

Academic Skills

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Transfer

I take English Literature and Visual Arts at the Higher Level for my IB program. In most cases people, myself included, are aware of literature's standing as a medium of art, however it was not until I started the IBDP that I came to realize just how interdisciplinary their required skill sets are. During the transition from year 12 to 13, I was simultaneously working on my Comparative study for art and my extended essay in English. These are both assignments that require a great deal of close analysis; breaking down the literary or visual techniques/choices of author and artist. While I was accustomed to analytically writing about works of literature, I was not confident doing so for pieces visual art. However, by working on these assignments at the same time, I came to realize that the skills required are exactly the same. Whether investigating circular narrative structure or the use of negative space, the same process of of critical examination then evaluating the impact of stylistic choices must be undertaken. By reframing the way I approached the analysis of art to follow my method of analysing literature, I found that my observations became much more perceptive and I was able to appreciate the works I was studying significantly more. While I had initially considered the analysis of formal artistic qualities to be tedious and surface-level, I now find in it the same joy I find while writing about literature.

expectations merge with society's and are engrained in David. According to Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, "Gender is in no way a stable identity... rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler). Through Butler's perspective, we can make the claim that David constructs his "manliness" through repeated acts and behaviors that have been influenced by the societal norms his father embodies, rather than it being an expression of innate masculinity. While there are instances wherein he appears to resist these ideals, he ultimately carries this performativity with him to France. This impedes his capacity to establish meaningful connections and come to terms with facets of his identity that diverge from these ideals of masculinity.

Little Dog's childhood is a polar opposite to David's. In the sense that he was raised by women without any consistently present masculine figures. He is oblivious to the way men or boys are ridiculed for stepping out of the constraints of masculinity, because femininity is, in a way, all he knows. The analysis, taking readers back to points before Little Dog's birth, often focuses on Lan or Rose's youths. These flashbacks are so resonant because they bring forth concepts that are then carried across the novel. Vuong writes that Little Dog's grandmother had given herself the name Lan, meaning orchid. He writes, "to name herself after a flower something that opens like something torn apart" (41). This implies that despite their beauty, flowers are able to withstand the pain they will inevitably face. Lan then goes on to name her own daughter Rose, a flower that is delicate and beautiful but, due to its thorns, is able to protect itself. Flowers are associated with fragility or growth, and tend to be symbolic of femininity. In times of distress across the novel, Little Dog often fixates on flowers.

Analysis of Baldwin and Viong's use of memory and identity in *Giovanni's Room* and *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (page 9 of 18)

<p>The black of the piece is half a traditional flower, it depicts a dimensional subject.</p>	<p>The mother and children are presented through the presence of blacked lines.</p>
<p>There is a sense of unity that is presented through the absence of black at the base of the piece, giving the appearance of the figures as a singular entity.</p>	
<p>The black form figures, located on their faces and bodies, call particular attention to the lines on the backside of each subject. This gives the appearance of wrinkles and presents a feeling of concern and worry.</p>	<p>Explores the very small spaces of white representing the cracks between the black print and the white space.</p>
<p>The black color highlights the connection between the black print and the white space.</p>	<p>The black lines are particularly prominent. These lines are not distinct, instead they are more like soft, blurry lines.</p>
<p>The mother and children are depicted as they attempt to connect because of their children from the outside world (even if it were possible).</p>	<p>This demonstrates the strength of these mothers and the length of their love as they protect their children from the world.</p>
<p>Through the inclusion of the white space of the hands, there is a face emerging. With so little lines we can see how their eyes and mouths emerge through wrinkles. Despite the separation, another chance of being united.</p>	

Formal Qualities of "The Mothers: Die Mutter"

The piece (a 2 x 8 1/2 cm) is a woodcut print that depicts mothers protectively holding, nurturing, and covering their children/babies. The subjects can be interpreted as either getting away from home or they covering their eyes against a depiction of an outdoor world for fear of their children being taken away.

The emphasis on the mother's hands is created by the high contrast. The hands are meant to be much larger than the rest of the figure to create the narrative:

- Children pushing their heads under their mother's arms
- Mother whose eyes are being covered
- Eyes peering through the shadow-like child's hand
- Program figure holding up their hands
- Head that seems to be holding everyone together.

The artist of the artwork explains the narrative space surrounding the print getting sense of purpose. Both the painting and the print capture an act of emotional investment.

The weight of the narrative is what the print presents the concept of the mother and the figure as a protective force of one another. This is then reinforced by the absence of lines on the face.

The second page of the piece, something extremely odd. In some of the mother's have joined together, forming a cluster of arms, keeping away the danger that children to take away their children.

One of the mothers (on the far left) is pregnant. Unlike the other mothers who are protectively holding their children, she is holding up both children as a sign of love, nurture and protection. This is a high representation of Baldwin's idea of protection and shows the mother's need to protect her unborn child.

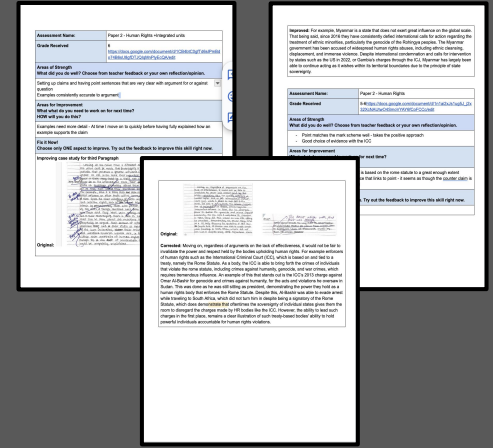
The areas of high contrast within the print guide the viewer's eyes, creating focal points, starting with the faces which stretch out gently and ending with the hand that is involved in the center of the piece. This makes sense that the viewer to focus on a key details of the piece that work together to create the narrative:

- Children pushing their heads under their mother's arms
- Mother whose eyes are being covered
- Eyes peering through the shadow-like child's hand
- Program figure holding up their hands
- Head that seems to be holding everyone together.

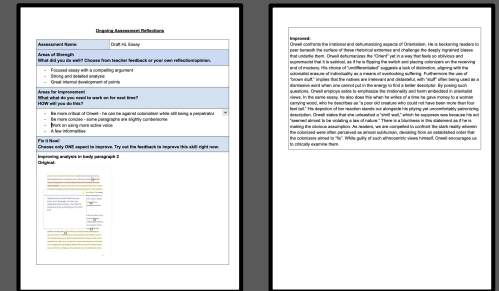
Analysis of formal qualities of the piece "The Mothers" by Kathe Kollwitz (slide 4 of 19)

Reflection

In my time at NIST one of the things I am most grateful for has been the emphasis on reflection as a means of improving academically. While this is a skill that was extremely prevalent during the MYP I have noticed its benefits significantly more doing the IBDP program. In my Global Politics class, my teacher made us an “Ongoing Assessment Reflection Document” at the beginning of year 12 that I continue to use nearing the end of senior year. In addition to being a valuable tool for tracking my progress over the past two years, this document has allowed me to understand then address my areas of weakness in the subject. After every assessment I note down the strengths and weaknesses of my work, then I highlight a specific area for improvement and act on it/redo it. I find that celebrating the strengths of assignments has also surprised me in it’s helpfulness as I have become much more confident in my abilities and am aware of skills or knowledge that I need to continue to tap into. Because of how effective this method of reflection proved to be for me, I began to use a similar document for my other essay-based subject: English Literature. In doing so I have become much more attuned to areas that I consistently struggle with and have been able to work to improve them. This has made me considerably better writer. For example, I often fell into the trap of describing rather than analysing, whereas now, I no longer have this issue as I have dedicated time to improving old work.



Global Politics - Ongoing Assessment Reflection Document



English Lit - Ongoing Assessment Reflection Document

How have I grown as a result of these skills?

- Developing the the ability to transfer academic skills between my subjects has given me the room to expand my understanding and appreciation of both literature and visual arts, fostering a deeper connection with different mediums of creative expression.
- The practice of reflection, instilled through my experiences at NIST and a consistent method for reflecting, has been instrumental in my academic growth and success across various subjects, empowering me to identify and address areas of weakness, celebrate strengths, and continually strive for improvement.
- The proficiency in organization acquired through managing long-term projects, such as my personal project and extended essay, has not only been instrumental in academic endeavors but has also laid a foundation for maintaining productivity and balance in various aspects of life beyond the classroom.