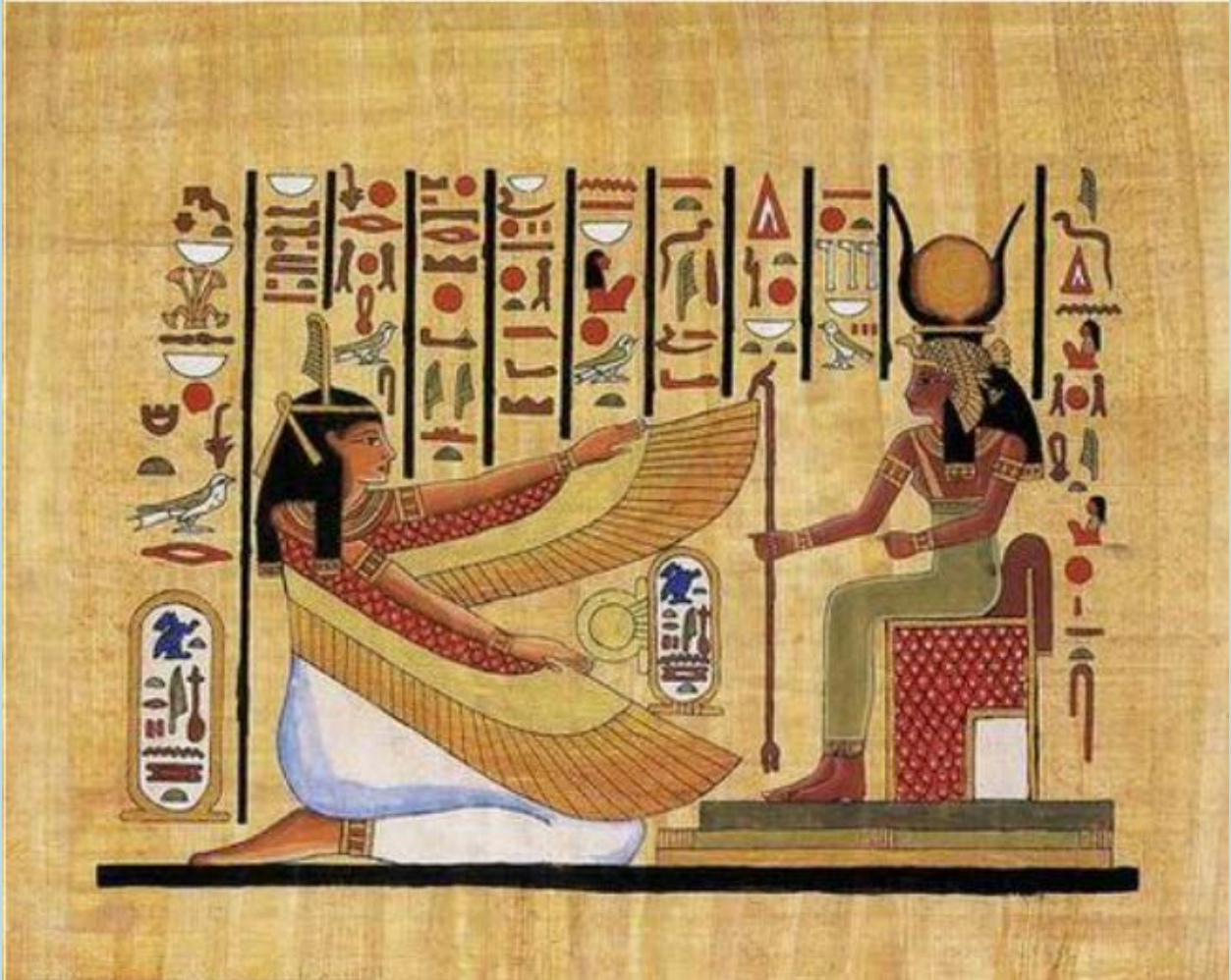


ACTIVITY 2 – WORD AND IMAGE



Description: Students create a visual representation of an historical figure, famous scientist or thinker, literary character or individual related to the discipline they are studying and use symbolic elements in order to convey something about that character’s personality, mindset, nature, or temperament. Once they have done this, they write a reflection that explains how these symbolic elements help us to better understand the character in question.

Skills: Critical Thinking, Metacognition, Making Connections

Purpose: By the end of the activity, students should understand something about how symbolic language can help us understand the visual representation of a character or individual, how symbolic language is similar to and different from orthographic language, and how words and images can have a genuinely emotive power in a given context.

Critical Thinking Questions:

- Would my project be as effective if the symbolic language I've used was replaced with orthographic language (a statement, for instance, that says something similar about the character or individual)?
- Does the final work represent my own attitude towards the individual I have represented? If so, why? If not, why not?
- What are some things that a symbolic, visual language can do that a written language cannot? What about the reverse?
- What would be the most difficult question for me to answer about my work?

Metacognition Questions:

- Why did I choose the particular symbols I have used in representing the personality, nature, or temperament of the character or individual I have chosen to represent?
- To what extent were my choices based on creating something that worked as a piece of art? To what extent were they based on creating something that represented the character or individual in question?
- If I were someone else, would it be easy for me to recognize what the symbolism is trying to suggest about the character or individual?
- What was the most interesting part of putting this composition together?
- What can I learn from the other projects that I have seen?

How Can Visual Narrative Foster Inquiry in This Activity?

Some critics have argued that graphic novels derive their power from a rather unique quality—their lack of photographic realism. When looking at a photograph, for instance, we are acutely aware that we are *only* looking at a photograph. We are not witnessing the events taking place or the people affected by them in real time, because the photograph tells us that these things have already happened. In a graphic novel or story, however, things are not so clear. We are more likely to accept that when we see little Marji in Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, we are actually looking at a "real person." The cartoonish nature of the representation has the opposite effect we think it might. Because it's obviously a cartoon, our minds don't wrestle with the question of whether it's the actual character or only his or her representation. So, we don't tell ourselves that this line drawing isn't really Marjane Satrapi. We just accept that it is.

Recommended Read for the Teacher



Persepolis, by Marjane Satrapi

Satrapi's autobiographical tale of her experiences during the Iranian Revolution is a profound work on many levels, not the least of which is her ability to use word, image, and symbol to express the transformative events to which she bore witness. Indeed, the strength of Satrapi's visual narrative is her ability to infuse her panels with symbolic touches that no realistic photograph has the same power to express.