

Educators Guide



goicolea
Alter Ego: A Decade of Work by Anthony Goicolea

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About This Guide

This educators guide was designed for use in conjunction with field trips to the *Alter Ego: A Decade of Work by Anthony Goicolea*. Its primary focus is to familiarize educators with the use of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to develop critical thinking, communication and visual literacy skills.

We recommend that you use this guide to prepare yourself, rather than your students, for the tour, and that you return to the resources in the guide after the tour in order to continue to build on your museum experience within your classroom.



Anthony Goicolea, *Guardian*, 2008. Chromogenic print, 39.75 x 84.6" Telfair Museum of Art, purchased with funds provided by the William Jay Society.

Acknowledgements

Alter Ego: A Decade of Work by Anthony Goicolea, the first major museum exhibition devoted solely to his work, was organized by the North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina, and Telfair Museums, Savannah, Georgia, in collaboration with 21c Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.

Information in this guide about the artist and his work was adapted from the exhibition catalogue *Alter Ego: A Decade of Work by Anthony Goicolea*. This book, co-published by the North Carolina Museum of Art and Telfair Museums, is distributed by University of Georgia Press, and contains essays by Linda Johnson Dougherty and Holly Koons McCullough.

Information about Visual Thinking Strategies was adapted from materials provided by Visual Understanding in Education, a non-profit organization with a mission to broaden the use of VTS, and increase understanding of aesthetic development. Please visit www.vtshome.org

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About the Artist



Born in 1971 in Atlanta, Georgia, Anthony Goicolea (pronounced goy-koh-LAY-ah) is a first-generation Cuban American artist living and working in Brooklyn, New York. His extended family immigrated to the United States from Cuba soon after Castro came to power—a fact that underpins much of his work. Goicolea holds a B.A. in art history and a B.F.A. in drawing and painting, both earned at the University of Georgia, and an M.F.A. from Pratt Institute of Art.

About the Work



Anthony Goicolea, *Warriors*, 2001. Chromogenic print mounted on Sintra board, 30 x 2706" Courtesy 21c Museums and Collection of Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson.



Goicolea's artwork explores themes ranging from personal history and identity, to cultural tradition and heritage, to alienation and displacement. It includes self-portraits, landscapes, and narrative tableaux executed in a variety of media, including sculpture and video installations, photography, and drawings. His early works featured groups of boys on the threshold of adolescence, acting out childhood fantasies and rituals of revelry in highly staged settings, often consisting of complex composites of the artist himself, in all manner of poses and guises.

Anthony Goicolea, *Kidnap*, 2004-2005. Single-channel DVD. Courtesy Postmasters Gallery.

Soon after, Goicolea began focusing on digitally composed landscapes, ranging from dream-like woodland environments to vast, urban and industrial wastelands. In recent series, primitive lean-tos and crudely constructed shanties coexist in an uneasy union with the vestiges of an industrialized society.



Left to right: Anthony Goicolea, *Deconstruction*, 2007. Chromogenic print, mounted on aluminum and laminated with Plexiglas., 72 x 117.5" , Courtesy North Carolina Museum of Art, Gift of Allen G. Thomas. / Anthony Goicolea, *Family Geometry*, 2008. Ink and acrylic on canvas, 55 x 66.5" Courtesy of the Artist and Postmasters Gallery.

Recently, Goicolea has turned to his own personal history in a body of work exploring his roots and family heritage. These poignant, sometimes cinematic images and installations are characterized by a search for ancestral connections to a mythical homeland, Cuba, revealing nostalgia for a past that the artist never actually experienced, as well as a sense of cultural dislocation and isolation.

Goicolea, Cuba, and Cultural Identity

Goicolea's work from 2008 to 2009 focuses on genealogy and family history, exploring the past and his extended family as a way to understand his own identity as a first-generation Cuban American. In 1961, soon after Castro came to power, Goicolea's extended family emigrated from Cuba to the United States, fleeing the country with just a few belongings, including family photographs. They never returned, settling in areas around Atlanta and Miami. Goicolea went to Havana for the first time in May of 2008 and visited the places his family members left behind, using their drawn-from-memory maps to find the homes, farms, schools, and churches from their past.



In reference to this body of work, Goicolea has said, "I've always had these different stories from different relatives about what it was like growing up in Cuba, how they'd left, how they came [to America] and what it's like now. So it's become this mythic place in my head and I think that's something a lot of first-generation immigrants experience. They grow up with certain customs and stories indicative of their homeland. They have this connection to a place they've never really experienced, but they also have the place they actually grew up in. Having those two things and not feeling fully connected to either leaves this sensation of alienation."

In *Night Sitting*, 2009, Goicolea composes a portrait that includes four generations from both sides of his family. Gathered on the family farm in Cuba and surrounded by twinkling strands of party lights, as well as film equipment and stage lights, they are like actors assembled for a play or movie. In Goicolea's words, "The family members are rendered in their most idealized states from when they were living in Cuba." For instance, he depicts his great-grandmother as the same age as his aunt and his mother. Romantic, nostalgic, poignant — these formal, posed portraits capture everyone in an ideal, utopian moment.



Anthony Goicolea, *Night Sitting*, 2009. Acrylic, graphite, and spray paint on Mylar. Triptych: 81 x 124" overall.
Courtesy of 21c Museum and Collection of Laura Lee Brown and Steve Wilson.

Visual Thinking Strategies



Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a research-based teaching method that improves critical thinking and language skills through discussions of images. VTS encourages participation and self-confidence, especially among students who struggle. VTS is easy to learn and offers a proven strategy for educators to meet learning objectives.

Visual Thinking Strategies work best with art work that is open to interpretation: pictures whose content is less clear, that subsequently encourage speculation, questioning, and complex interpretations. That's why many of

Anthony Goicolea's works are a natural match for VTS. He is a consummate storyteller, providing just enough information to set the scene and then leaving it up to the viewer to fill in the story line.

Building on children's innate capacity to make sense of what they see, Visual Thinking Strategies enable students and teachers to examine and talk about unfamiliar subjects with rigor and excitement. VTS is essentially a discovery process, based in discussions that the teacher facilitates through three questions, carefully phrased to provoke thoughtful responses. The questions ask students to focus, become reflective and to question—the basis for thinking critically.

VTS Tours at Telfair Museums

Students touring *Alter Ego: A Decade of Work by Anthony Goicolea* will participate in group discussions prompting them to observe carefully, decipher “what is going on,” and gather evidence to support their opinions. As they share and support their observations, they will practice fact-based and logical reasoning skills. Students will also take part in a writing activity in the galleries, further supporting Language Arts standards addressed by this school tours program. (A copy of the writing activity worksheet used by the Telfair Museums for VTS tours is included in this guide.)

Gallery discussions will be facilitated by Telfair Museums docents trained in Visual Thinking Strategies. VTS has been field tested since 1991 in longitudinal studies employing experimental and control groups in multiple sites in the United States and other countries. These studies have found that VTS builds critical thinking skills that students transfer to other settings and subjects, including writing, math, social studies, and science. VTS produces measurable academic growth in students with varying ethnicities, income levels, and school achievement, including those with limited English skills and poor prior standardized test performance.



Using VTS in Your Classroom

Start by visiting <http://www.vtshome.org/> to learn more about the methodology. This website is the source for all things VTS, and where you will find helpful, specific advice for addressing individual situations and concerns. What follows is an introductory outline for Visual Thinking Strategies.

Beginning the Lesson:

- ◆ **Call students' attention to the image.**
- ◆ **Give students a moment to look in silence before inviting them to speak.**

Asking the Questions:

- ◆ ***What's going on in this picture?***

This question suggests that the image is “about” something which can be figured out. It allows comments of any sort—addressing colors, feelings, information, highly personal associations, and so forth. Think about the wording of the question and compare it to “What do you see in this picture?” The latter often results in students making lists of what is depicted. The recommended wording urges them to probe for meaning.

- ◆ ***What do you see that makes you say that?***

Students are prompted to look more and gather evidence to support their opinions. They argue their points, not proving them so much as grounding their interpretations in concrete visual data.. Again the phrasing is important. “Why do you say that?” might seem a reasonable alternative, but the much more concrete “What do you see that makes you say that?” keeps the discussion anchored in the image. Asking “Why?” implies that the student should provide motives, not evidence, for an opinion.

- ◆ ***What more can you find?***

Details that might be missed are found when students are urged to look for more. The habit of making thorough and rigorous examinations is thus encouraged, and opportunities arise for considering other points of view.

Responding to Student Comments:

- ◆ **Listen carefully** to students, making sure you hear all of what they say and understand it accurately. Ask for clarification if necessary.
- ◆ **Point** to what they mention in the art work. Gesture with precision to focus student attention.
- ◆ **Paraphrase** each comment. If you are careful and skillful, you can turn a halting response into something clearer or more exact. Model language skills without obviously correcting the student.
- ◆ **Accept each comment neutrally.** Acknowledge each student's contribution in ways that feel supportive without singling it out as “right.” Try a simple “Thank you. What more can we find?”
- ◆ **Link observations.** Keep track of various strands of thoughts and draw links among related responses. Recalling links shows how thinking evolves, changes, and builds.

Choosing Images for VTS Discussions

Beginning viewers make sense of what they encounter based on what they already know; thus one essential requirement for art images introduced to them is accessibility: are they likely to recognize what they observe? Can they make reasonable associations with it based on what they already know? Pictures should thus include identifiable and reasonably familiar people, actions, interactions, settings, and emotions. Viewers should be able to glean what they can from the objects without expert intervention, learning to trust that most art can be interpreted to a meaningful degree through examination, association, and deduction. What assists the beginning viewer is the sense that they are "getting it right." Puzzling them is useful, but stumping them is not.

Visual Thinking Strategies work best with art work that is open to interpretation: they should contain a number of valid readings, and several possible meanings, even levels of meaning. This allows an intriguing challenge, and it also justifies a range of viable viewpoints. The more a work is open to interpretation, the more likely the viewer's intuition is reasonable. Pictures that are less clear encourage speculation, questioning, and complex interpretations.



Anthony Goicolea, *Disassembly*, 2006. Mixed Media on Mylar, 53 x 36"
Collection of Allen G. Thomas Jr.

Image Sources

As noted before, Anthony Goicolea's work is a natural match for Visual Thinking Strategies. Many of his pieces present mysterious scenes, seemingly caught somewhere in the middle of an event, and headed toward an uncertain conclusion. Because they are open to numerous interpretations, they inspire lively discussions.

To access a PowerPoint presentation of images from *Alter Ego: A Decade of Work* by Anthony Goicolea, or for a selection of VTS appropriate images from the Telfair Museums permanent collection, please refer to: <http://telfair.org/learn/resources/>

VTS Resources

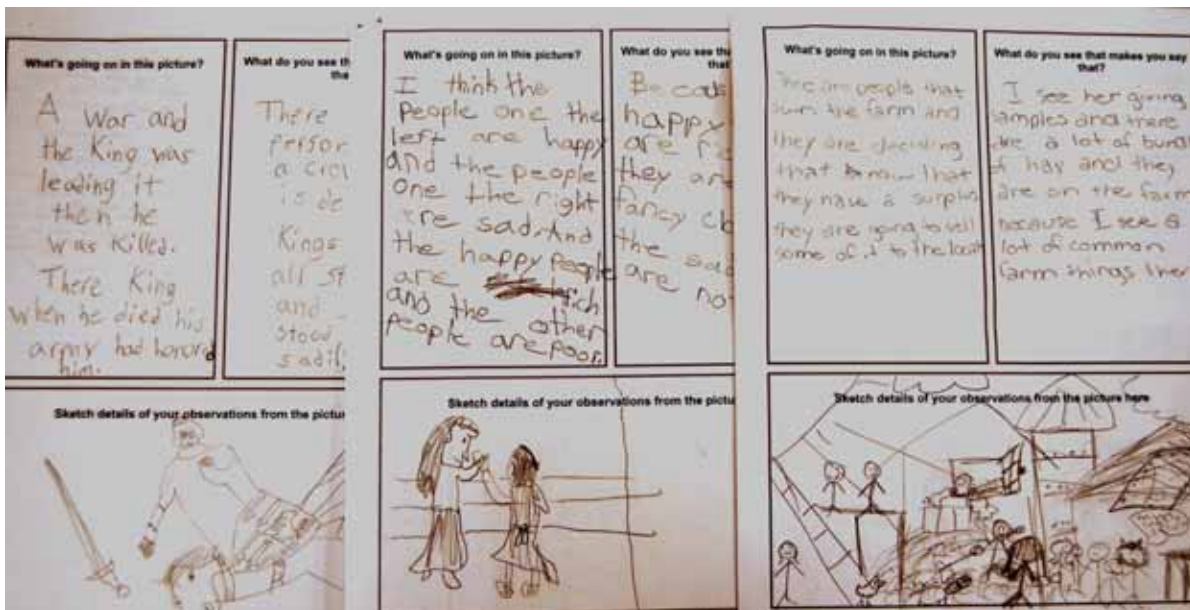
Visual Understanding in Education

VTS was developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine more than twenty years ago. The founders of VTS incorporated Visual Understanding in Education (VUE) as a non-profit organization. Their mission is to foster cognitive growth through interaction with art, to boost academic achievement in every school where VTS is implemented, and facilitate systemic change in how students learn and how teachers teach. The VTS material presented in this guide is adapted from their website and based on their research. We strongly recommend their resources page: <http://vtshome.org/pages/vts-downloads>

Print-ready Writing Prompts

The following five pages contain reproducible worksheets. The first (*Telfair Museums VTS Writing Prompt*) is a two-sided single-page worksheet developed by Telfair Museums and used in conjunction with our VTS tours for school children. At the close of their tour, students use this outline to guide them as they write about the artwork that was the center of their last VTS discussion. Students record the answers to the questions “What is going on in this picture?” and “What do you see that makes you think that?” They are reminded that their views may have been altered by opinions voiced by classmates during the discussion, and that they are free to adopt and include observations that were not initially their own. They also have the opportunity to sketch, in a kind of visual note-taking, aspects of the referred-to artwork. A checklist asking students to review their work is included. This checklist was adapted from the one used in the Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment.

This VTS worksheet is followed two creative writing prompts based on works by Anthony Goicolea. Each one introduces a one-sentence scenario that students then enlarge on. The fifth sheet in this series provides arts-related practice in reading comprehension.



Writing samples and drawings composed by 4th grade students during a Telfair Museums Visual Thinking Strategies tour.

What's going on in this picture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

Writing Checklist ✓

- Read your work silently to yourself. Does it make sense?
- Did you describe what you think is happening in the picture?
- Did you include details that help explain what is happening?
- Did you check spelling, punctuation, and capitalization?

Sketch details of your observations.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Reading for Comprehension

PROFILE: ANTHONY GOICOLEA
Documenting the Imaginary



By **MATTHEW PHILLIP**

Save for a green wall here and there — one of which happens to match his T-shirt — Anthony Goicolea's Williamsburg apartment is surprisingly monochromatic. Color, it appears, is saved for his vibrant photographs and drawings.

Only days away from a solo exhibition of his photographs, drawings, and videos, opening April 9 at Postmasters Gallery, and the limited-edition publication of his second book of drawings, called simply "Drawings" (2005, Twin Palms Press), the artist, 33, far from seeming nervous, exuded an enchanting youthfulness. Casually dressed in layered T-shirts and fashionably tattered jeans, and with a boyish energy radiating from his sparkling eyes, Mr. Goicolea described new excitement over the forthcoming show, his first in New York in three years.

Mr. Goicolea recalls drawing and making art as far back as he can remember. His mother, a graduate of New York's School of Visual Arts, painted frequently in their house, and his brothers and sisters all made art in their own ways. As far back as the second grade he was the one people went to when they wanted something drawn. "My mother has framed some of the drawings I did when I was in kindergarten," he said. "Not to toot my own horn, but they're actually pretty good work."

Throughout high school he took more art classes and ended up earning degrees in art from the University of Georgia and Pratt. As an undergraduate, he had moments of doubt when he wondered about an alternate career, one that would definitely pay the bills, so after finishing school he worked in advertising for a year. The experience induced deep self-reflection. "I spent a year wondering if I would end up one of those couch-potato people who don't do anything besides work a job they hate," he recalled.

In the end, none of the alternative career options he came up with lasted. Art, he realized, is simply part of the way he lives. "Making art is like a filtration process for me. I see the world and I process it and then produce something. Fortunately, I've never experienced an artistic block," he said. "It's always sort of the reverse. I am overwhelmed with what I want to do, and I never have time enough to get it all done. I'm always working."

"Anthony Goicolea: Sheltered Life" until May 7 at Postmasters Gallery, 459 W. 19th Street, 212-727-3323.

What factors could have led to Goicolea's success as an artist?

List three reasons mentioned specifically in the article.

1.

2.

3.

One more for bonus points!

4.

Excerpted from the New York Sun, April 10th, 2005, page 25.

www.anthonygoicolea.com/NewAnthonySite/press/2005/The%20New%20York%20Sun/TheNewYorkSun_04_08_05.pdf

Language Arts Extension Activities: Web Resources



<http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>

Make Beliefs Comix helps children and adults tap into their creativity to create their own comic strips in English, Spanish, French, Italian, German and Latin. Parents and kids can select from 15 fun characters with different moods and write words for blank talk and thought balloons to make their characters talk and think. Users can also find story ideas and prompts to help them craft their graphic stories. Once they've created their comics, they can print them to

create comic books or email them to friends and family. There are also story ideas and prompts to help users create graphic stories. This site can be used by educators and parents to teach language, reading and writing skills, and by students to facilitate self-expression and storytelling as well as computer literacy.



<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/student-interactives/literary-graffiti-30023.html>

Teaching students to visualize what they are reading and to create graphic symbols helps them develop as readers. The Literary Graffiti interactive combines the process of drawing with analytical thinking about a text by pairing an online drawing space with writing prompts (shown at left) that encourage students to make connections between their visual designs and the text. The tool can be used for whole-class discussion of a text, small-group work, or individually, where students use "graffiti," symbols, drawings, shapes,

and colors to construct a graphic of the text they are reading. After completing their individual or group images, students have the ability to print out their final versions for feedback and assessment.

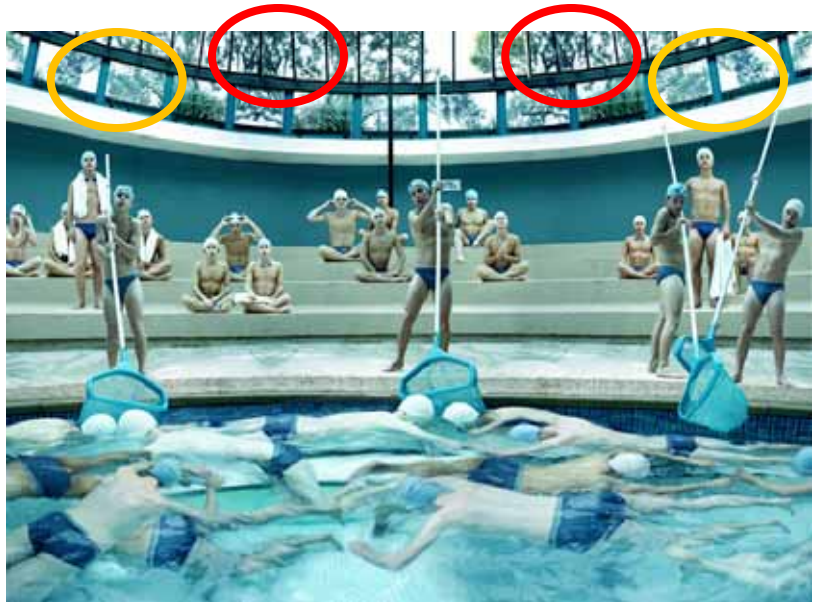


<http://www.easystreetprompts.com/p/about-easy-street.html>

Easy Street Prompts provides inspiring visual ideas for writing and the arts. Use one of the prompts to get started writing. A new idea will post every day. All you have to do is respond to it. After you create, share it in the comments or post a link. Easy Street Prompts began as a daily prompt site for creative writing students. What you'll find here are random words, thought-provoking pictures, and an occasional video. Everyone is welcome to stop by and be inspired.

Visual Arts Extension Activities: Manipulating Photographs

Goicolea frequently composes his photographs using a software tool, called Photoshop, that allows him to digitally manipulate photographic images, in particular, to select, copy, position, and paste sections of images. Looking carefully at some of Goicolea's photographic prints, you may notice that individual people and portions of the landscape are repeated. For instance, in *Pool Pushers*, sections of the background foliage are copied and reversed. You may have already noticed that all the figures in this work are Goicolea himself.



Anthony Goicolea, *Pool Pushers*, 2001. Chromogenic print, 71 x 100" Collection of Dr. Carlos Garcia-Velez. **Reproduction altered to emphasize repeated imagery.**

If you do not have access to Photoshop, you can still experiment with this technique by downloading Paint.NET, a free, open-source image and photo editing software package for computers that runs on Windows. It is a relatively simple and intuitive program, but contains enough tools to perform a wide range of effects. Read more about it at the following cnet tech product review:

http://download.cnet.com/Paint-NET/3000-2192_4-10338146.html?tag=dropDownForm;productListing



Carl Ludwig Brandt. *Mary Telfair*, 1896. Oil on Canvas, 89.75 x 64.25" Collection of Telfair Museums



Digitally manipulated copy of Brandt's *Mary Telfair*, composed using Paint.NET

Visual Arts Extension Activities: Layering Images with Mixed Media

Goicolea is a master draftsman, and his layered works on Mylar and Plexiglas incorporate acrylic paint and intricately detailed ink and graphite drawings, collaged together in transparent, semi-transparent, and opaque layers.



Anthony Goicolea, *Cat's Cradle*, 2004. Graphite, ink, and acrylic on Mylar, 23.5 x 77.75" Collection of Allen G. Thomas Jr.

Using commonly found materials, students can create similarly layered compositions. Wax paper, tissue paper, tracing paper, overhead transparencies, "windows" from food packaging, and the trim left over from the school laminating machine can provide semi- to translucent working surfaces

Working in layers provides students with a wider degree of flexibility for experimenting with various compositions and combinations of materials. The illustration below demonstrates marker, crayon, pencil, and watercolor used in combination with paper, tissue, transparencies and laminate. Students can freely test the results of various combinations of materials and orientations. Figures and other elements traced from printed material can be added, and may inspire students with the possibility of a narrative theme.

For an in-depth exploration of composition, provide students with reproductions of paintings and ask them to trace elements from the work onto translucent layers. Experimenting with alternative placements of these elements will reveal the effects of basic compositional principles such as balance and emphasis.



Curriculum Connections

The following subjects, knowledge, and skills are addressed by the use of Visual Thinking Strategies, and/or the content of this guide.

Georgia Grade 5 Writing Assessment

- The Georgia Grade 5 Writing assessment covers two types of narrative writing: relating a personal experience and creating an imaginative story. Many of the images featured in Goicolea's *Alter Ego* exhibition are imaginative interpretations of the childhood experiences, providing prompts that elicit a narrative response.
- In the *Assessment and Instructional Guide for the Georgia Writing Assessment*, teachers who wish to assist students in interpreting writing prompts are advised to model a “think-aloud about a writing topic and how the topic can become a story.” This is essentially the process followed when a docent leads a VTS tour.
- The *Assessment and Instructional Guide* also advises that “Reading, writing, listening, thinking and speaking are interactive and inseparable and should be taught accordingly.” The guided discussions that VTS promotes exemplify these kinds of classroom exchanges. Not only do students benefit from exposure to VTS’ carefully developed practices, but teachers find VTS methods easy to adopt for use across the curriculum.

Common Core Curriculum Language Arts Standards, 4th Grade:

- **Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration**

(These skills will be practiced by students and/or modeled by docents and during VTS discussions.)

1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions ... building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly ...
2. Paraphrase portions of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Identify reasons and evidence a speaker provides to support particular points ...

- **Reading: Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure**

(These skills will be used by students in “reading” narrative art. Docents will use the following vocabulary (designated in bold) to promote transfer of skills from text to image and vice versa.)

1. Refer to **details and examples** ... when drawing **inferences**.
2. Determine the **main idea** ... and explain how it is supported by **key details** ...
5. **Describe** the overall structure (e.g., **chronology, comparison, cause/effect, problem/solution**) of events ...

- **Writing: Text Types and Purposes**

(Students will practice these skills as a part of the writing exercise that closes their last VTS discussion.)

1. Write opinion pieces on topics ... supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Common Core Curriculum Language Arts Standards, 4th Grade, *Continued*:

- **Conventions of Standard English**

(At the close of the writing assignment, docents will prompt students to use a provided checklist to review their work.)

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage ...
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation...

Georgia Performance Standards, Visual Arts, 6th Grade

- VA6CU.2 Investigates and discovers personal relationship to community, culture, and the world through making and studying art.
 - c. Recognizes the relationship between personal artistic contributions and one's own relationship to the world at large
- VA6PR.1 Understands and applies media, techniques, and processes.
 - f. Uses technology to produce original works of art (e.g., digital photo montage on a personally or socially compelling theme)
- VA6MC.4 Engages in dialogue about his or her artwork and the artwork of others.
 - a. Provides personal response (e.g., spoken, written, or visual) to a work of art using the language of art.
 - b. Participates in open-ended discussion, and supports peers through informal assessment of idea development and works of art in progress
- VA6C.3 Expands knowledge of art as a profession and/or avocation.
 - b. Identifies skills and educational requirements necessary to pursue visual arts professions (e.g., fine artists, designers, art educators, architects, animators).
 - d. Identifies and builds art skills and habits of mind that support a variety of careers (e.g., higher order thinking skills, tolerance for ambiguity, judgment in the absence of rule, finding structure in apparent disorder, problem-solving skills, perseverance, and creativity)

Georgia Performance Standards, Social Studies

- **5th Grade** SS5H8 The student will describe the importance of key people, events, and developments between 1950-1975
 - a. Discuss the importance of the Cuban Missile Crisis.
- **6th Grade** SS6G1 The student will locate selected features of Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - b. Locate on a world and regional political-physical map the country of Cuba.
- **High School** SSUSH20 The student will analyze the domestic and international impact of the Cold War on the United States
 - c. Describe the Cuban Revolution, the Bay of Pigs, and the Cuban missile crisis.
 - e. Explain the role of geography on the Bay of Pigs, and the Cuban missile crisis.

