



## Using Luca della Robbia's Cantoria as Inspiration in Integrating Visual Art, Music, and Literature

**Grade level:** 9-12

### **Background:**

Luca della Robbia's Cantoria for Florence Cathedral was inspired by the emotional, physical, and social experience of music. The work also incorporates literary elements in that it features an inscription of Psalm 150, "Laudate Dominum in sanctis eius..." - a biblical poem encouraging praise through music. Because of these many elements, the Cantoria provides an example of how visual art, music, and literature can all embody a singular idea or emotion in different ways (visually, aurally, and textually). In this lesson, students will creatively explore the intersections of these different artistic forms by creating panels in which they use visual art and poetry to respond to a song.

### **Essential Questions:**

1. How are visual art, music, and literature similar and different in conveying emotions or ideas?
2. How can visual art, music, and poetry inform one another?

### **Objective:**

Students will create a well-crafted artwork on panel in which they use a visual art form of their choice as well as written word to portray an idea or emotion in response to a song.

### **Terms:**

- Composition
- Rhythm
- Harmony
- Unity
- Repetition

### **Materials:**

- Sketchbooks
  - Pencils
  - A song
  - Headphones
  - Panels (art board or wood)
  - Colored Pencils
  - Paint
  - Collage materials
- (open ended in regards to materials)

**Lesson:**

## Day 1-2:

- Introduce students to Luca della Robbia's Cantoria and the role that music and words played in relation to the piece. You may want to briefly discuss the history of Renaissance Italy as it relates to art, music, and religion. You may also want to read and discuss Psalm 150. (This may be before/after a visit to the exhibition).
- Investigate the Cantoria. What emotions or ideas seem to be captured in the piece? What song or type of music reminds you of those emotions or ideas? What words come to mind that describe those emotions or ideas? Encourage the students to give thoughtful answers in regards to expressive content. For example, they should not just say Renaissance music because the piece was made during that time period.
- Facilitate a classroom discussion that compares and contrasts visual art, music, and literature. Some questions to consider might be similarities and differences in compositional elements, expression/emotion, narrative, etc. Have students think about contemporary examples of the integration of these forms. You may also want to discuss some terms that are shared in describing visual art, music, and poetry. Some examples include composition, rhythm, harmony, unity, and repetition.
- As a sketchbook activity, play a few different types of songs and have the students list words and do drawings in response to what they are hearing.
- Ask the students to think about a song that has meaning or emotional substance to them personally, and to bring the song, as well as a means to listen to it on headphones, to the next class meeting. (This aspect may become problematic for some classrooms, and can be adjusted and adapted. Perhaps the students can complete the project without having the song with them in class, or perhaps there could be one song that you play for the class as a whole to use for their project.)

## Day 3-4:

- Have students take a few moments to listen to their songs privately and list words that come to mind as they listen. Similar to Luca della Robbia's panels, students will be creating a panel in response to their songs.
- First, they will do a visual response to their song in whatever medium they choose (drawing, paint, collage, etc). This can be left very open ended. (Some might do abstraction, some might do figurative work). The students should be encouraged to listen to their songs often while they are working.
- Next, the students will write a literary response using the words that they listed in response to their songs. This can also be very open ended (poetry, prose, a sentence, etc). The written responses will then be placed onto their works in some way, in a similar manner to della Robbia's Psalm 150.
- The panels can be hung beside one another on the wall in a similar manner to the Cantoria.

**Assessment:**

Formative assessment will occur through classroom discussion and verbal feedback during studio time. Summative assessment can be recorded by rubric that can be adjusted according to teacher discretion.

| Needs Improvement   | Good   | Exemplary  |
|---|--|--|
| Student does not take part in discussion/ is overly distracting or misbehaved | Student is active during discussion/contributes at least one comment | Student contributes thoughtfully and productively in discussion  |
| Student chooses not to complete the artwork and makes no effort to make it up | Student completes all the criteria of the artwork assignment         | Student produces a well-crafted and creatively developed artwork |

**Modifications/Extensions:**

If you would rather not use headphones in your class, you may want to choose one song to play aloud. It may be interesting to see the varied ways in which the students interpret the song.

To integrate contemporary art, you may want to include discussion about Janet Cardiff’s *Forty Part Motet*, which is a contemporary example of music incorporated into art and will also be on view at the High at the same time as *Make a Joyful Noise*.

At the end of the project, you may want to have a critique in which the students discuss their panels, perhaps touching on topics such as why they chose their specific songs and explaining their visual and textual interpretations of their songs.

**Standards:**

**ELACC9-10SL1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions(one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**ELACC9-10L3:** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

**ELACC9-10L5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

**ELACC11-12SL1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**ELACC11-12L3:** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when

reading or listening.

**ELACC11-12L5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

**VAHSVAMC.1** Engages in the creative process, imagines new ideas by using mental and visual imagery, conceptualizes these ideas by using artistic language and contextual understandings in assessing learning, and develops a personal artistic voice that gives unique form to these concepts.

**VAHSVAMC.4** Analyzes the origins of one's own ideas in relation to community, culture, and the world.

**VAHSVAPR.1** Uses formal qualities of art (elements and principles) to create unified composition and communicate meaning.

**VAHSVAPR.5** Creates artwork reflecting a range of concepts, ideas, and subject matter.

**VAHSVAPR.6** Keeps a visual/verbal sketchbook journal, consistently throughout the course, to collect, develop, and preserve ideas in order to produce works of art around themes of personal meaning.

**VAHSVAAR.3** Develops multiple strategies for responding to and reflecting on artworks.

**VAHSVAC.1** Applies information from other disciplines to enhance the understanding and production of artworks.