



# THE SHOE BOX PROJECT

Honors European Literature / Junius Wright / Academic Magnet High School

For this project you will:

- Design and produce a piece of assemblage art consisting of concrete objects presented within a shoe box that communicates a central idea.
- Work individually and collaboratively to use your imagination and knowledge of language arts to “brainstorm” ideas for an assemblage box.
- Identify a musical soundtrack that helps communicate the central meaning of your work.
- Write a literary artist statement that uses literary tools to explain how individual objects in the work establish the theme of the work.
- Write a literary artist statement that uses literary tools to explain how the musical soundtrack helps establish a specific tone that contributes to the overall meaning of the work.
- Explain how the work makes a connection to a curriculum concept you learned this year in European Literature.

## Step #1: Gathering of objects

(Due the 1st week after spring break)

- Obtain a discarded, standard size shoe box.
- Gather ten to fifteen objects that are of a size which will fit inside of the shoe box.

### Object Selection Guidelines

- Use objects that are mysterious, visually provocative, or unusual. Also search for objects that have already been or have the potential to be altered. Objects with archetypal connotations or undertones are ideal to use for this project.
- Avoid objects that directly identify you or can be quickly connected to you (e.g. name tags or photographs).
- Avoid commercial items such as drink containers or advertisements.
- Do not use objects that are valuable, illegal, or have been identified by school officials as contraband.
- Still not sure if an object is worthy for you box? Use the "cataloging of objects" activity printed on the other side of this handout to test the "explicative value" of your object.

## Step #2: Cataloging and analysis of objects

- Catalog each item in the box by describing it in complete concrete sentences.

## Step #3: Individual brainstorming sessions

- Sketch and describe three different “scenarios” created by combining six or more items from the box.

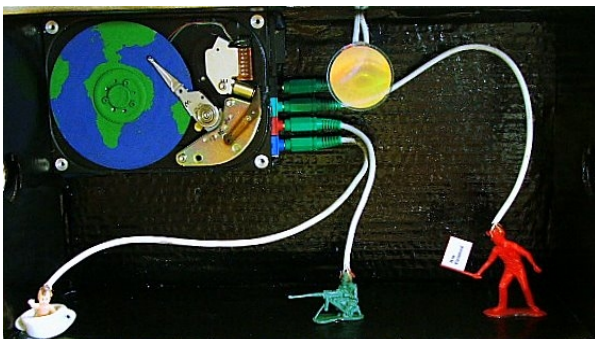
## Step #4: Construction of the box

- Paint or cover the outside of the box.
- Affix a minimum of six objects in the box arranged in a manner that reflects a conscious effort to communicate a central theme.
- Create and display a title that supports and helps communicate the central theme of the work to the viewer is clearly inscribed and displayed on the front of the work.

**Step #5:** Write a literary artist statement about your box.

**Step #6:** Use your literary superpower tools to write an explication of a peer’s assemblage box.

For an example of a completed project visit [www.readingart.net](http://www.readingart.net) and click on the "shoobox project" banner.



*The Archetypal Mind,  
The Three Stages of the Human Experience*

by Junius Wright



# THE SHOE BOX PROJECT

## The Literary Artist Statement

An **artist statement** is a short piece written by the artist to accompany a work of art. Its purpose is to provide information that will add to the viewer's understanding and appreciation of the work.

**Assignment:** Write a literary artist statement that addresses each of the following areas.

- introductory paragraph stating the subject and theme of the box.
- body paragraphs that use literary tools to analyze and explain how the title and three or more elements in the work establish the theme of the work.
- two different explanations of the connection between elements in your work and works studied this year in Honors European Literature (tip: look for literary allusions).
- a concluding paragraph that explains the creative process you used to create your box.

### Literary Artist Statement

#### *The Archetypal Mind, The Three Stages of the the Human Experience* by Junius Wright

According to Carl Jung, the collective unconscious is the part of the mind that contains the cumulative knowledge, experiences, and images of the human race. He argued that this knowledge evidences itself as "primordial images" in humankind's religions, myths, dreams, and literature and can be tapped by writers through the use of archetypes. The Three Stages of the Human Experience is a literal representation of how the experiences in the stages of birth, youth, and old age feed into and creates the collective unconscious of the human race.

At the bottom of the work there are three figures representing the life stages of childhood, youth, and every human passes through in life. The first figure, a baby in a teacup, represents the experience of birth and childhood. The baby's presentation in a teacup alludes to the phrase "tempest in a teacup" which means a great disturbance over a matter of little or no importance. Most of us have forgotten the rude awakening we encountered when we were expelled from the warm, nurturing womb of our mothers into the cold and confusing world. The second figure, a soldier firing a machine gun, represents the adolescent stage of the human experience. The gun is aimed at the past representing how in this stage we attempt to "kill our past" and establish a new identity. The machine gun also reminds us of the tumultuous state of being an individual experiences when they challenge the world during this stage of life. The third figure waves a flag of surrender with the words, "It is finished". These words are the final words muttered by Christ on the cross as well as the final words spoken by the silent girl in Bergman's film, *The Seventh Seal*. This phrase reflects how both of the characters recognize that their struggle with life is at last come to an end. However, it also refers to

another meaning "to complete the manufacture or decoration of by giving it an attractive surface appearance." It is here at the end of life that we attempt to put a positive spin on the trials and tribulations that we had to endure during our life.

Each of the three figures at the bottom of the work is connected by a wire that feeds into a large hard drive at the top of the work. These wires represent the that feed the wisdom that is gained when individuals pass through each of the three stages of life. The bits of wisdom are fed into the hard drive which represents the collective unconscious mind of humanity. At the top of the work is a solitary eye representing the eye of God. This symbol represents what Carl Jung referred to as the "primordial images" that evidences itself in humankind's religions, myths, and dreams through archetypes.

The work is made of objects that I found in the "junk drawer" at my house and classroom where I teach. One of the most interesting objects that I found was an old computer hard drive. One afternoon I decided to open it up and peek inside. When I looked inside I found a shiny gold disk that immediately made me think, "Wow, this disk has a whole world of information recorded on it." I realized however, that this information was useless without the computer to access it. It was then that I struck on the central idea of my work. The collective unconscious is like a hard drive in a computer that records the wisdom of generations of humans as they pass through the stages of life. In addition just like the information stored on a computer hard drive the wisdom stored in the collective unconscious of humanity can also be accessed.

### Music statement for *The Archetypal Mind*

The music begins with a steady melody of two notes played on the piano. The simplicity of this melody represents the first stage of life seen in the work. Next a higher and faster melody enters and plays at the same time as the first melody and helps move the viewers attention from the first stage to the second stage of adolescence. The more rapid tempo and higher pitch imitate the great speed and recklessness that one experiences in the stage of adolescence. Finally a third melody enters consisting of a slightly lower pitch and distinguishes itself as removed from the other two melodies. This third melody seems to be played as a comment to the other two melodies and represents death, the final stage in life. All three of these melodies can be heard individually and this helps emphasize that each of the stages has its own unique experiences which are fed into the great archetypal mind machine in the sky. Many times in the musical score, however, the individual melodies blend together and seem to become a tangled musical mess. This helps reinforce the idea that the experiences from each of the three stages of life are blended together to create an individual's lifetime of experiences. Overall the music is fast, chaotic, and overwhelming. This is how the music is able to reinforce the poignant tone used to present the three stages of life to the viewer.

# Cataloging of Objects

Directions: Use the charts below to record your observations about each of the objects you selected for your project. You will make your observations in the following four areas:

## Area #1

object name: Give the object a descriptive name.

sketch of the object: Complete a quick sketch of the object in the sketch box. This will help you notice small details in the object.

## Area #2

Descriptive sentences

Imagery: Describe the object in terms of the one or two senses to which it most directly appeals.

## Area #3

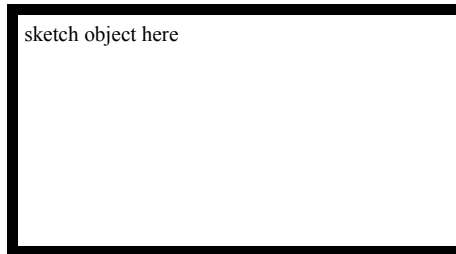
Figurative language:

Describe the object using simile, metaphor, or personification.

## Area #4

Symbolism:

- Describe the object in terms of its literal meaning (What is the object's concrete function or purpose?)
- Describe the object in terms of its figurative meaning (What abstract idea or concept does the object represent or relate?)



Object name:
Imagery description:
Figurative description:
symbolic description (literal)
symbolic description (figurative)

