Teaching Handouts:
Coherence and Unity

Coherence means that the content of the project moves easily from piece to piece and makes sense to a naive reader. Unity means that your project has a sense of being one, complete unit that makes a purposeful statement.

Be sure that you total project has a beginning, climactic moment, and a conclusion.

Be sure that your project has a limited focus and a meaningful life theme.

Elements that can help coherence and unity:
· Chronology or sequence of events
· Timeline of related events
· Diagram or family tree
· Meta-story in which the smaller stories are embedded
· Repeated reference to one event
· One symbolic metaphor repeated throughout the project
· Visual Theme
· Selected quotes from a scholar, poem, song, work of literature.
· Transitional small pieces of writing (repetends)
· Overview in the introduction
· Reference to earlier events
· Concluding review

Problems to Avoid:
· Genre confusion--what is this?
· Narrator confusion--who is I?
· Chronology confusion--what happened first?
· Theme confusion--why am I reading this?
· Climactic confusion--what happens next?
· Interpretive confusion--how do you feel about this?

Give your reader cues early in each piece:
· Titles and Table of Contents
· Names of people and places
· Relationships stated clearly
· Visuals
· Repeated thematic phrases
· Overviews
· Guiding statements

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