

English Language Education

Luciana C. de Oliveira
Kathryn M. Obenchain
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Teaching the Content Areas to English Language Learners in Secondary Schools

English Language Arts, Mathematics,
Science, and Social Studies



Springer

English Language Education

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Developing Literacy Through Contemporary Art: Promising Practices for English Language Learners in Social Studies Classrooms

Barbara C. Cruz and Robert W. Bailey

Abstract This chapter describes an innovative approach for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) that incorporates contemporary art in social studies instruction. A model lesson is included that explores the work of contemporary artist Mary Mattingly and has students consider the ecological footprints left by humans as they interact with their environment. ELLs simultaneously develop important academic skills called for by the Common Core State Standards—such as accurately using academic language, engaging in high-level discussions, and refining diverse and creative thinking—while reflecting on their role as “extractive beings.” A university-school partnership that employs curricular interdisciplinarity, relevance to students’ lives, and active learning is described. To achieve these goals, ELL-supportive classroom strategies such as rich visual content, word walls, and scaffolded cooperative learning are utilized and discussed.

As the lights were dimmed and the high school students’ eyes became adjusted, their anticipation was palpable. They had just completed a project researching various multinational corporations and considered the companies’ responsibility to consumers and the environment. Many of them commented that their research had led to changes in their behavior as consumers. As their teacher deftly fielded their comments, providing corrective feedback and genuine praise, he told them that today they would be reflecting on their own practices and sense of responsibility.

As Mary Mattingly’s socially conscious sculpture Pull (2013) was projected onto the screen, quiet descended on the classroom as students studied the art work, some of them coming up to the screen to get a closer look at the image. Using simplified lan-

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Image 1 *Pull* (2013)

gauge and gestures, the teacher presented questions to guide their viewing and analysis: Where is this taking place? What is the woman pulling? How is it held together? Why is she pulling it? What is the artist trying to say with this work? (Image 1)

The teacher then presented vocabulary that students would be encountering in the lesson, pointing out the Word Wall he had started in the classroom. After viewing more of Mattingly's work, the teacher brought closure to the lesson by asking students to reflect and respond to a quote by the artist: "Maybe we need art more today because we're in a world with so many mass produced things." Students were given sufficient time so that all could consider the piece and think deeply about Mattingly's quote. Then the teacher asked them to write their thoughts down in their student journals. One English language learner tapped on a nearby student's shoulder, "¿Como se dice 'provocar'?" He watched her write down the unfamiliar word in her response: "In the world we live in, art is one of the few things that can provoke change in people."

The bell rang and it was time for the students to move to the next class. The teacher told them that they would continue the lesson the following day. One student observed that the art they had viewed was really 'weird.' The teacher smiled and said, "Artists can definitely be weird. But they use their weirdness to make us think and feel. Tomorrow you will get an opportunity to do more of both."

This classroom scene transpired in a diverse, secondary, public school social studies classroom with a mixed student population of native English speakers and English language learners (ELL).¹ The teacher, a participant in a project that infuses contemporary art into social studies curricula, had made adjustments to the original lesson so that comprehensible input was provided for all learners. With a few minor modifications, the teacher was able to teach a lesson that used contemporary art to discuss social responsibility. Students were able to explore important social issues, while English language learners had the opportunity to build linguistic competence.

1 Introduction

Now more than ever, students are being asked to accurately use academic, domain-specific words and phrases that will prepare them for college and career. These literacy expectations are delineated in the *Common Core State Standards* (National Governors Association, 2010) and in the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework* (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013), both calling for students to engage in high-level discussions that evidence reasoning and promote diverse and creative thinking. Developing these skills can be especially challenging for English language learners (ELLs) who are in the process of acquiring vocabulary in a new language and who typically have more difficulty with expressive (rather than receptive) language. In no subject in the school curriculum is this truer than the social studies. Yet academic language development is considered the key organizing principle for ELL academic success (Francis, 2005; Scarcella, 2003). As Salinas, Rodríguez, and Blevins (2017) plainly put it: “For emergent bilinguals in social studies classrooms, the most immediate challenge is language” (p. 444).

The typical social studies classroom has a high cognitive load, evidenced by low-frequency vocabulary terms and specialized jargon not typically used in everyday life (Szpara and Ahmad, 2007). Social studies textbooks and other published materials can also be complex, reflecting complicated syntax (Brown, 2007). Cognitive and linguistic load should also be kept in mind when selecting political cartoons and, especially, primary sources which often include formal and/or archaic language, posing an additional challenge for ELLs (Cruz & Thornton, 2012).

What is called for, then, is a pedagogically sensitive approach to teaching social studies to ELLs. This chapter describes one innovative way for teaching ELLs that incorporates contemporary art in social studies instruction. We present a field-tested lesson that explores the work of contemporary artist Mary Mattingly and has students consider the ecological footprints left by humans as they interact with their environment. We also describe how using such an approach can enable ELLs to simultaneously develop important academic skills used in a number of social studies

¹Although we are aware that other terms such as “emergent bilinguals” and “culturally and linguistically diverse” learners are currently being used, we’ve opted to use the more traditional, long-standing “English Language Learner” (ELL) for continuity. We recognize “ELL” is less than perfect and endeavor to identify a more precise, inclusive, and asset-focused term in the future.

content areas, such as accurately using academic language, engaging in high-level discussions, and refining diverse and creative thinking. Last, because the lesson centers on environmental responsibility and consumerism, connections to curriculum standards such as the National Council for the Social Studies' "People, Places, and Environments," "Production, Distribution, and Consumption," and "Global Connections" are made.

2 Approach to Teaching Social Studies to ELLs: Vocabulary Development and Cooperative Learning

There are a number of pedagogical strategies and approaches that have been shown to be effective when working with ELLs (see, e.g., Cruz & Thornton, 2013; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Wright, 2016). Here we will focus on five that are employed in the lesson, "Extraction and Responsibility: Exploring Ecological Footprinting through the Work of Mary Mattingly." We have found these five strategies—developing vocabulary, maintaining a "word wall," utilizing visually-rich materials, providing students with a "viewing guide" with word bank to accompany any video clips used in class, and using scaffolded cooperative learning such as Think-Pair-Share—are useful and effective in simultaneously developing language skills and facilitating social studies understanding.

Vocabulary Development: Anyone who has ever studied and learned another language knows that acquiring basic vocabulary in the target language is key to comprehension. Before students can conjugate verbs or even string simple sentences together, merely knowing words and simple terms can help them make sense of the foreign language swirling around them. For ELLs, vocabulary development is crucial for meaning-making (August et al., 2005). With knowledge of some key vocabulary, even ELLs in the very early stages of language development can point to details in an image and use simple descriptors and terms to express thoughts (Cruz & Thornton, 2012). Pre-teaching critical vocabulary to ELLs is an effective instructional practice that benefits all students (Gersten & Baker, 2000).

Word Walls: Typically associated only with elementary school classrooms, Word Walls are especially helpful for ELLs (regardless of grade level) and are of value for all students, particularly if the words are outside the regular course of study. The strategy is essentially a systematically organized collection of words displayed on a wall or other large display place in the classroom. Typically, they are high-frequency vocabulary words that are used in a unit of study; for secondary classrooms, brief definitions should accompany accurate spellings. Because of the abstract nature of many social studies-related concepts, Word Walls can be particularly useful in social studies classrooms. For ELLs, including illustrations or other graphic representations increases the "comprehensible input" (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2012), that is, language that can be understood by learners. Variations on the Word Wall strategy include the creation and maintenance of personal dictionaries and the construction and utilization of flashcards.

Visuals: The use of visuals and demonstrations has been shown to be an effective way to make content understandable for ELLs (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2010). The social studies are particularly fruitful for visual content that can be used with ELLs (Cruz & Thornton, 2013). Historical photographs, maps, charts, and graphic organizers are just a few of the social studies visuals that can be used successfully with all students. Scholars have concluded that linguistically responsive teachers regularly utilize pictures, illustrations, maps, and videos to support instruction that develops academic knowledge and skills (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Viewing Guides: A viewing guide accompanies a film or video clip so that students' attention is focused on key concepts. It facilitates comprehension for ELLs when it is reviewed in class as an advance organizer. Providing questions, cues, and advance organizers help students develop understanding (Hill & Miller, 2013). In our practice, we have found that presenting students with questions they are to answer while viewing results in better comprehension and engagement. Further, including a word bank of key terms that will be encountered in the video clip offers students language support. Online dictionaries that include images illustrating word meanings are especially helpful; these can be used by both students and teachers as they create resources for classroom use.

Scaffolded Cooperative Learning: Having opportunities for output, that is, being able to *use* language, positively impacts an ELL's rate of language acquisition (Skehan, 1998; Wright, 2016). Yet most classrooms offer few occasions to participate in extended language use (Truscott & Watts-Taffe, 1998). In addition to interactions with the teacher, being able to interact with other students in English is crucial if they are to develop academic language skills (Egbert & Simich-Dudgeon, 2001; Truscott & Watts-Taffe, 2000). However, since ELLs in a given classroom are often at different stages of language development, providing learning opportunities that are scaffolded can greatly increase their comfort level in speaking in their new language.

The value of cooperative learning in ELL instruction has been well-documented (see, e.g., Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez 2011; Cohen, 1994; Hill & Miller, 2013; Montecel & Cortez, 2002). Pyle, Pyle, Lignugaris/Kraft, Duran, and Akers (2016) reviewed 14 studies and determined that peer-mediated interventions, such as cooperative learning, result in positive effects on students' phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and comprehension when compared to teacher mediated strategies. Well-structured cooperative learning activities can provide ELLs with opportunities to engage in extended language use in a sheltered environment. In our experience, Think-Pair-Share exercises can be especially effective because they provide all students, especially those who take a little longer, a chance to reflect and collect their thoughts; they then can practice speaking with just one other person in a sheltered format; and finally, the entire class benefits from a group discussion.

3 Theoretical Foundations of the Approach

Inside Art is a visual literacy program that integrates social studies with contemporary art in an examination and discussion of critical societal issues. This university-school partnership uses contemporary art as a springboard to discuss a variety of

topics that are relevant to students' lives and the world at large (Mead, Ellerbrock, & Cruz, 2017). The theoretical underpinnings of the program are anchored in interdisciplinarity, curriculum relevance, and an active learning pedagogical approach.

By *curricular interdisciplinarity* we mean a synthesis and integration of knowledge, skills, and methods that are culled from a variety of content areas, such as geography, civics, history, and economics. We agree with Jacobs (1989) that the growth of knowledge calls for an integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum and believe, as Hinde (2005) declares, that "integrating the curriculum is a powerful and useful pedagogical tool" (p. 107). Past social studies themes explored in the *Inside Art* curriculum, for example, have included human rights, environmental degradation, urbanization, and homelessness. Because these issues transcend any one discipline, we draw upon the social sciences, the natural sciences, and the visual arts to explore them. Social studies educators, science curriculum developers, and visual arts specialists work together to develop curricula that is meaningful and reflects real-world problems and understandings.

Relevance in the curriculum is also central to the program's goals. Effective teachers know that providing connections between school subjects and students' lives often results in learners who are more motivated and interested in classroom lessons. Research has shown that this practice is critical for a diverse student body in the twenty-first century (see, for example, Hulleman & Harackiewicz, 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). As such, all lessons in the *Inside Art* curriculum focus on issues and topics that are important for students, their local communities, and the world in which they live.

To gain and maintain high levels of student interest and participation in learning activities, an instructional approach that emphasizes *active learning* is evident throughout the curriculum. This approach utilizes a variety of strategies that require students to think critically and be fully involved in their learning. Numerous studies indicate the positive impact this approach can have on students' academic achievement as well as social and emotional growth (see, for example, Durlak et al., 2011; Eison, 2010; Prince, 2004). For ELLs, this engaged, hands-on approach may be especially beneficial since it can provide more scaffolding and more opportunities for active participation (Cruz & Thornton, 2013; Hur & Suh, 2012).

While the *Inside Art* lessons are not developed specifically for ELLs, their visual nature renders them very useful to work with this student population. Social studies teachers in the program use the curriculum to teach social studies content through the visual arts; participating art teachers use the curriculum to enlighten their students about underlying social issues and concepts in contemporary art. Each edition of *Inside Art* features the work of artists showcased in the exhibitions at the University of South Florida's Contemporary Art Museum (USFCAM). In the fall 2016, USFCAM's exhibition was titled *Extracted* and included contemporary artists whose work investigates the extraction of natural resources and the use and circulation of those resources around the globe (CAM, 2016). One of these artists, Mary Mattingly, creates sculptures using her personal possessions, asking viewers to consider everyday objects and how their lives as consumers impact the global economy and Earth's physical environment.

4 Implementation of the Approach: “*Extraction and Responsibility*,” A Lesson in the Use of Natural Resources

In history courses, students often learn how time is defined by length including such concepts as age, epoch, or period. The Anthropocene is a proposed geological epoch that begins when human activities started to have a significant global impact on Earth’s geology and ecosystems. In this lesson, students consider how humans are “extractive” beings, leaving ecological footprints by their interactions with the environment, and what their responsibility is in relation to this process. This discussion is particularly appropriate in social studies courses such as Human Geography (the exchanges of natural resources and finished products), Economics (applying economic theory to the allocation of natural resources), Sociology (the role of the environment in social development), and Civics (citizens’ custodial responsibility to the planet).

ELL-friendly strategies for this social studies lesson include the creation of a word wall (or personal dictionary), engaging in a critical analysis exercise using visual skills, and participating in a high-level discussion framed with a think-pair-share activity to sharpen both listening and speaking skills. Extension activities provide opportunities for students to examine selected nations’ ecological footprints as well as reflect on their own daily activities and their impact on the planet.

4.1 *Extraction and Responsibility: Exploring Ecological Footprinting through the Work of Mary Mattingly*

Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson: 2 class periods

Intended Grade Levels: Grades 6–12

Social Studies Courses: Civics; Environmental Studies; Government; Law Studies; Geography; Economics

Instructional Objectives: Students will:

- define unit-specific vocabulary by maintaining a “word wall” or personal dictionary;
- describe and analyze the work of Mary Mattingly through a guided visual analysis exercise;
- analyze and consider humans’ responsibility to Earth by viewing a video and engaging in a think-pair-share activity;
- practice and develop spoken and written academic English;
- sharpen critical thinking and writing skills by writing a reflection in their student journals.

Curriculum Standards:

NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies Learning Expectations (NCSS, 2011)

People, Places, and Environments: explore the impact of human activities on the environment; develop informed civic decision-making about human-environmental relationships

Production, Distribution, and Consumption: understand the economic choices that people make have both present and future consequences; compare personal economic decisions with those of others and consider the wider consequences of those decisions for groups, communities, the nation, and beyond

Global Connections: become informed about serious global issues; explore the causes, consequences, and possible solutions related to persistent, current, and emerging global issues; consider how individual behaviors and decisions connect with global systems.

Common Core

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6: Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.8: Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C: Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D: Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

Social Studies C3 Framework

D1.5.9-12. Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration multiple points of view represented in the sources, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.

- D2.Eco.1.9-12. Analyze how incentives influence choices that may result in policies with a range of costs and benefits for different groups.
- D2.Eco.15.9-12. Explain how current globalization trends and policies affect economic growth, labor markets, rights of citizens, the environment, and resource and income distribution in different nations.
- D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.
- D2.Geo.4.9-12. Analyze relationships and interactions within and between human and physical systems to explain reciprocal influences that occur among them.
- D3.2.9-12. Evaluate the credibility of a source by examining how experts value the source.
- D4.7.9-12. Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

Materials and Resources: Computer, Projector, Speakers; “Mary Mattingly (ELLs)” PowerPoint; Word Wall resource sheet; *Mary Mattingly Owns Up* viewing guide; “My Possessions” worksheet.

Day 1: Learning Activities Sequence:

Attention-Getter (5–7 min)

1. Access the PowerPoint presentation, “Mary Mattingly (ELL lesson)” from the Inside Art web site (http://www.ira.usf.edu/InsideART/Inside_Art_Extracted/InsideART_2016_Extracted_files.html). You may need to make some modifications to the lesson and PowerPoint based on your students’ specific linguistic needs. Project slide 1 on a screen for all students to view. Give students 2–3 min to view the image, allowing them to inspect the image close-up to make out individual elements, if they wish.
2. Guide their visual analysis and whole-class discussion by asking:
 - Where is this scene taking place? Point to the things in the image that makes you say that.
 - Describe the scene.
 - What is the person doing?
 - Describe what she is pulling—what is the ball of things made of?
 - How is the ball held together?
 - Why do you think she is pulling the ball of things?

In simplified language, explain that this image is a work of contemporary art called *Pull*. *Pull* (2013) was created by artist Mary Mattingly. In this work, Mattingly uses a previous work, *Terrene* (2012), a twine-wrapped parcel of her belongings: books, magazines, a lamp, purses, and other household objects. In *Pull*, she then drags this across a city sidewalk, visibly straining with its heft.

Ask students:

- What is the artist trying to say with this work?

Advance to slide 2 (title slide) and tell students that today they will be exploring the work of contemporary artist Mary Mattingly and considering human's responsibility to the environment.

Word Wall (10 min) Announce to the class that they will be creating and maintaining a Word Wall. (An alternate strategy would be to have students create a "personal dictionary," writing the words and definitions in their student journals or specially designated notebook.) Suggested terms for the Word Wall for this lesson are located on the "Word Wall" resource sheet. Words for the Word Wall can be added as they are encountered in the lesson or they can be placed on the wall from the outset. Model the strategy by starting with the three terms on the title slide: extraction, responsibility, ecological footprint (see suggested definitions from the "Word Wall resource sheet").

PPT-Guided Interactive Lecture (15 min) Using the PowerPoint presentation developed for this lesson (resume at slide 3), have students explore Mary Mattingly's work pausing to check for understanding by asking and answering questions. Note that questions and suggestions for discussion have been imbedded in the Notes View of the PPT slides.

Closure and Evaluation (5–10 min)

Advance the PowerPoint presentation to the final slide of Day 1 (slide #8). Have students reflect on and respond to this quotation by Mary Mattingly in their student notebooks (5 min):

Maybe we need art more today because we're in a world with so many mass produced things. Mary Mattingly

Optional: Ask for student volunteers to share their responses aloud with the class (5 min).

Day 2: Learning Activities Sequence:

Attention-Getter (5–10 min) Access the PowerPoint presentation, "Mary Mattingly (ELL lesson)" from the Inside Art web site, resuming the presentation on slide #9. Tell students they will be continuing the lesson from yesterday and advance the PPT to slide #10. Ask students to think about these questions:

- What does it mean to "throw something away"? Where is "away"? Where does our garbage go?

Allow students a minute or two to reflect individually, then ask for volunteers to answer the question. Engage the class in a brief discussion.

Explain to students that some cities charge people per trash can that they put out for collection. Ask: is that fair? Why or why not? Tell students that today they will continue to reflect on the work of contemporary Mary Mattingly and reflect on individuals' responsibility for the objects they consume and throw away.

Viewing Guide and Video Clip Access the video, *Mary Mattingly Owns Up* (<http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/films/mary-mattingly-owns-up/>) and have it ready for viewing in the classroom. Distribute the Viewing Guide for *Mary Mattingly Owns Up*. Review the questions with the students, clarifying any queries they might have. Allow students to review the Word Bank before viewing (you can also review the list as a class). Ask students to view and listen carefully, answering the questions in writing on the Viewing Guide as they view the video clip. Pause the video periodically so that students have an opportunity to write down their responses on their Viewing Guides.

[Alternate Strategy: Access the 24-image slideshow of *Mary Mattingly Owns Up* (<http://www.art21.org/newyorkcloseup/images/mary-mattingly-artist-at-work/#013-nycu-production-mattingly>). Each slide is accompanied by a short description of the image which can be paraphrased as needed.]

Research: Documenting Personal Objects (10 min) Have students visit Mary Mattingly's web site, "Own-It.US" (<http://own-it.us>) [alternately, the web site can be accessed by the teacher and projected in the classroom for all to see]. Have students peruse Mattingly's possessions. Photocopy and distribute the "My Possessions" handout. Ask them to make a list (pre-production ELLs may draw pictures) documenting their own possessions (slide #14), reflecting on objects' origins, purpose, and likely future [alternately, students may be allowed to photographically document their list]. Although this assignment will be completed as homework, allow the students to document one or two items (have them look in their pockets, purses, and backpacks) while they are in class to ensure they understand the process (Fig. 1).

Closure: Think-Pair-Share (15 min)

Advance to slide #15, projecting the questions and asking students to first reflect individually, then discuss in pairs, and finally as a whole group. [Before commencing activity, refer to the Word Wall for the definitions of some of the terms used in the questions.]

- Whenever the earth's surface experiences a major change, geologists declare a new epoch. Because of all the recent changes on the planet made by humans, some geologists have called for a new epoch, called the Anthropocene (humans + geologic period). Do you agree that we need the creation of this new epoch?
- Mary Mattingly says all of us are "extractive beings." To extract means to pull out or take. How are humans "extractive beings"?
- There are some people, companies, and nations that use more of the earth's resources than others. Should they be required to pay more for these resources? Should they be required to clean the environment?

Evaluation (10 min)

Advance the PPT to the final slide (#17). Have students respond to this prompt in their student journals (5 min):

- When you are buying something, do you ever think about how it might affect the earth? Give an example.

Ask for volunteers to read aloud their responses and share with the group. (5 min).

“My Possessions”

Like Mary Mattingly, make a list (you can use words or pictures) that documents your own possessions using the table below.

Possession (item or object)	Purpose of the possession (what it's used for)	Origins (country and/or company)	Likely future of the possession (How long is it expected to last? What will happen to it once its use is finished?)

Fig. 1 My possessions worksheet

Alternately, this writing activity can be completed as homework.

Optional Extension Activities

Online “footprint” quizzes: Allow students to take an online quiz to determine the ecological impact they are having on the planet. Some possibilities include (slide #18):

- Global Footprint Network: <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/en/index.php/GFN/page/calculators/>
- World Wildlife Fund: <http://footprint.wwf.org.uk/>
- The Nature Conservancy: <http://www.nature.org/greenliving/carboncalculator/>
- Earth Day Network: <http://www.earthday.org/take-action/footprint-calculator/>

The “Happy Planet Index” (HPI): The HPI measures human well-being and environmental impact, giving higher scores to nations with lower ecological footprints. Access the worldwide map and results at: <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>. Have students consider: Which countries in the world have the highest HPI? Which countries have the lowest HPI? What are some possible reasons for these results?

Internet Links

<http://www.marymattingly.com>

A visually rich source detailing the life and work of artist Mary Mattingly including several links to her projects and personal thoughts.

<http://own-it.us>

Some of artist Mary Mattingly's work examines the physical belongings we carry with us throughout our lives. This website explores those objects and asks how those objects define us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gujH5oYmHcY>

A short film (9:22) that follows artist Mary Mattingly as she designs and reflects on her work in her Greenpoint studio. The film follows her as she moves the art across the Bayonne Bridge from Staten Island into New Jersey.

<https://art21.org/artist/mary-mattingly/>

Art21 is a nonprofit dedicated to inspiring a more creative world through the work and words of artists. The link provides a brief summary of Mary Mattingly's portfolio along with several videos.

<https://www.artsy.net/artist/mary-mattingly>

Artsy.net is a one-stop shop for everything art related. The site allows visitors to search out local artists, shows, galleries, and auctions near and far. Artist Mary Mattingly is prominently featured. The site requires registration.

<http://www.artinamericamagazine.com/news-features/interviews/life-of-objects-an-interview-with-mary-mattingly/>

Art in America Magazine was a widely circulated and respected journal covering the humanities for over 100 years, sadly ending its printed publication in 2015. This interview, conducted and written by author/contributor Greg Lindquist, provides a rare glimpse into artist Mary Mattingly's creative process.

5 Conclusion

Socially-conscious contemporary art can be a useful vehicle for the discussion of global issues in social studies classrooms. As shown with this lesson, accommodations that have been found to be effective with ELLs can help make the input comprehensible and enable all students to be engaged learners, considering important social issues in government, civics, economics, and geography.

In the class described in the opening of this chapter, students wrapped up their thoughts by participating in a think-pair-share exercise, some ELLs working together, some working with native English speakers. Three ELLs (each at varying levels of language production) in one small group defined "extractive being" in their own words: "it means us taking part of the environment away, but then later filling it with trash." Another pair—made up of one ELL and one native English speaker—offered, "It means to be a constant consumer, especially of resources." In a Civics course, this offers a critical teaching moment to discuss citizens' custodial relationship to Earth. As students reflect on their actions as consumers, teachers can probe further, asking them to consider their responsibility as citizens.

When asked to reflect on their personal responsibility for the objects they acquire, two ELLs working together responded: “Before we hold the *people* responsible, we need to hold our politicians, presidents, and leaders responsible for global warming.” Another ELL who had been in the U.S. longer, added: “If we continue to purchase items from companies who commit intolerable acts, the only ones to blame are the individuals who continue to feed those corrupt companies.” A follow-up activity would be for students to write to businesses or legislators, asking them to take action on reversing planetary degradation.

Not all students felt the same level of personal responsibility; some opposed a proposed ecological tax on people with a higher consumer footprint. One ELL responded: “Because waste is common in everyday life and some things I buy are expensive, I shouldn’t have to pay to throw it away.” Two other students working together said: “If they have to pay an ecological tax, the poor will find a way to throw away their trash (in an inappropriate or illegal manner), like sofas and beds, on the side of the road.” Arguments and counter-arguments were presented by the students, resulting in a lively discussion.

At the end of the lesson, one ELL summarized her “take-away” thusly: “What does the artist hope her art will accomplish? To help people realize they don’t need that much stuff.”

Reflection Questions

1. What modifications are present in this lesson to make the input more comprehensible to ELLs?
2. What are other works of art that can be used in a social studies classroom to discuss global issues?
3. What art projects might help ELLs express their understanding of social studies content?
4. What instructional modifications have you observed or used in your own classroom that have been effective with ELLs?

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