

## ARTIST REFLECTION

Artist Name	Trish Donald
Artist Discipline Area	Illustration and Writing
Mentor Name	Sangay Biddha
Mentor Discipline Area	Faculty of English
Activity Name	<p>Children’s literature: Creating Characters, Stories, Masks and Games</p> <p>This alignment document applies to the following lessons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lesson 1 – Understanding the Role of Illustrators</li> <li>• Lesson 2 - Creating Characters</li> <li>• Lesson 3 - Exploring Genre and Story Development</li> <li>• Lesson 4 - Creating a Picture Book</li> <li>• Lesson 5 - Mask Making and Performance</li> <li>• Lesson 6 - Expanding Stories and Learning Through Games</li> </ul>
<p>Activity Outline/ Description</p> <p>Include a brief overview of the activity and who was involved.</p>	<p>A series of lessons was delivered to Bachelor of Education (Primary Education) final year students (of Paro College of Education) and also a two-hour workshop to Masters of Education (English) and Bachelor of Education (Dzongkha) students.</p> <p>Students were introduced to the process of illustrating picture books with real examples from books I have had published. This included the process from rough sketches and concept drawings to creating the finished illustrations. They learnt about how an illustrator represents a story visually and how they add value to a story through their drawing.</p> <p>Students then worked collaboratively to create characters which they used to explore genre and different audiences. This led to the development of an original short story and planning for a picture book.</p> <p>Following on from this, students made masks based on their character and explored ways to bring their character to life through movement. In the last class, students explored how to adapt their stories into games as strategies to expand reading and writing skills.</p>
<p>Were Expectations Met?</p> <p>If yes, in what way, if no, why?</p>	<p>Yes, absolutely.</p> <p>Prior to arriving in Paro, I thought I was going to be delivering the project-based activities at a school and mentoring teaching staff. However, upon arrival I discovered that this was not going to be possible. The Founder and Coordinator of the Program, Dr Margaret Brooks, adjunct Professor from the University of New England, in Australia, was able to organise a partnership with the academic of children’s literacy Sangay Biddha. I was concerned at</p>

	<p>first, hoping my lessons would fit into her curriculum and after our first meeting we discovered how well my ideas and activities would support her unit content.</p> <p>My experience with one class was so positive they requested an extra lesson, and a Dzongkha class, who were not initially part of my teaching plan, requested a workshop which they did in their own time outside of the class timetable.</p> <p>It was wonderful to experience their keenness to connect and I delighted by how much the students loved and responded to the lessons. Students were fully engaged in the activities with many students telling me they not only enjoyed the experience, they could see how this could impact the way they taught and were valid ways of teaching.</p>
<p>Overall comments and feelings about the activity</p>	<p>I had so much fun with the students, it was such a joy and pleasure to meet and get to know them.</p> <p>The activities opened students' eyes to the effort that goes into illustrating picture books and how visual devises can be utilised to represent, enhance and expand stories.</p> <p>I am a very playful and animated teacher and the students got to experience a different style of teaching which they seemed to enjoy.</p> <p>There was a distinct shift in students' confidence in their own abilities as the lessons progressed.</p>
<p>What did you enjoy?</p>	<p>I thoroughly enjoyed working with the students. At times the Dzongkha class's English meant there were some language barriers, but students with more advanced English were able to act as interpreters. We had a lot of fun together and students achieved all of the lesson outcomes.</p> <p>I really enjoyed seeing how much the students embraced the activities, there was a lot of chatter as they worked and shared ideas.</p> <p>Sangay Biddha was a highlight to get to know. She is clever and dedicated and her care of her students was wonderful to experience. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversations and getting to know her curricular, her students and the Bhutanese culture through her. She was a gracious and supportive host.</p> <p>I was pleased with how well my activities fitted in with the theory Sangay had taught. This made my lessons a practical capstone that I felt was a really lovely way for students to finish their teaching studies and a wonderful first-time experience for me teaching in Bhutan.</p>
<p>What surprised you?</p>	<p>The limited access to resources was a surprise. They had pens and paper but that was about it. There were limited scissors, and stapler and I had to bring those things to class myself. Students were slowed down because they had to share. I brought cardboard from Australia to make the masks and this</p>

	<p>proved to be a good idea. Otherwise I would have collected boxes from the local shop to use as bases for the masks.</p> <p>I was also surprised by how much teachers and students used WhatsApp to share content but this was really useful in class as I could have a student take a photo of a resource that they then shared with the group. Usually I would have photocopied enough resources for each student but a photocopier was not available. WhatsApp meant students were still able to access the information, just in a different way.</p> <p>How much the students wrote with pencil surprised me. They used pencil in case they made a mistake and could rub it out. Some used pen, but quite a lot used pencils. They were concerned with being neat and perfect but my activities required quick and messy!</p> <p>I was surprised that creative project-based activities such as these, and using their imagination, was such a new experience for them, particularly the mask making. I was surprised by how much they enjoyed it and how much they wanted to create more masks.</p> <p>What I found interesting, was how much students resisted acting like their characters when wearing the masks. They were very shy about representing the movement and speech of their characters. and reverted to holding the masks and talking about them rather than putting them on and ‘being’ the character. In order to get them to explore this further I found other ways to get them to engage with acting by swapping masks to embody their classmates’ character with its creator judging how well the other person embodied their character. It provided an opportunity for them to make suggestions and engage more fully with this aspect of the lesson.</p> <p>Students were shy to share with the class their experience. However, when they did, they were very articulate. Rather than asking students to share, Dr Margaret Brooks suggested I asked them to talk within their group, and then have one person represent the group and share to the class. My experience of Bhutan was that it was very much a collective culture where they work as a group rather than individually. Kinship, family and community is important. I thought this was relevant in the classroom and perhaps contributed to students not wanting to stand out when I asked them to share their experience. Represented their groups thoughts and experience was successful as the students seemed less shy.</p>
<p>What were the three main things you took away from conducting the activity?</p>	<p>My three main takeaways include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How practical activities that are playful, can add value to theory heavy topics and can empower learners.</li> <li>2) The impact you have as a teacher from another country bringing a different perspective. I hope this new perspective will have a ripple effect and that the students taught by my students, will learn differently as a result of my impact. I got a real sense that by delivering these lessons, traditional ways of teaching could be softened allowing more imagination, originality and play. This</li> </ol>

	<p>ignited my desire to contribute more to education in Bhutan in the future.</p> <p>3) The value of working collaboratively with a teacher from another country was a clear takeaway. Sangay was able to help me navigate the classroom, and allowed me to understand students whose behaviour, perspectives, culture and religion is so different from your own. Sharing ideas with one another was a wonderful way to contribute to each other and I felt it built a professional connection and friendship that I hope continues well into the future.</p>
<p>What are some of the impacts you think this activity had on participants?</p>	<p>What was rewarding about this experience was seeing the shift in how students not only saw themselves but also who they could be as teachers in their own classrooms. For the first time, many of the students realised they could be creative and also imaginative in a way that supported valid ways of teaching and learning.</p>
<p>Did the activity help shift your perspective in some way?</p>	<p>Delivering the lessons reinforced for me the importance of creativity, imagination and play in learning and how it helps foster confidence and expression.</p>
<p>Would you undertake the activity again on your own? If yes, why and if no, why?</p>	<p>Yes, definitely. I have delivered all of these lessons in various ways in the past but I think creating this sequence for Paro College, and thinking about how I would extend them in future, has been very helpful in building a cohesive and valuable sequence of learning activities.</p>
<p>How could you build on this activity in your own teaching?</p>	<p>If I was teaching this series of lessons again, in any setting whether Bhutan or Australia, I would spend more time creating the picture book and on the last two lessons which were focused on making masks and games. I have reflected this on the lesson plans I created for the Artist in Residence Education Program website, but, at the time was not able to spend more time with the students.</p> <p>If I had extra classes I would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring a variety of materials to class so students could use them to create and experiment making the masks. This would include paint, papier-mâché, feathers, fabric and any other craft material I could find.</li> <li>• Bring lots of games to class so students could play with them to become familiar with how they work and are put together. This would help influence and inform students when it came to making their own games.</li> <li>• I would also create an activity where students created a publishing logo and explored brand design and marketing.</li> <li>• If possible, I would also invite more teachers to participate and be part of the activities, from different teaching disciplines. For example, when adapting the stories into games, inviting maths, geography, dance and science teachers to help create the games and look for ways the stories can link to their topic area. This would provide another level of depth and understanding and be a starting point for cross curricular learning.</li> </ul>

	<p>Other ideas to extend these teaching activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taking the stories and games created by students into local schools to play with school students and test them. Once refined, then making them available in schools. In this way, it would help students to gain confidence prior to running these lessons in their own classrooms.</li><li>• Turning the outputs from these lessons into assessment tasks. This would mean students would be marked on their picture book, mask, performance and game.</li></ul>
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