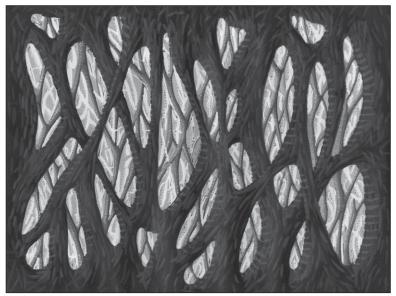# Multimodal Literacies: An Introduction

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Entangled by James Adam Sanders, woodblock print. Used with permission.

Today, more than ever before, attention is being given to the role of the arts, multimodality, and new literacies as they relate to research and practice in English language arts classrooms and operate within 21st century literacies (NCTE, http://www. ncte.org/pathways/21stcentury). This attention is significant and timely as it reflects a growing shift in how literacy is being defined and what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century. Literacy, no longer confined to communication through reading and writing of traditional printed text, has expanded and figuratively exploded, particularly within the past decade. Messages are now created, inscribed, sent, and received in multimodal ways steeped

in the use of new technologies. In today's world, a literate person must be able to read and create a range of paper-based and online texts (newspapers, pamphlets, websites, books, Kindle, and so on), participate in and create virtual settings (classrooms, Second Life, Facebook, Elluminate, blogs, wikis) that use interactive and dynamic Web 2.0 tools, and critically analyze multimodal texts that integrate visual, musical, dramatic, digital, and new literacies (Albers, 2007; Doering, Beach, & O'Brien, 2007; Harste, Leland, Grant, Chung, & Enyeart, 2007; Miller, 2007). In response to these needs, 21st century literacy and language arts classroom practice and research have become more focused on multimodal literacies and ways to reconceptualize and reenvision what constitutes literacy (Albers, Vasquez, & Harste, 2008; Harste, 2003; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008; Miller, 2007; O'Brien & Beach, 2009).

For educators and students, it's here—technology and the desire to create and read multimedia and multimodal texts. Children and adults alike are using visual, audio, and technology media to capture, develop, produce, and publicly publish all types of products, and these uses have certainly spilled over into the literacy and English language arts (ELA) classes. As literacy and language arts teacher educators, we continually struggle with the tension between the restrictive culture of political mandates that value traditional approaches to literacy and how we must work to develop a culture of possibilities that engage and build upon the new literacies that students bring with them to class daily. We are continually enthralled at the intensity with which young people immerse themselves in arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies. While some see such engagement as problematic, we, like Gee (2003), see these actions as redefining the world of literacy and our most basic understanding of what it means to be literate. We argue that ELA and literacy educators, across grade levels, as well as researchers, must be knowledgeable about and be prepared to work with the tools through which such multi-modal and multimedia projects are created. These stakeholders must also become familiar with how today's messages are sent, received, and interpreted; how media and technology position us both as viewers and users of multimedia texts in the world; and how such texts endow us with an identity we may or may not

wish to take on (Albers & Harste, 2007; Vasquez, 2004). Yet we welcome this struggle, because we see it as an essential part of the forward trajectory of literacy, one that has already catapulted us toward reading and creating multimodal, multidimensional, and hyperlinked texts.

In light of this changing world of texts and the diverse student populations we serve, we must not only consider what we think students ought to know to be literate in the twenty-first century, but we must also ask, *What are the everyday literacies that learners bring into the classroom?* and *How can I value and integrate these literacies into my own practice?* By keeping these questions in mind, we make literacy more relevant to students while creating space in the English language arts classroom both for teachers and students alike to explore, compose, and share a range of texts with larger audiences. Further, when we keep such questions in mind, we can create multidimensional curricula that reach more populations in ways that we could not otherwise.

We begin this introduction with a woodcut print created by James Adam Sanders, simply entitled *Entangled*. Each of the sixteen layers was intentionally carved from one 12" × 16" woodblock. As each new layer was carved and printed atop previous layers, the colors, shapes, and textures combined to ultimately form a whole that would not be complete without each of the layers working in synergy. We see Sanders's artwork as a visual metaphor for the way in which we understand the nature of literacy in today's world: complex, multimodal, multimedia, digital, and transformative. We also understand that as teachers, we have the responsibility to provide students with a range of opportunities that enables them to expand their repertoire of ways in which they can communicate what and how they know. We know that when people are actively engaged with inquiry, have a desire to learn new things, and try out different digital, visual, musical, spatial, dramatic (and so on) tools and techniques, they have the potential to say and do things that we have never before imagined. Consider, for example, the work of Glynda Hull (2009), who brings together children from different continents through digital technologies to study images of boys and girls and engage in critical written and video conversations about how children are

represented in images. Or consider how your own lives have been changed by the arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies. There is more accessibility to software that allows you to alter digital photos and to send these photos to family and friends immediately through cell phone connectivity with the Internet. Think of the explosion of the hundreds of thousands of YouTube videos, created by students, teachers, and ordinary people and uploaded for educational, personal, political, and other reasons. If you missed a performance on *American Idol*, YouTube, no doubt, will have a video posted by the start of the next day. Cell phones with video capability capture a range of events and emotions. Consider the video of a Chicago student beaten by others, captured on video, and replayed by news stations across the country. These examples demonstrate how no one particular mode (written language, visual, gestural, music, digital, and so on) carries the entire message. They also serve to demonstrate how "entangled" literacy really is. That is, modes, media, and language systems are in symbiotic relationship and offer humans the potential to express what they want to say in innumerable ways, forms, and combinations. Literacy is not simply a separation of language systems that can be tested or skilled to death. It is not, nor can it be, enacted by simply adding on another communicative mode to traditional print literacy and calling it "multimodal." Literacy is entangled, unable and unwilling to be separated from the other modes, media, and language systems that constitute the very messages that are sent, read, and/or interpreted.

For us, this collection of work in *Literacies, the Arts, and Multimodality* enables us to speak about and to the trajectory of 21st century literacy research and practice. Multimodal literacies research considers the multifaceted ways in which languages (art, drama, music, movement, written/oral, math) can be studied in school contexts, and multimodal literacies instruction is pedagogy with a fundamental philosophical orientation that holds that children (and adults) learn best when *engaged* in complex, socially constructed, personally relevant, creative composition and interpretation of texts that incorporate a variety of meaningful communicative modes or symbol systems. Composing and interpreting through multimodal literacies are much like Sanders's print; the message incorporates multiple modes that

work together in interactive, dynamic, and integrative ways to communicate the maker's intentions. Working with multimodal literacies is an essentially interactive and flexible, dynamic and integrative, social and cultural practice that cannot be reduced to anything less.

In this introduction, we want to offer our readers a way to define and think about the arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies, as well as highlight the significance of each field for literacy and English language arts classrooms. After providing this conceptual framework, we will briefly introduce the chapters of research and teacher practice that are included in this compilation. We conclude with a discussion of the complex issues that arise with multimodal literacies instruction. When referring to the work of the arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies as a whole, we will use the term *multimodal literacies*, as we believe it is inclusive of the arts, literacies, and new media.

Framing the Arts, Multimodality, and 21st Century Literacies in the English Language Arts

Concepts of *the arts*, *multimodality*, and *21st century literacies* are often used interchangeably although each has its own unique characteristics. In the following discussion, we theoretically situate each of these key concepts and make connections to relevant scholarship while considering each area's significance in the English language arts.

The Arts

As Albers and Harste (2007) have written, the arts often refer to the visual, musical, and performance arts, which include paintings, ceramics, photographs, films, plays, storytelling, concerts, and others, and are often associated with the term *aesthetics*. Engagements with the arts offer us aesthetic experiences that are pleasing and transform the very way we encounter our world. Maxine Greene (1995; 2001), a philosopher, has long argued that the arts in education enable a person to become different and look through the lenses of various ways of knowing, seeing,

and feeling in a conscious endeavor to change one's perspective on the world. Learning through the arts, she argued, must not be positioned as a frill but as an intentional undertaking that enables learners to notice the noticeable, become appreciative and reflective, and understand the role of the arts in making life meaningful. Elliot Eisner (2003) has also championed the arts as developing different forms of thinking, including an ability to see qualitative relationships within and among texts, an understanding that form and content are inextricably linked, an understanding that how something is expressed is only a part of what is meant, and the awareness that not everything knowable can be expressed through written language. The arts, argued Greene, leads to informed or critical talk by positioning learners as active viewers and perceivers while providing more precise and imaginative language to elucidate a deeper perception of the everyday world.

A number of scholars have reported on the effects of the arts on literacy (i.e., Blecher & Jaffee, 1998; Deasy, 2002; Ehrenworth, 2003; Olshansky, 1994; Rose, Parks, Androes, & McMahon, 2000; Smagorinsky & Coppock, 1993; Wolf, 1998), and several important works are highlighted here to help to contextualize the significance of the arts in language arts instruction.

In 2007, Burnaford, Brown, Doherty, and McLaughlin wrote *Arts Integration Frameworks, Research and Practice*: *A Literature Review*, an extensive and comprehensive review of arts-based practice and research primarily conducted in the United States that was written between 1995 and 2007. They presented the historical context around which arts-based instruction and research emerged, current theories that inform practice and research, and a range of studies that described methods and practices in the field. In presenting this collection of work, Burnaford et al.'s work situates the significance that the arts play in teaching, learning, and research.

Beth Olshansky's important work (1994, 2006, 2008) in the arts and writing has demonstrated time and again that both language systems must be treated equally in literacy learning and that when viewed from this perspective, both children's writing and art-making grow. After observing more than 400 students at all elementary grades during a two-year study of their art and story-making, Olshansky (1994) concluded that integrated art

and writing instruction supports diverse learners and enriches the composing processes: "without the burden of needing to create representational images, their minds are free to discover images and make meaning out of their own abstract creations. Their ideas are imaginative and their language in discussing them is unusually descriptive" (p. 352). Olshansky's (2006) conclusion is supported by the children's own words: "pictures paint the words on paper for you so your words are much better. The words are more descriptive. Sometimes you can't describe the pictures because they are so beautiful" (p. 531). For these children, literacy, as experienced with and through the arts, was engaging, supportive, and allowed more informed, precise, and descriptive talk.

Another landmark synthesis of research in the arts, including connections to literacy learning, was conducted by James Catterall, Lois Hetland, and Ellen Winner and edited by Richard Deasy (2002) under the auspices of the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education. This compendium of research, titled *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* and available online at http://www.aep-arts.org, presents summaries and critiques of sixty-two studies, both qualitative and quantitative, in the arts and arts integration. In sum, Deasy states that the studies in the compendium "suggest that well-crafted arts experiences produce positive academic and social effects" (p. iii). Two studies, in particular, demonstrated how the inclusion of drama in the reading curriculum improved students' comprehension and the teacher's use of effective instructional practices to support reading (Rose et al., 2000; Wolf, 1998). Only three studies of visual arts processes or instruction were included in the compendium, and all of these studies addressed the positive role of the visual arts, particularly drawing, in enhancing literacy instruction (Burger & Winner, 2000; DeJarnette, 1997; Wilhelm, 1995). Larry Scripp synthesized the research on music for this compendium and found "positive significant associations between music and achievement in reading" (Deasy, 2002, p. 133). However, Scripp also concluded that "further practitioner research is needed to specify how these links can be best and most consistently achieved" (p. 133). Throughout *Critical Links*, authors called for further research that conveys the intricate details and the teaching and learning results of

arts-integrated instruction; *Literacies, the Arts, and Multimodality* answers this call for research with thirteen chapters that systematically describe the instructional practices and learning outcomes of research in multimodal literacies.Collectively, these studies demonstrate the power of arts-integrated instruction. The research also represents how the arts encourage a different type of language learning, one that enables children to authentically tell their cultured stories, to speak through art, and to understand stories more deeply through informed viewing of art.

Multimodality

As articulated by the work of Halliday (1985), Hodge and Kress (1988), and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), multimodal communication is comprised of multiple "modes" or communicative forms (i.e., digital, visual, spatial, musical, etc.) within various sign systems that carry meanings recognized and understood by a social collective. In multimodal theory, Kress and Jewitt (2003) identify four aspects that comprise one's representation of meaning: materiality, framing, design, and production, all of which come into play when texts are constructed.

Materiality refers to the materials and resources used to represent meaning (still images, music, transitions, fabric, as well as ideas, concepts, etc.), and their affordances, or the qualities of that material/resource and its potential to communicate messages in various ways. *Framing* defines the way in which elements of a visual composition operate together, are spaced, show dis/continuities in color, connect (or not) with each other, or "move" on the canvas (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Within digital texts such as PowerPoint presentations, webpages, and digital films, framing involves placement of a visual image, selection of the best image for the intention of the message, and choices concerning text or image size and font types. In creating such texts, the textmaker considers how each of these elements interrelates and how this relationship will inform a viewer's interpretation.

Design, the conceptual side of expression (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) and separate from the actual product, refers to how people make use of the materials and resources that are available to them at a particular moment to create their representation.

Lastly, *production* refers to the creation of and organization of the representation; production includes the actual product or text (website, movie, podcast, visual text, dance, play, etc.), as well as the technical skills (skills of the hand, eye, ear, body) used when working with media to create the text. Additionally, within multimodality inherently lies a critical perspective enacted when examining the textmaker's choices regarding the materials used, how those materials are framed and designed, and how such decisions are realized and situated within the creator's beliefs.

Scholarship in multimodality has grown significantly within the past decade, and to contextualize multimodality within literacy practice, we present two studies. In a two-year study called the Games-Play Project that involved an artist, an architect, and teachers of 4- and 5-year-olds, Kate Pahl (2007) examined children's multimodal drawings, created as part of the architectural planning for their new playground, of games they liked to play. Pahl considered how teachers might view and extend their students' texts by considering the variety of multimodal literacy practices demonstrated and associated with the texts. The children's multimodal drawing artifacts revealed details of what Rowsell and Pahl (2007) called "sedimented" identities, or traces of past experiences visually shown in the drawings. If educators read such multimodal texts to uncover the child's sedimented experiences, they may find connections between home, school, and other spaces and facilitate conversations that bridge home and school literacy practices. The work of Rowsell and Pahl demonstrated the multimodal nature of learning in that children designed and produced, through the modes of art and writing, the space they thought they needed to play their games. Further, in framing their ideas and the drawings, they revealed themselves as individuals, as members of families, and as members of their school through art and writing.

Albers and Frederick (2009) studied seven teachers' visual texts created over a semester. Like Rowsell and Pahl (2007), they found teachers included elements or traces of practice, interests, and ideologies that appeared across texts. They concluded that these "(re)marks" enabled researchers and educators to see learners' ongoing discourses through these elements. Norris's (2004) work in multimodal analysis has located how modes operate in

human interaction. In her comprehensive methodological approach to understand this interaction, she described the complex nuances within and across modes that are made visible within such analysis. According to Kress (2003), "the world told" is vastly different from "the world shown" (p. 1), and all texts are "entirely in the realm of ideology" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 12). As such, a number of critical literacy scholars have argued that reading and analyzing modes must be critical (Albers et al., 2008; Callow, 2005; Harste, Leland, Grant, Chung, & Enyeart, 2007; Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008; Lewison & Heffernan, 2008) because they position not only the viewers to read in a particular way, but position the subject of the image in particular ways.

These teachers and researchers interested in multimodality help us see how students' and teachers' lives are revealed in the design, framing, and production of their texts and reveal the critical nature, or ideologies, of such creations. Across this work, researchers collectively have shown the significance of studying the dynamic and interactive nature of students' image production within classroom contexts as a crucial part of literacy practice and research.

21st Century Literacies

In concert with the arts and multimodality is 21st century literacies studies (Albers & Harste, 2007; Alvermann, 2008; O'Brien & Beach, 2009; NCTE Pathways–21st Century Literacies), also known as new literacies, or literacy in a digital and high-tech world, which gestures toward a shift in perspective or mindset, (Kist, 2005; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; 2007). Lankshear and Knobel (2007) identified two interrelated elements in 21st century literacies: (1) new technical stuff, and (2) new ethos. Both of these elements are necessary components when engaging in 21st century literacies work. When thinking about "new technical stuff," Lankshear and Knobel argued that it not only involves new uses of technology but also necessitates new ways of being and interacting in the world (p. 7). That is, new technologies can be used in new ways (Facebook, blogs) to do the same kinds of things we already know (phones, letters). Further, when integrated into literacy practices, this "new technological stuff" allows edu-

cators and students to create something significantly novel (self-running PowerPoints, Podcasts, YouTube videos, for example). In essence, this new technical stuff allows us to technologize our existing practices *and* creates space for us to move beyond mere technologizing; that is, we do not include technology because we should, but because it allows for greater participation, collaboration, and distribution of knowledge that has not been possible with our previous uses of technology (Albers, Vasquez, & Harste, 2008). For example, students across the world create podcasts, or digitized audio recordings, accessible by all who know the URL link. Once confined to classrooms, student learning can now be shared worldwide (Hull, 2009). The "new ethos stuff" develops from the new technology. Central to "new ethos stuff" is not that we use technology to reorganize old practices (look up information online, use PowerPoint as colorful overhead transparencies, or write documents using word processing), but that we develop new ways of being when working with new technologies: sharing, experimenting, innovating, and creative rule-breaking (video podcasts, photo editing, and morphing of images, for example).

To conceptualize 21st century literacies in this way is to understand that communication is socially motivated and engaging, should work toward social action, and should be informed by global perspectives (NCTE Pathways). Consider how two social networking sites, Facebook and Twitter, have changed the face of social and global communication. Young children through adults access these sites multiple times a day, writing, talking in real time, and sharing a range of texts from photos to videos, drawings to audiocasts, and so on. Lenhart, Madden, Macgill, and Smith (2007) reported that 93 percent of teens use the Internet much more than they had in the past, and more than half of them had created profiles on social networking sites. Consider how social networking sites, the Internet, and television contributed, in synchronicity, to the nearly unprecedented worldwide fame of Susan Boyle, a middle-aged woman from Scotland who sang a show tune from *Les Miserables* on *Britain's Got Talent*. Photos, written text, interviews, history, and past singing engagements of Ms. Boyle, a woman previously unknown to the public, emerged onto the global scene literally overnight. In a short matter of two weeks, Ms. Boyle's video from *Britain's Got Talent 2009* had been

viewed 47,309,919 times, and as of this writing several months later, more than 78 million.

Or consider how the cell phone has become a tool of communication that allows the user to send, receive, and forward a range of messages that are multimodal, messages that are visual, aural, spatial, and/or dramatic. Users scroll through text messages, create simple but interesting drawings, locate themselves via its built-in Global Positioning System, or "tweet" friends using Twitter to let them know they have arrived, all with just the touch of a finger. Just as literacy is not simply about reading and writing anymore, the cell phone is no longer merely for making and receiving phone calls; its name has become a misnomer. The capability of this one device has led people to reimagine and reinvent communication. In sum, social networking sites and modern tools of communication offer us a range of ways in which we can create simple messages or complex texts and have brought about cultural shifts in communication. In today's world, much of our communication is multimodal and requires facility with new forms of composition and interpretation.

To contextualize 21st century literacies into classrooms, Vivian Vasquez's work with teachers and children in the Washington, D.C. area is of particular note. Vasquez has initiated a number of 21st century literacies projects that invite learners to understand the role of critical literacy in different spaces and places. In one project called the "DC Area Literary Map Podcast" (Albers, Vasquez, & Harste, 2008), Vasquez aimed to create a project that would (1) help teachers become more resourceful when choosing books for students; (2) move beyond the immediate needs of students; (3) be generative, ongoing, and sustainable beyond the life of the course; and (4) be accessible to a larger audience outside of the class. Teachers generated questions around a book that reflected a social issue, found other texts (music, visual, photos of statues, poems, among others) that might accompany this book, and then created a four-minute podcast that addressed their learning about the social issue. These podcasts were then posted on Vasquez's blog and those interested in critical literacy with picture books could listen. This important work with teachers in the "new technology stuff" enabled them to move into the "new ethos stuff," or a shift in mindset about both the

content that they wanted to teach and the possible ways in which to communicate this critical perspective across multiple spaces. Through such projects, teachers create something significantly new, experiment with new technologies, and share innovative learning that moves well beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The Scope of This Book

NCTE's Pathways Program—21st Century Literacies—has initiated a national effort to bring to the foreground the significance of the arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies, and has challenged educators and researchers to consider how these three areas are significant in teaching and research in today's English language arts classrooms. As an active commission of NCTE, the Commission on Arts and Literacies (COAL) took on this challenge and developed this edited book in which connections among literacy and the arts, multimodality, and new literacies are addressed and positioned as significant to the English language learning of all students.

The chapters within this book arise from the work of teachers, teacher educators, and researchers from across the country who have substantively integrated the arts, digital media, drama, film, sound, and Web 2.0 tools into literacy and language arts instruction. Written by members of COAL, teachers and researchers whose interests span K–12 and university settings, *Literacies, the Arts, and Multimodality* is aimed at two specific English language arts and literacy audiences: (1) K–12 teachers and (2) teacher educators and researchers in college/university settings. With these two audiences in mind, we share theoretically grounded and well-documented teaching and research, writing that enables teachers, teacher educators, and researchers to adapt and implement the ideas and methodologies presented in the chapters into their work. The chapters serve as concrete demonstrations of how to integrate the arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies into classroom practice and research, and highlight the significance of these three areas in the teaching and learning of the English language arts. Authors within these chapters worked with students across ages, including preservice and inservice teachers; across

urban, suburban, and/or rural communities with diverse cultural demographics; and within an array of geographical regions. This book represents a breadth of multimodal literacies work across a range of contexts, wherein lies both its merit and its limitations. First, we provide a brief overview of the chapters, and then we take some space to problematize and complicate the issues involved in implementing multimodal literacies research and practice.

Jerome Harste, a key thinker in areas of literacy and literacy and arts integration, defines and describes multimodality in Chapter 1. In this invited chapter, Harste urges readers to consider multimodal events and texts as a whole instead of breaking them into the various types of literacies within. He also addresses why multimodality is a central construct for literacy in the twenty-first century and challenges educators to rethink curriculum in multimodal ways that promote social consciousness.

In Chapter 2, "Saying 'Yes' to Music: Integrating Opera into a Literature Study," Sharon Blecher and Gail Burton describe the integral role music plays in their first- and second-grade curricula. They demonstrate how music frames their school day, enhances children's understanding of story, specifically fairy tales, and enables children to engage in authentic musical and literary inquiry. In this chapter, readers see how drama, visual arts, music, and the genre of fairy tales were integrated to help children broaden their thinking and extend the possibilities for learning in unique and phenomenal ways. Our third chapter addresses the integration of audio modes and literacy. "Opening Doors, Unlocking Writers: A Classroom Exploration of Picture Books with Sound" by Joanna Robertson, is a skillful interweaving of theory and practice that examines teacher and student transactions with multimodal picture books that incorporate elements of sound. This case study research was conducted with a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher and her students and shares both teacher practice and student responses to these multimodal picture books. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the hybridity of texts—the mixture of different discourses or ways of speaking within a social community like a classroom, of students' literacy practices, and of teacher's pedagogical design, along with a bibliography of fifteen picture books that integrate sound elements.

Three chapters in this collection focus on the integration of the arts and writing: Chapter 4, "Inventing a Drama World as a Place to Learn;" Chapter 5, "Relationships between Artistic and Written Composing;" and Chapter 6, "Seeing, Writing, and Drawing the Intangible: Teaching with Multiple Literacies." In Chapter 4, Esther Gray and Susan Thetard present their research investigating how Susan's high school students express the complexities of the Holocaust through process drama and writing in role. Gray and Thetard describe how they carefully designed the dramatic contexts to discourage students from oversimplifying the events or from resorting to mere tragedy narratives. Findings from the data illuminate the ethics and insights students gained about the Holocaust-era and about themselves as actors. This chapter raises important points related to critical literacy and identifies key considerations for teachers who plan to implement drama in their own literacy classrooms.

In Jennifer Sanders's phenomenological study presented in Chapter 5, she examines the similarities, differences, and relationships between the composing processes of art and writing for six fourth-grade students who engaged in an art-infused writing workshop throughout the school year. The unique findings of this research are the inductive identification of seven relationships that emerged from the students' written and artistic composing processes and the description of how students learn to transfer what they understand about composing in art to writing and writing to art. In Chapter 6, Michelle Zoss, Richard Siegesmund, and Sherelle Jones Patisaul describe the origin and adaptation of a "backpack lesson" in which middle school students draw their backpacks, listen to a piece of literature that describes the things soldiers "carry" with them, and engage in a metaphorical writing activity about what they literally and figuratively carry in their backpacks. Through multimodal instruction that is engaging, challenging, and personally relevant for the students, rich learning and writing result. This lesson is conveyed so clearly and explicitly that teachers of all levels will find it easy to follow and adapt in their own classrooms.

The next two chapters examine ways to read images. In Chapter 7, "Reading Art, Reading Lives," Peggy Albers analyzes the visual texts created by urban students in English language arts

classrooms across grade levels and identifies three distinct genres that emerged. Teachers and researchers alike can benefit from Albers's careful and descriptive structural analysis of students' visual texts and will come to understand how such analysis allows viewers insight into students' understanding. In Chapter 8, "Reading Illustrations," Ray Martens, Prisca Martens, Keri Croce, and Catherine Maderazo present a study of how a group of third graders in a diverse, urban classroom learned to read picture books with more depth and understanding through explicit instruction in reading both the written and visual texts. These art and literacy teachers and teacher educators provide evidence of how students translated their understanding of art and written text in their own illustrated texts and share practical implications for both teachers and researchers.

In Chapter 9, "An Arts-Integrated Unit: Learning 21st Century Literacies While the Teachers Are on Break," Beth Berghoff, Cindy Borgmann, Melissa Helmerick, and Carol Thorne describe how four fifth-grade classroom teachers, the art teacher, music teacher, and media specialist worked together to teach an integrated unit on Native Americans to students in a low-income, diverse elementary school. Three of the teachers, however, became the main initiators and actors in this effort at arts integration, and the authors of this chapter discuss their struggles, decisions, and successes that resulted. Research such as this that explicitly focuses on connections of teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge to their practice is scarce, and this chapter allows readers to follow the art and music teachers through their own learning processes to their subsequent instructional practices.

The final four chapters in this collection consider the various applications for digital video composing in English language arts classrooms. In Chapter 10, "Silencing Stories" Adrienne Costello describes, through ethnographic case study, one teacher's implementation of digital video composing and informal classroom drama in an urban middle school. In a strong and engaging voice, Costello recounts how multimodal teaching and learning can be fraught with "daunting challenges" and discusses the complexities involved in a teacher's struggle to incorporate progressive, multimodal literacies practices. In the theoretically substantive Chapter 11 entitled "Toward a Multimodal Literacy Pedagogy:

Digital Video Composing as 21st Century Literacy," Suzanne Miller argues that multimodality is not "local and adolescent, but global and multigenerational," and that educators must understand 21st century literacy curriculum and pedagogy as integrating engagements that are multimodal in design and practice. Miller's four guiding principles for implementing digital video in English Language Arts classrooms are explained in clear detail, using real classroom instruction as examples, so that readers can understand how they can purposefully and meaningfully create socially oriented, multimodal literacies instruction.

In Chapter 12, "Bringing Filmmaking into the English Language Arts Classroom," Bruce Robbins describes how he and a ninth-grade English teacher collaborated on an instructional unit that integrated classic literature analysis with digital filmmaking by highlighting connections between elements of literary and cinematic storytelling. This chapter details their instructional process and provides evidence of students' progress, learning, and engagement. Robbins offers educators insights into essential components of filmmaking, describes challenges one might face, and provides a thorough picture—from conception to completion—of what successful English literature and digital filmmaking integration might look like. And finally, Chapter 13, "Digital Literacies, Aesthetics, and Pedagogies Involved in Digital Video Production" takes an aesthetic perspective on the production of and response to digital video composing. Richard Beach and Thom Swiss assert that the aesthetic appeal of digital video lies in its social impact and reception. They identify six digital literacy components of multimodality (interactivity, modularity, automation, collection or appropriation, and embodiment), demonstrate how these components were employed by students to do aesthetic work, and show how the teacher guided students in reflecting on their aesthetic decisions.

The Issues Complicating Multimodal Literacies

In most of the chapters in this book, working with multiple literacies looks easy. Many of the classrooms into which we get a glimpse are led by talented weavers of multimodal curricula or

by teachers who collaborated with researchers or colleagues. But as anyone who has attempted a multimodal literacies curriculum knows, it's hard work, and it doesn't always go as smoothly as you hoped. There are several issues that may arise to complicate successful and effective arts or technology integration including securing resources or an instructor's comfort level and buy-in in using new technologies, as well as the potential for multimodal work to become chaotic. Resourcing units of instruction in which new technologies are required can be challenging, particularly if the school already struggles with its budget for textbooks, paper, and pencils. Although arts materials and technology equipment continually become more affordable, the costs quickly add up when teachers work with twenty-five to forty students in each classroom. Authors in these chapters do address issues of costs and offer some insight into resourcing such curricula.

Perhaps more significant is that as educators, we know teachers teach what they know best, what they are most comfortable with, and what they enjoy. How do we convince a teacher who thinks her voice sounds like a diesel grinding through gears to sing with her or his students? How do we convince a teacher who dislikes writing to implement an arts-infused writing workshop? A teacher's comfort level with his or her own artistic abilities or technological skills can be one of the biggest deterrents to implementing multimodal literacies instruction. When we read chapters like Sharon Blecher and Gail Burton's, we notice that at least one of the teachers has a wealth of musical knowledge to support their collaborative instruction. Would teachers with limited music (or other arts) knowledge be willing to attempt multimodal literacies instruction? It certainly takes risk and courage to move outside of our comfort zone and attempt novel practices.

In fact, Bruce Robbins, author of Chapter 12, approached six teachers about working with him to infuse digital filmmaking into their language arts instruction, and he was consistently met with resistance because the teachers didn't feel comfortable with "all that technical stuff." Teachers who lack skills or experience with the arts or new literacies are a lot like struggling readers—they avoid what they are not good at. Robbins and the other three authors of chapters on digital video composing help teachers new

to technology become familiar with the essential components of effective instruction and learn successful practices that will assist them in their first attempts at multimodality. Blecher and Burton help teachers leery of integrating the musical arts into practice through their thorough description of their approaches, examples, and sets of related texts. Having a classroom music library makes the music and music players readily available so that cross-curricular connections can be made more frequently and even spontaneously. Blecher and Burton also remind readers of free resources for music such as YouTube and the allies teachers can find in their students' parents. Linda Labbo, 2003, notes an exemplary website for gallery art as well: ArtsConnectEd at http://www.artsconnected.org. For teachers who do not feel comfortable singing or playing music, using professional recordings is a much more probable entry point into multimodal literacies instruction. Educators and researchers invested in multimodal literacies will need to find more of these non-threatening paths into multimodal literacies curricula for teachers who have limited experience or expertise with the arts or technology. This book serves as one such entry point for teachers new to multimodal literacies instruction, as it will help readers envision the possibilities and see successful multimodal literacies instruction at work.

A third factor complicating multimodal curricula is the fact that teacher collaboration is often necessary to implement some types of multimodal literacies instruction, and if teacher "buy-in" is weak, collaboration can quickly turn into one or two people carrying the burden of the planning and implementation. Acquiring teacher buy-in can be a challenge if some of the collaborating teachers are not personally invested in multimodal literacies, as in cases where a special area teacher proposes the curriculum to the regular classroom teachers or when researchers bring multimodal literacies curricula to classroom teachers. In Chapter 9, *An Arts-Integrated Unit*, Beth Berghoff and her colleagues describe a project that included a librarian, music and art teachers, and classroom teachers that results in less than equal collaboration. The music and art teachers ultimately assumed responsibility for the planning of the integrated unit because they knew firsthand the educational benefits students could experience from arts

integration. Individuals may be disappointed in the degree of collaboration and buy-in that occurs with some participating teachers, but even though there may be initial resistance to curriculum integration, teachers may buy-in to integration the following year, or the year after. In a study on integrating reading strategy instruction in the middle school science curriculum that Jenn Sanders worked on with a research team at the University of Florida, the teacher buy-in was noticed most strongly in the two years following the initial implementation (Fang et al., 2008). It may take time for teachers to make the curriculum their own and experiment with integration on their own terms, in their own time. So while initial teacher buy-in may appear negligible, collaborators may see greater investment and ownership of the curriculum in the following years. To advocate the benefits of multimodal literacies, some educators may be willing to take the lead during the first round of arts or new literacies integration in order to apprentice teachers less familiar with multimodal literacies instruction. True collaboration and/or a higher buy-in may follow soon after.

A common observation and finding from the work presented in this book is that multimodal literacies instruction enables more children to enter into academic thinking and literacy than uni-dimensional forms of literacy instruction. We feel confident in saying that the researchers and educators in this book all believe that multimodal literacies instruction has the power to reach students marginalized because of a mismatch in school and home cultures or because they do not conform to the traditional institutionalized academic learning styles. No matter how hard we wish it could be, however, multimodal literacies instruction is not a cure-all. Adrienne M. Costello so eloquently states in Chapter 10, "Amid the promise that 21st century literacies hold for students and teachers, we cannot overlook the challenges that are still faced by teachers in complicated contexts as they attempt to adopt transformational teaching practices, and the personal and pedagogical choices they make in the face of such challenges." The students in Mr. Bradley's class in Costello's chapter did not end up benefitting from the multimodal digital literacies instruction to which they were exposed, and they may have even

been hurt by their teacher's withdrawal of this instruction. This teacher sent a pretty explicit message that these students were not good enough to participate in this special project. Similarly, Jenn would have loved to report that an arts-integrated writing curriculum kept Louis, the boy in the vignette in Chapter 5, in school, but it didn't. It kept him engaged while he was in school, but arts-integrated writing did not "save" Louis. He was still expelled from the public arts magnet school he was attending for not doing his other school work.

Whatever the challenges, we suggest that the arts, multimodality, and 21st century literacies are here, are important to literacy and language arts learning, and must be a part of curriculum. Not only must we embrace these aspects of language learning, but we must begin to play with them as students do daily. As James Gee (2003) argued, if students were invested in their school work as much as they are in their video game playing, we would have energized and enthusiastic learners excited to come to school. If multimodal literacies instruction is only reserved for special times during the week, for the "good" kids, or the privileged students, the ones who conform, then the effects contradict the social justice goals for multimodal literacies pedagogy of access for and engagement of all learners. A teacher's expectations, cultural incongruencies between a teacher's background and the students', a teacher's inexperience with managing a multimodal literacies curriculum, and his or her pedagogical beliefs-in-practice can be determining factors in the success or failure of the instruction. The question remains, how do we best advocate for effective multimodal literacies instruction amidst these complexities? This is not a question to which there is an easy answer, but we think that you will find many practical suggestions that contribute to a fuller understanding of the possibilities throughout this book. As Sanders's woodprint helps us remember, multimodal literacies research and practice is entangled; one informs the other and generates continual layers as new ideas emerge and are integrated. We believe such work will make an impact in the social, emotional, and academic lives of many children, and we argue that it is well worth traversing the challenges.

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