

### Summary of Information Literacy Activities

**Activity #1, Facilitator:** Cornell College Head Librarian, Laurel Whistler

**Cultural artifact:** Robert Schumann's Dichterliebe #16 "Die alten, bösen Lieder," with text by Heinrich Heine. The class context was a first-year undergraduate course entitled *19<sup>th</sup> Century German Culture*.

**Assignment:** Prepare a brief 3-5 minute report about the following song for class tomorrow.

**Pedagogical lessons learned from this activity:**

- Determination of learning goals and presentation of the assignment must take into account context and class level.
- Modeling of the inquiry and research process is especially beneficial for beginning students
  - (For example, First Year Seminar students would benefit from participating directly, with the professor, in the development of questions to be addressed in the report. They would also benefit from collaboration with the professor in the development of a plan to identify and use appropriate research resources. This involves students in the process of learning how to set priorities, and to distinguish important information necessary for completing the assignment well. It helps them learn what college-level work is like. )
- At the advanced-level, less pedagogical "scaffolding" of the assignment would be necessary.

**Activity #2, Facilitator:** Assistant Professor of French, Joyce Janca-Aji, Coe College

**Cultural artifact:** Painting of Louis XIV

**Assignment:** Interpret the painting in light of the target culture.

**Pedagogical lessons learned from this activity:**

- The incorporation of visual "texts" in a language, literature, and culture classroom facilitates the development of close reading, analytical, and research skills.
  - Students can be asked to imagine a cultural artifact transposed into another medium, such as text to visual or vice versa. "Drawing" a text or composing a narrative that gives voice to an image requires students to analyze the cultural artifact in terms of its composition, context (social/political/cultural, etc.), intended audience, intended rhetorical/emotional/aesthetic effect, genre and materiality/medium.

**Activity #3, Facilitators:** Associate Professor of Spanish, Marcela Ochoa-Shivapour, Cornell College, Consulting Librarian for the Humanities, Jen Rouse, Cornell College.

**Cultural artifact:** Television ads in Spanish for the World Cup

**Assignment:** Interpret the ads in light of the target culture.

**Pedagogical lessons learned from this activity:**

- “Texts” such as video clips of advertisements created in the target language provide an early opportunity for students to engage with a cultural artifact even before they are proficient in the target language.
  - At this stage, students can be asked to identify a question that arises for them when watching the video, something they would like to pursue in a research context. This requires students to engage on an authentic level with the “text” to build background knowledge about the target culture and further explore, analyze, and synthesize information as they probe further into the questions raised by the visual rhetoric. A lesson such as this might be used as a vehicle to talk about popular vs. scholarly sources and primary, secondary, and tertiary source material.

**Activity #4, Facilitator:** Assistant Professor of French, Devan Baty, Cornell College

**Cultural artifact:** “Si les Gaulois avaient su” by Camerounian musician Francis Bebey, a song/performance presented in textual form to students who also hear a recorded performance. In order to understand the comic irony of the song, students must recognize and understand its references to French history and the popular Belgian comic strip, Asterix and Obelix, and identify the educational setting of the song itself which takes place during the era of French colonialism in Africa. This assignment would be given in a 300-level course on French and Francophone Culture taught in French.

**Assignment:** Prepare a 3-5 minute presentation about how this song is representative of both French and African cultures.

**Pedagogical lessons learned from this activity:**

- As teachers, we should not assume that some texts are only appropriate for certain levels. Dense and culturally rich texts can be incorporated at all levels of the curriculum, but the assignments we give to our students and the kinds of questions that we ask should be appropriate to the level of the class. For example, though difficult, this song could be used in a beginning to intermediate-level language class, but the activity/assignment would be different.
  - Beginning and intermediate-level students benefit from being provided with facilitating tasks that contextualize a text. Prior orientation to the who? what? where? and when? of a text can help alleviate their frustration. What kind of genre are they dealing with? In what communicative situation would they expect to encounter this genre? Who is the intended public? Etc.
  - Advanced-level students also benefit from this orientation. They should, however, be held more accountable for making sense of texts without as much support from their professor or consulting librarian. Presumably, they will have been prepared by this point to know how to formulate and pursue the answers to their own questions.

- The challenge is providing our students with just enough support along the way so that they are not overly dependent on our help when confronted with a challenging cultural artifact (be it a text, an image, a song, etc.) but are, rather, empowered to work through their own cultural alienation as independent learners and seekers of information.

**Comments from Colorado College Assistant Professor of Spanish, Daniel Arroyo-Rodriguez on how the information literacy activities inspired his own idea of a comparable activity:**

- “The workshop on information literacy at Cornell College has been a very satisfactory learning experience for me. I had the opportunity to exchange ideas with instructors from other institutions and to learn about the different ways in which we teach a literary text or a work of art. An example of something I learned and that I have already implemented in the classroom is about different ways of explaining a painting. In one of the presentations, the speaker explained how, by cropping a work of art and expanding the image step by step, students develop the capacity to anticipate the meaning of the work of art as a whole. Moreover, this activity enhances the importance of reading different details of a painting both in isolation and in relation to other elements. A week after attending this workshop, I used this activity to teach Pablo Picasso’s *Guernika*. I was very satisfied with the goals of this class. Students learned about new ways of looking at a work of art and interpreting its meaning. As an instructor, I think that this activity is very useful in order to read a work of art as a literary text, a perspective that I had not previously explored in the classroom. I plan on improving this activity in future courses and on looking at alternative ways in which I could use this strategy, namely, cropping an image or even a text, and expanding the image progressively. “