

Sacred Images - Documentary Arts

Summary

Students will understand the tools of documentary work which include photography, oral history, film making, narrative writing, radio broadcasting, and visual art. Students will learn to use a photo log and will also learn to conduct an oral history.

Time Frame

3 class periods of 45 minutes each

Group Size

Small Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning, Communication

Materials

- *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American Rock Art*
- *Using Oral Histories and Group Work to Montana Insitutue for Effective Teaching of American Indian Children*
, Eastern Montana College in Billings, June 1990. "Develop a Cultural Sensitivity to the Study of History by Eileen Sheehy Pavish" pp. 134-146.
Handout on photo log

Background for Teachers

Documentary Arts help students to better understand their connection to their world. It allows them to explore and understand their past and give meaning to their present. Examine the Center for Documentary Expression and Art web site as well as the other resources to be better prepared to teach this lesson.

Student Prior Knowledge

Students should have reviewed lessons on Sacred Images 1-4 prior to receiving this lesson. It includes the ones on Geographic Characteristics of Utah, The Circle and Native American Culture, Development of Cultural Understanding, Preserving History Through Storytelling.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will evaluate the artistic subject matter, themes, symbols, ideas, meanings and purposes of documentary art using the book and viewing the exhibit *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American Rock Art*.

Instructional Procedures

Activity: Visual Literacy (This lesson was adapted from material from the Center for Documentary Expression and Art's Sebastiao Salgado's teacher's guide).

Ask the students to describe what a photograph is. Explain that a photograph is one individual image that can and usually does stand on its own. An individual photo can be part of a larger story.

Ask the students to examine the photographs from *Sacred Images A Vision of Native American*

Rock Art. Explain that an individual photograph can be explored and understood like other visual media, such as a painting or drawing. Exploring the elements of a photo will help students appreciate the impact of photography and the book and exhibit.

Using the photographs in *Sacred Images*, discuss the following terms with students:

Light and dark: Where is the light coming from in the photograph? Is it natural or artificial?

Are there strong contrasts between light and dark in the photograph?

Space: Is the space (area) shown in the photograph deep or shallow?

Line: What types of lines do you see in the photo? Are they straight, curves, thick, thin, diagonal, or horizontal?

Texture: Can you identify different textures in the photographs?

Exploring Composition:

Angle: Where was the photographer standing in relation to the photograph? Does the angle create a certain effect?

Mood: Is the photo creating a mood? What in the photograph contributes to making this mood?

Frame: Look at the edges of the photograph. What did the artist choose to include in the image? Did he cut or exclude anything? Does the framing of the image draw your eye to certain areas of the photograph?

Comparing Photographs: Ask students to compare the various photographs using the above terms.

Activity: Using a Photo Log (see handout)

Pass out the photo log as a journal to record their ideas, feelings, and questions as they tour the exhibit or look at the photos in the book *Sacred Images*.

Review each heading, making sure to remind students that photos can teach, stir emotions, encourage new thoughts, and raise many questions. Make sure students understand each vocabulary word listed in the log.

Tell students that they will bring their notebook, pen or pencil and photo log to record their thoughts as they look at the photographs. Using their notebook they will carefully examine at least one photograph. Encourage them to keep the following questions in mind then answering:

What can you see in the photograph?

Is there anything you notice about the photograph that you didn't see at first?

Why do you think the photographer chose this scene to photograph?

How does it make you feel?

What does this photograph say about the ancient people of Utah?

What does the photograph say about our life in Utah today?

Activity: Small Group Discussion:

Organize students into small groups to share their photo logs. Ask the group to appoint a recorder for the 20-minute session and capture the major impressions and questions.

Activity: Newspaper Project

Tell the students they are going to use their exhibit and/or photo log experience to comment on the exhibition in one of the following ways: the impact on the environment, preservation of a culture, personal reflection, or an opinion piece.

Activity: Conducting an Oral History

Explain to students that an oral history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information that is authentic, useful, and reliable. Its purpose is to preserve information about the past which can be used by others.

Using the resources in the materials list, ask students to conduct an oral history with a grandparent or parent. It is suggested that students tape or video tape their interviews.

