



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2012 Volume I: Understanding History and Society through Visual Art, 1776 to 1914

History through Art: The American Revolution and the Colonial New World (1750-1850)

Curriculum Unit 12.01.01
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Rationale

In an ideal world when we think of the United States, we think of this one big "melting pot." People come from all over the world, unite and share a part of their culture while assimilating a new culture. In the real world we see something different. Many people come to the United States, put their culture on a back burner and try to fit in with this new culture that surrounds them. In the process some are losing a bit of who they are and not fully understanding who they are expected to "become". Most students begin to look upon their culture and history as "less" because it is not the focus of the content they are being bogged down with. I see this happen a lot when I am teaching a Social Studies/History unit. No matter how much background knowledge I try to provide them with, there is a disconnect. Students see history as an "us and them". They do not understand the ripple effect. They see history as isolated pockets of events that do not connect. Most of my students just want to memorize dates, facts, and events. By looking at and analyzing the art of the period, I am hoping the students will begin to see these historical figures as more than just "imaginary" people who are being written about in a book. I want them to feel that history is more than just a bunch of facts that they need to memorize. I want them to make the connection that these events took place and that real people and families were affected.

I currently teach at Roberto Clemente Leadership Academy in the Hill section of New Haven, Connecticut. My students are fifth and sixth grade English Language Learners. They come from modest income homes. Most are recent arrivals to the United States from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Mexico. History is not an integral part of the curriculum. Social Studies are what is most taught and it is focused on the present day world around them. History is taught later on in the curriculum and when they get here they have not experienced studies in History. They find it hard to grasp the concept of the "past", not to mention artistic representations of the times. Upon getting to know my students I come to realize that most had limited exposure to the arts in their native countries because of lack of access, means or proximity. This by no means suggests that these countries do not have wonderful, relevant art. It only re-enforces that sometimes although available, access is a big factor. Since access to the arts was limited, the ability to make the connection of text to world falters. I cannot expect them to understand and engage in something they have never experienced.

By working with my students this year, I am able to appreciate that art is a topic that really interests them. I have been able to witness that with a simple illustration, their interest is piqued. They formulate so many questions based on what they observe. These illustrations open up a world of questions and curiosities. Lots of times they also become creative themselves and draw their own representations of how they visualize what is going on.

Bringing art and history together will close some of the disconnect the students experience. When I teach them history it only seems natural to bring artwork into the equation. I want to be able to teach a historical event, present them with content and then find artwork of the period and present it. By presenting it I will be able to re-enforce the content and also bring a human element into the lesson. Through artwork I can put faces to the names we have just read about. With the artwork I can extend the history lesson into the realm of what society was like. We can examine how people lived in colonial America and how people lived in colonial Jamaica after the emancipation of the slaves and compare what their lives were like. Through artwork we can also examine what leisure time was like, we can view how people enjoyed themselves when they were not focused on work or struggles to gain freedom. We can examine what may have been some of the causes of these historical events. I also want students to identify some of the places mentioned in history and relate them to actual places that still exist today. Through art I want students to be transported back in time. I want them to see a work of art and appreciate that they know what is going on, what were some of the causes and what effect does it still have on us today. I also want them to see the humanity of people in history. They may not have been from the same country, time period, social, or cultural background, but they were human and very much like them or myself. I want them to appreciate emotion transmitted in art that they may otherwise miss in a book laden with facts. Art will be able to bring about that connection that we should share with the world. Art will also give them the opportunity to verbalize what they are observing, thinking, and feeling about a specific piece. Our students need the time and opportunity to observe, analyze and then verbalize without feeling pressure and worrying about whether they are right or wrong. This is a skill that through art they can develop and later on transfer to other areas in life.

I want to include some of the artwork of the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica, during the same period. As we know Jamaica was a British colony much like the "New World". Many of my students realize that cultures are different but then they equate these differences with inferiority. By presenting correlating images of Colonial America leading up to the Revolution, we can view the history of Jamaica after the Emancipation through art. I want my students to be able to compare characteristics of colonist in two different countries colonized by the same nation. I want them to appreciate that most of the struggles, victories, and losses experienced were similar to those experienced in the United States. By viewing artwork of the American Revolutionary period I want them to see portraits of important and contributing historical figures and know that their effect was profound and on a grand scale. I also want to zero in on how the artwork of the new American nation begins to change once the colonies gain independence and what the artwork of Jamaica looks like after the emancipation. Students should be given the opportunity through art to "see" how people were feeling when art was the best way to express these feelings. I want them to see that history was in the making all over the world and just because something was happening in the United States, that did not mean that the rest of the world ceased to exist. I want my students to feel like citizens of the world who share a history or what it means to be human. Through artwork I also want students to appreciate who we are as a people with culturally mixed heritages. Through visuals and art, students will be able to see relationships that they otherwise may not be able to grasp if they just read about it.

I want to be able to take full advantage of the art galleries and studios throughout the Greater New Haven area and Yale University. Just within the city we have a wealth of history, landmarks, and artwork. With the

incorporation of artwork into the curriculum, fieldtrips and guided tours will be so much more meaningful. Students will be able to take learning outside of the classroom and apply what they know, engage in active learning and broaden their scope of topics and interests. Experiencing art will also help them with language acquisition because vocabulary will be expanded based on the need to communicate what they are observing. Children want to express what they know and what they have learned and artwork is the vehicle that will take us there. Artwork will give meaning to that "book full of facts."

Content Objectives and Overview

In my current curriculum we use the series "On our way to English". This series integrates social studies, science, and English language arts. The students are introduced to different content while focusing on language acquisition skills. We are introduced to the American Revolution. Our vocabulary consists of the words; colonists, colonies, general, battalions, battles, soldiers, minutemen, king, freedom, independence, constitution, truce, treaties, oppression, and ruling nation. These at the moment are just vocabulary words. I know that at the Yale Art Gallery and the British Art Center, we can find representations in various forms for each of the words. This will enable me to teach them that it is just more than a word but a concept, a real life concept. There are many books and articles geared towards the instruction of English Language Learners but the one I find most helpful is the SIOP (Shelter Instructional Operational Protocol) book. As discussed in the SIOP (Sheltered Instructional Operational Protocol) model for ELL instruction, students make content comprehensible through techniques such as visual aids, graphic organizers and multicultural content. I can complement the pictures in the book with real art work that someone painted and someone owned. Viewing artwork will give my students the opportunity to really examine a piece up close. They will be able to appreciate details, lighting, technique and perspective. By viewing artwork the students will be able to analyze the purpose behind different pieces during the period between 1750 and 1850.

This unit will include a list of activities that will enhance student's understanding of the Revolutionary War through the artwork of the time. Students will analyze a work of art and understand what was occurring during the time period in relation to family life, society, social positions and political beliefs. They will analyze artwork and understand that these figures were family members, fathers, sons, mothers, wives and even daughters of those fighting for their ideals. Students will make inferences and judgments about different works of art and come to their own conclusions as to the artists purpose or message. They will be able to see a piece of artwork from a variety of perspectives. They will examine works of art from those who were living and painting in the "New World", those from Britian and artists from Jamaica. Based on the conclusions the students draw, they will be able to create a story around the art piece and how it fits into the history of the time. Once students are able to understand the human experiences involved through artwork, I think they will be able to draw a connection to these historical figures on a humanistic level. I think that it will help them learn how to better make text to self connections and text to world connections.

Another objective I have for my unit is to have students increase vocabulary that is rich in content, based on sensory experiences. The students need the opportunity to view art, experience it, critically analyze it, then be able to verbalize all this. By viewing art, students can formulate opinions based on what they see and acquire new vocabulary in order to share out. They will be able to externalize an opinion based on schema and new images introduced. Students will also be able to practice comparing and contrasting. This is important because they will be comparing and contrasting two countries that are different but related for different

reasons. When students are able to compare and contrast, they become more detailed orientated and better critical thinkers. The students will need to immerse themselves in the topic and the period in order to identify these characteristics.

By the end of this unit, most of my students should be able to describe a piece of artwork, first based on just what they see in the image and then make one or two inferences about what the authors intention may have been. They will be required to pay attention to details and how the details play into the bigger scheme of things.

As the students become more experienced in analyzing art work, I will ask them to write their observations and inferences down and discuss them among themselves before we discuss them as a group. Students will be able to work in small groups and then share out in a whole group setting.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

In order to teach my unit, I plan on activating schema and introducing the topics with as much pre-reading and vocabulary as I can. I will also incorporate supplemental readings and these readings will consist of articles and history text books used in monolingual mainstream history classes offered at my school. Students will be encouraged to note take in order to supplement the basic information found in the unit regarding the American Revolution found in "On Our way to English". Technology is prevalent and many of our students are literate in it and it cannot be ignored in our teaching . For this reason and to enhance the curriculum I will show a movie about the Revolutionary War. The movie will be "The Patriot". This movie is an excellent example of family life and struggles during the American Revolution. It demonstrates that with victory comes loss. Students will be required to do a character analysis. As they observe the different characters in the movie, they will be encouraged to record what they observe in regards to the characters' surrounding and relationships. Technology is great because it adds movement and sound to topics some students may find boring or uninteresting. As the artwork is incorporated, the students will be encouraged to observe attention to details that movies or reproductions tend to omit. I plan on using graphic organizers because students will be receiving so much information that they need an organized format to help them keep track. Some of these graphic organizes will include a KWL chart, (what you Know, what you Want to know, what you've Learned), a character analysis chart where they will list physical, social, and emotional traits, and a time line with a space for brief descriptors of events listed.

I also want to incorporate "gallery walks". These gallery walks will be with reproductions found in my current curriculum. Students will be able to walk around the classroom and look at pictures related to content . Students will be encouraged to list observations focusing on their sense of sight and touch. The guide questions will be: "What do you see? What colors are prominent? Are there any women, children or African Americans? What do you think certain objects felt like? What did the weather feel like on your skin? The questions will vary depending on the reproductions shown. The students will later be able to write their observations and look at their findings as a group. This will prepare them for the actual tours that will be planned at the Yale Art Gallery and or the British Art Center.

Sample Lessons

Lesson One

During the beginning of the unit, I will introduce the topic of the Revolutionary War in the book "On Our Way to English" by activating schema. The students will be asked to translate and define the word "war". Then they will do the same with the word "revolution". After the basic concept is introduced we will do some short readings about the causes that led up to the Revolutionary War. Once we reach this stage we will pause and focus on the concept of "freedom". Here the students will be able to discuss what "freedom" means to them and they will be asked to draw a visual representation of what "freedom" means to them.

After the students demonstrate that they have grasped the concept of "freedom" and that it was one of the basic reasons for the Revolutionary War, the students will read the historical account of the Revolution and organize their facts on a time line graphic organizer. At this interval, I will then present them with some images of the Revolution itself and some of the important historical figures involved. I will begin with the portrait by John Trumbull, *General George Washington at Trenton (1792)*, Yale University Art Gallery. I choose this portrait because I want students to observe the detail given to George Washington and how portrait painting signified a person's importance. I also want the students to reflect on the significance of the horse and how it lends status to the subject. The students will be asked the following questions: Why do you think this portrait was painted? What impression does the General give with his pose? Why do you think the painter included the majestic white horse? By just looking at the portrait, can you appreciate the importance of the General? The second image I will present will also be by John Trumbull, *The Battle of Bunker's Hill, June 17, 1775 (1786)*, Yale University Art Gallery. In this battle image we see the consequences of war and death up close. I think this image is important because here we see that even in full battle, a fellow soldier is trying to protect and retain the dignity of the fallen soldier. The soldiers from neither side have not lost their composure nor humanity. Using this image, the students will be asked to provide as much detail as possible. I will guide them with the following questions: Who is fighting who? Can you recognize any familiar figures seen before? What group seems to be winning? How are they fighting? What weapons can you identify? How do you think these men feel? After we read about the end of the Revolution, we will then discuss the outcome and focus on a major historical event which was the signing of the Declaration of Independence. John Trumbull, *The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776, (1786-1820)*, Yale University Art Gallery. I will present the image and ask the students the following questions: What is happening in this picture? What is the significance of the men standing? Who do you think the others are that seem to be just observing? Do you think the image represents how important the signing of the Declaration was? After ample discussion about the importance of the Revolution and how it has affected us until this day I will present the students with the question: Why don't we see many women on our images? Once they formulate ideas and inferences as to the reasons I will present the image of Molly Pitcher—Heroine of Monmouth Revolutionary War, a lithograph published by Currier & Ives (1859). They will then observe what they see and give their opinion they will also give an opinion as to if they think there were more women like Molly or was this an isolated event. They will be asked to research at the library and as a class, name at least three other important female characters during the revolution. As a writing assignment I will ask students to pretend that they were alive during the Revolutionary period and based on their observations, write a short letter to a family member describing their experiences. They will be asked to include as much detail as possible. The guide questions will be: What did you see? How were you feeling during this time? What did it mean to be victorious? What are your plans for the future?

Lesson Two

For my second lesson I will re-introduce the concept of freedom. I will then go on to introduce that Britain had various colonies and one of them was Jamaica. I will present a brief discussion of the history of Jamaica and focus on the period of Emancipation . We will define the term of emancipation and briefly explain the concept of slavery. We will relate the term emancipation to freedom while assuring that the students realize Jamaica remained a colony and that independence occurred many years later. After a brief history of Jamaica is introduced, I will introduce a popular Jamaican artist, Isaac Mendes Belisario. He is important to this part of my curriculum because he is one of the most prominent artists of the period. Isaac Mendes Belisario was a Jamaican born artist of Spanish or Portuguese origin. He was raised in London and returned to Jamaica during the height of the emancipation looking for freedoms that were allotted to Jewish people at the time. What is interesting is that even though he was a white colonial artist of the Jewish community he represented the true sentiment and nature of the Negro population in Jamaica. Isaac Mendez Belisario was able to show through his works, a population undergoing and resisting changes. He was able to represent a people holding on to their customs and traditions. Through his artwork, students will be able to appreciate that as a white colonial artist raised in London, he was able to respectfully portray life in Colonial Jamaica. Students can infer that as a member of the Jewish community who suffered limited rights in London he could better sympathize with Jamaicans who were suffering limited rights in Jamaica and that through art he could tell their story. Once students have an understanding of colonial Jamaica, Isaac Mendez Belisario and emancipation, we will move on to the focal questions of the lesson which will be: What did colonization look like in America and what did it look like in Jamaica? Here I will utilize the Venn Diagram while presenting the students with two similar images. I will use the image of I.M. Belisario, Cocoa Walk Estate, (c1840), Collection: National Gallery of Jamaica. and to compare and contrast this image I will use John Trumbull, View on the West Mountain near Hartford, (1791). These images are two focused on nature and its surroundings. John Trumbulls' image looks dry and barren in comparison to Belisarios lush green mountainside. In Belisarios image even though we see blacks working under white supervision, we can appreciate life, the life of the people, livestock, and greenery. These images tell of a beautiful land full of hope because where there is life there is hope. Trumbulls image also has livestock but in a more somber state, where you can see that change is coming about and the light in the background, in the horizon, is also a glimmer of hope. Students will be able to search the website, Colonial America.wikispaces.com and obtain images of colonial life in America. To these various colonial images we can compare and contrast other images by Isaac Mendes Belisario. I.M.Belisario, Band of the Jaw-Bone John-Canoe, (1837) Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon collection, USA. In this image we see musicians with tattered clothes and recognizable instruments with one exception, the instrument made of a horse skull. They are making music, looking happy even though we know that they are struggling. Students can search a similar image in Colonial America and see that physical characteristics may be different but the musicians do obtain joy from the activity. The students will be asked to focus on what can they find similar in each image with a minimum of at least three sentences. Then they will be asked to find the differences. Students will be asked as to why they think such great differences are present.

Lesson Three

As a final look into Jamaican Colonial society students will see the image by Charles Tilt, An Interior View of a Jamaican House of Correction, (c. 1836), The National Library of Jamaica. Although graphic it is an image that leads to great discussions. I will provide the students with a little background knowledge of the concept of discipline during that period. Students will be informed that authorities imposed a system no less harsh then that practiced during slavery. I want students to notice that fellow black Jamaicans are inflicting punishment under the watchful eye of a white overseer. I also want to draw attention to the visitor who seems to be

experiencing pleasure at what is going on. I will ask students to describe all the activity going on. I will then ask them why they think a lot of those things are happening. I will then ask the students if they believe the Jamaicans are truly free or is there a dominating class or race. After all, black or white, are they all not Jamaican? I will focus their attention on the two white figures and ask students what roles do they think they play in the scenario. Then I will show them the image of Abraham James, Segar Smoking Society in Jamaica, Lewis Walpole Library Collection, Yale University Library, ID 308529 Using this image I will ask them to observe the overall feeling they get when they view the image. Then students will be asked to notice the details of what is going on and who are the dominant figures in the image. Then putting the two aforementioned images together, I will ask students to compare and contrast, noting that they will find very few similarities in detail but if they inference they can pick up on at least two similarities. Students will be encouraged to use all their senses when they observe the images in order to appreciate the similarities and differences.

Lesson Four

As a final project, students will be asked to choose some time frame or situation of the history discussed and write a short paragraph (5–7) sentences about how that certain moment in time relates to them and how that period in history has affected life as we know it today. They will be asked to consider the factors of gender, position in society, race, and economics. They will also be asked to draw a representation of themselves during that time. They would be encouraged to think about what they would look like and how they would feel. With these activities I am hoping to bring some life into the events that are from so long ago.

Suggested Images for further study

For the suggested images in the unit, the students will look at these images of art and record observations. Some images can be substituted for others in the lessons. These images can also be adapted to other content areas like social studies, English literature, Spanish, and art appreciation. Students will be encouraged to focus on scenery, gender roles, socio-economic representation, family life, light/dark contrast, proximity and focal points. No matter how they are used, the main focal point for ELL students will be to record observations and engage in focused conversation.

Jamaican Art

Adolphe Duperly, *The Effect of the Fire from the Parade* , Kingston, (ca.1843), Christopher Isaac Collection, Jamaica

Unknown engraver, *Emancipation, 1st August 1834* , Yale University Library

Isaac Mendes Belisario, "The French Set Girls' Sketches of Character", Kingston: Jamaica, 1837

Childhood

Joshua Reynolds, *The Marlborough Family* ,1777–8, Blenheim Palace

Philipp Otto Runge, *The Parents of the artist*, 1806, Hamburg, Kunsthalle

Victorian Childhood

William Collins, *Rustic Chivalry* , 1833, V&A

Richard Redgrave, *The Poor Teacher* , 1844, V&A

John Everett Millais, *The Woodman's Daughter* , 1851, Guildhall

American Sublime

Jasper Francis Cropsey, *Autumn on the Hudson River* , 1855 Washington

Frederic Edwin Church, *West Rock, New Haven, 1849* , New Britain Museum

JMW Turner, *The Slave Ship* , 1840, Boston Museum of Fine Arts

Bibliography

Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing* , December 1990, Penguin Press This book is helpful in providing perspective in regards to art appreciation and interpretation.

William Vaughan 'Conversations' Everyday Art' and 'Arcadias' from William Vaughan, British Painting: *The Golden Age* , Thames and Hudson, 1999, 50-65; 150-161; and 205-223

Angela Miller et al, 'Forging a New Nation', in *American Encounters: Art, History and Cultural Identity* , Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008, 133-148; 163-170

Angela Miller et al, 'Representing War' and Post-War Challenges', in *American Encounters: Art, History and Cultural Identity* , Upper Saddle River NJ: Prentice Hall, 2008, 266-300

Anne Higonnet, Chapter 6: Through the Looking Glass, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* , Thames and Hudson, 1998

Barringer, Tim, Gillian Forrester, and Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz eds, *Art and Emancipation In Jamaica: Isaac Mendes Belisario and his Worlds* , New Haven Yale Center for British Art and Yale University Press, 2007

Jana J. Echevarria, Mary Ellen J. Vogt, Deborah J. Short, *Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners: The SIOP Model* (3rd Edition) May 2007

H. Cooper, ed., *Life Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness* , Yale University Press, 2011

Implementing District Standards

The Common Core standards that will be implemented are as follows: Addressing key ideas and details: The students will describe how a particular story's drama or plot unfold in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves towards a resolution.

Craft and Structure: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text including figurative and connotative meaning, analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.

Integrate information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually) as well as in words to develop a coherent understanding of a topic or issue.

Compare and contrast a text to a visual analyzing each mediums portrayal of the subject. How the delivery effects the outcome.

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