



Vegas Baby
John Petrey

Title: Costumes and Characters

Overview:

Students will examine and discuss the sculpture *Vegas Baby* by artist John Petrey. Using visual clues, they will make connections and infer character traits in order to create a character synopsis to be used by a costume designer of a real or imaginary film.

Students will review and consider images and character sketches of Harry from *Harry Potter*, Katniss from *The Hunger Games* and Gandalf from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.

Students will list adjectives and phrases that describe the character's physical, emotional and personality traits and use these to write a brief character synopsis.

Subjects:

Drama, Language Arts, Visual Arts

Age Group:

Grades 6-9

Standards:

21st Century Learning Skills:

- Critical Thinking and Reasoning

- Information Literacy
- Self-Direction
- Invention

Colorado Academic Standards:

Drama

- Create
- Critically Respond

Language Arts

- Oral Expression and Listening
- Writing and Composition
- Research and Reasoning

Visual Arts

- Observe and Learn to Comprehend
- Relate and Connect to Transfer

Essential Question(s):

- *What can be understood using only visual clues?*
- *How does art help us learn about people?*
- *What choices must an artist make when beginning a work?*

Rationale:

By interpreting visual clues, students can understand, describe and create a character.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- describe and analyze what they see in *Vegas Baby* by artist John Petrey
- consider and use visual clues to infer meaning and context
- develop a list of adjectives describing a character using only visual clues
- understand how costume departments use costume design to communicate character and story
- create and invent a character based on their observations
- write a brief character synopsis like those used in film development

Materials:

- Paper or journal for each student
- Pens or pencils
- *The Art and the Artist* information on *Vegas Baby* (found at the end of this lesson plan)
- One color copy of *Vegas Baby* for every student, or the ability to project the image onto a wall or screen
- Handout: Character Synopses Vegas Baby PDF
- Optional: Additional images of John Petrey's work, found on his website
 - <http://www.johnpetrey.com>

Duration:

One 50-minute lesson

Vocabulary:

- *Character*: A person portrayed in a narrative work of art, such as a film, TV show, performance, book, story, graphic novel, etc.
- *Character Traits*: Descriptive adjectives, like brave or loyal, that tell us the specific qualities of the character.
- *Synopsis*: summary, abstract, outline, abridgment.
- *Character Synopsis*: A short description of a specific character. This might include personality traits, appearance, action, time period, location, motivations, the character's relationship to the plot, etc.
- *Costume Drama*: A costume drama is a period piece in which elaborate costumes, sets, and properties are featured in order to capture the ambience of a particular era, e.g. the late 19th century, the 1930s, or the 1980s. The term is usually used in the context of film and television.
- *Noun*: A part of speech used to identify a person, place or thing.
- *Adjective*: A part of speech that describes a noun or pronoun.

Lesson:

Warm-up: Ask students what their favorite movies are. Now ask who their favorite characters are from the movies. What is it about these characters that appeals to them? Is it appearance? Is it personality? Is it their actions? Is it *who they are* in relation to the story? Explain to the students that they are using *adjectives* to describe *character traits*, and that they are going to create a *character synopsis*, similar to what is done in creative departments in movies.

1. Brainstorm adjectives to describe their favorite movie character.

- Pass out paper and pencils to students.
- Ask the students to choose their favorite movie character and quickly list as many adjectives as possible to describe the character in just a few moments.
- Have a student volunteer to share their adjective lists.
- Next, have them select and prioritize their top 3 - 5 adjectives for their chosen character.
- Explain that they have just completed a Character Trait Summary for a movie character.

2. Show and discuss *Vegas Baby* by artist John Petrey.

- Hand out color copies of the sculpture and/or display on overhead projector or internet.
- Ask students to share their initial observations. Suggest leading topics such as color, design, materials, story, mood, etc. What can the students ascertain about a possible theme or character, just by viewing this piece?
- Now read the information about the artist (found at the end of this lesson plan).

3. Discuss costumes in movies as story-telling tools.

- Every garment worn in a movie is considered a costume.
- Costumes are a storytelling tool, communicating details of each character's personality and history.
- Whether a film is set in the present, the past, in a distant location, or in an imaginary time and place, costume designers collaborate with the film's director, cinematographer, and production designer to tell the story.
- The costume design department assists in the transformation to bring characters to life, creating a total look that conveys the film's themes, setting, and moods.

4. Read and discuss the student handout **Character Synopsis Vegas Baby**.

- Give each student a copy of the handout, or display on an overhead projector.
 - Explain that a Character Synopsis is a short description of a specific character which might include personality traits, appearance, action, time period, location, motivations, the character's relationship to the plot, etc.
 - Explain that character synopses are used in the creative departments of film crews (costume department, art department, cinematography, production department, etc.)
 - Ask for volunteers to read each character synopsis: Harry from *Harry Potter*, Katniss from *The Hunger Games* and Gandalf from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.
 - Discuss the synopses: ask for student feedback on the synopses and how these help them envision the characters.
5. **Have students write a Character Synopsis for *Vegas Baby* by John Petrey.**
- Remind students of their adjective lists and character trait summaries of their favorite movie characters.
 - Instruct students to brainstorm an adjective list for *Vegas Baby*.
 - Then have the students select and prioritize their top 3 - 5 adjectives for *Vegas Baby*, as they did in Step 1, creating a character trait summary. (As a group or individually)
 - Students will then complete a Character Synopsis of for *Vegas Baby*.
 - Ask for student volunteers to share their synopses with the class.

Additional Resources:

For additional images of John Petrey's work:

<http://www.johnpetrey.com>

The Art and the Artist



Vegas Baby
John Petrey
Sculpture

John Petrey - Vegas Baby

Artist John Petrey feels that dresses made out of fabric have already been done and he wants to create them out of a different material that looks just as flowing yet surprises the viewer. He created this dress out of small playing cards, flattened bottle caps and dice.

John says that he feels the imagination is the most powerful tool humans possess. He was inspired to create this body of work by growing up in the 60's and seeing all of the families on TV that could solve their problems in 30 minutes while the women's clothes were perfectly pressed and they wore pearls to cook breakfast.

Character Synopses

Harry Potter

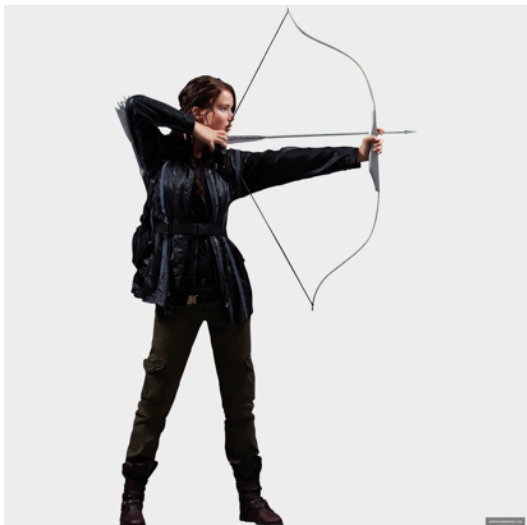
Harry Potter



Harry Potter is a boy whose parents were killed by an evil wizard and, as a result, has a hard time growing up. When he turns 11, he finds out that he is a wizard and gets to go to school to study magic. Soon he becomes enmeshed in many battles against the same wizard who killed his parents and (as Harry finds out) is destined to either kill him or be killed by him. Personality-wise, he is brave and loyal to his friends, but also very impulsive and tends to think with his heart rather than his head.

Katniss Everdeen

The Hunger Games



Katniss Everdeen is a teenage girl who lives in District 12, an impoverished coal-mining region in the country of Panem. She's a volunteer tribute in Panem's annual Hunger Games, having taken the place of her younger sister in an act of heroic self-sacrifice.

Likes include: bows, arrows, and lamb stew. Also: a certain guy named Gale.

Dislikes include: Haymitch Abernathy, tracker jacker stings, getting her leg hair waxed, and the family cat. Also: occasionally her mother.

Gandalf

The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings



Gandalf is a wise old wizard who always seems to know more than he reveals. He has a vast command of magic and tends to show up at just the moment he is needed most. He is secretive, always having another purpose or plan in mind, but rarely revealing his private thoughts. Gandalf roams Middle-earth looking for information and allies in the fight against evil and enemies of Middle Earth.