

OVERVIEW

LESSON TITLE: Gender Identity

TEACHER NAME: Lori Bertonazzi & Sarah Brown

UNIT OF STUDY/TOPIC: Where Do I Fit In?

GRADE LEVEL: 8 & 9

CLASS TIME: 90 Minutes 1 Day 1 Session

RATIONAL/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The goal of this lesson is to help students realize their place in a larger historical context. Through the exploration of the Feminist Art Movement, and the deconstruction of popular culture female icons, students will gain a more meaningful understanding of their place in history and society as a female. At this age, gender identity is still undergoing construction. Adolescent females are undergoing physical transformations that are new and often awkward. Issues such as appearance and body image often begin to take root at this age. This lesson is designed to allow the young women for which this lesson is designed, to express the changes they are going through in relation to the new social pressures they are facing based on their gender. The goal is to encourage them to question beauty and prescribed gender roles, and to come up with their own definitions for them, rather than buying into the often sexually explicit portrayal of “beautiful” women in the media. We will also be exploring gender in depth, and the students will be encouraged to question the gender stereotypes that have traditionally be assigned to women, as well as any stereotypes that they feel are still being perpetuated in society today. The students will be constructing a dress that challenges all of the traditional connotations associated with dresses and femininity. Their dress will serve as a symbol of growth and empowerment, not one of the frail, dependent, female.

The students should be able to confidently critically analyze visual images, as they have practiced the process in the previous two lessons. This process involves questioning cultural values, challenging the status quo, exploring the self in relation to society, and forming educated judgments. All of these higher-order thinking skills will be challenging to students at this age, but meaningful at the same time. The students will also be creating a symbolic, non-traditional representation of their voice as they begin to collaboratively design their dresses. The goal is to help the students develop their interpersonal skills- to work together towards a common goal without losing sight of their own core values.

MATERIALS/EQUIPMENT

- Computer/projector
- Markers
- Pencils
- Newsprint
- Erasers
- Dress
- Visuals: (See References)

ROOM ARRANGEMENT

The lesson will be taught in the computer lab so that visuals for discussion can be seen on a large scale. We will then use the large tables in the lab to begin dress construction.

VOCABULARY

Feminist Art Movement:

- A movement beginning in the 1960's which describes the efforts and accomplishments of feminists internationally to bring more visibility to women in the art world; the movement ran concurrently with the general feminist movement, which refers to a number of cultural, political and social movements concerned with gender inequality and equal rights for women
(Wikipedia.org)

Gender identity:

- The way in which a person categorizes themselves as either male or female/ masculine or feminine and all of the expectations and responsibilities that come along with it

Gender bias/stereotype:

- When an individual is treated unfairly or is expected to act a certain way based on their gender (Examples: Girls are not as good at math as boys because they're girls)

REFERENCE/SOURCES

- Why is this Woman Beautiful? <http://www.friesian.com/gender.htm>
- Girl Culture- (Book cover by Lauren Greenfield) www.takegreatpictures.com
- Ingres- La Grande Odalisque

STANDARDS/OBJECTIVES

STANDARDS

1.1 Aesthetics

1.1.8 A. Knowledge

1. Examine works of art that communicate significant cultural beliefs or set of values.

Students will examine photographs of female popular culture icons and will discuss the projected gender stereotypes and expectations of our culture.

1.1.8 B. Skills

2. Distinguish among artistic styles, trends, and movements in various art forms.

Students will explore and discuss the Feminist Art Movement.

3. Express how art is inspired by an individual's imagination.

Students will create imaginative sketches for the final project (a dress).

1.2 Creation and Performance

1.2.8 D. Visual Art

1. Incorporate various art elements and principles in the creation of works of art.

3. Identify form, function, craftsmanship, and originality when creating a work of art.

Students will create sketches for the final project using contour line, the illusion of volume, color and collage.

1.4 Critique

1.4.8 B. Skills

1. Evaluate the judgment of others based on the process of critique.

Students will collaborate in the creation of the design for the final dress. They will evaluate the potential effectiveness of each other's independent sketches through critique before combining the strongest traits from each design.

1.5 History/Culture

1.5.8 A. Knowledge

2. Examine how the social and political environment influences artists in various social/historical/political contexts.

Students will examine Feminist Art in relation to the time period and social context in which it was created.

Language Arts Literacy

STANDARD 3.5 (Viewing and media literacy) All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources.

3. Analyze and respond to visual and print messages (e.g. humor, irony, metaphor) and recognize how words, sounds, and still or moving images are used in each medium to convey the intended messages.

Students will examine visual images and will critically analyze them in terms of their social implications, implicit values and projected gender stereotypes.

STANDARD 3.2 (Writing) All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.

D. Writing Forms, Audiences, and Purposes (exploring a variety of forms)

14. Maintain a collection of writing (e.g., a literacy folder, or a literacy portfolio).

Students respond to guiding questions at the end of class. Responses will be recorded in an on-going journal assignment.

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Define the Feminist Art Movement and explain its cultural and social motivations and implications.
- Question the gender stereotypes that are present in their daily lives (i.e. gender expectations that are present at school, home, and society in general)
- Critically examine how gender expectations are personified by the way that popular culture icons present themselves in the media.
- Collaboratively design a dress that challenges the traditional role of the female artist.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of each other's designs before creating one cohesive product.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

- Topic Question: (*Show Girl Culture image*)
 - What's going on in this image?
 - How does it make you feel?
 - How do you think the girl in this image feels? What is she thinking? How do you know this? (*She looks like she's dissatisfied with her body; her face does not display confidence, but disappointment*)
 - What does this suggest about the pressures of being a female?
 - How do these pressures reflect our culture and our expectations of beauty and gender? (*Women are categorized as "beautiful" or feminine in our society when their bodies look a certain way- i.e. large breasts, small waste, etc*).
 - Look at the younger girl in the lower left hand corner. What is she doing? What does this suggest? (*The perpetuation of gender stereotypes from generation to generation*)
 - Why do you think this image is titled "Girl Culture"? (*Society places certain expectations on girls, and they often become frustrated because it is impossible to live up to the ideal*)
- Association: (*Show images of Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, Britney Spears, and Beyonce*)
 - Tell me about these pictures. What do they all have in common? How are they different?
 - How are they dressed? Why?
 - What features of the female body are being emphasized in these pictures? Why?
 - Look at the bodies of the women. Are they realistic? Are they more idealistic? How does this affect their audience (young women)?
 - Look at the faces of these women. Are they realistic? Why are women expected to have long eyelashes, big lips, red cheeks, etc. in order to be considered beautiful? Do most women naturally have these features?
 - What are the implications of these images for young women in general? Do they create an impossible standard?
 - What does this suggest about the values of our culture? What does it tell you about our culture's expectations for women? Why are most women in the media presented this way?
- Visualization:
 - Today, women artists are using their artwork to challenge these stereotypes, or gender biases, that are projected by popular culture icons and maintained by society as a whole.
 - These women can be associated with the movement known as the Feminists Art Movement. Do you know what this means? What does feminism mean?
 - During the 1960's and 70's, women began to reexamine how they were being treated in society and found that they were not being treated fairly.

- They were expected to stay home and maintain the household and raise children because they were not seen as being capable of going out into the workplace like their male counterparts.
 - They were thought to be more fragile and unstable than men, and so they were rarely in a position of power in the work place.
 - They were often delegated to “feminine” jobs like teaching, food service, secretary and could be turned down on the basis of sex.
- In the art world:
 - It was believed that women were not capable of creating valuable art.
 - Women were underrepresented in the art world, in art museums.
 - Most women who were in art museums were not the artists, but the nude models that males had chosen for their subjects.
 - What do you think about this?
- Feminist Art Movement
 - As a response to this discrimination, women artists united in what we now refer to as the Feminist Art Movement: the efforts and accomplishments of feminists internationally to bring more visibility to women within art history and art practice.
 - These women used their artwork to create visual images that conveyed a message to the rest of society. What is that message?
 - *Deconstruct the following in terms of the image, color, composition, text, etc:*
 - *Cindy Sherman*
 - *Barbara Kruger*
 - *Guerrilla Girls*
 - Show and deconstruct “Why is this woman beautiful?” image and Ingres image so that students can see that the distortion of women’s bodies is not a new concept.
 - Are these factual representations of women? (*No, they are ideal, fiction*)
 - What implications do these images have on women in society? (*Women may feel pressured to live up to an impossible standard; women may feel self-conscious*)
- Transition: Do you think that there are still gender biases in our society today? Why/why not?
 - Think about the expectations that others have of you. Are you treated differently when you are at school? At home? Do others expect you to act a certain way because of your gender? Do you ever think that you are treated differently just because you are a young woman
 - Now, today you are going to have a chance to combat what was once a very common gender stereotype for women artists.
 - As we discussed earlier, women were not considered intelligent enough to create “real” art. They were delegated to fun, decorative activities such as sewing and quilt making, because they weren’t smart enough to make meaningful, thought-provoking art.

- Today you are going to begin working on our final project. It will be a dress, but not a dress in the traditional sense. We are breaking not only the stereotype of what was once thought to be easy, meaningless art, but also, we are redefining the function of a dress, and are changing it from a symbol of inferior femininity (as it was once considered) to a powerful work of art.

SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES

- Warm Up:
 - Before we get started on your sketches, we are going to do a small exercise to get you in the collaborative mood:
 - Each of you will have 1 minute to draw three shapes/lines on your piece of paper.
 - Once you have finished your drawings, you will switch papers and each of you will draw three more shapes/marks in response to the one's on your partner's paper. No talking!
 - Repeat three times.
 - What just happened? Did you collaborate with each other? How? (*Visual communication*)
- Sketches:
 - Gather a pencil, piece of paper and markers.
 - (Teacher will present canvas, fabric, and under-dress)
 - These are the materials we will be using to create your dress.
 - Think about how you will arrange these items to create a dress. Will it be strapless; will the bottom be fitting or hoped; how will you arrange these materials to create a cohesive "dress" that still serves as a reflection of you.
 - You are to each complete one sketch for the dress.
 - Fill in the colors you wish to use.
 - Use shading to suggest the form of the dress.
 - Once you have each completed your individual dresses, we will critique them and pull out the strongest features of each to create one cohesive design.

CLOSURE/CULMINATING EXPERIENCE

Informal Critique:

- Each design will be displayed.
- Students will analyze each design in terms of its strengths and weaknesses.
 - What is visually appealing?
 - What is most practical?
 - What pieces will work together to create unity?
 - How is this dress a work of art?
 - How will it reflect our classroom?
- Students and teachers will decide which elements will be included in the final project, which will be completed in lesson 7.

ADAPTATIONS/MODIFICATIONS

The Feminist Art Movement is a very complex concept. In order to make it more approachable for students the teacher will engage in constant questioning to check for understanding and instructions and discussions will be broken down into small steps.

LESSON ANALYSIS

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

- See Rubric.
- Journal Entry: Explain the Feminist Art Movement (what is it; what are the goals of the artists associated with this movement) Do you think it's important? Why/Why not?

SELF-REFLECTION

I. Diverse Learners – *Teacher candidates understand the practice of culturally responsive teaching.*

(3.4) Uses knowledge of students and their lives to design and carry out instruction that builds on students' strengths while meeting their needs and taking into account issues of social class, gender, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, age, and special needs. (NJPTS 3.10)

In this lesson issues of gender, age, social class and ethnicity were addressed through the exploration of the Feminist Movement and its connections to the Civil Rights Movement. In our discussion, we analyzed issues that both female and other minority artists have faced when striving for equality and fairness. Gender stereotypes and gender roles in particular are addressed when deconstructing Feminine Artwork and their meanings. The students were given a chance to reflect on how they felt about the treatment of women artists of the past, as well as gender inequality issues that exist today. Each student was able to look at their own experiences and analyze them in terms of gender.

Learning Environment – *Teacher candidates understand individual and group motivation and behavior and create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.*

(6.4) Creates a positive classroom climate which is socially, emotionally and physically safe. (NJPTS 6.9)

Because so many sensitive and controversial issues are covered in this lesson, it was very important for me to create an environment in which the students felt safe to voice their opinions and to disagree. In order for the students to walk away with the most understanding from this lesson, it was essential for them to share their thoughts and feelings during the analysis of Feminist Art and how this art reflected a certain time period. Also, for the learners to connect with the lesson, it was important that they felt safe enough to share their own experiences of gender inequality. In order to create this atmosphere, both teachers were very open with their thoughts, and were sure to disagree with each other to let the students know that disagreement is a good thing. We were also sure to point out multiple perspectives when analyzing a piece of art so that the students could understand that there were many correct answers.

II. As is explained in the rationale for this unit, 8th and 9th grade students are at a point in their social development where they are trying to figure out their own set of core values. As they are bombarded with more and more visual messages, it becomes difficult to separate your own voice from the voice of the media. The learners are also at a time where they may begin to seek more independence from their parents, and are trying to distinguish their values from those of their parents. In this lesson, we analyzed visual images that specifically addressed women, and the students took advantage of the opportunity to share some of the challenges that they face every day. They were also given the chance to gain a better perspective of how and why women in the art world have evolved. The students then took these ideas that we discussed in the motivation of the lesson, and responded to them in a visual way by designing a sculptural dress form that breaks from the stereotypes that lead to inequality for women and women artists. One of the students created a non-conventional, very conceptual design. She used a Rowan football jersey as the theme of her project to symbolize her artistic growth at Rowan, and to comment on a gender inequality that is most relevant to her- not being included on the football team just because she's a girl. The other student created a more traditionally formed dress and was more concerned with the aesthetic appeal of the dress. Based on her design and her journal entry, I was able to assess that she had not fully understood some of the concepts we discussed, but she was still able to make a personal connection to gender inequality that she has experienced. To help clarify concepts in this lesson, the dialogue of the lesson would be shortened to mostly deconstruction of images, rather than lecture about historical facts.