Illuminated Journals
Pat Holder, Humanities, High Tech High

Inspired by Ken Kesey’s *Jail Journal*, which links writing with original art, students selected a journal entry of their own and created a design to bring it to life. They turned their humanities class into an art studio and constructed a permanent display for the work on the classroom wall.

**Teacher Reflection**

We open class with journaling almost every day. This exercise broadens the bandwidth between students’ thoughts and their more formal writing, and has created a context for our class discussions. However, journals lose their power when students think their writing will just end up on the shelf. I urged my students to look at their journals as a grab bag that could provide the foundation for public expression through art. They responded by presenting insightful political perspectives, efforts at understanding their sexuality, unease with newfound class-consciousness, attempts at making sense of death, and other issues central to the humanities. In the end, the real benefit for me was that I was reminded of the need to hear what really matters to my students and incorporate their voices into my teaching.

**Student Reflection**

We turned our writing into an art piece that involved us putting ourselves in vulnerable positions. For my piece to be honest, I had to put myself in a state of mind where I couldn’t care what people thought of me. When you hide yourself from people because you’re scared to tell them about the real you, you’re hiding a person that can change the opinion of other people. I wrote my piece to let everyone know that I ain’t ashamed of being who I am. I didn’t do this project for the grade. I did it so people can get to know the real me. If there was a grade for letting yourself be vulnerable I should get an A grade. Don’t grade me on my work for how powerful it is, because I just want to be rewarded with people accepting me.

—11th grader

To learn more about this project and others visit [www.hightechhigh.org](http://www.hightechhigh.org) and Pat Holder’s digital portfolio at [http://staff.hightechhigh.org/~pholder](http://staff.hightechhigh.org/~pholder)