

**Title of Session:** Arts and Literacy - Arnie Abrams

**Moderator:** BJ Berquist

**Guest Speaker:** Arnie Abrams

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**BJB2:** welcome, everyone, to today's Arts and Literacy discussion. Our guest speaker is Arnie Abrams, respected educator and photographer extraordinaire!

**BJB2:** we always start the Tapped In discussions with introductions. Can you please share where you are located and what you teach...and your interest in arts and literacy.

**JessicaL:** Baltimore, MD- 3rd grade I love to add the arts to my lit

**AmyHea:** I am a pre-service teacher in a kinder classroom. I am living in Houston, TX.

**FredK:** I am a tutor for literacy hoping to expand the ways to teach communication

**GaryML:** My name is Gary, and I teach 7th grade history in San Antonio Texas and always looking for ways to improve my teaching skills

**AndreaDu:** Richmond, Va... not currently teaching but an elem. art teacher-to-be

**JayneT:** I live in Moose Jaw. SK and attend the University of Regina. I am a third years arts education student. I love visual arts as well as literature.

**ArnieA:** I have been a college professor of Education for the past 25 years at Southern Oregon University. This year I moved to Computer Science. I am the author of about a dozen books and software programs. My real love is photography and the arts. I was an art major but I couldn't draw, so I turned to photography and got back at those art teachers with Photoshop.

**AmyHea:** he he...

**BJB2:** everyone do an intro?

**BJB2** . o O ( except me: I'm a communications teacher in Pennsylvania )

**BJB2:** Let's take a look at Arnie's webpage at [www.arnieabrams.net](http://www.arnieabrams.net)

**BJB2** turns the virtual floor over to Arnie

**BJB2:** everyone see that handsome man?!

**JessicaL** smiles

**BJB2:** did you do the portrait, Arnie?

**AmyHea:** yes, I do. Do we take a moment to check it out?

**ArnieA:** Well, hello everyone. I hope you haven't got lost finding my web site. This is my first time at Tapped In but I'm impressed. It's a bit strange talking about visuals without any visuals.

**BJB2:** what do you recommend people look at on your webpage, Arnie?

**ArnieA:** The portrait was done by one of my college students. She was a 19 year old who worked at Wal-Mart. I paid her for the portrait, but now she has a job as a Web designer. She's a great illustrator (something I'm not)

**BJB2** . o O ( besides making a huge purchase )

**BJB2:** cool...there is hope for those struggling artists!

**BJB2** . o O ( besides working at WalMart! )

**ArnieA:** You might go to the gallery of some of my photos... and also note the handouts page. I have PDFs and other files of several of my presentations there.

**JayneT:** the handouts are not working for me

**BJB2:** <http://www.arnieabrams.net/handouts.htm>

**BJB2:** they are all pdf

**ArnieA:** For some users, the handouts will need to be downloaded, saved and viewed later . Don't worry about it now.

**BJB2** agrees with Arnie

**JayneT:** okay

**ArnieA:** Perhaps you folks have some comments or questions about visual literacy, digital storytelling or other tech topics.

**AmyHea:** I like how simple your webpage is, Arnie.

**ArnieA:** My middle name is simple. I make a living out of trying to simplify technology for teachers and students.

**ArnieA:** No one ever complains about technology being too easy!

**FredK:** I've got one beautiful picture of a mountain loaded so far.

**BJB2** smiles. I think that is an important tip for digital storytelling...simplify

**AmyHea:** I am using a digital camera this week with my kinder's. I think they would really enjoy seeing them in a Photo Story. Where should I go to do this?

**ArnieA:** I think a simple way of showing pics in a presentation is PowerPoint. Perhaps you [can] put them into the program for them

**AmyHea:** Ok, I have done a couple of Power Points so far.

**BJB2:** have you done photo story, Amy?

**ArnieA:** The Windows version of PowerPoint has a command.. New>PhotoGallery. It builds the file for you from a folder of photo files.

**GaryML:** Definitely powerpoints, especially if you're teaching about a place where you've been

**AmyHea:** no, during my technology classes we were taught but it was too overwhelming at the time.

**BJB2:** Amy, are the kinders contributing to the text?

**BJB2** . o O ( perhaps naming their favorite color? )

**JayneT:** I used a program called photo story 3 today

**ArnieA:** For older kids I like to use Photoshop Elements slide show feature (Windows) or iMovie (Mac).

**AmyHea:** Yes, I have the text for them and they are filling in some of it.

**JayneT:** the program is for windows and is very user friendly

**ArnieA:** I believe Photo Story is a free download from Microsoft. Correct?

**BJB2** nods to Jayne. There is an archive of a discussion on photostory at [www.tappedin.org/transcripts](http://www.tappedin.org/transcripts)

**JayneT:** I think so, but am not positive, I used it at the university

**BJB2:** yes, Arnie

**GaryML:** yeah, I think all the Microsoft programs can be downloaded on the net

**BJB2** . o O ( the photostory discussion was led by Midge Frazel )

**ArnieA:** I have a friend creating templates for Photo Story for kids to drop in their images about different places.

**BJB2:** are the kids going to be adding text, Arnie?

**ArnieA:** The template idea is a good way to jump start a project, but it limits creativity.

**JayneT:** The photo story would be great for kinders, as it is simple, you can easily type in text add transitions, music, etc. It takes you step by step through the process

**BJB2** hopes that teachers include as much writing as they can in all the disciplines

**AmyHea:** Arnie, that's really neat. It might limit creativity but it allows the students to become more familiar with technology.

**ArnieA:** You can add text or not... with older than 3rd grade kids I recommend text. Words are good, pictures are good.. put them together they're even better!

**ArnieA:** I think literacy includes both words and imagery.

**BJB2** agrees!

**AmyHea:** I agree as well.

**FredK:** Yep

**ArnieA:** Literacy can also include the aesthetics of working with visuals, and video editing.

**BJB2:** please say more on this, Arnie

**ArnieA:** Here's a poser... we are considering a visual literacy class as a requirement at our university. What do you think? and what should be included?

**ArnieA:** Our definition becomes so broad it could be a 20 credit class!

**BJB2** cheers. I am a major supporter of visual literacy ...

**AmyHea:** It sounds good, but I need more info before I can make a comment.

**JayneT:** I think that is a great idea

**ArnieA:** So, what do you think should be included in a visual literacy curriculum?

**BJB2:** people are constantly bombarded with visuals...and need to learn how to make sense of it all

**GaryML:** sounds good to me

**ArnieA:** Is it an art class, technology, communication, psychology, etc?

**AmyHea:** That sounds really exciting.

**BJB2** chuckles...that could be a debate that lasts forever!

**FredK** . o O ( wow )

**JayneT:** couldn't you integrate all subject areas, it would be hard to limit visual literacy, as these are all aspects

**ArnieA:** When I visited New Zealand and Australia, vis lit was part of the art curriculum and mostly about graphic design.

**AmyHea:** That makes sense, graphic design.

**JayneT:** I could definitely see it as graphic design

**BJB2:** we've had some visual literacy discussions here in Tapped In...it's a difficult choice

**ArnieA:** Here's my idea... a team taught class with professors from communication, art and technology each offering instruction.

**BJB2:** much depends on what you want the students to take away with them...and what their major is

**FredK:** It helps with English as a second Language

**ArnieA:** I think film studies and psychology stretch things a bit.

**JayneT:** just a question, what is more important or powerful, images or text

**AmyHea:** I think that every major should be required to take a technology class. mine have really helped me in so many ways.

**BJB2:** if you want the students to be intelligent consumers then you could cover psychology of advertising...and film includes more and more product embedding

**ArnieA:** For most people I think it is text, but to make it more approachable a visual approach makes it inviting. Just think of USA Today vs the Wall St Journal in its appeal.

**GaryML:** a college is failing their student body if they don't require tech classes

**ArnieA:** So... you see how wide a field vis lit becomes. At a minimum we should include some pieces of it. I think photography is a natural doorway for "non artists".

**AmyHea:** I feel that imagery and text go hand in hand. that's why picture books are used so frequently in pre-k and kinder.

**ArnieA:** So, why don't we use picture books for adults much?

**AmyHea:** The pictures help build communication and literacy skills.

**FredK:** Pictures do make good story starters

**BJB2:** are you familiar with <http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/tools/5/>

**JayneT:** In my lit k-6 class last semester I learnt a lot about picture books in the classroom

**JayneT:** if wanting to introduce pic books at later stages-graphic novels is a good choice

**BJB2:** I use picture books with my teen students

**AmyHea:** I will add that to my favs and check it out later. thanks

**BJB2:** they're especially good for ESL students

**GaryML:** I try to always incorporate pictures, maps, etc. when teaching

**AmyHea:** How do the teens respond to the pic books?

**ArnieA:** I think student media festivals are a great way to entice students to do digital story telling.

**FredK:** Ever use comic books without the balloons?

**BJB2:** they do ok...some picture books are especially for older kids

**ArnieA:** I think student media festivals are a great way to entice students to do digital story telling.

**BJB2:** so, you will need to include digital storytelling in your visual literacy course?

**AmyHea:** comic books sounds really cool. I tried it with a 1st grade class and it was way over their heads. maybe I needed more of a guided practice.

**BJB2:** graphic novels are for older kids, Amy

**BJB2 . o O** ( and some are really for adults )

**AmyHea:** most of the kids were esl, maybe they didn't have the lang. yet.

**ArnieA:** Here are some ideas for using visuals in the classroom: stills brought into video editing, adding music and/or narration, creating DVDs, digital story telling movies posted on web sites or on CDs. The emphasis is on the narrative aspect.

**AmyHea:** I would really like to incorporate more music into my lessons.

**BJB2 . o O** ( there is a Music Across the Curriculum discussion every month in Tapped In, Amy... )

**AmyHea:** we do a lot of music and movement but I want more that goes along with their finished product.

**BJB2:** and a Learning From Lyrics discussion

**AmyHea:** ok, that sounds good. thanks

**BJB2 . o O** ( next Music ACC is November 13 )

**BJB2:** Lyrics is on November 21

**AmyHea:** thanks for the dates.

**GaryML:** The last lyrics class gave me a ton of ideas

**ArnieA:** In any case these things make me regret losing the arts in the classroom. We need to emphasize it.

**AmyHea:** it's raining pretty hard here, so if sign off it's because my electricity went out.

**BJB2** nods to Amy.

**BJB2:** Arts in the classroom! What a great idea!

**BJB2 . o O** ( one of the reasons I do this arts and literacy discussion every month )

**AmyHea:** arts in the classroom is so important.

**BJB2:** how many of you have arts specialists in your school?

**AmyHea:** I only had to take one art ed. class for my degree, but it really opened my eyes to a whole new world of ideas.

**ArnieA:** I'm speaking at NSBA this week in Dallas and will pass that along to the administrators!

**BJB2:** . o O ( they're becoming an endangered species )

**BJB2:** thanks, Arnie

**ArnieA:** I think the arts need to be viewed as being essential skills and not as a nice cultural add on.

**AmyHea:** I have an art specialist in my school. Actually there has been an art specialist at every school that I have worked in.

**JayneT:** I am fortunate as all my classes are arts education classes

**BJB2:** If you have an arts specialist, they are like the librarian...important people to befriend! Try collaborating with them

**JayneT:** We start out in the five strands and then choose a major and a minor

**ArnieA:** I live in a town where the citizens have passed levies to support the arts in the schools. We have good funding for art, music, drama. We have developed an "arts economy".

**BJB2:** wow, Arnie, that's great to hear!

**AmyHea:** that's Oregon for ya!

**BJB2:** smiles.

**ArnieA:** My town has the Oregon Shakespeare Festival as a major employer and lots of art galleries.

**BJB2:** Another resource that many of you have is a local arts council...

**BJB2:** often they can provide artists in residence for your schools

**ArnieA:** We can show that the arts can fit into economic and job terms.



**AmyHea:** that sounds neat. I will be moving to Austin next month. They just voted on millions of dollars to help support the art scene. We'll see what happens.

**ArnieA:** Austin is one of my favorite towns. I will be a keynote at TCEA there in February. I will be speaking about improving learning via digital media.

**GaryML:** I've heard great things about Austin and the arts, San Antonio is different story

**BJB2:** often, museums have outreach programs

**ArnieA:** Some people call Austin a blue dot in a red state.

**GaryML:** very true

**AmyHea:** that sounds great Arnie. I would love to hear you speak.

**AmyHea:** yes, Austin is very random.

**AmyHea:** funny that it is the state capitol.

**ArnieA:** You folks might want to look at my book on Award Winning Digital Photography Projects for the Classroom. I provide lesson plans for 75 projects across the curriculum. They were designed by teachers.

**AmyHea:** I recently attended the Austin book festival at the capitol.

**AmyHea:** We can find your book on your webpage?

**ArnieA:** Yes, along with excerpts.

**BJB2:** [http://www.arnieabrams.net/photo\\_proj\\_class.html](http://www.arnieabrams.net/photo_proj_class.html)

**JayneT:** sounds like a great resource

**BJB2:** the table of contents is covers some pretty extensive topics

**BJB2:** wow, our time is almost up already!

**BJB2:** any last questions for Arnie?

**BJB2:** Thanks so much for joining us for the discussion, Arnie! It's been wonderful.

**AmyHea:** no, but I really enjoyed this discussion.

**GaryML:** Thanks for the links and website!

**JayneT:** Thanx

**ArnieA:** Thank you BJ and the rest too. It was fun and went well (I think), sorry about the typos!

**AmyHea:** Thanks Arnie.

**AmyHea:** Thanks BJB

**BJB2** . o O ( we never worry about typos! )

**BJB2:** please join us any time, Arnie...

**ArnieA:** I will.