

# Picture This! Teaching Poetry with Visual and Textual Representation

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## Abstract:

Oftentimes, there is much abstraction and symbolism in poetry and, by complementing the text with visuals that convey a similar message, we as teachers can provide another avenue for our students to understand the intended message of the author.

The presentation speaks to the need of language learners to have access to materials in their target language in multiple modes, catering to the needs of the multiple learning styles represented in the classroom. This presentation works to examine the poetry of Verónica Volkow in her work *Arcanos* and how the visuals and text therein complement themselves to convey a similar message. In the process, the presentation offers applications for second language classroom instruction in a foreign language context by using visuals to aid in reader comprehension of an unfamiliar text in the target language. Finally, we provide a lesson plan utilizing the findings from the research project

## Justification for Research:

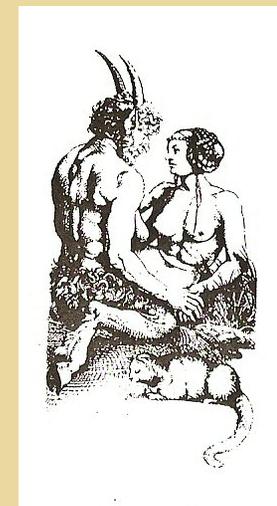
The impetus for this research project was to attempt to make the contemporary poetry of Mexican poet Verónica Volkow more accessible to a wider audience. While researching how to interpret the poetry, several implications for the classroom arose. How readers interact with a text became a central focus. From there, it became a question of how to help students negotiate the text by helping them relate it to their prior experience.

## Implications:

Upon further investigation, we were led to Louise Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory. This theory states that a reader is constantly relating the words and sentences that she encounters with her past, memories and experiences. This means that the reader's interpretation will hinge on her prior experiences. What this means for the classroom is that we as teachers need to help build the experience of our students.

## Los Amantes

Tus ojos son noches  
en que vive un día,  
tus ojos son piedras  
que sueñan  
y en el sueño un mundo  
que no está.  
Todo el cuerpo en la caricia cabe.  
Piel: garganta efímera  
y presa imprecisa,  
sólo aroma el cuerpo que deseamos  
y respiración,  
respiración ávida en la entraña.  
En la piel la inmensidad es lo que canta  
tenue voz muy honda,  
en el roce estrépito,  
suavidad ya grito.  
Embriaguez que es música y abismo.  
El amor lo escribe el infinito.  
¿Qué no está  
y en inagotable espejo  
nos habita?



## Lesson Plan

**Goals:** Students will be able to...

- 1.) Analyze an ekphrastic poem by Verónica Volkow through class discussion by using textual and visual similarities and applying them in their analyses.
- 2.) Describe the accompanying image using words, phrases, stanzas from the poem
- 3.) Modify and generate their own descriptions of the image based on their interpretation and the author's interpretation of the image
- 4.) Identify what part of the image the author is framing

**Content and Language Objectives (in target language):**

Students will be able to...

- 1.) Explain their concept of the term 'amantes' (lovers) and love
- 2.) Compare and contrast their concept of these terms with those of their classmates and the teacher
- 3.) Identify allegory in the poem (perhaps by comparing it with other examples that they know of)

**Sample of the Questions to Guide Students Through Discussion:**

- Which figures (people and objects) does the illustration contain?
- In which directions are the figures in the illustration looking?
- Are they looking at the audience, at each other or an object in the illustration, or is their gaze directed outside the frame/periphery of the illustration?
- How might the pronouns correspond with different perspectives within the text?