

PORTRAYING THE DREAM

GRADE LEVEL: 6 – 8

TOPIC: Visual Artists' Translation of the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" Speech

CONTENT AREAS: Social Studies
Language Arts
Fine Arts



LEARNING OBJECTIVES/QCC:

The students will:

- **Social Studies:** History – Identify the important events and personalities in the Civil Rights Movement in Georgia;
- **Language Arts:** Reading – Use of variety of meaning making strategies to facilitate comprehension of a text;
- **Fine Arts:** Artistic Skills and Knowledge
Creating, Performing, Producing – Design and produce artwork such as graphics, jewelry, pottery, weaving and public art for a specific function;
- **Fine Arts:** Visual Arts – Plan and create artworks using elements of art and principle of design for compositions expressing an intended meaning;

- **Fine Arts:** Visual Arts – Apply concepts and ideas from another discipline and its topics as sources of ideas for own artworks; and
- **Visual Arts** – Compare and contrast how artists use selected subject matter, including symbols and ideas to communicate a message.

CRITICAL QUESTIONS:

1. What is the role of the visual artist in a social/political movement?
2. How does the visual artist translate social issues into art?
3. How does art convey the issues central to the civil rights movement?
4. Do artists impact the perception of social movements today? Why or why not?

BACKGROUND:

In this lesson parallel skills used in reading written and visual texts are identified and applied to the works of the visual artists who illustrated Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech in the illustrated edition. Students build their conceptual understanding of visual literacy by learning basic visual literacy vocabulary and using the vocabulary in discussing, analyzing and critiquing the artwork of the 15 artists selected to illustrate the speech.

To build background knowledge the teacher should read the following website: The Alphabet of Art at <http://guidancecom.com/alphabet.html> where elements and principles of art are defined and illustrated.

Background information on the Black Arts Movement may also be useful and can be found at University of Virginia's Perceptions of Black website essay on the Black Aesthetic <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG01/hughes/intro.html>.

Resources listed in the *March on Washington* lesson plan are also appropriate.

MATERIALS/RESOURCES:

Print:

Edwards, Sarah and Foss, Abigail (2002). "Using Picture Books to Turn a Critical Lens on Injustice." *The New Advocate*, pp 391-393. Boston: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

King, Martin L. (1997). *I Have a Dream: An Illustrated Edition*. New York: Scholastic Books.

Sayre, Henry (2000). *A World of Art*, 3rd edition. New York: Prentice Hall.

Online:

The Alphabet of Art
<http://www.guidancecom.com/alphabet/alphabet.html>

Elements and principles of art are defined and illustrated.

Public Broadcasting System: African American World Timeline/Civil Rights Era
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/aaworld/timeline/civil_04.html

Timeline includes sports & arts events along with political and social events during the Civil Rights Era.

The March on Washington

<http://www.angelfire.com/pa/marchonwashington>

The organization and planning for the March on Washington is described on this website. Pictures of the March on Washington and details about the actual day are presented. Audio clips of the “I Have a Dream” speech are also available.

Equipment:

Computers with internet access

Other:

Chart paper, colored paper, markers, glue, glitter, and other craft materials variety of paint media, e.g. watercolor, charcoal, colored pencil, photographs, etc.

HOOK:

1. Make sure each student has a clean sheet of unlined white paper, a pencil and crayons or markers. Ask students to silently draw an angry line. Then ask them to draw a happy line.
2. Discuss the similarities and differences between student representations. Typically angry lines have sharp angles, and happy lines have curves. Ask students why they think we tend to represent emotions in similar ways. Present the idea that art is a language that we somewhat know intuitively.
3. Have students get into small groups to brainstorm the vocabulary of art. Ask them to think about whether the language of art is universal or if it varies across cultures.
4. Discuss student findings in whole group.

PROCEDURE:

1. Share information about how art has been used as a tool for protest and expression in the Black community. Read excerpts from the pages on the Black Arts Movement.
2. Direct students to the Alphabet of Art website. (If all students don't have access then download before starting this lesson). Give students time to read through each of the ten art vocabulary items listed. Have them compare the Alphabet of Art with their own findings. Discuss similarities and differences.
3. Have students read Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. (It can be read silently first and then sectioned off and read as a readers' theater). Discuss the meaning of the speech and ask students to select a section to respond to visually. Allow each student time to create a visual response to the entire speech or a section that they especially like. Remind them to keep in mind the alphabet of art as they create their product.
4. Allow students to share their work visually and to write about what they were trying to say and how both their visual and written expressions connect to the speech.
5. Introduce the "*I Have a Dream an Illustrated Edition*" book as a text with the work of Black artists. Read the speech from the book while showing each illustration. Select any one illustration and tell the students that as a class you will use the vocabulary of art to "read" the picture.
6. Begin by asking the following questions making sure that students respond by answering:

- How do you feel about this painting?
- What is the artist saying?
- Is this a literal or figurative painting? (Make a connection with the literal and figurative language of the speech.)
- What artistic techniques does the artist use? Use the student generated vocabulary to talk about the artistic language of the painting, then introduce the following artistic vocabulary and use new vocabulary to further discuss the painting:

- ✓ Line
- ✓ Line Direction
- ✓ Texture
- ✓ Size
- ✓ Composition
- ✓ Value
- ✓ Shape
- ✓ Color

7. Divide students into small groups or pairs and allow them to select a copy of one of the illustrations from the book to discuss using the same questions modeled earlier. In addition, have them do a further “reading” of the visual text by discussing the following questions:

What is happening in this painting?

What is going to happen next?

What does this remind you of?

What is the artist saying?

What is clearly stated and what confuses you?

What do you need to research or examine more closely in order to understand the picture?

8. Each team constructs a critique of its picture.
9. Teams research their artist and professional critiques by art critics and compare the two criticisms.

CENTERS/EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Students research the biography of their favorite artist and “read” a different artwork by the same artist.
2. The class produces its own “I Have a Dream – An Illustrated Edition.”
3. Students write their personal “I Have a Dream” speech by thinking about and tapping into their own dreams.