individual stories. In a visual narrative the student is presenting an account or series of events that tell their individual story (Cara, 2011). Storytelling has been used for generations in mankind. Beginning in its earliest forms, stories have been passed down orally, visually represented on cave walls and even later in history came the written tradition of storytelling. Challenging students to think about and visually depict their life story can be a highly beneficial learning opportunity. Visual storytelling comes from within the individual and students have the opportunity to disclose as much or as little as they like. This opportunity to work intuitively and reflectively allows students to show their hopes, desires, connections, relationships, concerns, feelings and more (Carroll, 2003). Connecting storytelling with a visual journal

allows students to reflect upon themselves while recording their memories and stories in a visual format.

Visual storytelling created within student journals can come from memories, observations, and experiences (Carroll, 2003). Students have the opportunity to record their own life story visually or written and will find the curriculum content meaningful and important to their life. In the classroom students can be given the option to create these stories both visually and written in their journals. By adding in written passages along with their artwork students will be forced to clearly articulate the art piece's meaning, which may not be something they may do otherwise (Hieb, 2005). Some students may feel the need to explain or justify the artwork that they have created and writing a passage can help a student to clearly articulate their thoughts and give their artwork more depth and meaning. This relationship between written and non-written media is essential as the written media may not say everything that the visual artwork creates in a more honest reflection (Hieb, 2005).

One artist who used a journal to tell her life story is Frida Kahlo. Much of Kahlo's artwork focuses around the subject of self, the experiences and desires Kahlo faced during her challenging life story. For Frida Kahlo is quoted as saying, "I am the subject I know best." This quote may resonate among some students. While all adolescent students are still discovering themselves and may not know themselves completely yet, compared to their parents, other adults, and their peers, the students truly know themselves the best. The subject of self fueled Frida Kahlo's artwork. Along with the artist's work, Kahlo's intimate diary was made public and published for viewers' eyes. Many of Kahlo's self-portraits show the desire to not just be seen as a picture but to be read into like a book,

and her diary actualizes this desire (Reis, 2012). Within the diary the images and text go together and represent the connection between the self and Kahlo's connection with others (Reis, 2012). An excerpt from Kahlo's diary can be seen in figure 4 in-text. This diary entry shows Kahlo's right foot, which since 1932 had been plagued by ulcers and is shown surrounded by splotches of color that show how her foot would bulge and swell (Kahlo, 2001). This intimate portrayal of Kahlo's foot which was a root of pain and suffering for Kahlo can be seen as a reflective self-portrait. Kahlo also depicted this same foot in her painting, *What the Water Gave Me* (1938). Within Frida's diary themes and pieces of completed paintings the two interplay with each other. Students can see this connection in Kahlo's diary and artwork and can use it as an inspiration to look to their own journal for ideas and to drive their art pieces.



Figure 3: Frida Kahlo, *Footprints and Sun-prints*, *The Diary of Frida Kahlo*

As stated by New (2005), “The journal’s primary purpose is to serve as a place for its author to sort ideas and observations” (p. 18). Allow students to pull ideas from their journals to create larger art pieces. Something in their journal will most likely catch their attention and may help them elaborate upon that theme, or create a new theme or question from it (Hieb, 2005). When looking at their journals students will make meaning of their

work by carefully observing patterns and ideas and can explore these possibilities or consider an alternative opposing idea (Moeller, 2013). Students will begin to see the importance of using a sketchbook/journal as a starting point to generate ideas for future work. Frida Kahlo did this with her diary, which served as both an artistic playground as well as a personal sounding board for Kahlo (New, 2005).

As with Frida Kahlo's diary, it may not only represent the individual but may also present underlying themes ongoing in the world around the individual. In Kahlo's situation her diary represents an autobiographical stance but also her and society's beliefs and reactions to communism and to communist leaders. Journals can also represent the discourse, culture, society and power of the time, the journal functioning as evidence of the surrounding world and as a representation of it (Cardell, 2014). Not only will students understand a sense of themselves better through visual journaling but they may also see how society affects and influences their lives. There is a lot of pressure placed on adolescents to become a certain type of individual. This pressure comes from parents, friends, teachers, coaches, media, and much more. Their journal may make visible the themes, issues and concerns of adolescents (Carroll, 2003), and their reactions to those things. A visual journal can be a tool that allows the student to see with more clarity.

When working in their visual journals students should be given the choice of tools and media that they would like to use. There is no right or wrong with journaling and all art media should be available to the student that creates a more individualized and unique journal (Apter, 2016). Students will still be working on technique and developing confidence even when given the choice of material to use. The material that students use is an important part in the way students tell their story and will affect the way that the

viewer sees their artwork. As stated by Henry (2015), “The tools one selects to work with, by definition, influence the thoughts one has about the subject matter” (p. 158). Allowing students to choose media will allow students to creatively problem solve and explore multiple possibilities. Through using their creativity students will be exploring patterns, shapes, textures, and colors through visual means (Moeller, 2013).

While all students should include visual aspects into the journals students can also incorporate text into their finished work. While some journal artists like to focus on the visual aspects of their entries, not all students are confident while creating artwork and may want to concentrate on the text (Apter, 2016). Both the visuals in the journal and the writing work together to create a stronger and more reflective piece of work. The words and images inspire each other and students who move between both visual and verbal systems as needed, discover the supportive relationship of the two systems (Carroll, 2003). When students select and arrange text and images it helps students to broaden their understanding of art forms, develop their expression of ideas, and create responses to themselves and culture (Cummings, 2011).

Most students incorporate drawing into their visual journals. Drawing is used by most individuals to assist in thinking and problem solving and to aid us in seeing more clearly (Davies, 2005). The drawing students create may be the working sketch or it may be a completely rendered drawing. Drawing can be a particularly good choice of technique if students are drawing from observation. Quick and easy to render drawings can be created in pencil, colored pencil, charcoal, conté crayon, pastel, marker, pen or ink. These drawings can be created directly in student journals or could be placed into journals from another source, such as a doodle created on a lined piece of paper.

Another expressive media that students should be encouraged to utilize is collage. Collage is a perfect medium for students who feel less confident in their drawing skills but still want to create an expressive piece of art. By piecing together photographs, paper, magazines, newspaper, music sheets, among other materials, students can represent symbols within their artwork. As stated by New (2005), “Visual journals are created in a secret language of symbols” (p. 12). Collage is a medium that is full of visually rich symbols through the means of colors, objects, textures, and shapes. Additionally collage lends nicely when creating autobiographical memory entries as things such as photographs, ticket stubs, letters, and pamphlets can be incorporated into the journal entries.

The subject matter behind all journals no matter what technique and media are used is the subject of one’s identity and life story. It is recommended that some guidance be given and journal prompts be given to adolescent students. Journal prompts should be inquisitive, self-reflective, challenging, and thought provoking. Below is a list of some journal prompts that can be incorporated into student journals.

- Create a unique family tree by researching and incorporating the kind of tree that represents your family and then incorporate animals that represent your family members.

- Develop a journal page that is entitled, “A Day in The Life Of...”. This journal prompt can consist of a comic strip, photographs, collage, or much more.

- As suggested by Thomas (2011), “Create a map representing where you have been in your life and where you are going” (p. 33).



- Create a piece of artwork that symbolizes a difficult moment in your lifetime and what has occurred now because of that moment.
- Represent in a piece of artwork your “inner animal” by thinking about what animal represents you.
- As put forth by Thomas (2011), “Create a piece of art that has a secret from your childhood or present life hidden in the finished product” (p. 44).
- Write a letter to your future self and incorporate important images into this letter.
- Design a self-portrait that portrays aspects and symbols of who you are as an individual.
- Using as inspiration an important dream that you had in your lifetime, develop a recreation of this dream.
- Think about a place or person that provides comfort to you.
- School is a large part of your life. Create a journal entry of what school means to you.
- Create a semi-fictional journal entry. This entry should be part true and part fiction. The theme for this entry is your decision.
- Include the lyrics of a song that are emotionally important to you.
- Identify and incorporate an aspect of your current life and think of it in terms of size. Using a photograph of yourself for size, show how big or small it is in relationship to your concern (Hieb, 2005).

-Showcase your attitude and feelings towards a current event that is occurring in your neighborhood, state, country, or the world.

These journal prompts are examples that will help students to be reflective and inquisitive. Through documenting their stories and journeys students will be using their creativity and will be helping to build a fluency of ideas, flexibility, originality, and problem solving (Cara, 2011).

When adolescents create the artwork in their journals they will begin to see their individual story laid out before them. Utilizing a visual journal is good for the students' personal well-being and can help to relieve stress and to contribute to overall well-being (Apter, 2016). Creating a visual journal helps adolescents to see who they really are. When students put something down in their journal they are sitting and drawing and thinking closely about which colors are best, which words to include, and it forces students to look closely at the subject: themselves (New, 2005). Inwardly thinking and reflecting is an important part of one's personal development.

It is crucial that students reflect upon their experiences before and after working on their visual journals. The inquiry questions that students are asked should help them to think about their story and why stories in general are important. It is recommended that the following inquiry questions take place before giving students their journal prompt in order to fuel ideas for their upcoming journal prompt. Listed are some inquiry questions to help students think about the importance of storytelling. The statements listed below are taken from Carroll (2003), "Encouraging Visual Storytelling" (p 16).

-Are there stories that can best be told in a single image?

- Are there stories that require the ability to layer and mix imagery?
- If you were to tell a story, would you, or others you know start with words or an image?
- How can ordinary experiences in everyday life be turned into extraordinary stories through words and images?
- Is it important to reflect on life-changing events and to mark them by making something special?

Utilizing these inquiry questions with students will help to begin the brainstorming process for students and their journal prompt. Inquiry questions allow students to think more critically on a deeper level and to arrive to conclusions themselves.

Inquiry questions and reflection are not only important before visual journal entries but also after the student has completed their journal entries. Having students write down concrete explanations behind their journal entries gives more meaning and perhaps a different viewpoint to the journal artwork itself. The students become storytellers throughout their visual journals and ultimately represent, reconstruct and communicate what they have learned, experienced, remembered, imagined and emotionally felt (Rifa-Valls, 2011). Through telling their individual stories students to reflect back on their lives. Listed below are some reflective questions to have students answer after their journal entries.

- How does the art media you choose for your journal entry affect the way the story is told?
- Write a short response revealing the meaning behind your visual journal entry.
- Explain how the theme behind this journal entry affected your life then and how it affects it now.
- What might someone need to know about this journal entry to allow them to understand better the artwork and to include more details and feeling? (Carroll, 2003)
- What words does this image bring to mind for you?
- Looking back at your journal entries what are the elements that make up your life today and how are those elements affecting the way you change or grow? (Hieb, 2005)
- Think back to the moment you visually represented in your artwork. Who were you at the time? Where were you? Who were you with? Do the answers to these questions hold significance?
- Create a short poem to accompany this piece of work.

Through the visual stories the students have told in their journal the students explain, interpret and assess their situations, beliefs and experiences which in turn creates new meaning behind their stories (Chung, 2007). It is important for students to reflect on this art making experience and the questions above should help students to begin that thought process.

In the next chapter a series of three lesson plans focusing on self-identity, journaling, and storytelling demonstrate the power, importance, and possibilities that this series of lessons can have on a middle school art classroom. Giving students an opportunity to express their personal story and experiences through artwork can open up the students' eyes to a new form of self-expression. Additionally artwork becomes more authentic and meaningful to students. Through implementing storytelling and journaling into the art curriculum it is possible to help students begin to answer the questions of "Who am I?" "Where am I going" and "Why."

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### INTRODUCTION

The most challenging period of life for many individuals is the teenage years. Adolescent students are struggling with many facets of life from friendships, family, to changes in appearance, which all come back to the central question of one's search for and development of identity. Identity is defined as one's set of beliefs, ideas, personality traits, background, challenges, physical appearance, and attitudes. As an educator it is important to challenge students to develop their own thoughts, opinions, and to begin their journey towards discovering themselves. As stated by Van Manen (1994), "Self-knowledge is related to the search for one's own life story" (as cited in Cara, 2011). Providing students a guide towards finding one's own life story is the tool of visual journaling. Visual journaling is self-reflective and inquisitive and can start the student's journey towards self-discovery.

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both qualitative and quantitative data through a mixed methods, action research approach. First two surveys were sent out to students that address how students feel about creating artwork that features the self as the subject, students' attitudes towards working in a sketchbook, and the way students view themselves. During the art lessons included in this research study, non-formal observation was recorded of students' attitudes towards lesson content and utilization of the sketchbook as a journal. Upon completion of the art unit focusing on the self in visual

art journaling and storytelling, written student reflections were used to assess changes in students' sense of identity, self-discovery and self-acceptance in their artwork.

Additionally two student surveys were completed at the conclusion of the unit to reflect on any changes due to self-reflective art journaling.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of having middle school students create autobiographical visual journals and artwork?
2. Does utilizing visual journaling aid students in creating more self-reflective artwork?
3. Does visual journaling promote an increased use of the sketchbook for middle school students?

### QUANTITATIVE METHODS

Students were initially given two surveys to determine how students feel about creating artwork that features the self as the subject, students' attitudes towards working in a sketchbook, and the way students view themselves. Additionally two student surveys were completed at the conclusion of the unit to ascertain if there were any changes due to self-reflective art journaling.

### QUALITATIVE METHODS

During the art lessons included in this research study, non-formal observation recorded students' attitudes towards lesson content and utilization of the sketchbook as a journal. Photographs were taken of students' completed artwork. Upon completion of the

art unit focusing on the self in visual art journaling and storytelling, written student reflections were used to assess changes in students' sense of identity, self-discovery, and self-acceptance in their artwork.

### POPULATION/SAMPLE

This study used a population of 47 seventh grade students, ages twelve to thirteen. The study was performed in a charter school that provides an International Baccalaureate education to suburban and urban students. The population of the school is ethnically diverse and students come from various neighborhoods in the surrounding area. Class size is limited to 25 students and all students attend art class for 57 minute classes each day of the week.

### ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

While conducting this study no student identifiers were used. The school and the participants understood that all the content would remain confidential and participants gave their consent to participate in the study. No identifiers were used within the research.

### EXPECTED FINDINGS

Upon completion of this research it was expected that there would be an increased use of sketchbooks by students for personal artwork. Students will be able to explain their art pieces and the motivation behind their created artwork. Moreover, it is expected that sketchbooks will help students to become more confident when talking about who they are as individuals as well as show more depth in their created art pieces.



## CHAPTER FOUR

## INITIAL DATA

The implementation of lesson plans based on self-identity through the use of journaling and self-reflective artwork is meant to start the students' journey towards self-discovery and towards creating authentic artwork. Having students ask questions of themselves and reflect upon who they are will help students create more authentic and meaningful art pieces based on themselves. This study was performed with 47 students ranging from ages twelve to thirteen who attend a public charter school that implements an International Baccalaureate curriculum. All students who participated in this research study had previously worked with the art teacher. It was important to the study that students had a report of trust, in order for students to feel comfortable when creating and sharing their artwork, reflections, and stories. Initially students were surveyed to assess prior student sketchbook habits as well as student beliefs on creating self-reflective art pieces. When students responded to personal use of sketchbooks outside of school requirements, 55% of students stated that they used their sketchbook at least two times a week for personal artwork. Most students commented that this artwork was created in a separate sketchbook outside of the one that they use for art class. The students were divided on the purpose of a sketchbook and had varying explanations for its use. There were 21 students who took a more formal approach to sketchbook use, stating that a sketchbook was for drawing rough drafts for final projects. There were 26 students who took a non-formal approach to sketchbook use, stating that sketchbooks were a place to express one's thoughts and feelings in a creative way. Table 1 shows student comments as to the purpose of using a sketchbook.

**Table 1: Student Comments**

<b>Formal Approach to Sketchbook Use</b>	<b>Non-Formal Approach to Sketchbook Use</b>
Devin: “The purpose of a sketchbook is to show the art instructor the skills that she taught us and for us to draw those skills. Also, the purpose of a sketchbook is to write our knowledge about these skills....we use the sketchbook to study this skill and my instructors gives out a test to see our understanding of this skill.”	Emma: “The purpose of a sketchbook is to draw freely and not have to rush. It is a place where you can let out your artistic feelings. You can let your ideas out.”
Jackson: “The purpose of a sketchbook is to try to re-draw someone’s art and reflect on how you did.”	Aubrey: “The purpose of a sketchbook is to let out your thoughts and feelings roam out on a piece of paper.”
Layla: “The purpose of a sketchbook is to make a rough draft of your good copy and draw new things. It’s kind of like an experiment.”	Mia: “To release your feelings. I think of it as a picture diary, with no words.”
Tyler: “The purpose of a sketchbook is to be able to practice out sketching a paper before you attempt a good copy.”	Justin: “I like to think of it as a creative place where I can keep my ideas because there is nothing better than expressing your feelings in a different way than words.”

All lessons that the students completed subsequently were based upon self-identity and the student’s personal story, and many of these lessons were completed with the students’ sketchbooks. Students were asked whether they thought that understanding

their life story is important to figuring out who they are. The majority of students, 42 out of 47, agreed that knowing their life story was important to figuring out who they are as individuals. Students were asked to explain what the word “self-identity” meant to them. Listed below are some of the student responses.

- Liz states, “Self-identity means to know who you truly are and to know what you are capable of.”
- Taryn says, “To me, self-identity means to find your true inner self and your purpose in this world.”
- Evelyn suggests, “Self-identity is who I am on the inside. The person behind the mask that I only let certain people see.”
- Cassidy states, “The word self-identity to me means finding who you are. This means what you like/dislike, your personality, what you aspire to be and what things are important to you. I think self-identity is important because everyone is unique in their own way and it’s a good thing that everyone’s different. Also self-identity may be hard to find but it plays a huge part in finding who you are.”
- Emma says, “Self-identity means you know who you are, what you like, what you feel and it’s something only you can change if you want to.”

The students showed great insights with their thoughtful responses on self-identity. When asked the statement, “It is possible to know myself better by creating pieces of artwork about myself”, 57% of students agreed that this was possible, while 21% of students

strongly agreed that this was possible. These results yielded promising as to students' pre-existing thoughts towards creating artwork about themselves. 41 out of 47 students agreed that there are other ways of creating self-portraits beyond creating a picture of oneself and 83% of students agreed that there are alternate ways to record memories, thoughts and feelings besides writing in a diary. The initial survey results showed promising data with the reflective and perceptive responses. Next a series of lesson plans was utilized to assess the benefits of storytelling and journaling that occurred due to the creation of their art pieces.

## CHAPTER 5

## LESSON PLANS

**Lesson Plan- Reflective Journaling like Frida Kahlo**

**Instructor:** Ms. Kaitlyn Boyer

**Lesson Title:** Reflective Journaling like Frida Kahlo

**Grade Level:** 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Time Allotment:** 13 (57 minute classes)

**Lesson Description:**

Learn about the life and artwork of artist, Frida Kahlo through a variety of sources. Analyze artwork and journal entries from Kahlo's personal journal. Make connections between Kahlo's journal entries and how these inspired Kahlo's art pieces. Utilizing journal prompts create a series of art journal entries focusing on the subject of self-identity, memories and experiences. Students will recognize the relationship between their own identity and the pieces of artwork they created and will write reflections on their experiences.

**Objectives:**

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify the relationship between Frida's artwork and her concept of self-identity.
- Identify the relationship between their own artwork and their own concept of self-identity.
- Define and interpret how various types of self-portraits represent an individual.
- Recognize how art journaling can be an integral part in portraying emotions, understanding oneself and developing ideas on a deeper level.

**National Visual Arts Standards:**

VA:Cr1.1.7a Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.

VA:Cr2.1.7a Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.

VA:Cr2.3.7a Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

VA:Cr3.1.7a Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.

VA:Re8.1.7a Interpret art by analyzing artmaking approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

**Vocabulary:**

Self-portrait, identity, self-identity, journal, art journaling, diary

**Resources:**

Kahlo, F., Fuentes, C., & Lowe, S. M. (1995). *The diary of Frida Kahlo: An intimate self-portrait*. New York : H.N. Abrams, 1995.

Venezia, M. (1999). *Frida Kahlo*. New York: Children's Press.

**Supplies / Materials:**

Paper, pencils, erasers, glue, scissors, construction paper, watercolors, acrylic paint, oil pastels, colored pencils, collage materials, rulers, photographs

**Procedures:**

1. Introduction to Frida Kahlo through reading, *Frida Kahlo* by Venezia. Show photographs of Frida Kahlo and reproductions of Frida's artwork.
2. In small groups students analyze a self-portrait of Frida Kahlo using the Feldman Method. Students present their findings to the class.
3. Using Frida Kahlo as an example of awareness of self-identity have students discuss the term, "self-identity". Students will brainstorm a list of what makes up their self-identity.
4. Discuss ways that self-identity can be shown in artwork. Does self-identity only need to be portrayed through the use of a self-portrait?
5. Students will complete 3 art journal entries based on the topic of self-identity. See handout for art journal prompts and student guidelines.
6. Upon completion of artwork students will complete a reflection on their experience with journaling about themselves.

**Reflection Questions**

1. How does the art material you chose for your journal entry affect the way the story is told?
2. What might someone need to know about this journal entry to allow them to understand better the artwork and to include more details and feeling? (Carroll, 2003)
3. What words does this image bring to mind for you?
4. Think back to the moment you visually represented in your artwork. Who were you at the time? Where were you? Who were you with? Do the answers to these questions hold significance?
5. Create a short poem to accompany this piece of work.
6. Looking back at your journal entries what are the elements that make up your life today and how are those elements affecting the way you change or grow? (Hieb, 2005)

Art Journal Entry Prompts for Lesson, “Reflective Journaling like Frida Kahlo”

**“I am the subject I know best.” –Frida Kahlo**

**Art Journal Entries**

- Choose 3 of the following journal prompts to complete in your sketchbook.
  1. Create a unique family tree by researching and incorporating the kind of tree that represents your family and then incorporate animals that represent you and your family members.
  2. Develop a journal page that is entitled, “A Day in The Life Of...” Ideas for this journal prompt can consist of a comic strip, photographs, collage, or much more.
  3. Create a map representing where you have been in your life and where you are going (Thomas, 2011, p. 33).
  4. Create a piece of artwork that symbolizes a difficult moment in your life and what has occurred now as a result of that moment.
  5. Represent in a piece of artwork your “inner animal” by thinking about what animal represents you.
  6. Create a piece of art that has a secret from your childhood or present life hidden in the finished product (Thomas, 2011).
  7. Write a letter to your future self and incorporate important images into this letter.
  8. Design a self-portrait that portrays aspects and symbols of who you are as an individual.

9. Using as inspiration an important dream that you had in your lifetime, develop a recreation of this dream.
  10. Create a piece of artwork about a place or person that provides comfort to you.
  11. School is a large part of your life. Create a journal entry of what school means to you.
  12. Create a semi-fictional journal entry. This entry should be part true and part fiction. The theme for this entry is your decision.
  13. Include the lyrics of a song that are emotionally important to you.
  14. Identify and incorporate an aspect of your current life and think of it in terms of size. Using a photograph of yourself for size, show how big or small it is in relationship to your concern (Hieb, 2005).
  15. Showcase your attitude and feelings towards a current event that is occurring in your neighborhood, state, country, or the world.
- For each of the 3 journal entries you will:
    1. Need to complete each journal entry inside of your sketchbook using 1 to 3 pages.
    2. You will need to decide what art materials you are going to use.
    3. You will have a total of 3 days to complete each journal entry.
    4. For each journal entry you need to write a written explanation that describes your artwork inside your sketchbook. This should be at least two paragraphs and needs to be on the next page after the piece of artwork.



- When creating the art pieces in your sketchbook you should think of it as a finished art piece. You are encouraged to work on your journal entries outside of class time if you want. You are able to complete more than the 3 journal entries if you want but you must have 3 completed journal entries that are done well.

## Art Journal Entry Reflection Questions for Lesson, “Reflective Journaling like Frida Kahlo”

## Journal Entry Reflection

**\*Pick one journal entry to respond to questions 1-4.**

1. How does the art material you chose for your journal entry affect the way the story is told?

2. What might someone need to know about this journal entry to allow them to understand better the artwork and to include more details and feeling?

(Carroll, 2003)

3. What words does this image bring to mind for you?

4. Think back to the moment you visually represented in your artwork. Who were you at the time? Where were you? Who were you with? Do the answers to these questions hold significance?

**\*Question #5 is optional.**

5. Create a short poem to accompany this piece of work.

**\*Respond to question #6 by referring to all your journal entries.**

6. Looking back at your journal entries what are the elements that make up your life today and how are those elements affecting the way you change or grow?  
(Hieb, 2005)

**Lesson Plan- Identity Box Collages**

**Instructor:** Ms. Kaitlyn Boyer

**Lesson Title:** Identity Box Collages

**Grade Level:** 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Time Allotment:** 7 (57 minute classes)

**Lesson Description:**

Students will create an identity box that displays their memories, self-identity and experiences. Incorporated into the identity box will be aspects from their journal entries in the previous lesson. Students will build off of their journal entries based on identity to create an inspired piece of artwork.

**Objectives:**

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Create a shadow box using 2 and 3 dimensional art techniques.
- Utilize the art medium of collage.
- Portray important life experiences and memories in a piece of artwork that showcases aspects of their self-identity.
- Recognize how creating a self-reflective piece of artwork can be an important part in understanding one's identity.

**National Visual Arts Standards:**

VA:Cr1.1.7a Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.

VA:Cr2.1.7a Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.

VA:Cr2.3.7a Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

VA:Cr3.1.7a Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.

VA:Re8.1.7a Interpret art by analyzing artmaking approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

**Vocabulary:**

identity, self-identity, collage, 2 dimensional, 3 dimensional, shadow box

**Resources:**

Student journal entries, examples of shadow boxes

**Supplies / Materials:**

Paper, pencils, erasers, glue, scissors, construction paper, colored pencils, rulers, photographs, magazines, assorted materials, cardboard boxes

**Procedures:**

1. Research examples of and explain shadow boxes. Students to develop a sketch of their identity box that portrays three aspects from their journal entries and additionally includes a photograph of themselves.
2. Teacher demonstrates how to collage materials together to create an identity box. Students are given 5 class periods to create their identity boxes using materials of their choice.
3. Students reflect on their experience and the meaning behind their identity boxes focusing through a written response.

**Reflection Questions**

1. Explain the significance that your identity box has for you.
2. Describe the meaning behind your identity box theme.
3. Explain how you incorporated your journal entries into your identity box.
4. Explain how your identity box shows your self-identity.

**Lesson Plan- How a Self-Portrait Tells a Story**

**Instructor:** Ms. Kaitlyn Boyer

**Lesson Title:** How a Self-Portrait Tells a Story

**Grade Level:** 7<sup>th</sup> Grade

**Time Allotment:** 6 (57 minute classes)

**Lesson Description:**

Students will create a self-portrait that portrays a story. The story can be an experience, a memory or a dream. Each story must be true and must involve the student. Using a photograph of themselves in the piece of artwork, students will build a story around, overtop of, or behind the photograph. Students are using a photograph to shift the emphasis of the piece of artwork to the story that the students are creating. Students are given the choice of drawing style for the piece of artwork but the artwork must be done in pencil.

**Objectives:**

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Create a self-portrait that portrays a story.
- Utilize drawing techniques to emphasize aspects of their story.
- Portray an important experience, memory or dream through a self-portrait.
- Recognize the importance of portraying and telling one's stories to other artists and individuals.
- Recall the story that their portrait portrays in written form.

**National Visual Arts Standards:**

VA:Cr1.1.7a Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.

VA:Cr1.2.7a Develop criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.

VA:Cr2.1.7a Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, methods, and approaches in creating works of art or design.

VA:Cr2.3.7a Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.

VA:Cr3.1.7a Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in an artist statement or another format.

VA:Re8.1.7a Interpret art by analyzing artmaking approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.

**Vocabulary:**

Storytelling, shading techniques, self-portrait, emphasis, portray

**Resources:**

Student photographs

**Supplies / Materials:**

Paper, pencils, student photographs, scissors, glue

**Procedures:**

1. Discuss ways in which self-portraits can tell stories. Students to develop a sketch of a self-portrait that portrays a story. The story can be an experience, a memory or a dream. Each story must be true and must involve the student. Students will use a photograph of themselves in the piece of artwork and will build their story around, overtop of, or behind the photograph.
2. As a class review shading techniques that students have the choice of to incorporate into their drawing. All drawings are to be done in pencil. (This project can also be done in color if there is access to a color printer.)
3. Students are given three class periods to complete their self-portraits.
4. Students will write the story that goes along with their self-portrait. This story and the piece of artwork will be displayed together and shared with peers in the classroom.

**Written Story Requirements**

Write the story that your portrait portrays. Include important details, people, events, conversations that took place in your story. You are not describing your art piece, rather you are writing a story so that people can look at your art piece and see the events unfold on your artwork as they read.

## CHAPTER 6

## ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WORK

The first lesson plan, “Reflective Journaling like Frida Kahlo,” introduces students to the life and artwork of artist, Frida Kahlo. Students analyze artwork and journal entries from Kahlo’s personal diary and make connections between Kahlo’s diary entries, her life, and how these inspired Kahlo’s art pieces. Utilizing journal prompts to create a series of art journal entries, students focus on the subject of self-identity, memories, and experiences. Students were given a choice of 15 journal entry prompts in which they needed to choose three to create their journal entries. Students felt empowered by the choice of subject matter that they were given and selected the journal prompt entries based on personal interest and their experiences. Additionally students were given the choice of material to use for their journal entries. Choice of material was given to students because the medium for a piece of artwork can affect its meaning. Students were given acrylic paint, watercolors, collage materials, oil pastels, chalk pastels, watercolor pencils, colored pencils, assorted paper, scissors, and glue. After creating their journal entries students were asked to write a short reflection that explained the significance the piece had to them as an individual. The written reflections about student journal entries were interpreted for meaning based upon the student description, the student’s personal interpretation of their artwork’s meaning, and personal meaning shared verbally with the teacher. Following is an example of a completed student journal entry and written response to their artwork. Additional examples can be found in Appendix C.





**Title:** *The Whale*

**Artist:** Kevin

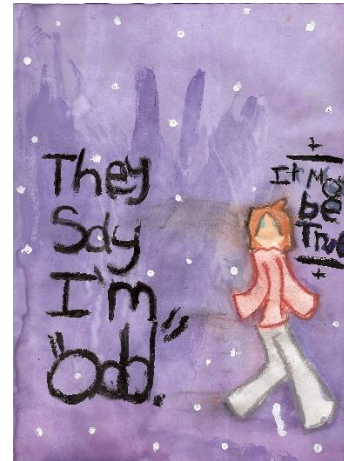
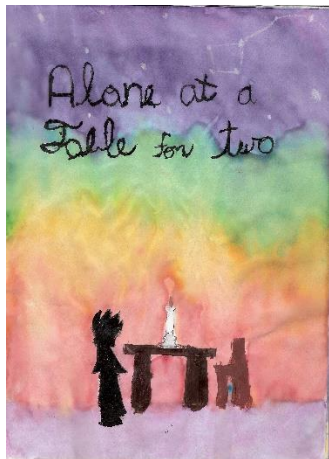
**Material:** Colored pencil

**Explanation:** The reason why I created this piece was because it expressed my dream to the world. I do not know what the exact meaning of the dream is but if I had to guess it's about my inner feelings because it was comforting to me. The most important things in this piece are the whale and the

door. I am shown in the picture looking through the door like a window which looks back on life, while the whale represents life and death.

Kevin's artwork, *The Whale* represents an important dream that he had. In class Kevin described in vivid detail what he visually remembered from the dream. He noted the white whale as being an important and powerful figure, and was adamant on making the wall look as if it was split. In Kevin's written description of the piece he interprets the meaning of the dream as representing his inner feeling about life and death. He noted that the dream made him feel comforted. Kevin has described, interpreted, and analyzed the moment and meaning of his dream and it can be concluded that the dream portrays his feelings and attitudes towards life and death.

The journal entries created by the students show thoughtful consideration of subject matter that held personal meaning for each of the students. Abbie stated that after creating her journal entries she noticed that, "They all represent past feelings, present feelings, and future dreams. These all make me who I am." All of Abbie's journal entries showed insight into her personal identity and past life experiences that make up who she is as an individual. The theme that was portrayed in all of Abbie's journal entries are her reactions to difficult moments within her life. Below are images of her three completed journal entries.



Another student also noted that, “Elements that make up my life today are my family and friends. Also my surroundings and political figures. They all affect my view on the world around me and how I think of things.” This student noted that not only does one’s family profoundly affect who you are as an individual but also the events that are going on around us in the world. The responses from students showed depth of understanding and a sense of identity. Steven noted that the theme behind his journal entries was “demonic and frightening” and expressed his concern about why he had chosen to create these pieces. Upon discussion Steven decided that these pieces helped him to work out his feelings about the experiences. As foreseen by Carroll, what ended up happening in the students’ journal entries that they created, was that the artwork contained stories that came from deep inside and were created from the student’s inner voice (Carroll, 2003). Most student work showed a deep personal connection to subject matter and meaning.

The second lesson plan titled, “Identity Box Collages,” focused on an extension of the students’ journal entries. Students created an identity box that displayed a chosen memory, experience, or aspect of their self-identity. Incorporated into the identity box were aspects from the students’ journal entries from the previous lesson. Students used their journal entries based on identity to create an inspired piece of artwork using the medium of collage. Students were required to incorporate three aspects from their journal entries as well as a photograph of themselves. After completing their identity box students were asked to write a written record on the significance of their identity box. The written reflections about the students’ identity boxes were interpreted for meaning based upon the student description of meaning, the students’ description of personal symbolism, and verbal

comments made with the teacher. Following is an example of a student identity box. Additional student examples can be found in Appendix C.



**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Sarah

**Material:** Mixed media

**Explanation:** "My identity box is something that helps me to express myself without words. Not only does it describe me but it has some memories that are

really special to me. The theme of my identity box was me and some of the people that have helped me grow in life. I chose this theme because I really want to thank all of the people that have helped me throughout life so far."

Artwork that students created during the lesson “Identity Box Collages” showed personal meaning and portrayed aspects of their personalities. Students were enthusiastic about the artwork they were creating and put thought into the items that they created/placed inside their box. Some students even noted that the box acted as a sort of time capsule that they could identify with later on. Sarah stated that, “My identity box is something that helps me to express myself without words.” Sarah’s art pieces throughout the unit have focused on her struggle with being an identical twin but still wanting to be recognized for her individuality. She described her identity box as being a means of portraying the people who have helped her personally grow throughout life. In this artwork, *Untitled*, Sarah showed her identity by portraying the things and people that are important to her.

Additionally, Steven remarked that, “My identity box means a lot to me. I took time to put hints of my personality all over the box.” Steven remarked in class that his personality is like an onion and that you have to pull back layers to get to know him. Steven does have a complex personality and it is fitting that he has put hints of his personality within his box. There is a lot of symbolism additionally within the work and his written explanation of the piece makes that clear. Abbie’s artwork is symbolic of an important place to her. Abbie shared that, “My identity box means many things to me. It’s highly personal but I can tell you some things. It is based off of my personality and that I think of this place when bad or terrible things occur.” Abbie shared that this box was important to her because it held a hidden secret that was important to her.

Students were asked to reflect upon the following statements: explain the significance that your identity box has for you; describe the meaning behind the theme of your identity box; explain how you incorporated your journal entries into your identity



box and explain how your identity box shows your self-identity. Many students noted the importance of their identity box that they created. Table two lists student comments.

**Table 2**

"I really love my identity box because it has a lot of meaning to me." –Rebecca
"The meaning behind my box is very special to me. It reminds me of my best friend." –Cassidy
"My identity box represents a lot about who I am. It means a lot to me because it showcases a lot of my favorite things and my idols." –Sasha
"To me, my identity box is something that helps me express myself but without words. My identity box is a really special thing. Not only does it describe me but it has some memories that are really special to me." –Sarah
"What my identity box means to me is who I am and what my life is about. This is showing you how I feel and how my emotions are displayed in my box." –Kevin
"What my identity box means to me is that I can create an aspect of my life into something that is presentable to other people so they have a chance to see something about my identity. It also helps me to remember a memory in my life better because I am able to visually see it. When you get older, it's important to remember things from your childhood because it builds up your character and affects your actions." –Jessica

Jessica noted that her identity box would help serve a purpose to remember a memory in her life. The reason that most individuals create artwork, use a sketchbook, or write within a diary is to preserve a moment or feeling within time. This student's response and reason why she created her artwork is self-reflective and insightful.

The third lesson plan is a twist on the more traditional self-portrait. Students created a self-portrait that portrayed a story. The story could be an experience, a memory, or a dream. Each story must be true and involve the student. The students used a photograph of themselves in the piece of artwork and built a story around, over top of, or behind the photograph. The artwork used a photograph to shift the emphasis of the piece of artwork to the story that the students were creating rather than the figure drawing of their portrait. Students were given the choice of the drawing style for their piece but they were required to create the artwork in pencil. After creating their self-portrait, students were asked to write down the story that the artwork portrayed. The written stories and artwork from the lesson; "How a Self-Portrait Tells a Story" were interpreted for meaning based upon the written story, depictions within the artwork, and personal meaning shared verbally in class. The following piece of artwork and story is an example from this lesson. Additional student examples can be found in Appendix C.



**Title:** *The Victim*

**Artist:** Taryn

**Material:** Graphite on Paper

**Written Story:** “One day in 3rd grade at my old school I was attending recess. I was alone. As always, kicking trash that I found on the ground tumbling around because of the strong gusts of wind. I walked around for about two minutes attempting to make friends, my usual

routine, but have been rejected every time. I quietly sighed and walked away alone. A quiet whimper filled my ears suddenly.

I followed the soft cries until I noticed a very small, brown haired girl with bright blue eyes surrounded by “the popular kids.” They seemed to have been harassing her because of her height and hair length. I stood in place contemplating my options on what to do. “If I help her, then I may get bullied...but if I don’t, then the girl could continue to be bullied...” I thought to myself. I decided to help anyway so I started approaching the crowd. I yelled out “STOP!” which was rare since I never raised my voice before. The girl looked up at me so I opened my arms for her and she gladly ran into them. “Don’t



EVER bully this girl again!” I shouted at the crowd. Before walking away with her. Me and the girl started to develop a close bond with each other and became close friends. We stayed by each other’s sides until she had to move away sadly in 4th grade.”

The final lesson that students completed, “How a Self-Portrait Tells a Story” allowed students to express a story through the means of a traditional self-portrait. The artwork includes a photograph of the student and portrays a story that the student experienced or dreamt about. Students were able to use the photographs in a more traditional manner or could use the self-portraits non-traditionally as part of the final story. Most students chose to use the photographs in a more traditional manner and included stories that were poignant moments in their lives. These stories were moments that changed and shaped who they were as an individual. Taryn’s piece of artwork focused on a dilemma that she encountered when she noticed a girl being bullied. “If I help her, then I may get bullied...but if I don’t then the girl could continue to be bullied...”, Taryn wrote. The moment when Taryn decided to help the girl who was being bullied was a turning point for her. Taryn expressed that she had difficulty making friends growing up and this was the start to a friendship. It was also the moment that she stepped out from along the sidelines and was noticed by others. Steven’s story about how he broke his arm ends with a profound statement, “After I could write normally I returned to school with a cast, still no one really questioned it.” This is Steven’s concluding sentence to his story and shows how he felt that no one seemed to care that he had broken his arm and missed school for so long. The stories that the students chose to portray in this artwork was a personal and important moment to each one of them.

## CHAPTER 7

## RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Through the implementation of lesson plans focusing on self-identity and storytelling this research study set out to discover the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of having middle school students create autobiographical visual journals and artwork?
2. Does utilizing visual journaling aid students in creating more self-reflective artwork?
3. Does visual journaling promote an increased use of the sketchbook for middle school students?

Many benefits have emerged through implementing a curriculum that focuses on autobiographical visual journals and artwork that focuses on storytelling. Before the study artwork created by students often lacked depth and personal meaning. Students completed art projects in order to fulfill the requirements of a project and did not create personally meaningful pieces of artwork. These lesson plans that were implemented produced more authentic artwork that held personal meaning for the students. Through the art lessons that the students experienced, 81% of students said that their artwork helped them to understand themselves and the importance of what their artwork has depicted. Thomas stated about the art lessons, “It’s given me a new perception that art isn’t just about what you create. It’s why you created it.” Understanding why artists create their work and understanding the meaning behind a piece of art is key to forming

an opinion and developing an appreciation for a piece of artwork. Tyler stated that the artwork changed the way that he felt about himself and that it made him think more deeply about himself in order to complete the work. Additionally Layla stated that she feels more confident in making art pieces about herself and has gained an appreciation for making artwork about herself. Getting adolescent students to think more deeply about themselves is key to creating authentic artwork that holds personal meaning for the students. Students were able to express their inner feelings with the outside world as a result of the lessons. Carroll (2003) stated that through using journaling in the art room, the students will share stories that come from deep inside and that are created from the students' inner voice which will develop a dialogue with themselves (p. 14). The artwork exhibits this dialogue that students have started to develop with themselves.

While implementing the art lessons in the classroom it was observed that students generally enjoyed the lessons. There was a particular enthusiasm from students about the reflective journaling prompts and students took it upon themselves to complete more prompts than asked for. When students were asked if they enjoyed creating artwork about themselves that described themselves and their life experiences, 83% of students agreed to this statement. Students were observed challenging themselves with lesson content and pushing their ideas farther. It is crucial that the students saw the value, importance, and enjoyed the lesson content.

Utilizing visual journaling aided students in creating more self-reflective artwork and helped some students to begin to understand their self-identity more deeply. Daniel stated that, "The teacher taught us about the importance of identity. We learned what it means to us and how to find your true identity." Students were asked if they found it

easier to understand themselves and their experiences through creating artwork. Table 3 in text shows the students who found it easier to understand themselves and their experiences through creating art.

**Table 3**

Name of Student	Comment
Morgan	“Art unlocks your feelings to be open to yourself and others.”
Taryn	“I feel as if it is easier to understand myself through creating artwork because of how I’m not very open about myself verbally but in art, I understand that people could know me better.”
Justin	“When I draw or paint it’s fun to bring out how I feel or show who I truly am.”
Thomas	“Yes because it gives me an opportunity to visualize thoughts that I couldn’t before.”
Emma	“It is super easy for me because I can act different and put all my feelings and emotions in art. I feel like I can connect with myself better if I draw, paint, color or sketch. Art has spoken to me in many different ways.”

Some students, however, did not find it easier to understand themselves and their experiences through creating artwork. It is interesting to note that those who did not find it easier to understand themselves stated that the assignments changed the way they felt

about creating artwork. Table 4 in text shows the students' rationale behind why they felt that the artwork did not change the way they understood themselves.

**Table 4**

Name of Student	Comment
Sharon	"When creating my artwork I think that I applied things that I already knew and understood about myself, so no I don't think it helped me."
James	"No I don't think so because I can only create pieces of artwork about myself by relating to past experiences."
Kyle	"No because pictures only represent a millisecond in the world and can only show expressions, sight and a little bit of touch but with vivid words you can create a whole new point of view."
Hope	"No, I think living through the events are better than creating art about it. You understand the experiences better when you actually experience it."

The students who did not find it easier to understand themselves and their experiences through creating artwork all offered another way to understand themselves or stated that they could only create artwork from past experiences. These students did not realize that they could draw on present experiences or future hopes to create art pieces. Additionally students did not realize that we understand ourselves better from reflecting on and learning from our past experiences, therefore understanding ourselves better ultimately.

With deeper reflection and thought these students may have found that ultimately they can understand themselves better through art experiences.

Through the continuation of self-reflective journaling and creating artwork using the subject of one's self, students will continue to discover the benefits that this practice can have. Some students were enthusiastic about continuing to use artwork as a means of self-discovery while others were unsure whether or not they would continue. Mia stated that, "This helped me to realize how my art can provide me the chance to express myself." Additionally, Aubrey stated that she would continue using artwork as a means of self-discovery saying, "I find it very interesting when artists incorporate themselves into their artwork and I would love to." Some students were unsure whether or not they would continue the use of artwork for self-discovery. Shyla stated that, "I think it's easier to express myself through writing and music." Similarly, other students noted reasons that they would not continue using artwork as a means of self-discovery as being: not good at art; do not create artwork at home; like drawing other things; already feel they know themselves; and they enjoy doing it in class but do not see doing it by themselves. Students who tended to have preconceived notions as to the purpose that art serves seemed to be more close-minded about the benefits of using art as a means to self-discovery. Students who were more receptive to and who are more confident with creating artwork tended to be more open-minded as to the benefits that artwork can have.

Some of the lessons implemented included pieces of student artwork that were created through journal prompts. The study set out to discover if visual journaling promoted an increased use of the sketchbook among students. When asked if the assignments students completed have encouraged them to use their personal sketchbooks

more often, 77% of students agreed to this statement. Additionally it was observed in the classroom that students were using their sketchbooks more often than normal. Visual journaling does promote an increased use of creating artwork within a sketchbook.

Upon finishing each journal prompt and piece of artwork students were asked to write an explanation and reflect upon their piece of artwork. In order for students to benefit from the art lesson it was important that students were honest when creating their art pieces and writing their explanations. 74% of students stated they were comfortable with explaining their artwork through written explanations. Students were additionally asked how comfortable and honest they were with what they were able to create and write, knowing that their artwork and descriptions would be seen by the teacher. They were then asked if it would have been different if no one were to have seen their artwork and descriptions. Student responses were mixed when answering this question. See table 5 in text below.

**Table 5**

Student Name	Comment
Emma	“I was not that honest with my writing and drawing when it had to be seen by a teacher because I don’t draw what’s on my mind. I also don’t tell the whole story through my writing. If a teacher didn’t see my writing or artwork it would have been very different because then I could speak my mind and not be afraid of what others might think.”



Hope	“I was comfortable sharing with my teacher because I feel like she understands the work better. But sharing with people who know me well is also comforting.”
Abbie	“I was somewhat honest. I felt uncomfortable sharing/drawing/creating my work about myself. If no one did, I’d be completely honest and create what it actually meant and I’d feel comfortable.
Riley	“I kind of changed and tweaked the description because my teacher was going to see it but if no one were to see it, it would be really different.”
Tyler	“I was 99.99% honest with the descriptions of my artwork. If no one saw it then it would have changed a tiny bit.”
Lily	“Not very honest because some things are more personal than others. Some things I want just myself to know or understand.”
Taylor	“Since the teacher was able to see my artwork I made sure that all my pieces were honest and true to myself. My piece of artwork would not be different because it is who I am. I might have changed the story I wrote but if not I would have had the same thing.”

While students were comfortable writing explanations about their artwork, many students stated that they were not 100% truthful with their explanations or what they depicted in their artwork. In middle school, students are self-conscious of how other individuals view them and what other people think of them. It can be said that the artwork and

explanations given by students do not show the whole truth but simply scratch the surface of the truth. The students alone know the true meaning behind their artwork.

For further study on the topic of utilizing journaling and storytelling in the art room, it is recommended that art teachers develop authentic and meaningful art lessons that incorporate the subject of self. Student fueled artwork that is representative and personally meaningful will allow students to use their creativity and to express themselves. It is recommended for further study that a collaborative approach be used with the lesson plans to create cross curricular learning opportunities. An example of a cross curricular approach would be using the English teacher to aid students in developing writing skills as well as to develop richer, descriptive vocabulary. Additionally more research is needed in utilizing journaling in the art classroom. The journal/sketchbook is often underutilized in the art room and has the potential to become a meaningful learning tool.

This study pointed out many benefits that occur when implementing visual journaling and artwork focused on storytelling into the art curriculum. Overall, many students found the artwork they created as being beneficial towards understanding and expressing themselves. By providing students the opportunity to create self-reflective artwork it has given the students an opportunity to develop their own thoughts and opinions about themselves and their life story. With the visual journaling prompts that students were given along with the artwork, it has started an inner dialogue in each student towards discovering their true identity. Developing a relationship with creating artwork about oneself will hopefully aid adolescent students in this challenging period of

their life. Autobiographical visual journals and artwork are powerful tools to guide students in creating and understanding their life story.

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APPENDIX A: The following documents are blank letters of support, consent, assent and photography release forms from my research site administration and research participants.

Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Institution's Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To Whom It May Concern:

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give permission to Kaitlyn Boyer to conduct an action research project at School Lane Charter School IB Campus during the spring 2017 semester in order to fulfill the requirements of her Master's thesis at the University of the Arts. I understand that this project is intended to understand the impact that storytelling and journaling in the visual art classroom has on an adolescent's awareness of self-identity. I understand that Kaitlyn Boyer will be collecting data from the participants in the seventh grade visual arts class during the months of February through May 2017. Data will be collected through methods such as one on one interviews, informal group interviews, questionnaires, visual art pieces, journaling and photography. This data will only be collected from children who receive parental or guardian consent.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_



Ms. Kaitlyn Boyer

Art Education Graduate Program

University of the Arts

320 South Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19102

January 2017

Dear Parent/Guardian:

I am a Graduate Student at the University of the Arts working under the direction of Professor Veronica Hicks. I will conduct research for my Thesis for my Masters in Art Education from February, 2017 – May, 2017. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact that storytelling and journaling in the visual art classroom has on an adolescent's awareness and development of self-identity.

Participating in this study is voluntary, and you can refuse to have your child/ward participate. If you and your child/ward agree to participate, participation will take during the art class over the course of seven weeks in February through April 2017. Your child/ward will meet with me during art class time, inside the room where we will be creating our art projects. Your child/ward will not receive payment for participating in this study.

This study poses very little risk to your child. Though I will disguise your child's identity in the final write-up of this research, there is a possibility that details of their artwork and/or comments shared will make them identifiable. This possibility could result in the public disclosure of various aspects of your child's life. In order to minimize this risk, I will change your child's name and any other obvious identifying information in the final write-up. Throughout the study, I will also discuss with your child what details they feel comfortable having included in any final products. Additionally, they are permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. If your child withdraws, no artwork and/or comments will be included in the final write-up.

This study may benefit your child by helping them to be more self-aware and reflective while creating artwork. Additionally, I will be taking still images of the children and their artwork throughout the course of this study. I may use these in the presentation of my thesis, as well as in any articles/book chapters I publish in the future. You have the right to deny permission (as indicated below) for any photographs. If you deny permission, I will ensure that your child does not appear in photographs taken while conducting this research.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, or if you are dissatisfied at any time, you can contact me (215) 245-6055 or at [kboyer@uarts.edu](mailto:kboyer@uarts.edu) or Art Education Professor Veronica Hicks, at [vhicks@uarts.edu](mailto:vhicks@uarts.edu). You and your child/ward are

encouraged to ask questions at any time about the study and its procedures or your child's/ward's rights as a participant.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Boyer Art Educator

\*\*\*\*\*

I give permission for my child to be photographed in the following forms (choose one):

\_\_\_\_ Photographs of my child and her/his artwork are all ok

\_\_\_\_ ONLY photographs of my child's artwork (no photographs of my child)

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to my questions. I give my consent for my child/ward to participate in this study.

Printed name of Child/Ward\_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of Parent/Guardian\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Ms. Kaitlyn Boyer

Art Education Graduate Program

University of the Arts

320 South Broad Street Philadelphia, PA 19102

January 2017

### ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I am a Graduate Student at the University of the Arts working under the direction of Professor Veronica Hicks. I will conduct research for my Thesis for my Masters in Art Education from February, 2017 – May, 2017.

I am asking you to take part in a research study because I am trying to learn about how students can create more self-reflective artwork. The study is for my thesis (for me to complete my Master's degree), and I'll be asking you to make art projects that build on your artistic skills, answer questions about how you feel about using a sketchbook and about your identity when we start the projects, during the projects and then at the end of our program together. This study is not an evaluation of you.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to write how you feel about yourself and your artwork in a sketchbook that you may keep after the program is over. Written reflections can be used in my thesis as a reflection of your work. We may also meet individually during class time for 5 to 10 minutes and talk about how you are doing with your project, if you need help, and how successful you feel about the project. I will be asking you a lot of questions about how you feel about yourself, your story behind your artwork and how you like to express yourself in your artwork, but you can choose not to answer something if you don't feel like sharing that information. However, I hope that anyone who agrees to participate is willing to answer most of my questions so that I can learn about each person's experiences. I will also be observing you and any other study participants in action in the art classroom.

There is very little risk to you in this study. Any information you share with me is confidential. When I do the final write-up for my thesis, I will be talking about students' artwork and reflections but changing all of my participants' names. However, there is some chance that people who read it and know you may be able to recognize who you are. You can tell me if there is any particular artwork or things you've written/said to me that you don't want me to include in my final write-up. I will keep track of your requests and make sure not to include anything you don't want to have included.

Please talk this over with your parent(s)/guardian(s) before you decide whether or not to participate. I will also ask your parent(s)/guardian(s) to give their permission for you to take part in this study. But even if your parent(s)/guardian(s) say "yes" you can still decide not to be in this study.

If you don't want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you don't want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.

You can ask any questions that you have about this study. If you have a question later that you didn't think of now, you can contact me (215) 245-6055 or at [kboyer@uarts.edu](mailto:kboyer@uarts.edu) or ask me the next time you see me. You can also contact the Art Education Professor Veronica Hicks, with any questions, concerns or complaints at [vhicks@uarts.edu](mailto:vhicks@uarts.edu).

Signing your name below means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you sign it.

Print Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Participant      Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Researcher      Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B: The following documents are survey instruments that were administered to research participants pre and post lesson implementation.

# PRE LESSON-STUDENT SURVEY ONE

1. Describe what the purpose of a sketchbook is.
2. Describe what the word “self-identity” means to you.
3. Describe your personality.

4. How does a person's personality affect other people?
5. Do you think that your life story is important for other's to know about? Explain why or why not.
6. Think of an important memory, event, or person that influenced your identity or personality. List at least 3 AND why/how they are important to you.

## PRE LESSON-STUDENT SURVEY TWO

1. In my free time I utilize my sketchbook at least 2 times a week for artwork not related to schoolwork.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

2. Understanding my life story is important to figuring out who I am.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

3. It is possible to know myself better by creating pieces of artwork about myself.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

4. A self-portrait is the only way to represent a picture of myself.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

5. Writing down stories about myself in a diary is the only way to record memories, thoughts and feelings.

Strongly Agree      Agree      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

## POST LESSON-STUDENT SURVEY THREE

1. The assignments I've completed have encouraged me to use my personal sketchbook often.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
2. Creating my art pieces (Journal entries, identity box and self-portrait story) have helped me to understand myself and the importance of what my artwork has depicted.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
3. I enjoyed creating artwork that was about myself.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
4. I have found new ways to represent/depict myself in artwork.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
5. I was comfortable with explaining my artwork through written explanations.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------
6. I enjoy creating artwork about myself that describes myself and my life experiences.  

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
----------------	-------	----------	-------------------



POST LESSON-STUDENT SURVEY FOUR

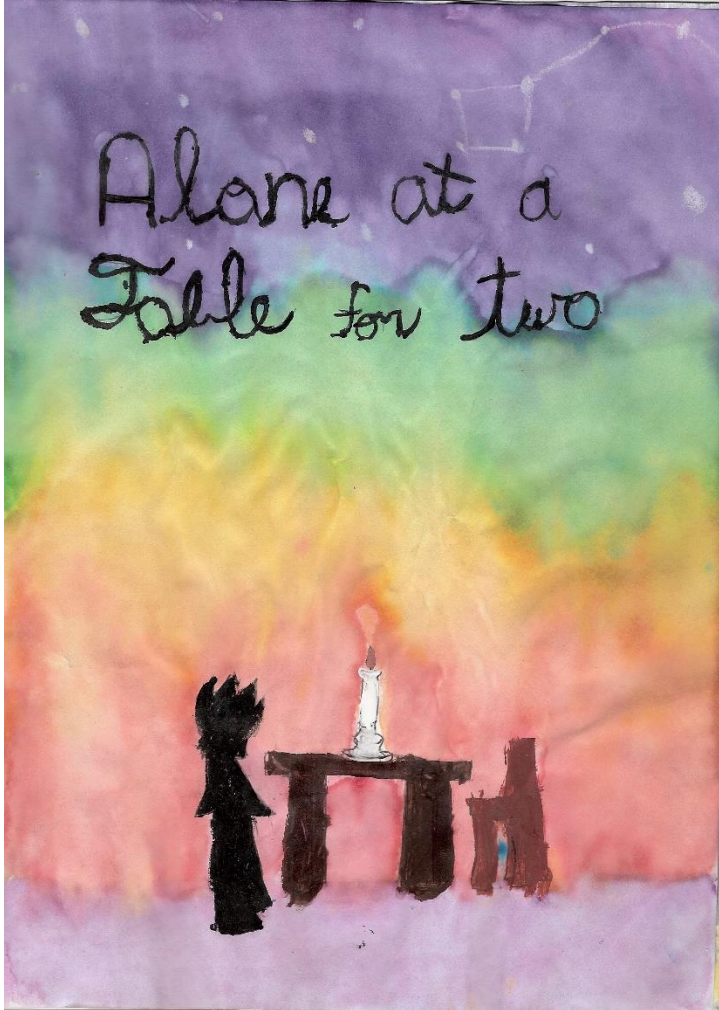
1. Have the assignments (Journal entries, identity box and self-portrait story) you completed changed the way you feel about creating art?

2. Do you think it is easier for you to understand yourself and your experiences through creating artwork?



APPENDIX C: The following images are examples of student work from the lesson plans used in this study.

LESSON ONE: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING LIKE FRIDA KAHLO EXAMPLES



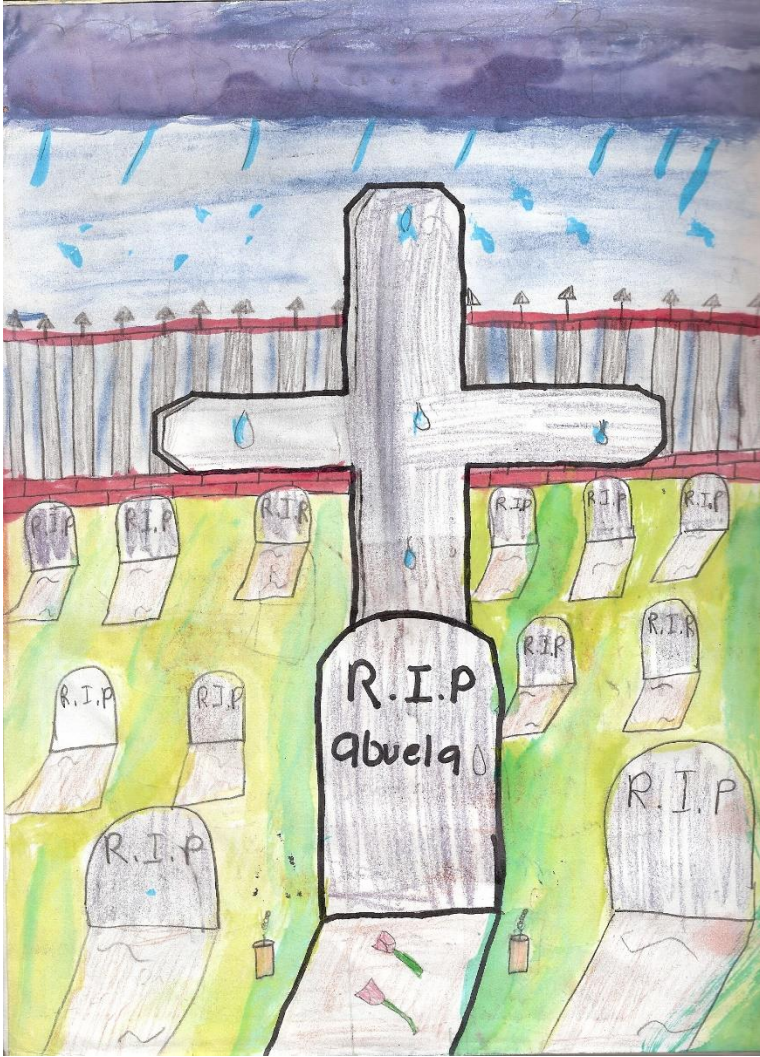
**Title:** *Alone at a Table for Two*

**Artist:** Abbie

**Material:** Watercolor and acrylic paint

**Explanation:** “This painting’s meaning is that a man asked someone on a date, but their date didn’t show. I painted this because the man in the picture resembles me. It represents how people don’t like me for whom I am. The person who didn’t show is the peers. The

rainbow like the sky in the background represents me as well. I may be a person who has a harsh outside but I’m still slightly colorful on the inside.”



**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Jose

**Material:** Watercolor and colored pencils

**Explanation:** “The reason I chose this piece to draw was because during the middle of December my mom came crying into my room and said that her mom died and explained how. That day I was sad. This represents the day my grandmother died.”





**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Devin

**Material:**

Watercolor and  
colored pencils

**Explanation:** I

chose this

because there  
are bad things

happenings

today. The new

elected

president is

deporting many

illegal

immigrants. I have a connection with illegal immigrants because my uncle and family are illegal aliens and are living here in the U.S. If they were deported back then I wouldn't be able to see my cousins anymore.



**Title:** *Hope was Brought Out*

**Artist:** Thomas

**Material:** Watercolor

**Explanation:** “It represents how I was once in a dark place in life and how because of my friends and a few other things I was able to overcome depression and suicide. This is abstract art so I think it requires an explanation to fully understand. The left is dark because obviously that is how I felt. I didn’t use the color black because I think that means all hope is lost. I never wanted to believe that. The lighter purple represents the thoughts that I could never share. At least not until later. The brightness in the middle is what little hope I still had. The colors get lighter to represent how things got better eventually. There is still a shade of pink and purple with the lighter colors to represents the scars and anxiety that the experience left with me.”





**Title:** *Burning Life*

**Artist:** Abbie

**Material:**

Watercolor  
and acrylic  
paint

**Explanation:**

“This painting has three people with their faces X’d out and fire is slowly engulfing their surroundings.

The three

people are my mom, my father and myself. I painted this because this shows how I feel about my parent’s divorce. The faces are X’d out to show that I’m shutting everyone out of my life, including myself. Fire is in the background to show that everything is burning around us and that this divorce causes all life around them to burn.”



**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Layla

**Material:** Colored pencil and chalk pastel

**Explanation:** “The work I made was me waking up from a dream. In my dream, my mother got in a car accident. I was really scared and my heart dropped. I didn’t get to say bye or tell my mother how much I loved her or what she meant to me. It has always been a fear of mine to lose my mother because she means the world to me. When she died I woke up. When I woke up, I was crying because the dream seemed so surreal. I told my mom how much she meant to me and that I was sorry for everything I did. I now appreciate everything she does for me and I cherish everything we do together.”





**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Emily

**Material:**

Watercolor and  
acrylic paint

**Explanation:** “I

chose this

because I had a  
difficult life as a

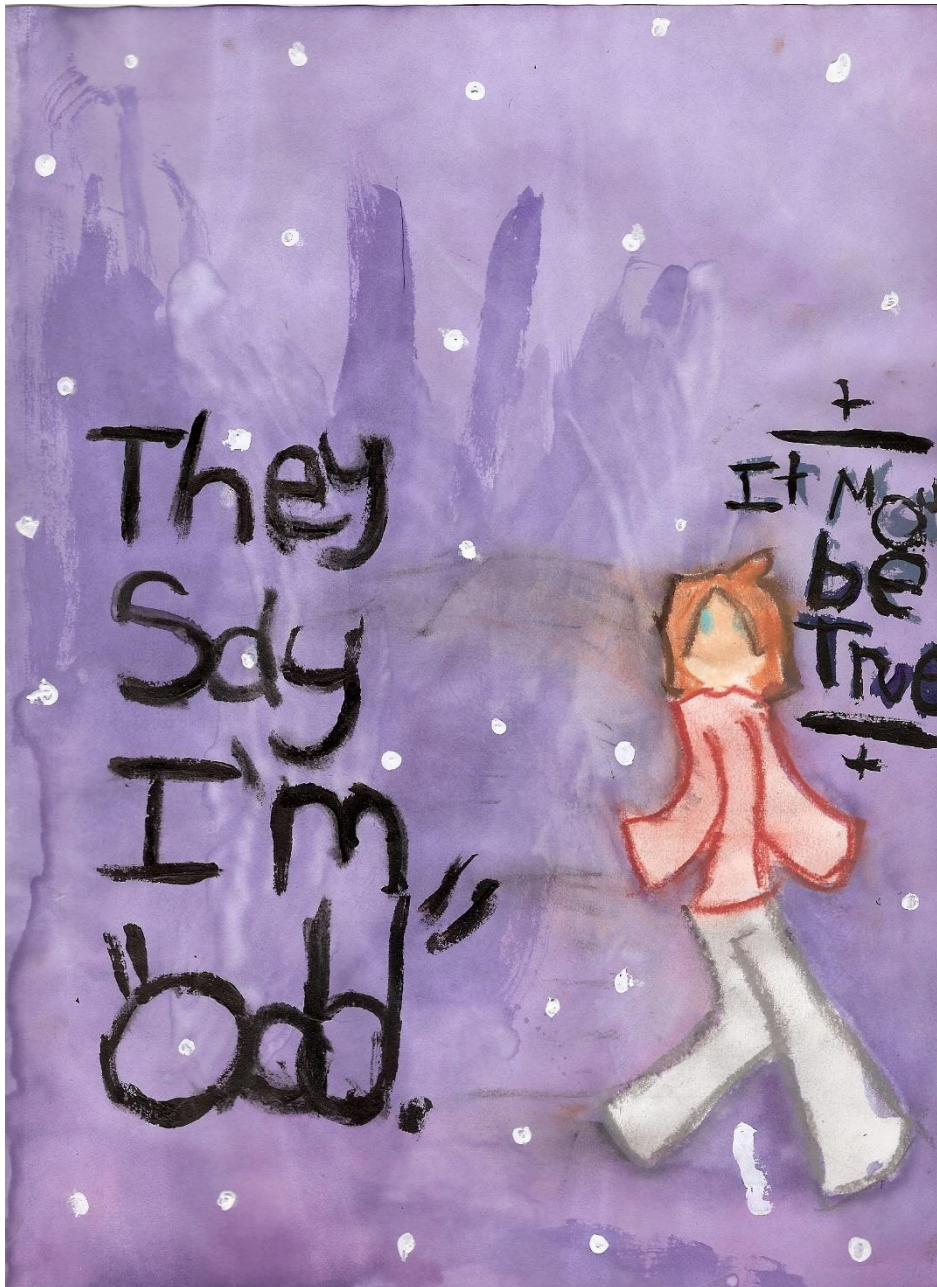
child. This piece  
represents me

before I had

glasses. Before I

had glasses I had

to wear an eye patch because I had a lazy eye and needed to train it. The heart on my shirt represents how much I loved my family and friends and the dots show how I had a lot of pain when I was younger. This piece is really important to me because it reveals a really big part of my childhood that not everyone knows about me. Also because I knew people would make fun of me because I had the patch.”



**Title:** *Lost Hopes and Dreams*

**Artist:** Abbie

**Material:**  
Watercolor  
and acrylic  
paint

**Explanation:**  
This painting  
is one of my  
dreams I had  
in 5<sup>th</sup> grade.  
It's all starry  
and purple in  
the  
background. I

am the only one in the painting and people are saying really mean things about me. I painted this to show how I dealt with this and that I'm fading off from this but it still bothers me. I also put the words I said in my dream, "They say I'm odd...It may be true" shows that I've lost hope in feeling and ever since I had had no dreams."





**Title:** *The Eye of the Storm*

**Artist:** Kevin

**Material:** Colored pencil

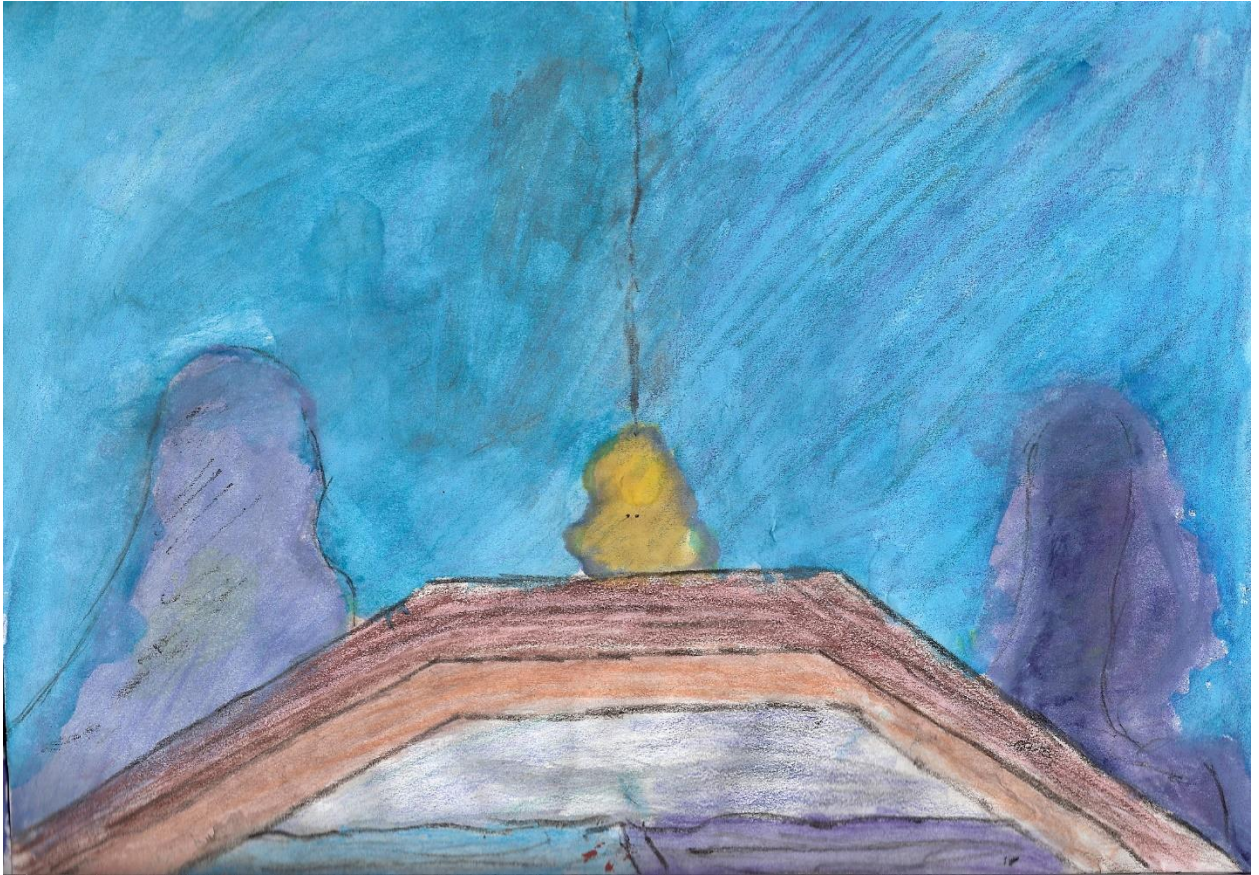
**Explanation:** The reason why I created this piece was I thought it would express my emotions and feelings that I have right now. This represents my feeling for the events going on

around me in my life. The

most important things in

this piece are the fire, the water and the crack. The fire represents most of my anger and frustrations in my life. The water represents how sometimes in my life I am cool and calm like the eye of a storm. The crack represents how I am sometimes emotionally torn between the fire and the water.





**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Steven

**Material:** Watercolor and watercolor colored pencils

**Explanation:** “I drew a yellow figure standing on a bridge. It has two different sides that are directly next to each other. There are also two other figures on opposite sides of the bridge. The figure on the left represents morals and the other represents doing things to benefit yourself. The figure in the center represents me and how at one point I was dull and wasn’t able to understand the difference between right or wrong. Or if someone was happy or sad. I also had to undergo therapy to get me to understand this.”





**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Steven

**Material:** Colored pencils and permanent marker

**Explanation:** “I drew a target with a rag doll pinned to it. It was a dream where I was pinned to a wall and people were insulting me. Every time each of them insulted me an arrow would be shot at me. The dream in my view was that every shot was my own fault. I thought that I shouldn’t care what people say. I would often have the dream after bad days.”

## LESSON TWO: IDENTITY BOX COLLAGE EXAMPLES



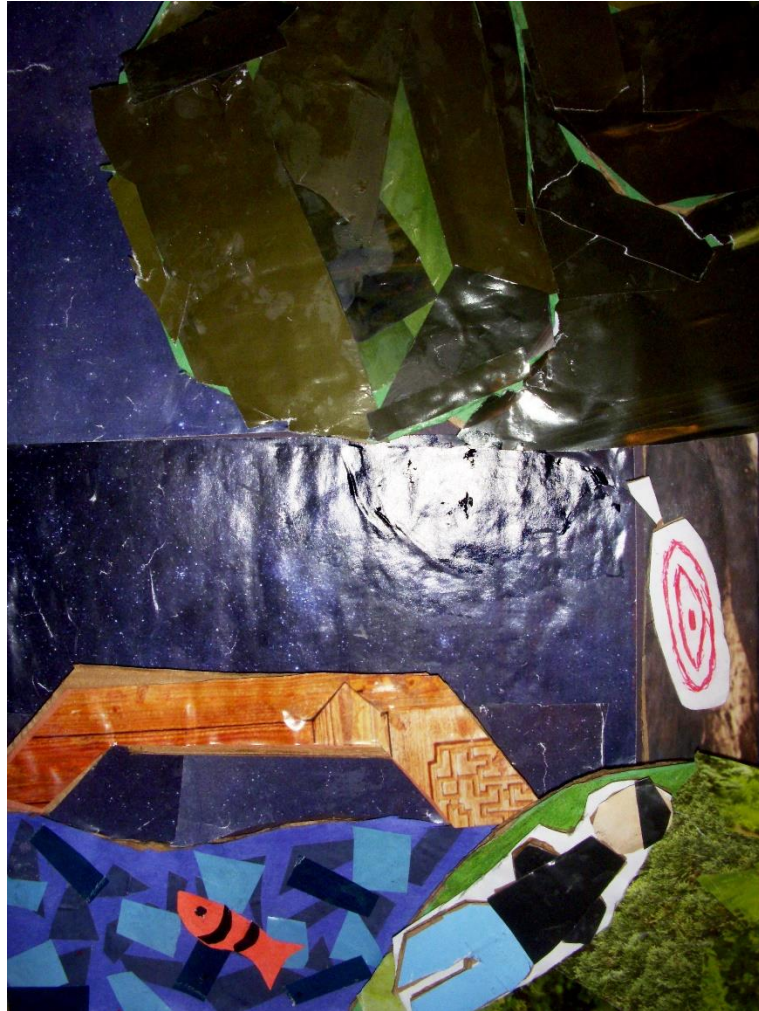
**Title:** *Casted Away*

**Artist:** Abbie

**Material:** Colored paper, charcoal pencil, colored pencil and marker

**Explanation:** “My identity box means many things to me. It’s highly personal but I can tell you some things. It is based off of my personality and that I think of this place when bad or terrible things occur. I added lyrics in the sky to represent that I like music. I put stars and a night sky to show that I like night time. The final thing I added was myself because it shows I’m happy there. My identity box shows my identity in many ways. It shows that I’m a creative and childish person. If you look at it closely or if you knew, it shows you that this is my only happy place where no one can reach me there.”





**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Steven

**Material:** Colored paper, cardboard and magazine clippings

**Explanation:** “My identity box means a lot to me. I took time to put hints of my personality all over the box. The theme behind was box was to make it look like it had layers. The reason I did this was it is similar to my personality. The fish represents luck. The bridge represents how I must overcome something to get to where I am. The target represents how I was targeted by hatred.”

## LESSON THREE: HOW A SELF-PORTRAIT TELLS A STORY EXAMPLES



**Title:** *The Face of God*

**Artist:** Kevin

**Material:** Graphite on Paper

**Written Story:** “It was a normal Wednesday and we were going to a party for my cousin. My brother, mom, dad and I drove down to the party place. As we were going down we got to the place and my cousin greeted me and we started to play. After we



started to then roller-skate, but I misplaced my foot and something truly terrible happened to me.

Whilst I was falling down on my back I noticed something of interest, a bright light of nothingness. It was cold, dark and I could not see anything. Then suddenly I saw a bright light and it was God but something was off. I could not see his face but he told me to never give up and that my family needs me. Then he crossed the cloud and I went back to the darkness

Then I heard a familiar voice, it was mom! She had not seen me fall and pass out for 10-15 minutes. She said, "Are you alright?" and I said, "Yes." She said to get up and get something to eat. After that I never saw God again but I kept his words in my mind ever since.



**Title:** *Being a Twin*

**Artist:** Emily

**Material:** Graphite on Paper

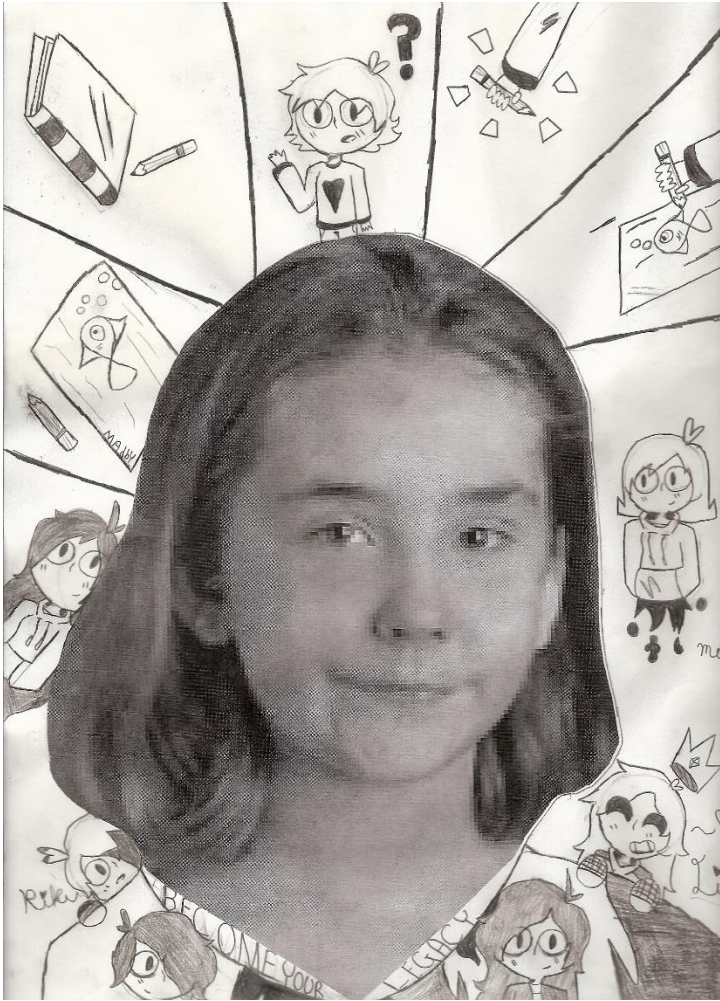
**Written Story:** “The story behind my picture my portrait is that I was born as a twin. Before Sarah and I were born, the doctor couldn’t identify what gender Sarah was and they just went with a boy. Then when we were born, Sarah was

really a girl. When we were younger I used to cry when Sarah didn’t give me something, but she would give me it at one point just so I would be quiet and the funniest part is my parents would tell her to stop. Sarah and I fight a lot but we’re used to it and we forgive each other.

At home my older sisters (Sarah and Hope) always team up against me. An example would be one time they both picked me up and put me in our recycle bin and locked all the doors, keep in mind that it was raining outside. This piece also explains

how we are different, Sarah and I are identical twins but if you meet us without seeing our faces or knowing we're identical twins you wouldn't believe we were identical just by our personalities. We both are different but a lot like each other at times. In my opinion Sarah and I are only alike by our facial features.

In conclusion, Sarah and I love each other so much. We both can be really annoying at times but we also can be the best thing that happened to you at once. Everyone used to always say, "You're so lucky, I wish I was a twin" and I would respond with "No, I'm not, you don't want a twin" but now I can see just how lucky and special I am to have Sarah in my life."



**Title:** *Curiosity Took the Child*

**Artist:** Abbie

**Material:** Graphite on Paper

**Written Story:** “A gray, dusty old book sat in the corner of a bedroom. It was old and it was ripping apart. Aside of it, a yellow wooden pencil was next to it. It too, was old. It lost its fresh touch and the point was slightly worn down. The eraser was never used or dared to be touched. It seemed as if the

person who originally used it was in a rush.

At the same time a five year old was eyeing the book as well as the pencil. Her icy blue eyes kept her gaze and never turned away. The toddler had pale skin as well as dusty blond hair. She wore a white shirt with black sleeves and a grey heart in the middle. She seemed slightly confused but yet curiosity led into her. She continued to stare at the objects before walking over to them. Her tiny, toddler, grabby hands picked up the pencil and held it in her hand. She looked over at the grey book. She opened it and dust was on the blank, yellow, faded pages. She looked at each page before picking one. She pushed the pencil down on the paper...and began to draw.”





**Title:** *Untitled*

**Artist:** Steven

**Material:** Graphite on Paper

**Written Story:** “In my picture it shows the story of a time when I completely snapped my arm. The story begins when me and my sister were playing on the slide in our backyard. Then all of a sudden I lost all of my balance and went tumbling down and

when I hit the ground it was like my arm was vibrating. My vision was blurred and I attempted to stand and when I tried to push myself up I felt a sharp pain and fell back to the ground. My sister stayed by my side and I called and called for my mom to come and help me but after a few minutes of calling I sent my sister to go get her.

After my mother finally came and I was rushed to the emergency room and had my arm wrapped up. I wasn't able to get much sleep because of the wincing pain. We were going to get it X-rayed and casted. We were able to get it X-rayed but unable to get it casted as soon as we wanted to. Getting my cast took a few days longer than it should have. After my casting I was not able to go to school because I took an immensely long time to write. So all of my schoolwork was sent home to me by my sister. I was unable to get another cast after my first one as quickly either being it was a time frame crunch or a break. As soon as they were able to I went to the hospital to have my bone put into the correct position so it would heal correctly. They had to put me to sleep for a short period of time so I wouldn't feel the pain. After I could write normally I returned to school with a cast, still no one really questioned it."