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Art Through the Eyes of Youth

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Working with seventh and eighth grade students is no easy task. They are coping with many changes and choices. This can be very confusing considering the types of choices available to them. In the New Haven Public Schools, students are dealing with a number of problems that can make adolescence more difficult. They see crime, drugs, prostitution, murders, victims of teen-age pregnancy and AIDS. And they still have to deal with physical and psychological changes as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood. Another confusing element that makes adolescence even more difficult is having no sense of self and how one fits into the “scheme of things.”

As a teacher of drama and dance in the New Haven Public Middle Schools, I believe that the Arts can help facilitate changes in youth from childhood to adulthood. Through the arts youth learn to appreciate who they are and how they fit into society. The reason this is possible is because art reflects so many aspects of human life. It's a reflection of culture and history. A useful way to use the Arts in education is to get students to identify with historical figures of their culture who have contributed significantly to American culture. We will discuss such figures like Roberto Clemente, a famous baseball player from Puerto Rico. The African-American hero that we will study is Cinque an African Chief who was kidnapped into slavery and he used the legal system to free himself and others. By exposing students to positive historical figures of their own race, in my case African-Americans, and Puerto Rican Americans, who are poets, dancers, actors, and artists, they are given something visual in which they can identify and have pride.

Here's how I intend to use visual and written art as a means to set students to this point.

Art is the spring-board because students are visual. They will first learn art vocabulary, art styles, interpretation, art appreciation, and history. Next they will visit local art galleries i.e. Ikensa Art Gallery on College street and the Yale Art Gallery on York street. Lessons will be developed to reinforce Previous lessons on analysis, art terms, vocabulary, style and historical significance. I will show slides of artists from the Harlem Renaissance era and also their works.

To complement the art instruction students will become familiar with literature that coincides with the time and the “flavor” of the art they are viewing. They will also become familiar with famous dancers, actors and singers from the Harlem Renaissance era.

The final product will be writings, dances, a mural, songs, and skits developed by the students based on their experiencing this unit.

The students will have a better understanding of self and how one fits into society.

Invitation to Art

In art one is sharing ideas, feelings and learning about new ideas and the past. One reads a story in paintings. And it's important to let the students know that art is about them. Art is so wonderful for students because no one can tell them what to feel or think. The students personal feelings are important. It's good to show that art is influenced by history. One can determine what was going on in the past by looking at a painting from the past.

Gallery Visit

When students go to Ikenga Gallery and Yale Art Gallery they should spend time at the paintings they like most. And they should ask themselves why the artist painted in the manner in which he did. They should compare paintings and ask what makes them different and similar?

Discover Design

Design is created by the artists usage of line, shape, colors, dark and light, space, movement, mass, variety and repetition.

Lines-Used to express ideas. They can show rain, wind, fast or slow.

Shapes-Formed by a line or lines. They describe people, places, and things.

Space-The use of perspective. Lines that vanish in a distance.

Movement-Lines and shapes can be used to show motion like floating shapes and mass of tangled lines.

Mass-The solid form suggested in paintings by the use of dark and light.

Variety and Repetition-Repeating the same thing can be boring. That's why artists use a variety of shapes, lines, colors and textures. But sometimes artists purposely repeat certain shapes, colors and textures.

Color-Used to express moods, feelings and ideas.

Dark and Light - Dark and light colors help make ideas clear. Color contrasts tell a story.

“View of Toledo” El Greco

This is where El Greco lived. He contrasted light and dark to show a stormy sky. He used his imagination to change the view of the sky. There is a very serious mood and one can tell by the dark, rich colors. Feelings are also shown. El Greco used shapes to show mood. The motion in the picture is upward.

Try This :

Create the stormy sky with a soft tipped marker. Make it your own as if you are in the storm. Repeat the motion of the wind, rain and clouds. Now wet a piece of paper, use cotton and water paint to trace the

movements of the storm.

El Greco 1548-1614

A great artist from Spain, born of a Greek island of Crete. His name El Greco means the Greek. His art is typical sixteenth century art which is religious, independent, serious and gay practical and mysterious.

El Greco left Greece when he was young and went to Italy because Italy was the hub of the art world. He remembered the art of his Greek homeland but allowed it to be influenced by Italian painters with color. After Italy El Greco settled in Spain, his true home.

"Puppet Show" Klee 1879-1940

This painting has childlike simplicity of disconnected images. The child puppeteer has sun in her eyes and her heart in the right place. The sun in the sky is drawn the way a child would draw it. Klee (pronounced clay) used an attractive combination of colors, the dark and light areas and clear simple shapes.

Try this:

Let the feelings and ideas of childhood take over. Think of the images you see in a young child's drawing and begin to draw.

Paul Klee 1879-1940

He was born in Switzerland, the son of a German music teacher and a Swiss mother. While in his early twenties he travelled to France and Italy, came back and married, then settled in Munich. In 1926 he taught at Bauhaus, a famous German school. He exhibited his works until 1933 when his work was attacked by Hitler's Nazi government. Klee was forced to leave Germany and return to Berne, where he continued his work until death.

"Cafe Terrace at Night" Van Gogh 1853-1890

This painting was done in Arles in the south of France. Van Gogh set up an Easel in the cobble stoned street not far from the cafe. He enjoyed the busy night scene while he painted. He contrasted brightness with darkness. He created space with the lines of the cafe terrace. He was very unhappy, although one would not know it from the painting. He used strong colors and brush work.

Try this:

Observing the brush strokes in "Cafe Terrace at Night," create a row of Evergreen trees. Let the direction of each line you make follow the direction suggested in the branches of the tree. It might help you to think of these trees as triangles.

Vincent Van Gogh 1853-1890

He was born in the Netherlands, son of a minister. He was very shy and unhappy. His only friend was his youngest brother Theo.

He tried to become a minister but couldn't complete the studies. He was assigned to aid miners in a poor mining section in Belgium. He became sick and was sent home. At age twenty seven he began to draw until

his death. His brother, Theo, always had faith in his art but it didn't begin to prosper until his death.

After learning to appreciate and interpret Art students will learn about major art movements.

The Baroque Period

A great artist of the time, Rembrandt Van Rijn was a master of the seventeenth century Baroque period. The Baroque period was considered the "Golden Age" of Dutch painting. The artist created an image of dimensions on canvas. Light glowing colors and suggested rounded, realistic forms. The figures were pictured in dramatic action filled poses.

The artists were interested in showing elegant costumes ornaments and shimmering textures. They used great technical skill in painting. The subject of Dutch paintings of this period reflect the liberal middle class society of seventeenth century Holland. The Dutch liked pictures of food, portraits, landscapes, and artists were free to develop independent styles.

Baroque art was attacked for its break with tradition just as modern art movements of the twentieth century are attacked today for their break with realism (rap and rock music).

The Romantic Period

Joseph Turner lived during the Romantic period that developed in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century England. Romantic artists were individualists who cast aside old formal orders and vent to nature for inspiration.

Romantic art often tells a story and presents dramatic events (like Romantic Ballet). During the nineteenth century the arrival of the steam locomotive symbolized the industrial revolution. It was a dramatic event when Turner painted "Rain, Steam and Speed."

Turner was one of the first landscape artists to make sketches out-of-doors. Some felt he was the first impressionist. Turner painted storms and shipwrecks while the impressionists painted sun lit fields and happy people.

Impressionism

This was an important movement of the nineteenth century. Impressionists rejected dark colors, dramatic stories and posed pictures painted by artists who came before them. They used light and bright colors, everyday subjects, and they often painted out-of-doors.

Vincent Van Gogh painted dark and serious pictures until he visited Paris and saw the work of the impressionists. His eyes were opened to bright colors and a happy view of life. Van Gogh also expressed deep feelings about people and places. Van Gogh stands out among the impressionists of his time because of his emotional, expressive quality.

Van Gogh with his interest in expressing feelings and emotions foresaw an art movement of the twentieth century expressionism.

Experimental Art

Modern art began on the twentieth century. By breaking with traditions of the past the artist is free to experiment and find materials as well as methods that will express what he feels along with what he sees.

Franz Marc came up with new ways to picture man's feelings responses and rebellions.

The cylinder, the cube, the sphere and the cone were other ways artists chose to express man and his environment.

Primitive Art

A primitive artist looks for a way to express reality based on personal vision of how things are, how things were and how things should be. The primitive painter uses scenes from daily life and images from fantasy and imagination.

Primitives paint for their own pleasure. They paint with brightly colored details. They used a stiff and formal manner sometimes suggesting simplified shapes and abstract art. Realism is the main goal of the primitive artist.

Henri Rousseau, "the father of primitives", wasn't influenced by the art of his time.

In the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century the primitive artist flourished in England. Artists were self taught because of the isolation. They lived on farms that were a great distance apart. This caused a very unique style to develop.

They painted still life arrangements, landscapes, figures, and portraits that reflect their simple lives. Many of the artists didn't sign their work but one who stands out is Edward Hicks.

Great art doesn't fit into one trend or style. Its originality is the make of its greatness. All artists are influenced by the past and the era in which they lived, in turn they influence the future.

After learning to identify art of the past we will move into the present and begin to deal with African-American and Puerto Rican American painters. We will compare poems to the paintings from the same time period. In dealing with the Harlem Renaissance era we will look at the works of such artists as Aaron Douglass, Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (female), William Henry Johnson, and Palmer Hayden. We will discuss the philosophy of Marcus Garvey who was a very influential activist who preached Black nationalism. We will discuss the NAACP which also formed during the Harlem Renaissance to protest the numerous lynching. Then we will discuss Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers."

Harlem Renaissance Artists

Aaron Douglas (1899-1979) was perhaps the most well-known of Harlem's visual artists in the 1920s. He came to New York in 1924 shortly after graduating from the University of Nebraska. In Harlem, Douglass quickly developed a highly stylized aesthetic characterized by spatially compressed compositions and chromatically subdued forms. He met with Philadelphia collector, Albert Barnes, a contributor to Alan Locke's *The New Negro* and a white patron and supporter of black artists, permitted Douglass to see his outstanding collection of West African sculpture as well as his superlative modern European paintings. Ironically, at a time when most of the American art establishment was experiencing ambivalence toward modernism and the influence of so-called primitivism, Douglass had access not only to the very best examples of African sculpture, but also to its influence in the paintings of such masters as Gauguin, Picasso, and Matisse. Strongly influenced by the

modernists' shallow depth of field, the monochromism of analytic cubism and the extreme simplifications and stylizations of African sculpture, Douglass developed a style for his paintings and illustrations that came to be regarded as the prototypical visual expression of the Harlem Renaissance.

Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller (1877-1968) An elegantly victorian, deeply spiritual sculptor, was one of the most important precursors of the Renaissance. She was trained at the Pennsylvania Museum and school for industrial arts and studied with Rodin in Paris at the turn of the century. When she returned to the United States, Meta Vaux Warrick married a librarian physician, Dr. Solomon Fuller. Thereafter, she spent most of her career in Framingham, Massachusetts where she worked in a studio she built against the wishes of her husband with her own hands. She was described by the historian Benjamin Brawley as one of the first to explore the "Tragedy of the Negro Race in the New World," Fuller became a powerful symbol of artistic determination for a generation of black artists who came after her. Fuller was inspired by W.E.B. DuBoise's Pan-Africanist philosophy, which emphasized black American's common African heritage. Her finest works Ethiopia Awakening (1914) and her (1919) Mary Turner (a silent protest against mob violence), all among the earliest examples of American art to reflect the formal exigencies of an aesthetic based on African sculpture. They are also important indictments of prevailing political and social climate.

Palmer Hayden (1890-1973) A World War I veteran who supported his painting career in the 1920s with menial jobs, was one of the first painters to offer a candid, if somewhat controversial interpretation of black life. Like Langston Hughes's poetry, his canvases often portrayed Harlem street life or recounted the customs and lore of the small town folks where he worked on the railroad before going to war. Hayden was eventually sponsored by a white patron who financed a trip to Paris in 1927. The following year he showed at the Bernheim-Jeune Gallery an important outpost of Paris's modern artists. (Since the nineteenth century, Europe had been a refuge for the talented black American artist. They found a public genuinely interested in their works).

Hayden was criticised for painting blacks that seemed to be rooted in cultural stereotypes so he revised some of his works.

William H. Johnson (1901-1970) A handsome adventurer from Florence, South Carolina, began his career as an academic painter. As his art matured, he shed his learned realism for a deliberate primitivism. Johnson studied at the national academy of design in New York and was invited to assist the painter George Luks in Provincetown. Yet like Hayden and so many other black artists of the 1920s, Johnson left the United States in 1926 to seek his fortune in Europe. His travels brought him into contact with the art of Vincent Van Gogh, Edvard Munch and Chaim Soutine whose intensely expressive, angst ridden paintings deeply moved the young artist. Johnson's early paintings skillful, realistic, tableaux, done in somber tones, were now followed by bright dramatically simplified scenes of religious subjects and black life. Johnson's self-enforced primitivism puzzled many Harlem Renaissance observers: but it was a style that allowed him to express the deeply felt emotions inherent in the scenes he conveyed.

James Van Der Zee (1886-1983) Was a popular Harlem photographer with a Lenox Avenue studio where New Negroes came to document the important rites and ceremonies of their lives. With his camera, Van Der Zee was able to bear witness to Harlem's weddings, funerals, and parades as well as its bridge clubs, fraternities, school groups, and church organizations. He photographed Harlem's sights: famed patron A'Lea Walker's Dark Tower, a chic salon for artists and socialites, the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Sr.'s Abyssinian Baptist Church; the elaborate complex ceremonies of Marcus Garvey's UNIA; or the Theresa Hotel, which in the days of segregated residencies, was one of the country's finest black hostels. Above all he captured the

extraordinary sense of self-esteem, style and optimism that was Harlem in the 1920s. Van Der Zee's Harlem was the site where the modern black identity was born, where the New Negro forged an urban personality.

These biographies will be discussed during the slide presentation.

We will then look at Puerto Rican American painters works and discuss the discovery of Puerto Rico and the relationship between Puerto Ricans and Africans.

We will end this segment by looking at paintings of many cultures and discuss the similarities and differences, what we like and dislike and reflect on the cultural significance.

Lesson #1

Collage

Students enjoy creating collages because they get to select the subjects. They can show style, personality, and creativity in their works.

Grade level: kindergarten–Eighth grade.

Materials Construction paper, scissors, magazines from home, Elmer's glue.

Procedure Look through magazines to find subjects that show who the student is. If they are athletic they may want to look in a sports magazine. They should make sure they find subjects from their culture because cultural identity is important.

- ¥ Students will cut out pictures of all shapes and sizes.
- ¥ Arrange pictures on the construction paper so that they overlap leaving no spaces.
- ¥ Glue pictures onto the construction paper.
- ¥ Let it dry.

Lesson #2

Masking Making

The making of ethnic masks always sparks the interest of students. They love to see themselves in their art. This is the best way to show students how who they are can be seen in their art. It's useful to mention the

various African activities masks were used for.

Grade level: Five-Eight

Materials Cast material (used to mend fractures), water, newspaper, aprons, vaseline, scissors, paint and paint brushes.

Procedure Students work in pairs

- ¥ Cut material in strips.
- ¥ Put vaseline on the eases of the face so cast material doesn't stick to the hairs on the face.
- ¥ Have student begin to place strips in water and then on the partners face until the face is covered.
- ¥ Leave the holes for the nostrils open.
- ¥ Smoothe out the cast material with fingers. Concentrate on the partners features like nose, lips, cheek bones let it dry for ten minutes.
- ¥ Be sure the cast is hard and dry.
- ¥ Move fingers along the eases and remove slowly.
- ¥ The next day find colors and begin painting.
- ¥ Students can add hair made of string, earrings, shells, and glitter to give the mask an ethnic look.

*Make sure YOU leave time to clean areas.

Lesson #3

Pinata

Pinatas are used for festivals by spanish cultures. The participants are blind-folded and given a stick. They have to swing at the Pinata as it hangs from the ceiling. They want to hit it hard enough for the Pinata to burst open allowing the candy to fall out.

Grade level: Kindergarten-Eighth grade.

Materials Newspapers, balloons, glue, tape, water, paint, paint brushes.

Procedure Blow up balloons and arrange them in the structure desired. ie a duck would require a small balloon for the head and a larger balloon for the body.

- ¥ Tape balloons together.
- ¥ Make paste by mixing glue with water.
- ¥ Tear newspaper into strips.

- ¥ Dip strips in pastes and cover the balloons.
- ¥ Leave a hole for the candy.
- ¥ Smooth out the strips Use imagination to make a beak with card board and tape.
- ¥ Let it dry.
- ¥ Bust balloons.
- ¥ Paint the duck.
- ¥ Fill duck with candy and cover the whole with tape and then paint it.
- ¥ Your pinata is complete.

Teacher's Reading List

Grigson, Geoffrey. 1969. *Shapes and People* , New York: Vanguard.

How works of artists from various periods and cultures captured the moods and activities of people.

Grigson, Geoffrey. 1964. *Shapes and Stories* , New York: Vanguard.

Presents reproductions of great paintings, with text that discusses the paintings and the artists.

Glubock, Shirley. 1970. *The Art of Colonial America* , Macmillan.

Shows examples of woodcuts, paintings, engravings, carved gravertons, architecture, pottery, furniture, and needlepoint of the period.

Time Life Books. 1970. *American Painting*, Time.

A panorama of American life as seen through artistic movements 1900-1970.

Hochman, Shirley. 1974. *Invitation to Art* . New York: Sterling Publishing Company.

Encourages an appreciation of art and artistic creativity in young people by studying works of masters.

Hochman, Shirley. 1974. *Identifying Art* . New York: Sterling Publishing Company.

Discussions of paintings which guide young people in recognizing art styles.

Student's Reading List

Adoff, Arnold. 1960. *I am the Darker Brother* . New York: Macmillan.

Poems by African-American Poets of the Harlem Renaissance era.

Lauter, Paul. 1990. *The Heath Anthology of American Literature* . United States: Heath and Company.

A multi-cultural look at poetry by poets of many ethnic backgrounds.

Walker, Paul. 1988. *Pride of Puerto Rico* . New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

A story about Roberto Clemente, a baseball legend from Puerto Rico who broke barriers to become a historic figure.

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