



Picture Pedagogy Online Resources – Lesson Examples

Lesson Example 5.1 Exoticism

Subject: Art
Level: Grade 4
Country: United States

Christine was an artist-in-residence in a small rural school in West Virginia when she taught lessons on tourist souvenirs. The lessons raised many issues for her students, including the fixed expectations of tourists versus an authentic cultural identity reflective of an ever-changing society.

Contrary to the usual approach when exploring art from other cultures that employ a long ago and far way attitude, Christine asked her young students to consider themselves tourists in their own place. At first her students were confused; they defined a tourist as someone who wants to find new things. You can't be a tourist in your own place they said. So, Christine organized a field trip to a neighboring town to visit an arts and crafts center, called Tamarack, that featured West Virginian artists, food, and literature. Tamarack had been established by the State Government as a tourist attraction but from the beginning had courted controversy by selling artefacts produced by people outside the state and denying local artists access. The artefacts of the area's culture, known as Appalachia, were defined by Tamarack as a commercial product attractive to tourists.

Before leaving for their day trip, the students constructed a travel journal in which they were required to describe, analyze, and review their excursion. The description was to include any information about the artifacts they collected like photographs, ticket stubs, news clippings, and tourist booklets. Additionally, the students were to write down what their fondest memories were, who they had met, and consider whether such people were the same or different from the people they knew. What had they learned, and what questions they still had about the place and/or people they had visited?

Off they went, taking the opportunity to visit artist studios, begin making a basket, listen to a concert, eat, walk about, and shop. At the end of the day, they wrote up their impressions in their journals.

Back in class the following day, and organized into small groups, the students shared their journal entries, and with the the help of a note taker they recorded issues, descriptions, and interesting comments. It soon became apparent that the students had many questions. Were all the items on sale at Tamarack Appalachian? How did the items they had seen represent them? Who had determined what was on sale? Discussion ensued. While the students had previously thought that all Appalachians were like them, it was apparent they there were regional differences. Christine stressed that there was no single Appalachian culture just as there was no single African American culture or Jewish Culture. She stressed that the more you know about a culture, its heritage, and traditions, the more complex it is, and that it is important to reject stereotypes that paint particular groups of people as the same.

Other questions were also raised. What part of West Virginia did those people live in who made the things they had seen at Tamarack? Were any of the items by Native Americans, African



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Americans or Latino? The significance of this question lies in the fact that while Appalachian culture is stereotypically derived from poor Europeans, today it is a mixture of many groups, those just mentioned as well as Arab Americans and Asian Americans.

It became apparent that almost all the artefacts they had seen were by white Europeans. Was the exclusion of non-European descendent people based on a stereotype or an act of racial discrimination? The students found it difficult to decide. What was evidently true, was that the students felt they had been misrepresented by many of the artefacts on display at Tamarack. They felt stereotyped, and they were embarrassed by some of the representations attached to their own regional culture. They objected to the idea that the food they had eaten was meant to be typical of what they ate. Some of the items they had viewed were of historical significance but initially of little interest to them because they did not reflect their own experience. As one boy said, 'If I am from West Virginia why don't we see things we know?' Other students commented that what they had seen was 'stuff tourists buy,' and 'something my grandmother did.'

Christine commented that in general her students felt that the items on sale at Tamarack suggested otherness. They represented an outsider's view of authenticity that was in fact inauthentic. They represented a stereotypical view that was out-of-date, a view fixed in the past that did not reflect the ever changing, dynamic reality of Appalachian culture as her students understood it to be.

Ballangee-Morris, C. (2003). 'Tourist Souvenirs,' *Visual Arts Research*, 28 (2): 102-107.



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Lesson Example 5.2 Sexuality

Subject: Integration

Level: Grade 3

Country: Spain

Teachers in an urban primary school set out to explore how their students understood and experience their own bodies. They approached bodies as they are represented in both fine art and popular mass media. While not especially focused on sexuality, views about sexuality arose as one of many issues. Planned as a 10-week inquiry-based project, the teachers deliberately integrated knowledge from art history, anatomy, language, geography and sociology.

The teachers began by asking their students, 'What do body images mean to you?' Most answers indicated concerns and speculations about biological and anatomical functions. Some of the students responded with answers like, 'It is a very important machine that allows us to live,' and 'It as an addition of bones, flesh and organs'. The teachers explained that the body functions as a whole, not as a collection of separate parts, and how this had been reflected in their answers. Students were then asked to find three images at home that represented the body or body parts.

One child chose pictures that led to rich discussions. Her three pictures were of an African woman naked from the waist up, a naked woman under a waterfall, and the torso of a naked man holding a baby. The child explained that the first picture showed how people live in different cultures; the second, that people love nature; and the third, that while men cannot breast feed they can do other things to help mothers. But some students thought the pictures were pornographic.

Considering this response, the teachers then asked the students to collect three fine art images of bodies. Then they compared, for example, the photograph of the African woman with paintings by Gauguin. The comparison raised the question: Why are some photographs considered pornographic and fine art paintings are not? Are the pictures themselves pornographic or is it a matter of how we look? Does pornography have to do with social conventions of viewing?

As homework, the teacher suggested trying to work out why many fine art paintings of females are naked. They were to think about issues like patronage, power relationships between men and women, and the way people tend to look at things. And they were to ask their parents for help. The next day, some of the students suggested that in the past there had been more female than male models. Other students indicated more insight. For example, one student said, 'Because the majority of famous painters were male and males for and buy the paintings, and they love to look at women who represent life and happiness'. Another student, helped by her parents, mentioned that woman had once been fertility symbols, and that women were treated as just objects to be looked at.

Realizing that these answers placed women as victims of patriarchy, a teacher introduced the students to the Guerilla Girls who protest against the lack of women artists in most museums of fine art. To emphasize this point, the teacher brought to class a newspaper article called 'Women According to Michelangelo.' Discussion centered on how in the past the clergy, kings, and nobles had commissioned artworks. Students found it odd that some figures represented by Michelangelo



appeared to be boys with breasts. The article also explored how in earlier centuries there was a preference for fatter and lighter skinned people, and to reinforce the idea that ideals of body types differed over time, the students explored paintings by Picasso, Francis Bacon, Matisse, and practitioners of Body Art.

Students went on to consider forms of material culture such as corsets, tattoos, body cults and body disorders. Students discussed society's obsession with a perfect body, plastic surgery, and dieting, and teachers talked about how the body shames.

Finally, students reflected on what they had learned, summarizing their findings as well as any views they might have changed or developed. Some of their comments included, 'before I didn't worry about losing weight but now I do'. 'When I decided to have long hair and plait it, my friends called me queer but now they accept me and I don't mind what they think.'

Vidiella. J., and Hernandez. F (2006), 'Beyond Lucian Freud: Exploring Representations in Children's Culture', *International Journal of Education Through Art*, 2 (2):105-117.



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Lesson Example 5.3 Bullying

Subject: Art
Level: Middle School
Country: United States

Josh used the creation of a comic book character by his students to help combat bullying in his school. To help reduce violence and encourage compassion for victims, he taught a lesson that gave expression to his students' own experiences, embodied positive values, reflected on personality traits, and examined the power dynamics of bullying.

Josh began by creating a learning environment where students felt safe to share their thoughts and feelings about bullying. Through an open discussion, though without naming names or revealing identifying information, students shared their personal experiences of schoolyard bullying. Josh asked, 'When have you witnessed someone standing up for what they believe in or defending others?' He encouraged his students to be brave enough to support someone being bullied. Could his students take on the role of defender? And further, what would it take to help transform a bully?

This discussion about what a defender might say or do reminded students about one of the core values of the school: Celebrating students that support each other during bullying situations. Students reflected on how they or others they knew may have been bullied and what it felt like. Josh wanted his students not to remain passive bystanders. Defender qualities, he told them, include core character values like willpower, awareness, respect, and compassion.

The students were then to create a defender superhero who would come to the rescue of victims. Before they began, they filled out a worksheet answering questions such as, "What are the defender's special abilities/powers? How would you describe the defender's personality? What does the defender look like and who does the defender protect?" Students examined an array of comic books for possibilities. Josh also asked question about visual representation such as, "What color or line quality would you use?" He asked students to their character's name and costume, and reiterated his earlier questions about their character's abilities, and whom she/he might defend. The students developed a rough sketch of their character and began their 'Defender Comic Book' cover designs, which included their character, a title using 3-D letters, and a background showing their mastery of one-point perspective.

As the students drew their superhero, Josh encouraged them to role-play with prompts such as, 'What might your strengths as a superhero character be and how might you or your superhero use them to help another student who is being bullied? How would your character tell a personal story about you? What abilities can you give your character that you can use to speak with bullies about their behavior?'

The students created characters that were whimsical yet possessed the ability to deal with intense situations. One student drew 'The Incredible Mind', a superhero that could move objects and people with his mental powers without having to physically reprimand or hurt his opponents in a compromising situation. Another student drew 'Le Super Sonic Sloth', a friendly sloth that helped



those in an argument slow down their decision-making and formulate fair decisions. A third student drew 'The Amazing Prodigy' who could fly for 'speedy travel' and make people's emotions hot or cold with the touch of his hands, cooling down hot tempers and helping people make rational, clear choices. In discussing their comic books, thoughts and feelings emerged as students expressed how in real life their defenders support them.

Josh felt that in making their comics, his students were dealing with often difficult emotions. It appeared to give his students the power to start again, recreate, reexamine, and explore qualities they value in themselves and others. The defender characters gave students permission to be self-aware, survey how people treat them, and consider thoughtful responses. Josh stressed that the defender's persona was a gift to society.

Finally, the students took their defender comic books with them on a journey throughout their school campus. They reflected on particular bullying situations and how they might assist a bully to stop or change their behavior.

This project uncovered ideas about the worlds inside students, which is critical for them to understand real-world situations. The project was not intended to cure bullying behaviors or to counsel bullies themselves. Rather, it was an initial step to address bullying in the school community.

Tellie, B., and Dracup, J. (2016), 'Exploring Bullying Through Artmaking', *Art Education*, 69 (1): 8-15.
DOI: 10.1080/00043125.2016.1106842.



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Lesson Example 5. 4 Horror and Hate

Subject: Art
Level: High School
Country: United States

Amada taught lessons with the theme 'No Place for Hate' that addressed a range of social issues. Taught shortly after the 2016 federal election in the United States, she wanted to combat the students' feelings of despair by empowering students to reject a social climate that had recently condoned bigotry and exasperated existing racial conflicts. There was a sense, since realized, that in addition to racism, sexism and homophobia would continue to plague public discourse.

Amada began by showing students photographs taken during the Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1960s. One photograph depicted police dogs attacking peaceful protestors. Others showed protestors being bludgeoned by police and subject to powerful water hoses. The pictures were horrifying, especially the way that the police had dehumanized the protestors.

Amanda pointed out that the photographs had been taken with 35 mm cameras which were new at the time. The cameras were small, flexible and allowed for intimate images to be taken, which, in turn, effected a strong emotional response. Amada linked these photographs to the numerous digital images captured in recent years of police shootings in the United States and how, downloaded to the internet, they went viral. In both cases, the photographs from the 1960s and the more recent ones helped to curb the worst of the abuses.

In developing her lessons Amanda had been inspired by a project conducted by contemporary United States artist Barbara Kruger. Kruger had recently worked with young people in which they created work similar to her own, that is, black and white photographs with banner-like bold text that commented on social issues. Kruger's work was to be Amada's students' model.

To focus her students' efforts, Amanda asked the following four questions: 'What do you fear? What do you hope for? Whose power? Whose justice?' Inquiring further, she asked, 'Who has power and control, and how do they use it? How do you feel when you are on the receiving end of unequal power relationships because of bigotry and hate?'

The students used 35 cameras, the kind used during the 1960s, developed them, and scanned them into digital form. Then they used Photoshop to overlay the pictures with text. While using the latest technology, using the older technology as well grounded the project within a tradition of talking back to power. In further instructions, Amanda noted that slogans are often short, either support or contrast with an image and that the placement and font are important. She also encouraged them to be clever, ironic, or humorous.

The students readily engaged. One example includes a head and shoulder shot with a neutral frame of a black woman staring into the camera with the text 'DO YOU FEAR being A BLACK WOMAN', though it can also be read 'DO YOU FEAR A BLACK WOMAN'. Another example shows a woman in profile seeming to be walking past with the text, 'Ignorance is not BLISS'.



When the memes were completed, and working with the counselling department of the school, they were displayed as large banners around the school. The memes were then uploaded to Instagram as part of a conscious raising effort. Amada class employed older technologies to emphasize that protesting power has a history, while exploiting the new technologies to reject hate through personal empowerment.

Arlington, A. K. (2018). 'Power and Control: Responding to Social Injustice through Photographic Memes', *Art Education*, 71 (6): 4-8. DOI: 10.1080/00043125.2018.1505391.