Why would anyone want to make their AR presentation into an art project? Consider the following story: Christy completed her student teaching in an elementary classroom with a very diverse group of learners. Particularly troubling to her was how to bring some of the students who had difficult learning disabilities and emotional challenges into the classroom community. Her project was empathetic, compassionate, and deliberate in attempting to create an inviting, safe, and responsive classroom for all her students. Christy collected rich and interesting data but when it came time to interpret this data and organize it, Christy was stuck. None of the tools we suggested seemed to help. In working with Christy, we realized that she often used art to express herself in other assignments and projects. Her AR journal was full of symbolic drawings. So, Christy drew her interpretations, first as sketches, and then, as her final project.

On the next few pages we present some of Christy's drawings and the text that accompanies them in her research paper: As you read excerpts from the text and view her art, try to notice the metaphors she represents visually and the meaning that the art carries that augments and at times even supersedes the text:

_The students in the class were like young and newly sprouted trees which were separated by their language and by gender. Interaction between the Spanish speaking and English speaking students did not occur at this time, and students were purposefully paired with students of the same language to help comfort them in a new environment. Students at this developmental level are learning about a phenomenal number of subjects and skills. “If in the youngest grades, students learn to support and encourage each other, listen carefully to the ideas of others, and work quietly and effectively in_
Groups, then they have received instruction most predictive of future academic and life successes” (Spencer Kagan, Curran, 1992, p. 5).

Gender is typically an issue in getting students to work with one another. Students at this developmental level do not naturally mix with opposite gender ...

... Gender separation is so strong that students in the game board data collection separated by gender before they would separate by language. For the game board activity, it was apparent that many groups had this gender separation. Many of the students were working independently of each other which are seen in this on task/off task behavior. This is supported by Bradekamp & Copple (1997), “Children of primary-grade age are becoming intensely interested in peers. They show marked preference for same-gender playmates and almost stereotypic rejection of the opposite sex” (p. 155)

Students were then assigned their table partner pairs to complete various activities. This required students to be sitting and participating with their partners during carpet activity time. Pairs were purposely mixed with different language and skills. Students were given opportunities for social interaction and cooperation between their partner pair. Activities on the carpet were done in such a way to provide success to all students by allowing students time to openly discuss their ideas and answers with each other...
...Students practicing active listening skills...

Important data from this sharing circle showed that most of the English speakers were engaged in this sharing circle and felt confident to share with others. However, the Spanish speakers were not sharing as much. My theory was that because Spanish speakers were often pulled out of the regular classroom, they did not have similar experiences as the English speakers and, therefore, they did not share. In addition, I was concerned they were silenced because they did not have the same English skills (Appendix E). This prompted me to change my sharing to a time where all students could show their work and not be distracted or provide...
distractions towards others. It was essential to develop more efficient space and time to accommodate my students.

Students of higher skills were observed to be helping students of lower skills. They were working well with this scaffolding technique and both showed benefits from this. (Appendix H). Consistent behavior problems occurred for two students in this class: Student W and H. I paired a higher skilled student with a lower skilled student to help these students in their learning...

...However, W appeared unable or unmotivated to work cooperatively. Their partners had a large amount of patience and great social skills and would continually try and help these students, but with no success.

An individual positive behavior plan was developed for Student W to help her be more successful in the classroom and at home. Also, a whole class positive management plan was put into place: the super star system. Students were rewarded for good work ethic, kindness towards others, offering compliments to others, and good sportsmanship. If students took ownership of their behavior and were exhibiting these behaviors they would be given a star. If they received a total of five stars, they would earn a special super star sticker which they could use towards their reading reward.

Students showed excitement and were eager to work well with others...
...Student behavior improved dramatically which improved overall classroom management. There were more positive comments heard, and students were eager to practice their social skills.

Students at this time were having a difficult time putting their names on papers and I had worked continuously with different methods to help students remember. I started discarding the papers with no names, but this still did not have an impact on students. Finally, I decided to have a group meeting and ask the students what we could do to solve this problem with no-name papers ... The students talked about setting a goal, which I also thought would be a great idea. By using a majority vote ruling, students voted on a possible goal. Unanimously, the goal turned out to be zero no-name papers daily (just as I had hoped). We then put a plan into place about reaching our goal. Never did I discuss rewards or results of what would happen if they achieved this goal.
This strategy brought our students closer together and benefited the class in ways I could not have imagined. I observed students going through papers in the trays to make sure that all names were recorded. This helped students understand the benefits of helping one another, and in turn, they were growing and learning why it is beneficial without any rewards given. Students then would remind the other students about their goal and how important it was before they started their work...

... Students growing their leaves by sharing and helping in the classroom ...

Throughout the data collection, these students have had continuous problems with each of the different strategies I offered in class. Because they did not have the social skills, they did not know how to work cooperatively with others. And because they did not know how to cooperate with others they did not feel like a part of the classroom, nor did they take ownership or responsibility for themselves. Since this appears to be a consistent problem, I am wondering if such students should be evaluated for specific kinds of behavior/social issues.
Children need certain things to grow; part of this is like the water of life which is part of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: trust, support, love, acceptance, and encouragement. By attaining this in the classroom, this caused a phenomenal amount of growth both in the individual student and for the classroom as a whole.

Dewey (1954) wrote,

The function of art has always been to break through the crust of conventionalized and routine consciousness. ... Artists have always been the real purveyors of news, for it is not the outward happening in itself which is new, but the kindling by it of emotion, perception and appreciation.

(pp. 183-4)

There are many ways to represent as art the story of your action research: painting, sculpture, music, interpretative dance, fiction, story telling, digital photography, and digital video, just to name a few. Artistic forms of representation can provide rich and expressive ways to tell your story, to capture that part of the experience that does not conform to words alone. The process of creating art can be particularly meaningful to both the artist and the audience as relationships between experiences, emotions, and literature are explored. In developing such representations, the guidelines at the beginning of this chapter should still be followed. How they appear in your presentation is a matter of your interpretation. Since art representations are still relatively new to academic culture, check with your professor or advisor for additional guidelines.