

# Meaningful Learning, Caring Community *Cultivating Creative & Civic Capacities*



(left to right) Playing with materials to make a superhero mask; teachers looking closely and reasoning with evidence, middle schoolers examining a CMA work to explore the power of storytelling, prototyping a light fixture to illuminate a social issue

## *Jennings Educator Institute 2023*

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**Cat Lynch**, Lead Teaching Artist & Coordinator for Young Child Programming; Columbus Museum of Art

# Charting our Journeys (so far)

2-min freewrite/draw

Where were you at the start of this journey?

What's something you've encountered in Educators Institute that has inspired you?

What's something you've encountered in Educators Institute that has challenged you?

Where do you hope you're going?



Aminah Robinson, *Raganon*, detail



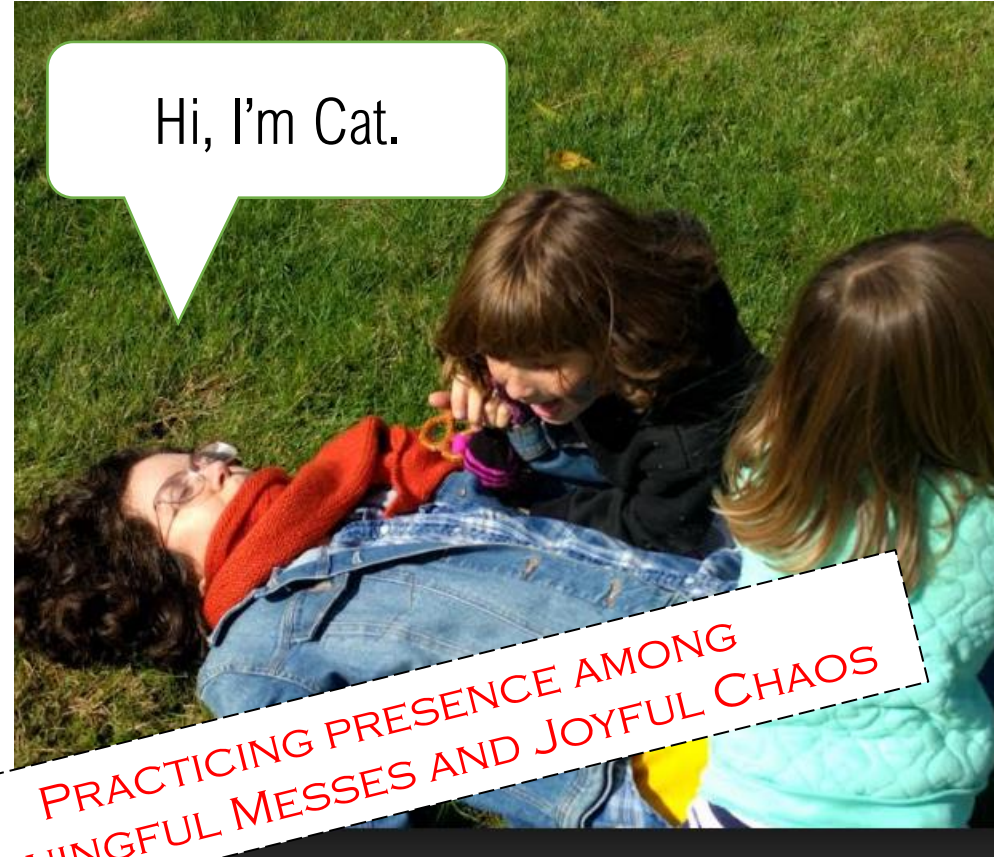
Hi, I'm Jen.

(DE)STABILIZED MOVEMENT: MUSEUM EDUCATOR SEEKING NEW PATH



Hi, I'm Cat.

PRACTICING PRESENCE AMONG  
MEANINGFUL MESSSES AND JOYFUL CHAOS





Tar Beach - Inman On a Bridge Series - Part 1  
by Faith Ringgold © 1988  
I will always remember when the stars fell down  
around us and lifted me up above the George  
Washington Bridge.



1  
I would see our  
boy fly high with  
Manny and Daddy  
and Mr. & Mrs. Honey  
our most dear neigh-  
bors who played  
cards as if nothing  
was going on, and  
Belie, my baby brother,  
laying flat, still on  
the mattress just  
like I had him in his  
eyes like huge round  
lights tracking me  
through the sky.

2  
Sleeping on Tar Beach was magical.  
Laying in the net in the night with  
stars and skyscraper buildings all  
around me made me feel rich, like  
I owned it. That I could see the  
bridge was my most proud possession.



3  
Now I have claimed it. All that he  
was fly over it for it to be what yours  
I can wear it like a fancy diamond  
necklace, or just fly over it and marvel  
at its sparkling beauty. Let fly, Mr.  
Fly. Mr. Cause Louis. Happiness only  
comes years old and in the third  
grade and I can fly.

because George wasn't a member. Well  
Daddy is going to own that building  
cause I'm gonna fly over it and give  
it to him. Then it won't matter that  
he's not in their old union or whether  
he's Colored or a half breed Indian  
like they say.

4  
That means I am free to go wherever  
I want to go for the rest of my life.  
Daddy took me to see the Union Diner.  
They sit is working on. He can walk  
on steel girders high up in the sky  
and not fall. They call him the cat.

5  
He'll be rich and won't have to stand  
on the story high girders and look down.  
He can look up at the building going  
up. And Manny won't cry all winter  
when Daddy goes to look for work and  
doesn't come home. And Manny can  
laugh and sleep like the Mr. Honey  
and he can have the crown money  
right in his pocket.

6  
I would like to see you see the  
Landing just to make sure you do.  
Thinking we're going up to Tar Beach,  
Manny is reaching peanuts and try-  
ing to throw one. Daddy will bring  
home a watermelon. Mr. and Mrs.  
Honey will bring the beer and their old  
apple core trays. And when the stars  
fall I'll protect me and I will fly  
to the Union Building.

7  
I'll take the cat with me. He can't understand  
to tell Manny and Daddy if I leave him  
behind.  
I have told him to stay away from  
me. It's gonna have to  
be all to my other  
Daddy you know, you're  
my cat.

The world and its challenges are complex  
...and our collective creativity and capacity to care  
are profound.



Faith Ringgold  
Tar Beach #2 , detail, 1990-92  
Screen print on silk  
Museum Purchase with funds donated from the first annual  
Celebrating Diversity in Art Event



**“What we practice at the small scale sets the pattern for the whole system.”**

**- adrienne maree brown**

**How we leave the world**

**How we teach**

**How we lead**

**How we live**

John Wawrzonek,  
*Dreamed Brook, Interstate 495, Littleton, MA, 1989*  
Dye transfer print  
Museum Purchase, Howald Fund  
1991.009.004



# Today's Intentions



We will build our understanding, skills, and confidence in creative and civic agency

# Strategies for this Investigation



*We will:*

Practice and reflect on creativity

Use group learning techniques from/for the classroom

Build our collective knowledge using targeted thinking routines

Plan for application to our own contexts





# Creativity Alarm Clock

Create a gift for your neighbors

Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson,  
*A Street Called Home*, detail 1997  
Mixed media with fabric, buttons, and thread  
Museum Purchase with funds from Wolfe Associates, Inc.  
1997.010



# Cracking Open Words: *Civic* and *Creative*

*Scribe: Record the images, words, phrases, inferences, and stories that come to mind when hearing this word.*

*Consider: What lives inside this word for you?*

Review what has been generated. Capture responses to the following:

What do you notice?

What do you wonder?

What connections or patterns do you see?

What surprises you?





cre·a·tiv·i·ty \,krē-(,)ā-'ti-və-tē

The process of using imagination and critical thinking to generate new ideas that have value





...across disciplines, ages, and contexts



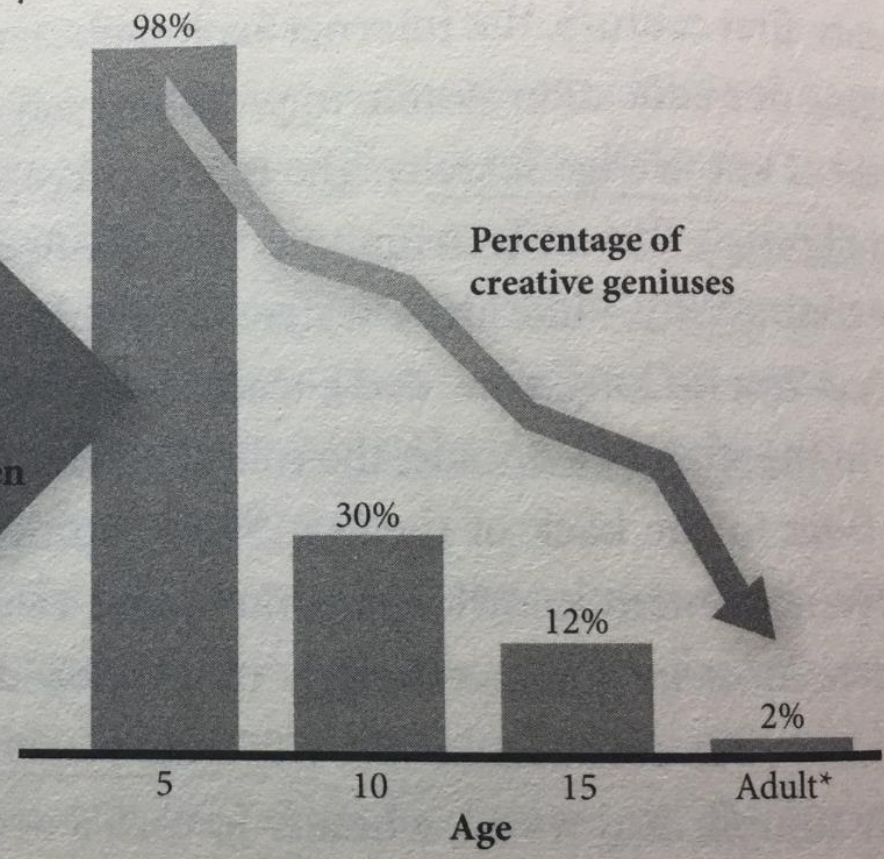


WOW

Study indicates noncreative behavior is learned

George Land's NASA Creativity Test

A NASA creativity test used to select innovative engineers and scientists was given to 1,600 children



\*The same test was given to 280,000 adults.

Source: *Breakpoint and Beyond: Mastering the Future Today* by George Land; A.T. Kearney analysis

Reprinted from *Most Likely to Succeed*, by Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith

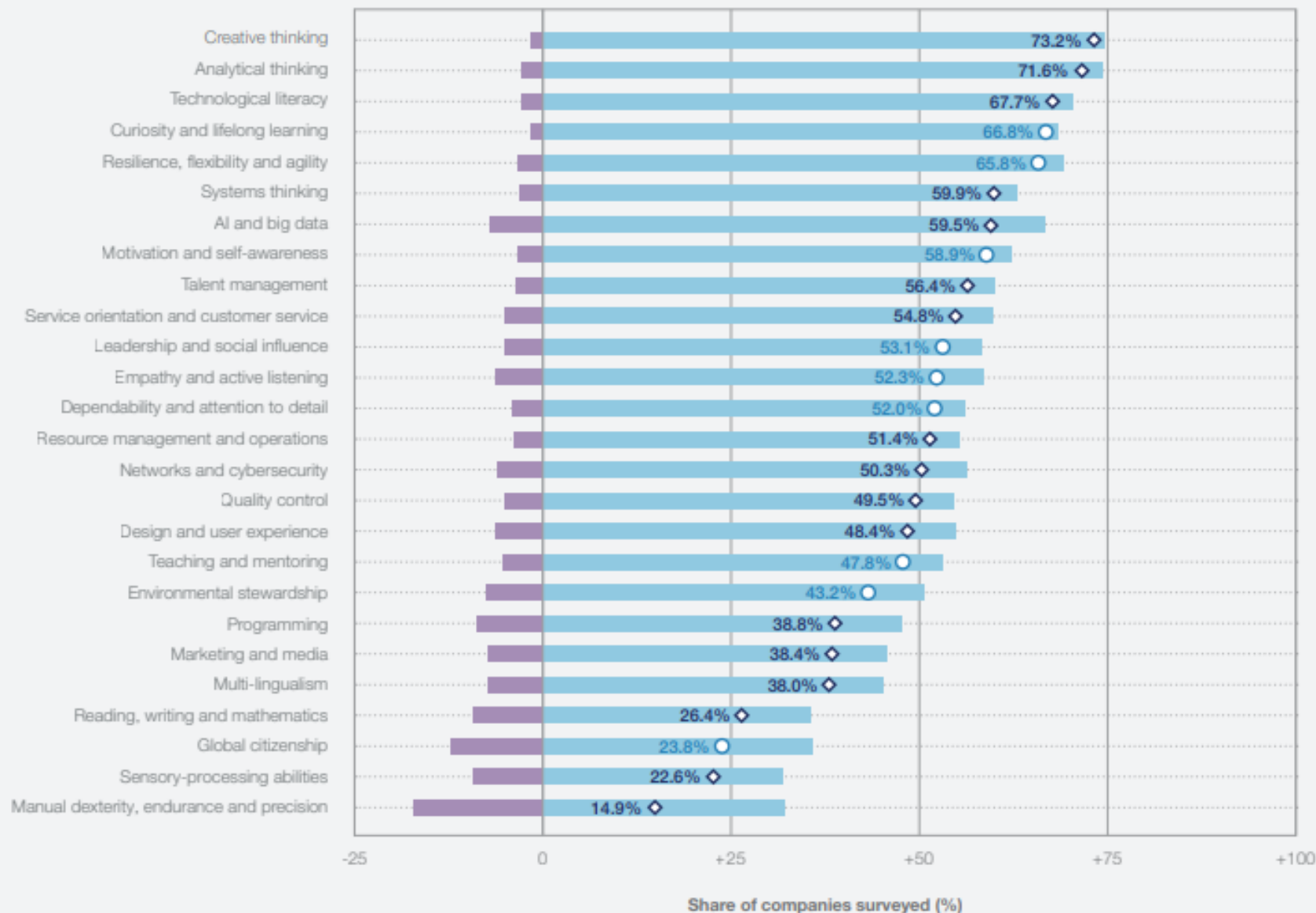




FIGURE 4.3

**Skills on the rise**

Share of organizations surveyed which consider skills to be increasing or decreasing in importance, ordered by the net difference.



Increasing importance    Declining importance  
 Net difference:    ♦ Skills, knowledge and abilities    ○ Attitudes



# Creativity & Resilience



Aug 22, 2023

## Want to increase resiliency in kids? Teach creativity

Study finds program helps children cope with problems



“[Creativity] stimulates alpha waves, signals in the brain that closely correlate with states of relaxation. Scientists have found that when people are relaxed, they’re much more likely to have big aha moments, when impossible problems seem to solve themselves...”

In addition, numerous studies show that activities such as drawing, knitting, and journaling raise serotonin levels and decrease anxiety, factors that contribute to resilience—our ability to deal with our problems in a way that makes us feel like the next time they come around, we’ll have a better ability to tackle them.”



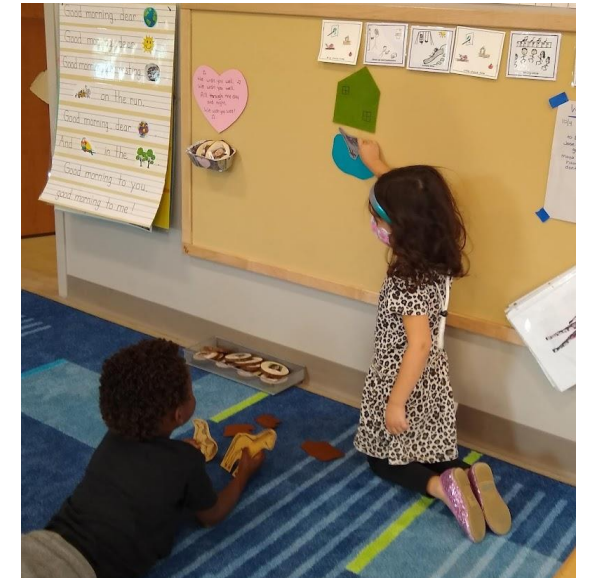
Creativity enables us to see things as if they could be otherwise, navigate complexity, and be agents in our lives, communities, and world.



...But although creativity is very good for us individually, it *doesn't necessarily* push us to be good for the communities we are part of.



# Cultivating Creative & Civic Capacities: How can we support learners to engage the world's complexity with imagination, critical thinking, care, and agency?



*Teens creating a light fixture to “shine a light” on a social issue they care about*

*Middle schoolers mindmapping after viewing an CMA artwork showing migrant workers*

*Preschoolers exploring an allegory of homelands and settlement*



# Zooming in: Portrait of Practice



Review your notes. What struck you? Jot down your thoughts.

*Discussion questions:*

What do you notice about the civic space of this classroom?

What are the children learning?

What is at stake for Malik? For the other students? For the teacher?



# Reflection: Connect-Extend-Challenge

What is one CONNECTION you see to your practice?

What's an idea you heard that EXTENDED your thinking about the civic life of your classroom?

What's one CHALLENGE that this learning experience (or your discussion of it) surfaces?



Try it!  
Connect-Extend-Challenge  
supports synthesis,  
connection, and curiosity



[stretch break]





# Think-Pair-Share

Read the quotations on the “Discussion Quotes...” handout. Select one that speaks to you. What do you **Think** this has to do with your practice?  
Jot down notes.

**Pair** up with an elbow partner and exchange your thoughts.

**Share** commonalities and puzzles in your table group.

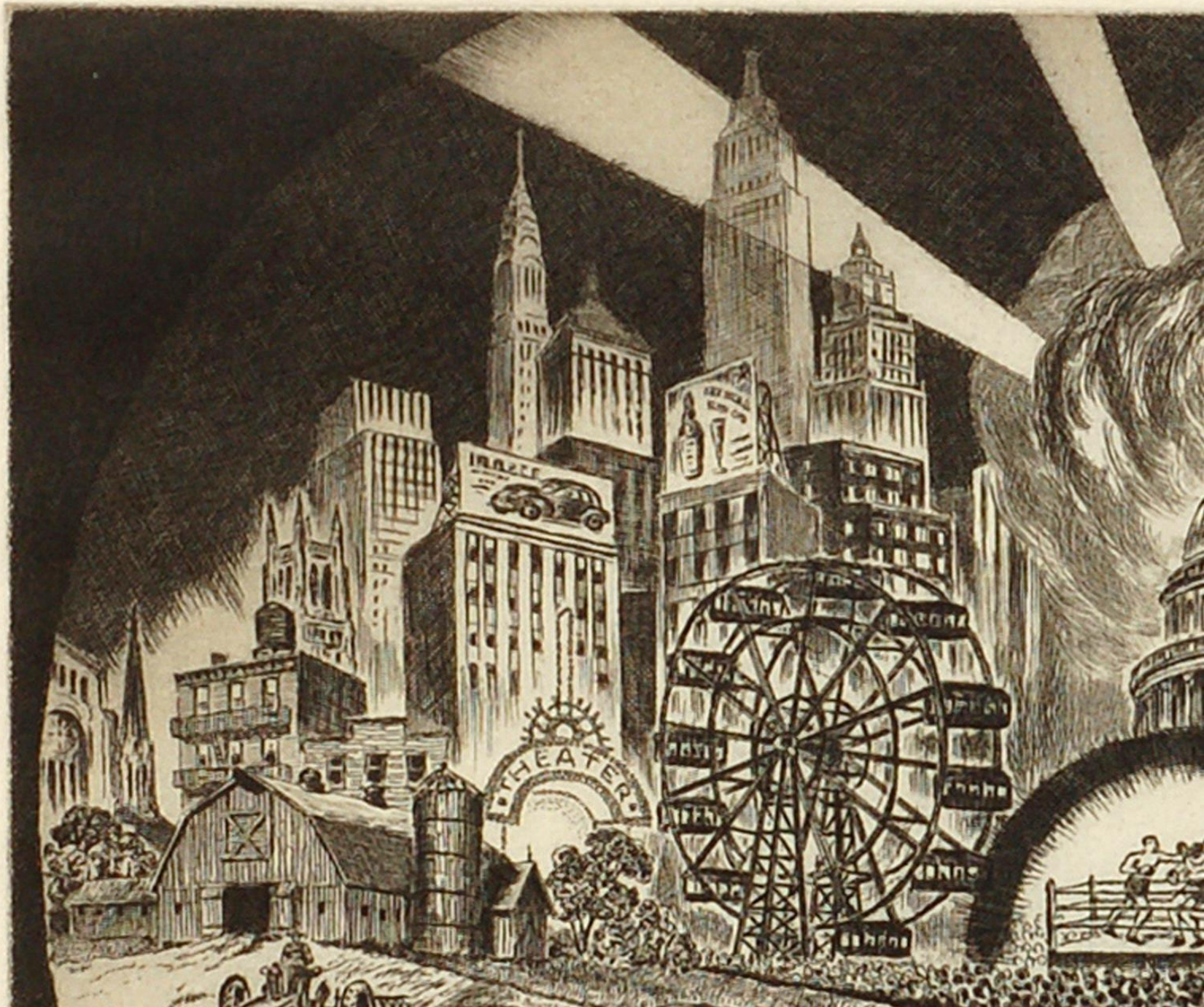




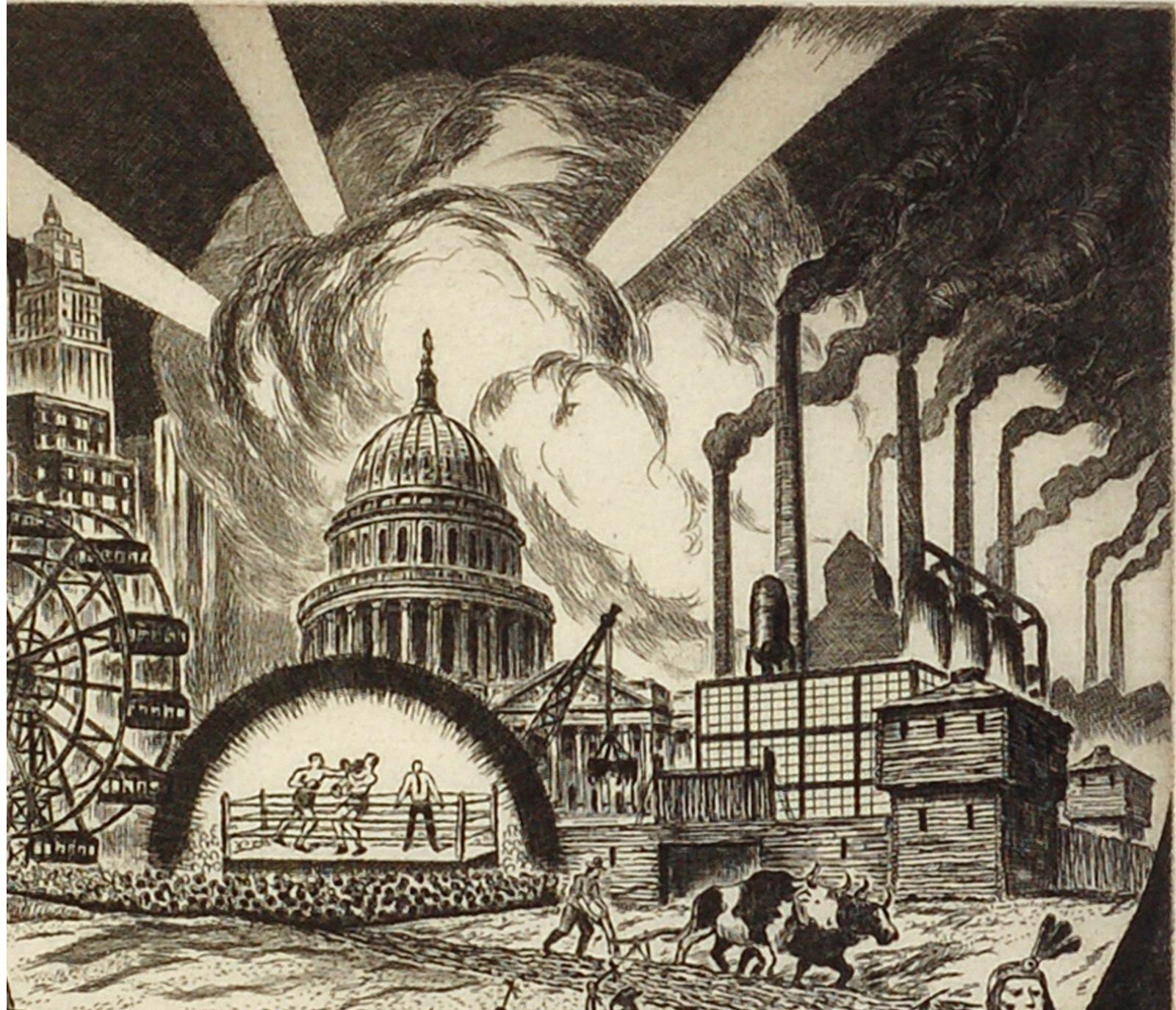
*Americana*

*Ralph Fabri*













Ralph Fabri





Americana





Try it! Focus & Frame:  
Promotes observation,  
reasoning, multiple  
perspectives, and comfort  
with complexity

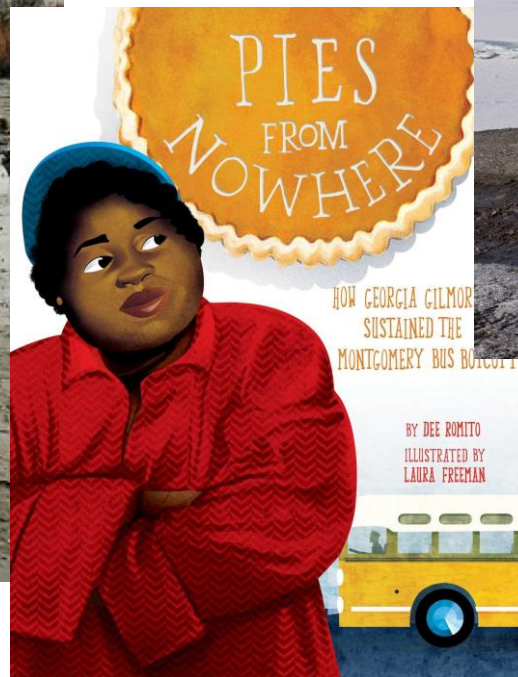
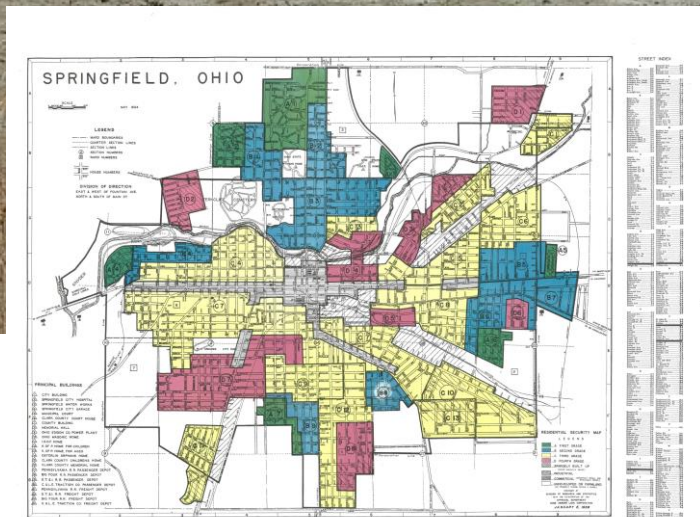
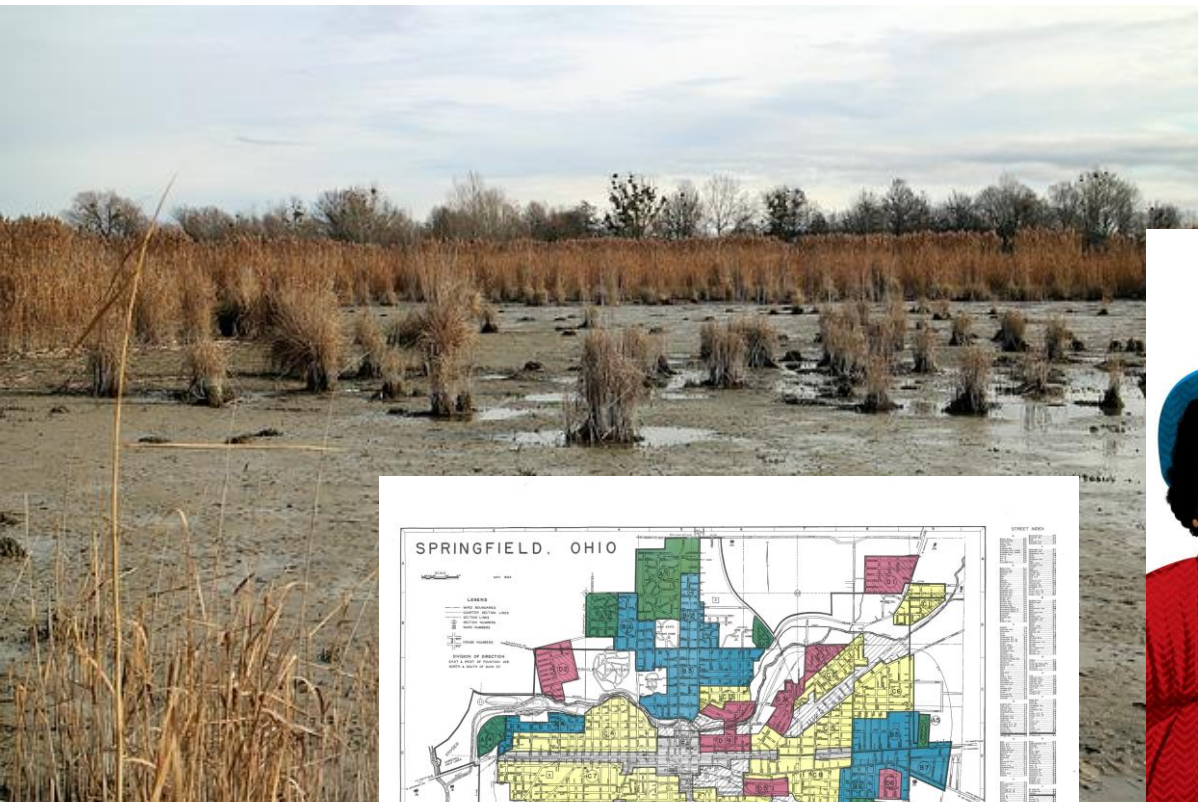
Ralph Fabri  
*Americana*, 1930

Etching

Museum Purchase, Derby Fund, from the  
Philip J. and Suzanne Schiller Collection of  
American Social Commentary Art  
2005.013.111



# Focus & Frame

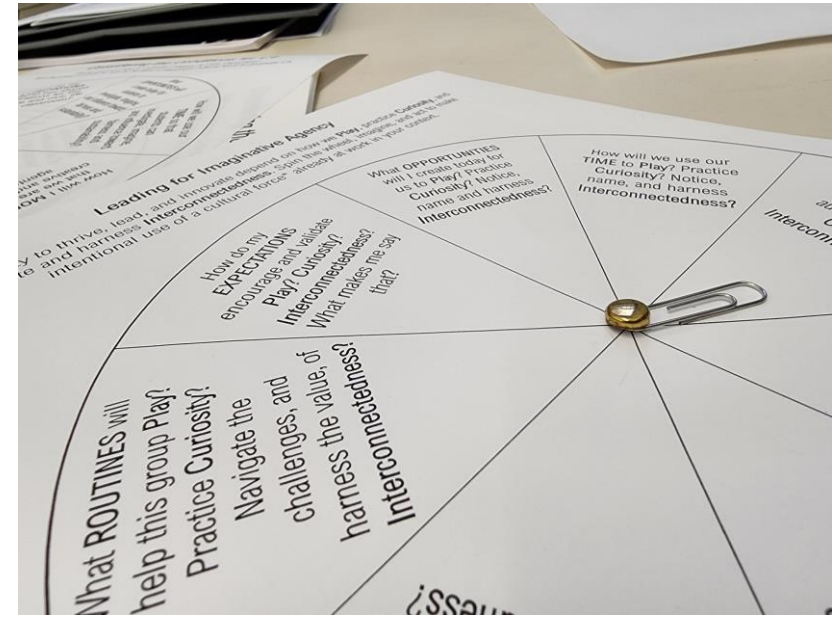
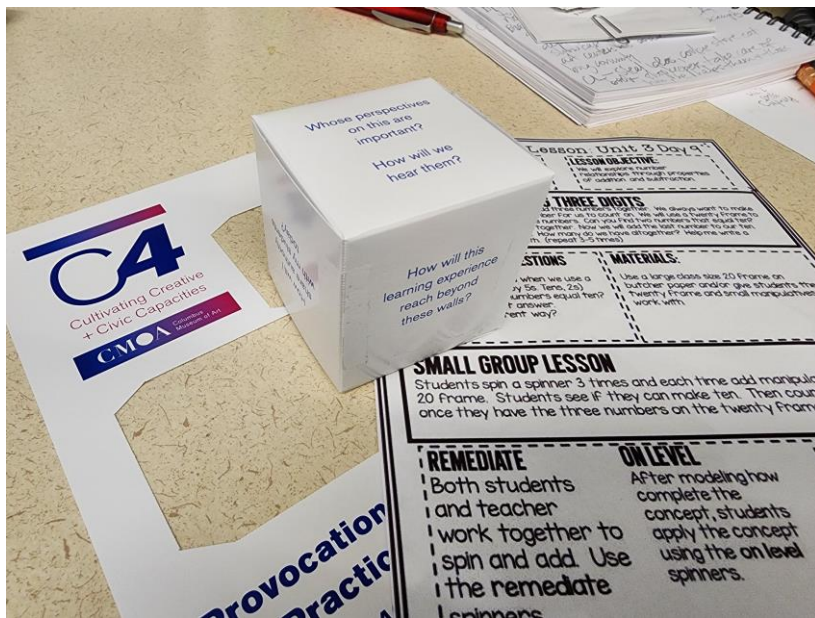


New York Times "What's Going On in This Picture?"

# Making a plan

Option 1: Select something on the horizon that you feel “meh” about. Roll the die for inspiration to reimagine it toward how to approach the content with C4)?

Option 2: Spin the wheel to consider a cultural force at play in your classroom and how you might harness it toward students’ creative and civic capacities





What's something you heard that you want to share with someone else?

Who should hear it? Why?



Try it!:

This prompt as an end-of-lesson reflection bridges the ideas in class with the world more broadly

Bruce Davidson,  
*Woman Talking on Phone (Chicago)*,  
1989  
C-print  
Gift of an anonymous donor  
2018.028.159



**“What we practice at the small scale sets the pattern for the whole system.”**

**- adrienne maree brown**



Thank you.  
Jen & Cat

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