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Development of a secondary mathematics curriculum based on significant works of art.

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The humanities and creative arts use a wonderfully “human” curriculum model that is not found in school mathematics. This model begins with the discussion and study of significant works of art and more from there to the creative processes of analysis, reconstruction and even reinvention. Along the way, essential technical skills are developed and practised. Mathematics turns this process around. There are wonderful works of art found in mathematics but school curricula begin with an agenda (often referred to as a laundry list) of technical skills with the ultimate intention of moving on to these works once technical mastery has been achieved. Alas, this grinding mastery turns out to be a slow and deadly process and most often the art and much of the meaning never appear, though the survivors are promised that these will be delivered in university. We discuss the possibilities for a “works of art” model in school mathematics and present an example from the Ontario Grade 10 curriculum.