



## **Past and Present New York Through A Comparative Study of Photography and Poetry**

Curriculum Unit 81.01.06

by Jane K. Marshall

This unit is planned as a sequel to a previous unit. "Poetry and Paintings: A Comparative Study". "Poetry and Paintings", enabled this teacher to introduce poetry, with its complex vocabulary, through a natural coupling with a visual mode of expression (painting). Students learned of symbols, metaphors, rhythm, structure etc. through a study of an "acceptable" (to them) mode of expression, and transferred this knowledge to the alien expression, poetry. Thus students who had previously been "turned off" by the mere word, poetry, were able to put aside prejudices, and accept/ enjoy the previously misunderstood genre.

A secondary, although perhaps no less important, dividend became obvious to me in teaching via this method. Students were actively involved in an appreciation of "art". Students appeared "ripe" for this experience, and unsolicited positive comments were expressed. The broad-based humanities approach to learning is not new. Yet, somehow we, as teachers, often become bogged down in our own area of expertise. I was pleasantly surprised by students' reactions to studying something they initially viewed as "nonEnglish", and am convinced then that the method is valuable in two ways: 1. Students who are primarily visually oriented are able to transfer knowledge of a visual mode of expression to the written. 2. Students can be encouraged to view visual expressions of art analytically.

A comparative study of photography and poetry will enable students to learn to appreciate the art of photography. In addition, through the theme of New York—past and present, students will begin to consider the artist and his world. Students will also be exposed to various changes which have taken place in the City of New York during a time-span of a century or so.

It will be necessary to expose students to the genre of photography early in the unit. Students having already experienced painting in a previous unit, will start out having some sense of what goes into a visual representation: they will have a general notion of how to approach visual expression.

The first portion of the unit will consider differences between painting and photography through a study of photography. Students will become aware of the limitations imposed upon the photographer. Unlike the painter; the photographer must deal with reality head on. His is a rapid medium which requires that he anticipate moments which represent the reality of his time. Students will learn that photography is an expression of symbols which define and illustrate our consciousness. It will be necessary to study such properties of photography as: detail, time, frame, and vantage point.

It is perhaps detail, more than any other property, which expresses the symbolic quality of the photograph. The photographer opens our eyes to that which was present yet unavailable to us. Through details the viewer is able to discover meanings which were previously over-looked by him.

Time is an ever-present phenomena for the viewer of photographs. We are aware of the capture of the moment, and yet are awed by the experience. The photographer himself enjoys a precarious relationship with time as he strives to anticipate the “decisive moment”. (It is important to realize, as Szarkowski indicates in *The Photographer’s Eye* , that the decisive moment is not the climax of the exterior event, but rather that of the juxtaposition of patterns which express clarity and balance.)

The frame, which defines the parameters of the photograph, allows the unexpected relationship as expression. The process of isolation of objects or event within a frame allows the photographer a statement of reality which would be all too forced or unreal in the context of a painting. That which has been purposely “left out” through the use of the frame also becomes important. Thus the photographer is able to make a statement through the process of omission.

Vantage point allows the photographer the freedom in which to make his statement. This property, perhaps more than any other, allows us a glimpse of the man behind the picture.

The second portion of this unit will consider changes which have occurred in New York City through a comparative study of poems and photographs. Through the theme of New York past and present, students will begin to consider the artist and his world. Artists’ works invariably reflect the world of which they are a part. Issues, problems, and dreams of society often form the cornerstone of a work of art. As men strive to understand their environment, the artist raises appropriate questions which must be addressed. Students will come to realize that the artist’s function is real, and that through works of art we are able to approach truth.

A study of the changing city, one hopes, will awaken students to pressures prevalent during various times in one of the United States’ most influential of cities. New York has been likened to a barometer which reflects the feelings of Americans. It is important for young people to realize that they are part of an ever-changing societal environment. One ought to understand outside pressures and their influence on every-day life. Students will be able to discern the issues of various times through symbols and themes present in each genre. One hopes that they will be able to transfer insights, gained through such a consideration, to their view of themselves and the world in which they live.

The unit will cover New York in three time periods, 1890-1930, 1930’s, and 1950’s-’60’s. Themes which are important in each time block will be discussed. Students will be exposed to a brief historical picture of each time period before they approach works of photography and poetry. Thus the reality of each period and resultant themes which concerned artists will be clear.

## **Part One: The Art of Photography**

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This portion of the unit attempts to introduce/explain the genre of photography through the study of one photograph. Students will be exposed to the basic photographic terms: detail, time, frame, vantage point. I have chosen “From New Lots Station, Brooklyn” by N. Jay Jaffee as a teaching tool.

“From New Lots Station, Brooklyn” is a startling photograph for several reasons. Although it is very much a

“city” photograph, its primary statement is made through its image of open space. Although it features neither buildings, nor traffic, nor hordes of people, it depicts city life through symbols which express change (which would affect many). One feels the pain of change as well as the excitement of change. The mood of this photograph is both depressing and hopeful. It is in a sense a paradox which best describes city life.

The viewer sees a lone man (back to) dressed in dark clothing walking through a virtually barren lot. The man is located in the middle of the top of the frame. The photographers’s vantage point is one hundred or so yards behind the man and one to two floors above him. The lot itself is clear except for a hole to the right of the man and a board to the right of the hole. There are pathways visible which form a cross. The man is situated at the top of this cross. There are also patterns visible in the ground itself where it appears lighter in some spots than in others. Bits of small debris are visible as they are scattered on the ground throughout the picture.

Themes which permeate this photograph, loneliness, individuality, energy, strength, are presented through vivid details, symbols which express identifiable meanings. Thus the cross brings to mind the basic Christian parable. The man in the photograph, positioned at the apex of the cross, suffers, yet redemption is promised. Robert Frost’s poem, “The Road Not Taken”, also comes to mind. This man appears to have a choice in directing his life. His posture indicates a strong, determined nature. The hole in the landscape denotes any number of meanings. One is reminded of the tremendous upheaval change brings upon the inhabitants of cities. The landscape constantly changes as old foundations of buildings are removed to make room for new buildings, thoughts, dreams. (The board in the photograph reminds the viewer of structures which were once viable in this location.) The hole also has a sinister connotation: it is shaped like a grave. One thinks of ideas which have lived out their lives and are buried—often to be forgotten. The debris which is small but highly visible throughout the photograph echoes a general feeling of uselessness.

The “decisive moment” in this photograph has to do with the position of the man in relation to the surrounding environment. Clearly the details mentioned in the previous paragraph are strong and viable only in so far as they are connected clearly (or in a balanced way) with the man. Thus it is important that the man has traveled almost to the uppermost region of the cross, and is close enough to the hole to be somehow connected with its symbol. The particular posture of the man (mid-stride, arms tight to body) too is important as it emphasizes the qualities of strength, isolation, and energy.

The frame of this photograph works in two ways. The photographer has placed the man high up in the photograph which allows a positive statement. The man has traveled some distance, and in the viewer’s mind is on the verge of experiencing something unseen and yet new. By isolating the man in the lot with its clear statement through symbol, the photographer has suggested negative aspects of city life, namely—isolation and loneliness.

The vantage point of the photographer allows the viewer an omniscient view of the scene. We are distanced from the man in three ways: 1. He is yards ahead of us. 2. He is yards below us. 3. He is positioned so that his back is to us. Clearly the man is not an individual whom we can relate to. He is rather a symbol of all inhabitants of cities who must grapple with change. The vantage point gives the viewer a sense of feeling, at least for the moment, that he is “in the know”. The tensions of the environment are removed from the viewer emotionally, and he is provided with a clear intellectual “picture” of city life.

## Part Two: New York Photography and Poetry

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Armed With A Thousand Pens by N. Jay Jaffee  
Look at a photograph  
as you would read a piece of poetry:  
both are mirrors of consciousness.  
Abortive, lean, and to the point,  
it identifies the essentials  
of visual and human emotions.  
A poet with a camera is armed  
with a thousand pens,  
each one forming imagery—  
poetic lines in endless  
variations  
A photograph is a poem  
to be read and re-read many times,  
or cast aside,  
never to charm the heart of human experience.  
Poetry, not painting  
forms the closest bond with photography.  
Both develop pictures in a language vague  
and particular.  
Poems are fragments of word-thoughts,  
photographs are fragments of vision-illusions,  
which catch the conscience of all. <sup>1</sup>

## **Early New York (1890-1930)**

The years encompassed in these three decades were years of tremendous growth in New York City. In 1898 New York became Greater New York which included five boroughs. Immigrants flocked to New York in droves until the Red Scare of the twenties. Neighborhoods were in constant flux, and housing was often poor for those many who were fighting for a place in the land of opportunity.

The city seemed at once to be both dehumanizing and exhilarating. New Yorkers witnessed and/or suffered through the Triangle Fire which occurred in a garment sweatshop which provided no fire protection, and hired children as young as seven or eight years of age. World War I affected New York directly as two million pounds of ammunition were blown up near the Statue of Liberty; New Yorkers were sure this was the work of German saboteurs, although the allegation was never proved. And yet, at the same time, the New York environment was producing and encouraging Jazz musicians in Harlem, Irving Berlin, Eugene O'Neill, Babe Ruth, O. Henry, and Charles Lindbergh. New York then was both chaotic and stimulating. Once again one is reminded of the paradox or duality of such an environment. Perhaps it can best be explained in terms of images of light and dark. New York could be gloomy, foreboding, menacing; New York could also offer flashes of insight, warmth, and hope. The poetic and photographic works which will be studied in this section reflect vividly New York as a sometimes light, sometimes dark world.

Photographs by Alfred Steiglitz reflect the ambivalent feelings New Yorkers must have experienced during this period. "The Hand of Man" depicts a dark, sinister-looking locomotive emitting billows of black smoke in an environment devoid of human beings. The viewer sees only silhouettes of nondescript buildings, telephone poles, and a barren land. Light images appear in the tracks which are hopelessly criss-crossed, confusing, and incomplete, and in the sky which is patterned with low-hanging clouds and appears to be beckoning one even as one knows it is unattainable. As one looks at this photograph, one feels that man "doesn't count" or perhaps doesn't even exist anymore having been swallowed up by the very technology he created. The mood is dark, sinister, and the world seems hopeless.

In marked contrast to "The Hand of Man" are two photographs which depict a "light", resilient, creative New York. "The Flat Iron Building" is a photograph which denotes qualities of creativity and optimism. Steiglitz himself referred to the photograph as "a picture of New America still in the making". It was a building started from the ground, but also from the top." It reflected "amazing simplicity in its tower. It combined lightness with solidity".<sup>2</sup> The Flat Iron Building is depicted in conjunction with nature in Steiglitz's photograph. A tree in the foreground echoes its very shape. We feel that man is able to create that which rivals nature in beauty. Clearly then this photograph celebrates the achievements of the New Yorker—achievements which might gladden and inspire all Americans.

In "Icy Night" Steiglitz once again photographed nature (trees) as a part of his statement of New York. The viewer sees a picture of a frigid night through a walkway lined with trees. The path has been plowed and footprints are visible in a newly fallen snow. The Path recedes into the depth of the photograph where it is met by beautiful and brilliant city lights. This too is a positive photograph which reflects a city which is always alert and watchful of its inhabitants. One feels that man is resourceful, controlling, and vital when one looks at this photograph.

Poems written during this time period also depict the duality of the city experience. The frustration of city inhabitants is poignantly revealed in "Factory Windows Are Always Broken" by Vachel Lindsay. The reader can't help but realize that dehumanization may cause city dwellers to turn on themselves (in a sense) to destroy the industrial complex upon which they depend. These are people who cry out for spiritual renewal;

“No one throws through the chapel window/ The bitter, derisive stone.” The poem illustrates a world which is out of control; “Something or other is going wrong./ Something is rotten . . .”<sup>3</sup>

Two poems, “Sky Signs” by Frederick Mortimer Clapp, and “Brooklyn Bridge at Dawn” by Richard Le Galliene, reflect in some sense the achievements of man. Although one is reminded of the high costs of achievement in both poems, the beauty of New York and man’s qualities of resilience and creativity are celebrated. Both poems reflect a shadowy almost dream-like New York. They take place in the shadowy twilight of sun-down, and in the quiet glow of dawn. The times are magical and special. This is the city of dreams and dream-like visions. So the bridge is “Frail as a gossamer, a thing of air/. . . Who would dream such softness . . . is wrought of human thunder, iron, and blood?”<sup>4</sup> The sky signs offer “pearly rows of lamps . . . sky signs of silver gilt, like pale fireworks threaded on a mesh of wire/ begin to ripple and fling,/ over and over and over again, kittens that play with the skeins of stars . . .”<sup>5</sup>

### ***New York in the Thirties***

New Yorkers faced dire circumstances in the early thirties. The crash had occurred and the city was enmeshed in a depression the likes of which it had never seen. The building boom of the twenties came to a stop, and completed buildings such as The Empire State Building had office space which stood empty for years. Many New Yorkers were unemployed having lost their businesses. Many families doubled up in small apartments as rents could not be paid. This was a city of homeless women and hungry children. The presiding government of the early to mid thirties was corrupt, and parasitic hoodlums preyed upon businessmen who somehow had managed to stay afloat. At this time the city was a dirty, poor, and unhealthy environment for many of its inhabitants.

By the late thirties, however, hope once again returned to New York. LaGuardia came to power overthrowing corrupt Jimmy Walker and his entourage. LaGuardia was able to root out gangsters and restore New York’s economy through a new surge of growth. The building of a “new” New York took place; jobs were available and New Yorkers witnessed a radical change in the city. People would never forget the tragedies they had witnessed, and the “new” New York, although welcomed, produced ambivalent feelings. Old New York buildings were perceived as being dwarfed by the new more non-descript architecture. New Yorkers must have recalled nostalgically the days of an older, slower New York, and hoped that they would be able to keep up with modern day complexities.

Photography and poetry of the thirties reflect the hopelessness of the depression years. The “new” New York phenomena was often perceived by artists as a time of extreme rapidity of change, and resultant disorientation among New Yorkers was often expressed. This feeling of disorientation might be likened to the feeling produced in the aftermath of an amusement ride. One is affected by unusual motion and speed; the result is a feeling of dizziness or loss of control. It would take time before New Yorkers felt firmly a part of their changing and fast-paced environment.

Steichen’s “Homeless Women: The Depression” was created as an advertisement for the Traveler’s Aid Society. Many young, old (jobless) women, unable to contribute to their families’ food supplies, were forced to leave home, and turned to New York as a refuge, Steichen’s photograph captures the hopelessness of this situation; the tragedy of this time is poignantly revealed in the faces of these women who, against all odds, were able to maintain at least the image of human strength and dignity.

The universality of the depression is expressed by Steichen through the broad spectrum of age groups he chose to photograph. The baby, teenager, middle-aged woman, and elderly woman are depicted—each

reflecting the reaction to poverty within her own frame of reference. Thus an old woman expresses a resignation with reference to death. Young women appear angry. The young child is bewildered.

Perhaps the most striking example of Steichen's genius, with regard to this photograph, is the positioning of the women. They fill the frame both vertically and horizontally. One feels the enormity of the repercussions of the depression. The women depicted are prototypes of the vast amount of women who found themselves in the same situation. These are women who knew no direction. Each literally faces a different direction in Steichen's composition. There is no comfort among them, and there is no communication between them. These are people who have no answers and are unable to express hope. <sup>6</sup>

Steichen's use of lighting heightens the image of human dignity in the face of adversity. Each face is illuminated; the souls of these people appear to be strangely removed from the surrounding environment.

The theme of motion and speed and resultant disorientation is perhaps best expressed in Steichen's "The Empire State Building" and "Rockefeller Center". Steichen's radical use of double exposure expresses the feeling of rapid change through the motion it depicts. "The Empire State Building" reflects a "maypole dance"; <sup>7</sup> the photograph is startling, pleasing, and yet, also bewildering. It is a photograph the viewer must simply "go with". Viewing the photograph is an experience in itself. Thus the photograph is an active representation rather than a passive one. The viewer is drawn into what must have been the feeling of the time. "Rockefeller Center" is a montage of several units which works in a similar way (to "The Empire State Building"). The photograph expresses the feeling of growth and rapid change by capturing it. The workmen or builders are eerily part of a scene of building placed upon building. One feels the building of modern, abstract structures will never stop. Man is clearly a part of the motion; he appears to be caught in the speed of change.

Poetry written during this time period also reflects the themes of depression, human dignity, and disorientation. Muriel Rekeyser's "Boy with His Hair Cut Short" captures the tragedy of joblessness. "He let his head fall, meeting her earnest hopeless look". The environment, which surrounds the two children of this poem, is modern and precise. "The arrow's electric red always reaches its mark, successful neon!" However, the modern world of movement and noisy communication—"A neighbor's radio sings, stocks, news, serenade . . ." <sup>8</sup>—offers little for those who see the magic of the modern world but somehow cannot connect with it.

Elizabeth Bishop's "letter to N.Y." captures a feeling of disorientation which is the result of over-stimulation. "Suddenly you're in a different place/ Where everything seems to happen in waves . . ." "Most of the jokes you cannot catch." "The songs are loud, but somehow dim . . ." This is a world which seems to defy understanding, and man is caught in a maze. (" . . .driving as if to save your soul/ Where the road goes round and round the park.") <sup>9</sup>.

### ***New York in the 1950's - 60's***

The fifties and the sixties were a time of continued building in New York City. The big push was for office space, and New York created skyscraper after skyscraper—many in the same mold. The United Nations decided to meet in New York, and John D. Rockefeller made land available for its building site. New Yorkers accepted the honor of being chosen as "the capital of the world" calmly, perhaps reluctantly, for while money was poured into office buildings, the U.N., and Lincoln Center, little money (by comparison) was spent on housing. The city's effort to eliminate slums made the housing shortage worse, for urban renewal found housing for only one third of those people who were displaced.

By the 50's-60's New York was astounding in its size. A New York newspaper reporter wrote: "Whatever any

other city has, New York has more of . . ." And New York continued to be a mecca for immigrants. A great influx of Puerto Ricans entered the New York mainstream after air service was established between San Juan and New York. Thus the face of the city continued to change. During the 50's-60's the city found itself at least in part responsible for maintaining its poor. The welfare system was in full swing.

Of course, New York enjoyed its heroes during this time,—as it had before. Names such as Jackie Robinson and Joe Namath are remembered. Leonard Bernstein created "West Side Story" which sought to express the tragedy of prejudice, and depict the pressures of big city life. Jackson Pollack, one of the "abstract expressionists" of the "New York School", created a painting of rhythmic motion ("Number 1") which captured the feeling of tremendous energy the big city projected.

Perhaps this time period may best be described as schizophrenic. While the American dream was being realized in the areas of science, business, and art, the dream had failed in the area of social welfare. Technology had improved while human relationships had worsened. The big city meant prejudice, crime, insensitivity, fear, and alienation. In many ways the individual was losing. Many poets and photographers of this time were concerned about this loss.

Two photographs by Gordon Parks illuminate our awareness of the loss of the individual. "Invisible Man", with its very title, speaks to an uncaring alienating society. The photograph shows only the head of a man with hands grasping the ground immediately in front of him. The man could be emerging through a man-hole. The photograph is ambiguous; the man is surrounded by a dark, foggy background. Yet, the message is clear. The individual is unimportant; the city has all but buried him. Parks' portrait of Malcolm X depicts prejudice and blind hatred. Malcolm X stands holding a newspaper whose headline concerns the murders of blacks. Man is against man. The American dream of man's unalienable rights is destroyed. Some men are deprived even of the right to live.

Photographs by N. Jay Jaffee also are concerned with the "invisible man" or the loss of the individual. Many of his photographs reflect the lost presence of man. Thus "Livonia Avenue, Brooklyn" shows an empty chair with a sign above it—"If you believe in credit—I lease/loan me". The background consists of a door off its hinges with a tattered jacket tacked to it. The dignity of man is lost. Man is reduced to begging for—or selling himself. The wording of the sign raises the question of man's opinion of his worth.

During the 50's-60's the Beats emerged as a new breed of poets. Their poems acknowledged the failure of the American dream. While the Beats were not primarily concerned with political revolution, they refused to go along with "the way". In other words, unlike others of this time period, they would not live with the pretense that everything was okay. Many of their poems depicted the sordidness of this time period. They sought to transcend the society of which they were unwillingly a part; they felt they could "let things go by uncovering them".

Thus Ginsberg raised a "Howl" against the cautious talk of the times. Gregory Corso in "Eastside Incidents" depicted the violence born of an alienating society. ". . . those mad Valenti kids who killed my cat with an umbrella . . ." "I see them now . . . getting the chair/ I see them now/ but they aren't there." <sup>10</sup> Lawrence Ferlinghetti speaks of the loss of the American dream. "The poet's eye obscene by seeing . . . the surface of the round world." ". . . fata1 shorn-up fragments/ of the immigrants' dream come true/ and mislaid . . ." <sup>11</sup>



## Suggestions for Student Activities

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### Part One: The Art of Photography

1. Students will be introduced to the vocabulary of photography. Basic terms (detail, time, frames, vantage point) will be explained.
2. Students will view “From New Lots Station, Brooklyn” in terms of the above vocabulary. Following a discussion, they will be able to determine basic “city” themes raised by N. Jay Jaffee (change, individuality, loneliness, strength.)
3. Additional photographs (from *Stop , Look , and Write* and *Pictures for Writing* ) will be made available for student viewing. Students will analyze photographs with reference to basic terminology.
4. Students will use photographs to heighten their powers of observation (of detail). Writing assignments will be given which will encourage the transference of seeing detail to writing with detail. (See specific lessons:— *Stop , Look , and Write* and *Pictures for Writing* .)
5. Students will be encouraged to take pictures of their own which will reflect their view of the world. They will be expected to explain what they intended to show. Students will refer directly to: detail, time, frame, vantage point.
6. Students will view one another's photographs before they are “explained” by the photographer. They will be encouraged to write about what they see in a creative fashion (short story, poem).

### Part Two: New York Photography and Poetry

1. A general discussion will take place which will address the purpose of the topic. Questions: (Why are you being encouraged to study New York photography and poetry?) A. What do photographs have to do with poems? B. Why study New York? (What do you know about New York? What does New York have to do with you?) C. Why study New York's past—or any past for that matter?
2. Students will read and discuss N. Jay Jaffee's “Armed With A Thousand Pens” (poem). Discussion will concern similarities between photography and poetry.

*Early New York: 1890-1930*

1. Students will listen to a brief historical lecture on early New York. A discussion will follow which will concern the duality of the city experience.
2. Students will be exposed to various musical pieces of this time period, and will comment on various moods projected in these works.
3. Photographs by Alfred Steiglitz will be introduced (“The Hand of Man”, “The Flat Iron Building”, “Icy Night”). Students will be expected to recognize varying themes/moods through discussion.
4. Students will write a contrast paper concerning “The Hand of Man” vs “The Flat Iron Building”.
5. Students will study poems of this time period (“Factory Windows are Always Broken”, “Sky-Signs”, “Brooklyn Bridge at Dawn”). They will comment about themes which exist in each. They will compare these themes to those raised by Steiglitz.
6. Students will be exposed to general photographs of this era which reflect housing, dress etc. They will be asked to imagine themselves living during this time. Students will make entries in a “diary” pretending that they are living in the time period (1890-1930).

### *New York in the Thirties*

1. Students will listen to a brief historical lecture concerning the thirties.
2. Students will discuss the ramifications of a fast-paced society (disorientation, stress, diseases of stress) etc.
3. Students will discuss the repercussions of the depression. (Walker Evans’ photographs may be shown.)
4. Films of the thirties will be discussed (gangster etc.). Students will be exposed to basic story plots. Discussion will follow—concerning plots, actors, heroes of the thirties.
5. Steichen’s photographs will be introduced. Students will explain why “Homeless Women: The Depression” is a good depiction of the thirties. They will discuss Steichen’s use of detail, time, frame, vantage point.
6. Students will jot down whatever comes to mind (in any form) after viewing Steichen’s “The Empire State Building” and “Rockefeller Center”. These writings will be shared among class members. A discussion will follow which will concern style, mood, and rhythm of these writings.
7. “The Empire State Building” and “Rockefeller Center” will be discussed with reference to the fast-paced society.
8. Thirties poetry will be discussed. The discussion will focus on symbolism and imagery of this time period. The poems will be compared to Steichen’s photographs (with reference to theme, mood).

## *New York in the 1950's-60's*

1. Students will listen to a brief historical lecture on New York in the 50's-60's.
2. Students will discuss causes of prejudice and alienation. (overcrowding, fear of unknown, unemployment etc).
3. Students will listen to music of the 50's-60's. The emergence of rock music will be discussed. (What was rock's primary statement? Why was Elvis so popular? etc.)
4. Students will be exposed to a summary of the black movement of the 50's-60's. ( Brown vs Board of Education, freedom riders, NAACP, Malcolm X, Black Panthers etc.)
5. Gordon Parks' photographs will be discussed with reference to the movement.
6. Jaffee's photograph "Livonia Avenue, Brooklyn" will be discussed with reference to the theme of the "invisible man".
7. Students will read selections of the Beats. (How are these poems different from poems previously read in this unit?) Students will write personal reactions to each of these poems.
8. Final discussion: What was/is the American dream? Is it dead? Where are we now?
9. Students will write a paper explaining what they learned from this unit.

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This unit is created with a ninth grade advanced English class in mind. It should follow "Poetry and Paintings: A Comparative Study" (previous unit). Presumably both units could be modified for use with other levels and/or grades. I would expect this unit to run for two to three weeks.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS**

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"From New Lots Station, Brooklyn"—N. Jay Jaffee

1890-1930

"The Hand of Man"—Alfred Stieglitz

"The Flat Iron Building"—Alfred Stieglitz

"Icy Night"—Alfred Stieglitz

1930's

"Homeless Women: The Depression"—Edward Steichen

"The Empire State Building"—Edward Steichen

"Rockefeller Center"—Edward Steichen

1950's-60's

"Invisible Man"—Gordon Parks

"Malcolm X"—Gordon Parks

"Livonia Avenue, Brooklyn"—N. Jay Jaffee

### STUDENT READINGS

#### POETRY

"Armed With A Thousand Pens"—N. Jay Jaffee

"Factory Windows Are Always Broken"—Vachel Lindsay

"Sky-Signs"—Frederick Mortimer Clapp

"Brooklyn Bridge At Dawn"—Richard Le Galliene

"Boy With His Hair Cut Short"—Muriel Rekeyser

"Letter to N.Y."—Elizabeth Bishop.

"Eastside Incidents"—Gregory Corso

"A Coney Island of the Mind"—Lawrence Ferlinghetti

## Notes

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### *Early New York (1890-1930)*

1. N. Jay Jaffee, *Photographs 1947-1953* , p. 6.

Reprinted by permission from *Photographs 1947-1953* , © 1976 by N. Jay Jaffee.

2. Dorothy Norman, *Alfred Steiglitz : An American Seer* , p. 45.

3. Adolph Gillis and William Benet, *Poems for Modern Youth* , p. 151.

4. Adolph Gillis and William Benet, *Poems for Modern Youth* , p. 80.

5. Adolph Gillis and William Benet, *Poems for Modern Youth* , p. 76.

6. Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* , p. 9.
7. Edward Steichen, *A Life in Photography* , p. 11.
8. John Malcolm Brinnin and Bill Read, *Twentieth Century Poetry : American and British* , p. 350.
9. John Malcolm Brinnin and William Read, *Twentieth Century Poetry : American and British* , p . 47.
10. Gregory Corso, *Elegiac Feelings American* , p. 80.
11. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, *A Coney Island of the Mind* , p. 13.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Abbott, Berenice, *New York in the Thirties* , E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., New York, 1939 ( *Changing New York* ). Reprint: Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1973.

This book provides a complete look at New York City in the thirties—from an old subway station to Rockefeller Center to waterfront scenes, and interesting sights from Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens.

Bliven, Bruce Jr., and Naomi. *New York* , Random House, New York, 1969.

This book provides an interesting history of the City of New York—complete with photographs.

Brinnin, John Malcolm and Read, Bill, *Twentieth Century Poetry : American and British* . McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1963.

This is a useful anthology which provides biographical data about the poets represented.

Corso, Gregory, *Elegiac Feelings American* . New Directions Books, New York, 1961.

Certainly this volume of poems represents the genre of the Beats.

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. *A Coney Island of the Mind* . New Directions Books, New York, 1958.

This is a small paperback packed with Ferlinghetti's most famous poems.

Gillis, Aldolph and Benet, William, *Poems for Modern Youth* . Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1938.

This is an old-fashioned poetry book which provides interesting poems—nonetheless.

Jaffee, N. Jay, *Photographs 1947 - 1953* . N.J. Jaffee, New York. 1976.

This is a beautiful book which includes poems and photography of New York.

Norman, Dorothy, *Alfred Stieglitz : An American Seer* , Aperture, Inc.

New York, 1960.

This book traces Stieglitz's career, Photographs are discussed through the voice of Stieglitz.

Leavitt, Hart D. and Sohn, David A., *Stop , Look , and Write* . New York, Bantam Books, 1964.

This book is a very useful tool for teachers who wish to sharpen students' observation skills for purposes of writing.

Steichen, Edward, *A Life in Photography* , Doubleday and Co., Inc. New York, 1963.

This book traces Steichen's career as a photographer. Many quality photographs are included.

Szarkowski, John, *The Photographer's Eye* , The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1966.

This is a must for those who wish to understand the genre of photography.

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