

## George Lucas on Teaching Visual Literacy and Communications

Edutopia

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwDXIA\\_6usI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwDXIA_6usI)

George Lucas: The issue we're discussing here in terms of multimedia literacy is that we stress so hard learning English and learning English grammar and then we shove music and art and most schools don't even get into cinema. We move those over into some sort of artistic which means sort of therapeutic or fun thing. It's not approached as a very valid form of communication. Kids know this.

When you take a five year old, they can speak, they can use words, they don't know how to write very well and they may not know much grammar, but they know how to speak, they also know music, they may not know the grammar of music, they know cinema because they spend a huge amount of time in front of the television so they know visual communication, they know the moving image. They intuitively know a lot of the rules, but nobody's actually taught them anything, anymore than they've taught them anything about grammar in English.

So we go through school and then later on we start to learn the grammar of English, you have punctuation, capital letters, you'll run on sentences, what a verb is. But nobody teaches anybody about what screen direction is, what perspective is, what color is, what a diagonal line means. Those are rules; those are grammatical rules that appear in an art class. If you've taken art class, the first thing you'll do is get into graphics and you start learning well a jagged line means this and a blue color means this or red color means that. So if you're trying to convince somebody that what you want to do is excite them, then you use red or yellow. If you're doing it with music then you use a fast rhythm, not a slow rhythm. You don't have to teach them necessarily how to read music and you don't need to have to teach them how to be an artist, but you do have to teach them how to use the grammar of the language.

Somehow we've gotten to the point where the words have gotten way up here and these other forms of communications, which all started out equal and at the beginning, much more equal before we had words. Somehow in the educational system they'll need to be balanced out. So the kids could communicate using all of the forms of communication, not just put it into little categories and say you really need to learn how to use a verb; that's much more important than learning perspective or learning screen direction. But it's not really, especially in this day and age where the power of multimedia is coming to the children. It used to be like with cinema, only the very elite professionals worked in this medium. But now anybody can work in it.

Interviewer: Are we talking about a new way of teaching?

George Lucas: It is a different way of teaching in that I think English classes should broaden themselves and my personal thing, I know this is heresy, I think we should rename English to be-- I mean I know in some schools we call it language arts, but I think it should be renamed communication. It's a communication class and you learn the English language, learn how to

write, you learn grammar, but you also learn graphics. If you take graphics out of the art department, take cinema and put it into the schools, take music out of the music department. If you want to learn how to play an instrument, if you want to learn how to be a composer, then you can go to the music department. If you want to learn how to do beautiful renditions of paintings and follow the great artists then you go into art class.

But if you really want to just learn how to communicate, then what is the basic grammar of communication then that should be taught basically in the communications class, it shouldn't be taught in some esoteric arty thing, it should be taught as a very practical tool that you use to sell and influence people and to get your point across and to communicate to other people.