

## Visual Metaphor

Grade level 6–8

### Curricular connection

English Language Arts / Visual Arts

### Artist

Carlos Dorrien (Argentinean, 1948)

Lives in Wellesley, MA

Works in Randolph Center, VT

### Artwork

*Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories*, 2000, granite, 8' x 10' x 55,'  
Museum Purchase and Gift of the Artist.



Carlos Dorrien is one of the foremost artists working in stone sculpture today. Creating forms that are both abstract and referential, Dorrien takes his inspiration from nature, architecture, archaeological ruins, and the human figure.

In *Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories*, a large-scale sculptural installation designed expressly for the promontory overlooking Flint's Pond, the artist brings together three of his major artistic themes: the door, the flying carpet, and a granite floor. For Dorrien, doors and flying carpets are symbolic vehicles for accessing the creative imagination. In discussing the importance of the floor in his work Dorrien stated: "The carved slab opens up the spatial life of the object and its surrounding space. Also, the slabs can inspire in the objects on top of them a sense of ceremonial mystery."

### Goals

1. Students will carefully view and describe *Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories*.
2. Students will discuss and develop an understanding of what site-specific art is and how it applies to the sculpture.
3. Students will discuss what a triptych is and how it functions in *Little Red riding Hood and Other Stories*.
4. Students will explore and compare literary and visual metaphor, considering the way the sculpture can be used as a visual metaphor for where literature can take the reader.

### Vocabulary

- **Site-specific installation:** Art made for a specific space that encompasses its environment and invites viewer interaction.
- **Triptych:** A work of art composed of three related parts.
- **Metaphor:** A situation in which a word or thing that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another, thereby making a comparison.

### Looking Questions

- What do you see? Look at the sculpture from different angles. What more do you see?
- Where would you choose to sit, stand, or move to better view and experience this work? Why?
- What material has the artist, Carlos Dorrien, used to make this sculpture? Why do you think he chose this material? How might the sculpture be different if he chose to build it with clay, glass, or some other material? How does this material complement the sculpture's immediate surroundings?
- How many different parts do you see in this sculpture? How are the parts arranged?
- Do you think there is anything that ties the whole thing together? Explain.

### Discussion Questions

- Dorrien includes three major artistic themes in much of his sculpture: a door, a flying carpet, and a granite floor. Look closely at the detailed views. What do you see in this sculpture that may represent each of these themes?
- What does a flying carpet symbolize to you? How does Dorrien's choice of granite as his media affect that meaning?
- Dorrien carved the following inscription into the sculpture:  
A MI MAMA QUE ME ENSEÑO A VOLAR SIN ALFOMBRA?  
(Translation: TO MY MOTHER WHO TAUGHT ME TO FLY WITHOUT WINGS)  
What do you think this means? How can you "fly without wings?" Consider both literally and figuratively flying.
- Discuss what a metaphor is. How could this sculpture be a metaphor?
- What might the title, *Little Red Riding Hood and Other Stories*, suggest about the meaning of this work?

### Activity: Personal Metaphors

- Students will select an individual they admire, and create verbal and visual metaphors to represent this person.

### Materials

- Writing paper
- Pens or pencils
- Drawing paper
- Colored pencils

## Directions

- As a class, students will discuss literary metaphor and consider how visual metaphor is similar and different. Begin discussion with the inscription: A MI MAMA QUE ME ENSEÑO A VOLAR SIN ALFOMBRA.
- Students will each select an individual they admire. This individual may be a literary character, historical figure, or personal acquaintance.
- Consider what this person looks like, the statements they might make, the place they live or work, and their most admirable characteristics. Students will write descriptive words and phrases related to the person they have selected. With these words and phrases students will write metaphors about these individuals.
- Students can share their metaphors aloud in class.
- Following this exercise, ask your students to illustrate a drawing or sculpture that exemplifies their verbal/written metaphors.

## Reflection Questions

- How are the metaphors similar to the subject and how are they different?
- If you met Carlos Dorrien what would you ask him about this sculpture? Why?

## Resources

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### Books

*Encountering Children's Literature: An Arts Approach.* Jane M. Gangi. Allyn & Bacon, 2004. (ISBN: 0-205-39240-7). See <http://faculty.sacredheart.edu/gangij/> for a preview of this book.

*The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales.* Brothers Grimm and Joseph Scharl. Pantheon Fairy Tale and Folklore Library, 1974.

### Websites

Teaching Metaphor

<http://www.rhlschool.com/eng3n26.htm>

## Extensions

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- **Science:** Study and trace the history of human flight endeavors. Students create timelines with advancements and scientists noted.
  - Standard Science as Inquiry G1: Science as a human endeavor / G3: History of Science.
- **Social Studies:** Students should read classic children's books from a range of different cultures comparing traditional stories. (Example: Compare *Little Red Riding Hood* with *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China*).
  - Standard I Culture. X. Global Connections.
- **Math:** Students estimate the weight of the entire sculpture and then research the necessary information (sculpture dimensions and weight of granite) to calculate weight close to the actual weight.

- Standard Data Analysis and Probability Formulate questions that can be addressed with data and collect, organize, and display relevant data to answer them / Geometry Apply appropriate techniques, tools, and formulas to determine measurements