



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1996 Volume III: Race and Representation in American Cinema

Representation in Art and Film: Identity and Stereotype

Curriculum Unit 96.03.10
by Martha Savage

Objectives

This unit is designed to make older middle school students look at and reflect upon art and film and to create art work with a deepening awareness of identity and an understanding of stereotype. Examining stereotype in contemporary life, in personal experience, as a tool used by artists to heighten understanding, and the uses and absence of stereotype in depiction of characters in cinema are key components of this series of lessons. In addition to looking at and being critical, students are asked to create art work which expresses and elaborates upon these ideas. Through analysis of image and stereotype, students will consider and evolve a more complex perception of personal identity.

At the core of the curriculum and educational mission of the Visual Art Department at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet School are certain ubiquitous goals which drive all aspects of the program. Among these goals is to imbue units and individual lessons with subject-matter which causes reflection on personal identity and diversity, individual differences and similarities. The Visual Art curriculum seeks to investigate world cultures throughout the four year program. The cultures of the students in attendance at the school are emphasized as well as Native American cultures. Comparisons and connections are made. Students identify and examine their personal heritage and culture. Students look at their differences and similarities. Art work is generated from this inquiry. In seeking to apply and use cultural diversity and identity in art, the problems and challenges of stereotypes emerge. "The less familiar we are with individuating characteristics of others, the more likely we are to treat them in terms of their ascribed group membership, or as stereotypes." (Goldberg 29) This unit seeks to enable students to identify, confront, analyze and critique racial stereotype, to know each other as unique individuals, and to further develop their sense of identity.

Uses of Stereotype in Art and Film

Contemporary artists address stereotype and identity in a variety of ways. Some of these approaches and the resulting art works will be employed to teach several of the lessons in this unit.

The role of the artist in confronting stereotype and racism and effectively using it in art in order to move forward in a process of mending and recovery is articulated by art critic, Lucy Lippard.

So what does it take to turn a stereotype around, to undermine a commonly assumed "realism"? The options for breaking patterns, reversing stigmas, and conceiving a new and more just world picture are many and

multifaceted. They range from opening wounds, to seeking revenge through representation, to reversing destructive developments so the healing process can begin. To turn a stereotype around, it is necessary to be extreme, to depart from, rather than merely engage with, accepted norms and romanticized aspirations. Stereotypes have the borrowed power of the real, even when they are turned around in the form of positive images by those trying to regain their pasts. It is necessary to depart from stereotype in two senses—to take off from it and finally to leave it behind. The effective turnaround is a doubling back rather than a collusion or a dispersion. It can be an unexpectedly vicious dig in the ribs indicating that the joke's on you, or a double vision that allows different cultures to understand each other even as they speak in different ways. Transformation of self and society is finally the aim of all this mobile work that spins the status quo around. While irony, with its tinge of bitterness as well as humor, is the prevalent instrument, another is healing, in which the artist, as neo-shaman, heals her or himself, as a microcosm of society. (Lippard 241)

Gary Simmons is one example of a contemporary visual artist who takes Lippard's approach. He strives to confront and wipe out stereotype through the use of metaphor. He redraws old racist cartoons, exaggerated characters with powerful stereotypical attributes which are not unlike stereotypical characters from early films. The cartoons are drawn in smudged chalk, a transient material, on blackboards, an icon of primary/secondary education. He attempts to teach his audience as the teacher attempts to teach the student.

Gary Simmons's career has been based on a canny combination of polemic subject matter and Post-Minimal technique. Drawing with chalk on large slate blackboards, he has revived the racist figures of old cartoons only to "deconstruct" them by smudging their outlines with erasers. The French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who writes of using outmoded concepts "under eraser," would probably see Mr. Simmons's images as perfect metaphors for the persistence of prejudicial stereotypes in a supposedly color-blind society. (Karmel C27)

The uses of stereotype in artistic production are complex and subtle. Nuances, convolutions, and contradictions energize the art. Although these intricacies should be appreciated and are the qualities that make art truly interesting, the simplified systems of stereotype are often useful in that they facilitate understanding, especially by the lay adult audience and youths. Without understanding, the message is completely lost. Likewise, with a greater level of understanding, the message becomes magnified. Although both types of artists, visual artists and filmmakers, work in visual media their paths to the same goal can differ significantly. Generally speaking, to combat racism and stereotype, visual artists employ the stereotype image as a weapon turning it upon itself, filmmakers seek to depart from the stereotype image and replace it with a real image and authentic portrayal of African American life. The exception in cinema is situations in which stereotypical characters are used to critique themselves. This technique is similar to that used by visual artists, but more difficult to decode in film for the students for whom this unit was written. Therefore, this unit focuses on stereotype and identity in cinema in which "real" character portrayal is the goal.

Film Historian Ed Guerrero calls on African American filmmakers to meet the challenge of changing the image perpetuated by the film industry. He urges black filmmakers to take control of their representation and create true characters and situations by complex, innovative and artistic means.

Perhaps here it is best to conclude with the riddle so brilliantly posed in the opening of Bill Duke's powerful crime-action drama about passing, dissembling, and double consciousness, 'Deep Cover' (1992). Applying for an undercover assignment, a black cop (Larry Fishburne) is interviewed by a slimy Washington bureaucrat who, in order to test Fishburne's cool, asks him a Zen-like question, 'What's the difference between a black man and a nigger?' The question is supposed to have no answer, or innumerable answers, as African Americans must

confront or negotiate this question every day of their lives. Fishburne, his face a cool, dissembling mask, responds by saying in effect that a nigger is someone who would even try to answer such a question. In a referential parallel manner, then, this question highlights something at the heart of the African American cinematic challenge. All black filmmakers confront exactly this defining task. Fishburne, playing the masked trickster, answers appropriately to his situation in the movie, but black filmmakers are obliged to respond in their films in complex political and aesthetic ways. If they fail to do so, they surrender control over the production of the ideas, images, and narratives that so indelibly define the limits and possibilities of black life in America. Only by weighing the many possible answers that arise in the riddle-like social transactions of 'race' can black filmmakers create authentic humanized images and narratives of black life. (Guerrero 207-8)

Like Lippard's conclusion that art and artists who address stereotype can ultimately help in a healing process and positive outcome for all people, Donald Bogle, film critic, similarly argues that film and black filmmakers have the same power.

If there are to be significant black films, the black actors, the directors, the writers, the producers, and the technicians who are now being given a chance to work must articulate the contemporary black's mind, his/her point of view, aspirations, and goals. The black filmmaker must come to terms with the world he or she lives, whether it be 125th Street and Lenox Avenue or an integrated suburb that is perhaps nothing more than a prison. Black films can liberate audiences from illusions, black and white, and in so freeing can give all of us vision and truth. (Bogle 302-3)

Perhaps this series of lessons can direct students toward becoming free from the false illusions and misrepresentations alluded to by Bogle, and move them closer to a more genuine understanding of themselves and others.

Strategies

This curriculum unit is composed of seven lessons that are designed for use in middle school, grades 7 and 8. It stresses a critical examination of visual art and film, in particular, the uses of identity and stereotype in the representation of people and characters. The lessons employ both media with an emphasis on visual art, as well as a wide variety of age appropriate readings, informational videotapes, writing, and discussion. Students work individually and in cooperative groups to encourage dialogue and literacy. Oral and written articulation of concepts, ideas, and thoughts are balanced with a studio component. Visual articulation stresses a hands-on approach and demonstrates and reinforces student understanding and shows a synthesis of knowledge of complex topics. All of the examples of stereotype in art were made by African American artists. There are two reasons for this perspective. First, art work addressing stereotype and the accompanying resources for a youth audience is most readily available on African American artists. Second, the African American student population at Betsy Ross Arts Magnet, for which this unit was designed is greater than any other group. Examples by Asian artists, Native American artist and Latino artists could be sought, although they are not currently as abundant or easily accessible. The lessons could also apply and materials sought to teach about gender stereotypes as well.

Lesson Summaries

Lesson #1: A Scrapbook/Journal-Create an ongoing personal repository for ideas, reflection and information.

Students and teacher keep a journal/scrapbook. By providing a non-threatening and secure environment, students are encouraged to participate in discussions. In addition to the discussion, a scrapbook/journal provides an outlet for a more personal, private expression. It also serves as a place to collect a variety of materials from drawings, magazine graphics to hand-outs, definitions, questions, comments, ideas, reflections, and concerns that can be shared with others. It also provides the students and teacher with a useful documentation of their process and evolution during the course of the unit.

Lesson #2: Stereotype Defined-Create a definition and rubric for identifying and interpreting stereotype.

Through class discussion, students write a definition of stereotype and begin to practice applying the stereotype definition to examples from everyday life: personal experience, television, advertising, school text books, comic books, art, and film. After creating their own definitions, students can refer to a standard dictionary such as the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language as a point of comparison. They would find stereotype defined as: “a conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image.” Or they might consult The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia and find: “stereotype, a prejudicial notion or set of notions a person uses to define members of an ethnic or other social group outside one’s own direct experience.” The class will develop a rubric from which they will be able to decode art and film and to analyze and reflect upon stereotype. The opening exercise in this lesson, which utilizes occupation descriptions as a first glimpse at stereotype, is also an icebreaker for the students since it is highly interactive. It sets the tone of friendly reciprocity in the search for knowledge.

Lesson #3: The One and Only Me, A Self-Portrait-Interpret meaning in a portrait and express unique, individual qualities through a self-portrait.

The use of symbols and keys in art is introduced. An artist must employ certain clues-body language, objects, color, symbols and setting to create a portrait which reveals the nature and character of the subject. Examples by well-known artists are used. It is important to provide an array of examples drawing on artists and portrait subjects of diverse cultures and heritage. From this point, students consider the problem of their own depiction, collecting and then selecting clues which communicate their individuality. Students must determine if they are choosing clues which are stereotypes or clues which truly demonstrate their identity. They must also spend time looking at their own image and contemplating and contrasting media’s often superficial image VS their own image. Through creation of the montage of images it is realized that a person is a complex entity. Madison Avenue, Hollywood and teachers for instance have ideas about youths. Now, with students in control of their own representation, what kind of statement is made?

Lesson #4: Get a Life! Rewriting and Redrawing the Lives of Well-Known Stereotype Characters in Advertising-Undo a familiar stereotype.

Having seized control of their own images, students move into another type of territory, that of racial stereotype and a derogatory image with a long history. This lesson demonstrates how Betye Saar and Faith Ringgold, two contemporary African American artists have transformed one of the most used racial stereotypes, the mammy-like Aunt Jemima.

Bogle describes this stereotype as an overweight and disagreeable character, emerging in the 1914 comedy, *Coon Town Suffragettes* :

“Mammy’s offshoot is the aunt jemima, sometime derogatorily referred to as ‘handkerchief head.’ Often aunt jemimas are toms blessed with religion or mammies who wedge themselves into the dominant white culture. Generally they are sweet, jolly and good tempered-a bit more polite than mammy and certainly never as headstrong. The maids in the Mae West films of the 1930’s fit snugly into this category.” (Bogle 9)

Film excerpts or stills could be used to illustrate how the mammy character was portrayed in film, making the connection between mammy and Aunt Jemima. Pictures of mammy/Aunt Jemima collectibles or statuettes also illustrate the point.

The mammy as Aunt Jemima, was the advertising strategy of a cake flour company which appropriated the character figurehead from a vaudeville act in 1889. The company hired a ‘spokesservant’ to promote their product at the World’s Colombian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. “The new product was a success and so was its spokesservant. For many years [Nancy] Green toured the country promoting Aunt Jemima cake flour, until she died in an automobile accident in 1923 at the age of eighty-nine.” (Goings 28) Not only did the company hire Ms. Green and later others to personify their product’s namesake, but they further endowed this mythic stereotype with several versions of a biography and legend used in advertising campaigns. Aunt Jemima, the tale goes, was the jolly, happy former slave from the Higbee Plantation who was visited by her former master, Colonel Higbee for whom she dishes up plates of steaming pancakes. He buys her recipe so everyone can enjoy her delicious pancakes. (Goings 28-31)

An appropriated, recontextualized and transformed Aunt Jemima character speaks with a new voice to contemporary viewers through artists Betye Saar and Faith Ringgold in different ways. Saar uses her to make a political statement and Ringgold rewrites her biography.

Saar’s Aunt Jemima takes the form of a small (11 3/4x8x2 3/4 inches) but extremely powerful, mixed media shadow box entitled, “The Liberation of Aunt Jemima” [1972]. Much has been written on this piece.

It is described by Peter Clothier as “the stereotype of every(white)man’s good-natured servant was armed with a grenade and rifle.” (Clothier 22) For many years prior to making this artwork, Saar collected a variety of items including defamatory images of African Americans. “Among other things she [Saar] collected were images of blacks-the derogatory stereotypes which white Americans had used to objectify a guilt and fear whose roots reached back to the origin of the country’s wealth and power.” (Clothier 20-23) Lippard describes Saar’s use of these items in the late 1960s as “homeopathic.” Carefully utilizing measured doses of appropriated stereotypes in her work, Saar was able to use the stereotype against itself and against the racism which produced it. (Lippard 233)

Using a sophisticated compositional/art historical analysis of “The Liberation of aunt Jemima,” Lippard shows: ‘There are three levels of imagery and Aunt Jemimas here. The wallpaper is a Warhol-like grid of the ‘modern’ Jemima; the front plane is an antique stereotype in which a grinning woman holds and equally unattractive fat white baby casually under one arm; and in the middle, between past and present, stands a black, no-nonsense jemima with a broom in one hand and a rifle in the other. Saar has used the overall format of an altarpiece as a continued reference to the spirituality necessary to maintain the life force.” (Lippard 234) By comparison, Leslie Sills, children’s art writer describes the same art work for a youth audience. “Betye took pancake box labels showing Aunt Jemima’s face and pasted them like wallpaper on the inside back of a box. In front, she placed an Aunt Jemima doll holding a miniature broom and toy pistol in one hand and a toy rifle and

hand grenade in the other. In front of the doll there is a postcard showing an Aunt Jemima carrying a crying white infant. A clenched black fist, the emblem of the Black Power movement, covers her skirt. The work is a strong warning: violence can erupt when people are not treated as human beings.” (Sills [1993] 37)

Faith Ringgold is best known for a genre of art she created, the story quilt. Sewn and painted on cloth, text panels recount stories and visual images move in a linear and at times not so linear path. The narrative, sequential quality of these works can be thought to bridge the gap between traditional visual art and film. In 1982 she began a story quilt dedicated to Aunt Jemima. Reproductions of the story quilt “Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima” are not readily available, therefore, this lengthy description appears unedited.

With this quilt, entitled ‘Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima,’ Ringgold’s intention was to re-tell the story of the ‘most maligned black female stereotype and reveal the true story never told before.’ The quilt consists of 56 squares and combines frontal images of three-quarter length figures, squares of traditional quilting, and a narrative text which is fully integrated into the overall design. The story is a contemporary folk tale, written in traditional black dialect. It transforms the stereotype of Aunt Jemima into Jemima Blakey, a successful business woman, and tells her story and that of her family, parents husband, children, and grandchildren. The narrative combines elements of folk lore and anecdote with the African and West Indian Dilemma Tale, traditions Ringgold has absorbed from her mother’s storytelling. It mixes black and white people (Jemima’s son, ‘Lil Rufus . . . married a white gal, name a Margo he picked up in Germany, of all places, during the Korean War’). But, unlike traditional folk tales that use stock characters which are morally absolute, Ringgold’s tale does not make absolute judgments: all blacks are not good and all whites are not bad. Thus it questions our preconceptions. It also does not reach a clear conclusion. Rather it leaves us with a question to puzzle over as Dilemma Tales do. The heroine and her husband, Big Rufus, die in a fatal car accident ‘on the way to open they restaurant.’ Their good son, ‘Lil Rufus brought they bodies back to Harlem and give ‘em an African Funeral-Praise God!’ But their daughter and her husband that evil ‘ole Ugly man Dr. Jones,’ and ‘them worthless chirrun of hers’ got Jemima’s house and restaurant business in New Orleans. And the story concludes: ‘Now who’s afraid of Aunt Jemima? (Gouma-Peterson 23)

Utilizing Faith Ringgold’s example of rewriting a stereotypical character’s life as a story quilt, students do the same, identifying and then unraveling a myth, and then trying to rebuild a story which is not predictable or peopled with stereotypes.

This lesson can be extended to include a personal narrative quilt which explores the student’s identity and life experience. Amy Ruopp describes this process based on the work of Faith Ringgold in an article, “Narrative Drawing, A Study in Personal Histories” in SchoolArts.

Lesson #5: Recontextualization Photocollage-Critically examine ideas about stereotype by recontextualizing, reversing and manipulating appropriated images.

[Robert] Colescott has transformed many of art history’s ‘sacred cows’ with a broad humor that veils rage. The pregnant wife in Jan Van Eyck’s Arnulfini wedding portrait becomes a black woman. George Washington Crossing the Delaware is replaced by his namesake Mr. Carver and a boatload of grinning black stereotypes, including Aunt Jemima again. In the 1976 ‘Homage to Delacroix: Liberty Leading the People,’ Liberty herself is led by a black drummer boy. Van Gogh’s ‘Potato Eaters’ is transported to a southern milieu in ‘Eat Dem Taters,’ and where Van Gogh’s Dutch peasants look miserably resigned, the black sharecroppers are grinning their heads off, as required. In a classic reversal, Colescott offers ‘Shirley Temple Black and Bill Robinson White,’ in which Shirley Temple and Bojangles switch races and expose the incongruity of the black and white role. (Lippard 238-9)

An informed student who has been exposed to basic art history and African American history will be able to

begin to realize the controversial yet important work of the African American artist, Robert Colescott. Colescott paints crude, cartoon-like copies of famous paintings from Western art history, replacing the white characters with black characters portrayed in a stereotypical, racist style. Colescott does have a sense of humor and irony, which is a relief when viewing these very confrontation paintings which display disgusting racial stereotypes so blatantly. His modus operandi is to shock. His paintings are garishly colored, exaggerated, frightening and perverse. It would be insensitive to use examples from Colescott's oeuvre with students without a responsible preface, intermittent explanations, and follow-up debriefing. Even with the most cautious presentation, misunderstandings may persist. Expect responses to be diverse and extreme. It is very difficult for students to use Colescott's techniques of appropriation and manipulation of images because young people simply lack the breadth of knowledge and experience necessary. However, this important American artist is synonymous with art and stereotype and should not be omitted from a unit of this type. A simple exercise in which students select a well-known art icon such as "Mona Lisa" and color a photocopy of her with a brown complexion, contemplating the impact this painting would have had, had it been the portrait of an African woman makes an important point. The Shirley Temple/Bill Robinson paintings would be appreciated by contextualizing these actors using the film *The Littlest Rebel*.

Few resources are currently available on Robert Colescott, especially material for youths. There is a videotape, *Robert Colescott* which requires careful selection of excerpts and an article in *Art in America*. Since Colescott has been selected to represent the United States at the 1997 Venice Biennale, more information will soon become available.

Lesson #6: Heritage Shadow Box—Select and utilize culturally significant objects and symbols in an artwork.

Betye Saar is revisited in this lesson. Her distinctive assemblage and shadow box styles and collections of culturally significant objects are interpreted and then used as a model for student art work. Saar combines a variety of natural objects such as bone, hair, rocks, and seeds with cultural artifacts like beads, cloth, postcards, mirrors, candles and photographs. By placing them together, she creates more than a sum of the parts. Magic, fortune telling and visionary experience inform her work. These collections of materials, framed in an old window, in a box, as an altarpiece gather energy and power.

Betye Saar gives recycling a larger meaning, transforming ordinary, often discarded materials into extraordinary works of art. Reflecting the lives and spirits of many people, these materials possess an energy. Betye captures and combines their energy to create artwork charged with spiritual power. The viewer feels connected to her work whether she is using objects from Africa, Asia, Mexico, the Caribbean, or the United States. In Betye Saar's art, all peoples, all races, are united. (Sills [1993] 43)

By examining and considering the cultural implications of objects and artifacts, students must gather, reflect, sort, and choose fragments and pieces, natural and appropriated, endowing them with meaning and power in relation to their own life experience. The resulting artwork should be a highly personal reflection of the individual's culture and heritage assembled with sensitivity to composition and the power of the juxtaposition of objects.

The videotape, *Betye and Alison Saar: Conjure Women of the Arts* (Linda Freeman 1995) shows Saar at work and illustrates her techniques and ideas. Usually students view art as an end product. The videotape demonstrates the artistic process—brainstorming ideas, planning, creating and reflecting. It is a good model for practice. Students see that art is not just a product but the result of a process which continues with the viewer. Students can identify and reflect upon the process in which they are currently engaged.

Lesson #7: Film Evaluation/Posters-Reflect upon stereotype VS authentic film characters.

Having done five films in six years, I know for sure I cannot keep up this pace, it could kill me. The reason for this pace is simple: historically, black filmmakers have found it extremely hard to go from film to film. I didn't want a long layoff between films. When things are clicking, ya gotta stay with it. So many of our stories are yet to be told, and I am getting a shot to tell the ones I know in films. Cinema is the most important thing in my life, and I have been given unique opportunities to have full creative control on films that I want to make. I can't turn that down. (Lee [1991] 17)

Several examples of stereotype in early film are contrasted against the depiction of authentic characters and stories in excerpts from certain of Spike Lee's films. *Crooklyn* (1994) is considered in its entirety and used for discussion. A character from *Crooklyn* is used as the subject of a poster. The depiction of family life as observed through the eyes of the wise, ten year old girl hero make this Lee film an appropriate choice for use with middle school students.

According to Lee, the Carmichaels, depicted in *Crooklyn*, are an ordinary family bearing similarities to his own family. The characters do not fit the stereotypes held about African Americans. On *Crooklyn*, Lee said, "I wanted to show that, despite what White America thinks, there's at least *one* family-one family in [a] Hollywood [film] this year, anyway-where both parents are *there*, where the family's not on welfare, the son's aren't rapist and muggers, and the daughters aren't getting pregnant at the age of eight. [The Carmichaels] are a normal family who fight and fuss and love. But they are not dysfunctional." (Hardy 111) Working within the overall theme of family, Lee sensitively weaves motifs of growth, relationships and loss. This African American family works through the same type of issues as any family. The context is African American, the message is a universal American experience.

Mr. Lee's fond evocation of a lost time and place, the Brooklyn of the early 1970's, becomes a means of conjuring up intense feelings of loss among his school-age characters. After meandering boisterously through much of the first half, 'Crooklyn' finally toughens up with the advent of a family tragedy, and shows how its principals are strengthened despite their loss. (Maslin)

The two-parent, middle class Carmichael family of 'Crooklyn' is conspicuously abnormal, at least among black families in American films. Despite its title, the story unfolds in a safe neighborhood where the father, Woody (Delroy Lindo), drinks Pepsi, the children play hopscotch and everyone eats healthy meals, though not without a lot of back talk about vegetables. (Maslin)

Alfre Woodard appears as Carolyn, the family's formidable mother, and along with Mr. Lindo she helps give the material much-needed ballast. This film's portrait of a marriage is hazily constructed, but each parent emerges as a forceful, compelling character. There's a particular honesty in the depiction of Carolyn as both loving mother and furiously stern taskmaster; at one point she drags the children out of bed because they forgot to clean up the kitchen. That behavior may not make sense, but it feels real. (Maslin)

After *Crooklyn* is viewed and discussed by the class, students create a poster based on a character from the film. Reviewing and then utilizing the principals of poster making from slogans, lettering, illustration, symbolism, color, and emphasis, students must make a number of creative decisions and use critical analysis in order to complete the assignment effectively. Using a lesson from an art text on poster making and following a systematic, analytical poster making process is helpful for most students. Viewing and analyzing movie poster art, movie advertising and video box covers (which are very similar to movie posters), sets the

expectation and helps students connect the intellectual operation and content with the visual content.

Reading *Spike Lee, Filmmaker* as an supplementary part of this lesson would fill in many gaps in the history of African American filmmaking, and the life and work of Mr. Lee.

In addition to *Crooklyn* , students will view one contemporary film or television show independently and analyze it in terms of representation of race in the characters and story by creating a poster. This final project summarizes, synthesizes and puts to the test the student's ability to see critically and then restate using and manipulating words and images what has been seen, observed and understood about a character.

The group of lessons which comprise this unit progress in a developmental way to lay groundwork for critical thinking and reflection on the idea of identity and representation of the individual in art and film, to consider the self in relation to society, to consider others in relation to self and finally to have insight and understanding about the portrayal of people in film and art. The journal/scapbook which serve as an ongoing record and diary of the student's and teacher's progressive journey, along with the art work completed throughout the course of this unit are the concrete evidence that a meaningful process took place. Acknowledging, contemplating and acting upon issues addressed in class should lead to the application of these lessons in the future, to probe the deeper meaning and motivation of representation in movies and art.

The Lessons

Lesson #1: A Scrap/Book Journal

Content Standard #5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others. (National Standards for Arts Education)

Content Standard #6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Goal Create an ongoing personal repository for ideas, reflection and information.

Objectives The student will be able to:

Create and maintain a scapbook/journal in class.

Make a variety of periodic written entries.

Read and save movie reviews.

Materials

ruled paper

stapler

construction paper

markers

Activities Each student creates a scrapbook/journal.

Teacher defines the uses of the book. Student input is requested. Entry ideas are listed on the inside cover.

Each student makes entries over the course of the unit as prompted.

Journal/scrapbook ideas

Movie reviews from the newspaper such as: "Taking the Children" - in the Sunday *New York Times* and regular film reviews in the *New York Times* .

Student written movie reviews.

Personal reflection on class work.

Personal reflection and examples of stereotype in art, film, television, advertising, comic books, textbooks.

Personal experience with stereotype.

Project ideas.

Definitions.

Class notes and classroom writing assignments.

Evaluation

Creation of a journal/scapbook.

Entries made by student and checked by the teacher at regular intervals.

Lesson #2: Stereotype Defined

Content Standard # 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Goal Create a definition and rubric for identifying and interpreting stereotype.

Objectives The student will be able to:

Participate in group brainstorming activities.

Identify stereotypes in everyday life.

Write a definition of stereotype.

Participate in group activities leading to producing a list of questions or statements which can be applied to identifying and interpreting stereotype in art and film.

Look at and analyze stereotype in an artwork or film excerpt by applying rubric.

Materials

large paper and markers for recording ideas (save)

magazines

scrap paper

box

ruled paper or journal scrapbook

Activities *Each student writes an occupation on a piece of paper which is folded and placed in a box. Each student selects a paper and writes a detailed physical description of an imaginary person whose occupation they have selected. Each student reads his/her description aloud, not revealing the occupation. Classmates guess the occupation. Discuss how stereotypes were used or not used in this exercise.*

By means of group discussion, students respond to the question: In what positive and negative ways can stereotyping people be used?

By means of large and small group discussion, students generate words, phrases and ideas that define stereotype until the group decides on a definition to be used in class. The definition can be subject to change by the class at a later date. Each student should record the definition in his/her journal/scrapbook

By means of group discussion, students respond to the question: How can you tell if you are looking at a stereotype in art or film. List answers in journal/scrapbook.

Each student finds an advertisement in a magazine which uses a person to sell a product. Applying the answers to the question in #4, the student decides if, and specifically how, stereotype is being used in their selected advertisement. Share with whole group or in small groups.

Evaluation Participation in discussions and brainstorming activities.

Application of concepts and elementary rubric to understanding stereotype in an advertisement by writing a brief analysis.

Lesson #3: The One and Only Real Me

A Self-Portrait

Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols and ideas.

Goal Interpret meaning in a portrait and express unique, individual qualities through a self-portrait.

Objectives The student will be able to:

Describe a person in depth based on clues in a portrait by a well-known artist.

Draw a realistic frontal rendering of his/her face.

Create montage of personality “clues.”

Create a collage using a face drawing and montage items.

Materials

reproductions of portraits by well-known artists
paper
pencil
mirror, or photograph of student
colored pencils
scissors
glue
construction paper or other paper for backing collage

Activities Using a portrait by a well known artist, the teacher asks the students to describe the personal characteristics of the subject of the portrait by completing the sentence: This person is _____. The students should then provide a rationale for the statement. Characteristics and rationales are charted. For example:

Characteristic	Rationale
a married woman	ring on the left finger
wealthy	fancy dress, smooth skin, pearl earrings

Each student selects a portrait and repeats the exercise independently using paper which is divided in half, one side reading “characteristic” and the other side “rationale.” Each student shares his/her portrait and interpretation with the a small group or whole class.

Each student creates a realistic rendering in pencil of his/her face using a mirror or photograph. (Students can make mirrors using mylar stretched over paper.)

Each student lists objects, ideas, thoughts, dreams, people, places which have personal meaning. Using the list, each student makes separate drawings in pencil and colored pencil which depict several of the themes.

Each student cuts out his/her self-portrait and other drawings and these elements are combined into a composition by gluing them onto colored construction paper or other backing (wall paper, marbled paper, fabric).

Evaluation

Participation in discussion.

Share analysis of a portrait.

Creation of a self-portrait which describes unique personal qualities.

Lesson #4: Get a Life! Rewriting and Redrawing the Lives of Well-Know Stereotype Characters in Advertising

Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.

Content Standard # 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Goal Undo a familiar stereotype.

Objectives The student will be able to:

Identify stereotypes and how they are used in advertising.

Acknowledge the history of Aunt Jemima's use in advertising (film and collectable figurines).

Rewrite and redraw a character from advertising as a person free of stereotype.

Describe how African-American artists Faith Ringgold and Betye Saar transformed the Aunt Jemima stereotype.

Materials

Food packages or advertisements displaying stereotypes

Faith Ringgold, The Last Story Quilt video tape

reproduction of "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima" (Saar)

paper

pencils

markers, crayons, colored pencils

fabric scraps

scissors

glue

(optional: illustrations of collectibles/figurines and excerpts from films depicted mammy/Aunt Jemima characters)

Activities

Teacher-led discussion and examples about the history of the Aunt Jemima figure.

View *Faith Ringgold, The Last Story Quilt* . Focus on quilt techniques and storytelling. Lead students in a discussion of how Ringgold transformed Aunt Jemima in her quilt, "Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?"

Teacher-facilitated discussion (use quotes written about the work to generate dialogue) and student analysis of symbols and images in Saar's "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima."

Teacher-facilitated student discussion comparing Ringgold's transformation of Aunt Jemima to Betye Saar's, "The Liberation of Aunt Jemima."

Using a collection of stereotypes from food labels and other products images gathered by students or teacher ahead of time, teacher leads students in a discussion of the intended stereotypes.

Employing Ringgold's story quilt example as a model, each student selects a stereotype character from the collection and rewrites and redraws the character's life as a non-stereotype person.

Each student's text, collages, and drawings are assembled on squares of paper and arranged into a grid as a quilt.

Stereotype character ideas from food and household products:

Aunt Millie
Uncle Ben
Mr. Clean
Mrs. Butterworth
Betty Crocker
Tio Sancho
Sun Maid
Campbell's Soup
kids

Evaluation

Participation in discussion.

Creation of a story quilt using text and graphics which dispel a familiar stereotype.

Lesson #5: Using Stereotypes to Confront Stereotypes: Robert Colescott Recontextualization Photocollage

Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Goal Critically examine ideas about stereotype by recontextualizing, reversing and manipulating appropriated images.

Objectives The student will be able to:

Describe and analyze the recontextualizing, reversing and manipulation of stereotypes employed by Robert Colescott after viewing selected excerpts from *Robert Colescott* videotape.

Manipulate an appropriated image from the history of art which challenges ideas about stereotype.

Materials:

Robert Colescott videotape

Littlest Rebel videotape

art history books and photocopies of selected images

markers

pencil

ruled paper or journal/scrapbook

Activities

View selected excerpts from *Robert Colescott* videotape. The sensitive material contained in this videotape must be carefully introduced. Students should be warned that the work contains stereotype vulgarly depicted. While viewing the videotape and pausing frequently, students identify the ways in which Colescott uses stereotype and list the negative stereotypes employed. Give particular attention to images of Shirley Temple and Bill Robinson. View excerpts from *Littlest Rebel* to contextualize Colescott's interpretation.

The teacher facilitates a student discussion about Colescott's controversial style.

Each student selects a well-known portrait or figure group painting from the history of art from the resources provided to transform using one of Colescott's methods: race reversal as seen in "Shirley Temple Black and Bill Robinson White."

Using an enlarged photocopy of the art work each student alters the original by coloring it with markers, changing the complexions of the subjects.

Each student writes a paragraph explaining how their original ideas about the well-known work of art changed.

Students should refer to notes on stereotype in their journal/scrapbook.

Evaluation

Participation in discussions.
Effective artwork.
Paragraph demonstrating understanding.

Lesson #6: Heritage Shadow Box Betye Saar, African-American Artist

Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions.

Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

Goal Select and utilize culturally significant objects and symbols in an artwork.

Objectives Student will be able to:

Identify his/her heritage.

Identify and select objects and symbols representing his/her heritage.

Create a shadow box which honors his/her heritage.

Use principals of composition.

Materials

Betye and Alison Saar, Conjure Women of the Arts videotape
cigar boxes and boxes-all sizes
cardboard tubes
cool melt glue
fabric, yarn, jute
old jewelry, beads
magazines
spools, wood pieces, twigs
acrylic paint

Activities

View *Betye and Alison Saar, Conjure Women of the Arts* videotape. Discussion: How does Betye Saar celebrate her complex personal heritage? How is the art process depicted in the videotape?

Each student identify personal heritage and compile a list of objects and symbols which communicate aspects of his/her heritage. Record information in scrapbook/journal.

Each student gathers materials which best match his/her list. Materials are collected from supplies provided in the classroom and brought from home, especially family photographs.

Using a composition which makes use of at least three planes of a box (back, middle and front), each student creates a shadow box employing the objects and symbols.

Evaluation

Creation of a list of objects and symbols which have cultural significance.

Creation of a shadow box utilizing appropriate materials and a composition of several planes.

Lesson #7: Film Evaluation/Posters

Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

Content Standard #5: Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

Content Standard #6 : Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

Goal Reflect upon stereotype VS authentic film characters.

Objectives The student will be able to:

Identify stereotype VS authentic characters in film, excerpts and personal selection from TV or film.

Apply a rationale for arguments.

Demonstrate knowledge through a poster using a slogan and illustration.

Demonstrate effective poster design.

Materials:

Crooklyn

Do the Right Thing

film reviews for *Crooklyn*

18"x24" and 9"x12" white paper

markers

tempera paint

pencils

pictures of movie posters, video boxes and movies advertisements

Spike Lee, Filmmaker (Hardy) [optional]

Activities

View *Crooklyn* in its entirety and excerpts from selected films including *Do The Right Thing* .

Review *stereotype* and *authentic* as they apply to characters. In journals, students list characters and their attributes and qualities. Determine which characters demonstrate stereotype or are authentic and provide rationale.

Each student chooses a character from *Crooklyn* as the central focus of a film poster.

Each student collects more specific information about *Crooklyn* and character by reading film reviews and excerpts from books and discussing with other students.

Each students creates a slogan for his/her poster which states clearly the essence of the character. An additional slogan about the film can be utilized.

Teacher leads review of elements of poster design (optional: by reviewing a poster chapter in an art text).

Look at and analyze movie posters, video boxes and advertisements.

Each student creates several small sketches employing effective poster design, slogan(s) and illustrations. Color with markers.

Students choose one design and create a 18"x24" poster using tempera paint.

Using the same process, each student creates a poster based on a film or television show character of his/her choice seen outside school.

Optional Read *Spike Lee, Filmmaker* .

Evaluation

Participation in discussions.

Posters demonstrate knowledge.

Bibliography for Teachers

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Bogle, Donald. *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies and Bucks* . New York: Bantam Books, 1973. Comprehensive text on black images and stereotypes in American film.

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Goldberg, David. "Images of the Other: Cinema and Stereotypes." in *Race and Representation: Art/Film/Video* . Berger, Maurice and Johnetta Cole, Project Co-Directors. New York: Hunter College Art Gallery, 1987. Exhibition catalogue with essays.

Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. "Modern Dilemma Tales; Faith Ringgold's Story Quilts" in *Faith Ringgold, A 25 Year Survey* . Hempstead, New York: The Museum, 1990. Essay from exhibition catalogue with description of "Who's Afraid of Aunt Jemima?"

Guerrero, Ed. *Framing Blackness, The African-American Image in Film* . Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993. History of black image in American film.

Hardy, James Earl. *Spike Lee, Filmmaker* . New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996. Written for the adolescent reader, the book describes the life and work of the African American filmmaker. It includes photographs, further reading and a brief summary of African American filmmaking.

Johnson, Ken. "Colescott on Black and White." *Art in America*. June, 1989. Reinterpretations of Western art icons and beyond.

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Kern-Foxworth, Marilyn. *Prisoners of Image; Ethnic and Gender Stereotypes* . New York: The Museum, 1989. Exhibition catalogue.

Lee, Spike. *Five for Five: The Films of Spike Lee* . New York: Stewart, Tabori and Chang., 1991. Spike Lee and five writers discuss Lee's first five films: *She's Gotta Have It* , *School Daze* , *Do the Right Thing* , *Mo' Better Blues* and *Jungle Fever* .

——— *Gotta Have It*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987. Screenplay, journal and production notes for the movie.

——— *Mo' Better Blues* . New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990. Storyboards, photographs, thoughts and feeling about the movie.

Lippard, Lucy. *Mixed Blessings, New Art in a Multicultural America* . New York: Pantheon Books, 1990. Multicultural (Native American, African American, Asian American and Latino) examination of American art-exile, identity, stereotype, reclaiming history and memory.

Loveridge, Clare E. "Poster-Pizzazz." *School Arts* . March 1994, 22-3. Article in teacher journal on poster making.

Maslin, Janet. "A Tender Domestic Drama From, No Joke, Spike Lee." *New York Times*. 13 May 1994. Review of *Crooklyn* .

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Ruopp, Amy. "Narrative Drawing, A Study in Personal Histories." *SchoolArts* April, 1996. A lesson for middle school students based on the art of Faith Ringgold.

Vogel, Carol. "A Painter is Chosen for Biennale." *New York Times* . 17 June 1996, C14. Article on the selection of Robert Colescott for the Venice Biennale.

Films/Videotapes

Betye and Alison Saar: Conjure Women of the Arts (Linda Freeman 1995)

The Littlest Rebel (Fox, 1935)

Faith Ringgold: The Last Story Quilt (Linda Freeman)

Crooklyn (Spike Lee, 1994)

Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee 1989)

Robert Colescott

Reading List for Students

Hardy, James Earl. *Spike Lee, Filmmaker* . New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1996. Written for the adolescent reader, the book describes the life and work of the African American filmmaker. It includes photographs, further reading and a brief summary of African American filmmaking.

Maslin, Janet. "A Tender Domestic Drama From, No Joke, Spike Lee ." *New York Times* . 13 May 1994. Review of *Crooklyn* .

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New York Times. "Taking the Children." weekly Sunday feature. Readable film reviews with children and youths in mind.

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Turner, Robyn Montana. *Faith Ringgold* . Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1993. Illustrated biography of Faith Ringgold.

Materials

Paper:

- ruled paper
- construction paper
- 18"x24" and 9"x12" white drawing paper
- scrap paper
- large manila paper and markers for recording ideas
- construction paper, wallpaper, marbled paper or other paper for backing collage
- mylar for optional handmade mirror
- journal/scrapbook

Writing, drawing, coloring and painting:

pencils
erasers
colored pencils
markers
brushes
acrylic paint
tempera paint

Cutting and joining:

scissors
stapler
white glue
cool-melt glue
tape, clear and masking
Cultural artifacts:
reproductions of portraits by well-known artists
art history books and photocopies of selected images
reproductions of “The Liberation of Aunt Jemima” (Saar) and “Who’s Afraid of Aunt Jemima?”
(Ringgold)
Food packages or advertisements displaying stereotypes
mirror or photograph of student
magazines
family photographs
pictures of movie posters, video boxes and movies advertisements

Shadow box materials:

boxes-all sizes
cardboard tubes
cardboard
cool melt glue
fabric, yarn, jute
old jewelry, beads
magazines
spools, wood pieces, twigs
acrylic paint
family photographs

Videotapes :

Betye and Alison Saar, Conjure Women of the Arts
Crooklyn
Do the Right Thing
Faith Ringgold, The Last Story Quilt
Robert Colescott

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