

Cultural Identity Through Art and Photography

Summary

This lesson introduces students to the work of classic 20th Century documentary photographers. Through this process, students will come to understand how art/artists are keys to defining and depicting cultural identities.

Time Frame

5 class periods of 70 minutes each

Life Skills

Aesthetics, Thinking & Reasoning, Communication, Social & Civic Responsibility

Materials

Day One

"Preface" Missing Stories

Day Two

Samples of historic photo essays (see website attachments)

Day Three

Camera for each student

Day Four

Computer for each student

Background for Teachers

Teachers using this lesson plan should be familiar with local photography projects and artists working with or documenting native and immigrant culture in Salt Lake City (or other cities throughout Utah).

Student Prior Knowledge

Students should be aware of the diverse cultures living in Salt Lake City. Students should also have an understanding of the principles of basic photography.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Students will learn how to document culture (diversity) through art (photography).

Students will learn about their own cultural heritage and how to document their own family story.

Students will learn about the rich history of cultural art in Salt Lake City.

Students will learn about diverse communities in Utah.

Instructional Procedures

Lesson One

As a class, read the "Preface" to Missing Stories. Discuss with the class the following questions:

How is this book not only about stories, but also about place?

What visual images do you conjure while reading this introduction?

How would you capture images for this book/collection?

Think about your own "geographic surrounding" and how would you visually depict your culture/community, or your place in the world?

Students should keep a list when answering the last question. This will help them begin to think about how they can visually capture and represent their own lives and communities.

Lesson Two

View with students the work of three American photographers. Choose from any of the following:

FSA Photographers, Walker Evans and Dorothy Lange

Robert Frank's The Americans

Henri Cartier Bresson's work on street candid.

Richard Avedon's portraits of the American West.

Discuss these works with the class, focusing on how these examples help the students visualize a project focused on their own lives and cultural identity.

Lesson Three

As a class visit or examine (in class) a local photography exhibit being shown at a museum, cultural center, or school. If no exhibits are available contact the [Center for Documentary Expression and Art](#) to see where any of their exhibits are being shown.

Students should also be working at home to document their cultural/community identity or life. In class, discuss with the students what they are taking pictures of (their room, family members, friends, cars, computer equipment, school, etc). Talk about the choices they are making, being sure they students are conscious of their decisions and the decision making process.

Lesson Four

Students will work in class to create a power point presentation of their photographs. Students should combine images and text to tell a story about their topic (their personal identity and broader culture). Students who do not complete this assignment in class should finish it for homework.

Lesson Five

Students will present their work to the class. Each student should prepare an introduction to their project that details their "artistic vision" for the project and the process they engaged to collect their photographs. For their presentations, students should have a clearly outlined/organized talk prepared.

Strategies for Diverse Learners

Although this lesson plan is designed specifically for students in a photography/art course, it could be modified to fit any classroom where cameras and computers (for editing) are available.

Extensions

If space and time permits, during Lesson Five, when students present their projects, they can invite family members as audience members.

In the past I have had guest speakers come to the class, on either the second or third day of the lesson. Possible guest speakers are:

Rick Egan, SL Trib Staff Photographer

Roger Tuttle: Commercial photographer and photojournalist

Jim Fisher: University of Utah Department of Communications and former photojournalist

Suzanne Simpson: Art Photographer

Kent Miles: Salt Lake City photographer and Center for Documentary Expression and Art Coordinator

Bibliography

Kelen, L.G, & Stone, E.H. (2000). Missing Stories: An Oral History of Ethnic Minority Groups in Utah. Utah State University Press. Logan, UT.

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