

Looking Through the Window

Introductory Activity

Overview: Students will be introduced to the concept of learning about history by looking through a window. A series of paintings by American artists will be used to exemplify social, cultural, and technological changes that developed from 1877 to the present.

SOLs: USII.3-USII.8, Art 6.13, 6.14, 6.21

Objectives: The student should be able to:

- understand that viewing and analyzing art can be used as a tool to increase understanding of the time during which the piece was produced;
- analyze art from both a cultural and aesthetic perspective; and
- compare and contrast multiple paintings and use clues found within the paintings to create a chronological timeline.

Materials:

- Prints of paintings created by American painters that were produced during the time and reflect each of the SOLs, USII.3-USII.8. Suggestions include:

USII.3	<i>New York</i> (George Bellows)
USII.4	<i>Food Will Win the War</i> (Unkown)
USII.5	<i>Chop Suey</i> (Edward Hopper)
USII.6	<i>Train Station</i> (Raphael Soyer)
USII.7	<i>The Problem We All Live With</i> (Norman Rockwell)
USII.8	<i>Robot Occupation</i> (Eliot Daughtry)

- Sets of small versions of these prints, printed and laminated. Postcards, note cards, etc. would also work well. (One set per group of 3-4 students)
- Window frame/old window sash (can be purchased at antique store/junk shop)
- Window frame template
- Unlined paper

Instructional Activity

Content/Teacher Notes

This will be the first time that many students have been asked to evaluate and utilize art in this manner; therefore there may be some initial discomfort or resistance. The warm up activity will help provide a model for students. There are countless other examples of American art that could be selected to exemplify these SOLs. Choosing different pieces of art will allow each teacher to

concentrate more heavily on a particular aspect of history and can offer the opportunity to make the instruction more personal.

Introduction

Explain to students that they will be looking at several pieces of art. By using clues found in the paintings, either from the content of the picture itself or from its style elements, they will be constructing an historical timeline. They will have the opportunity to work together as a group to pool their prior knowledge of U.S. history.

Procedure

Activity 1: Moments in Time

1. Divide students into six groups of 3 or 4. Distribute a set of the six painting reproductions to each group.
2. Explain to students that they should examine each of the pieces carefully to look for clues as to how the pictures would be placed in chronological order, or the order in which they painted. They should discuss what they think is being depicted in the painting, as well as whether they think the painting style is 'older' or more 'modern'.

Tip: It may be easier for students to determine the oldest and most recent paintings first, then fill in the rest of the timeline in between.

3. While students are working, the teacher should circulate to make sure that they do not get stuck. The following are questions that could be used to prompt student thought:

What do you notice about this picture that doesn't exist in the other picture?
What is different about the place? , the background?, the people?

4. While students are working, place the larger prints of the paintings that they are working with on display, out of order, in the front of the classroom.
5. After all of the groups have completed their timelines, have a member of each group come up, one at a time, to place the next picture in order.
6. Once all pictures have been placed, have students discuss their reasons for placing the pictures in the order that they did. 'I don't know' are not acceptable, but students may present answers that range from very astute observations of detail or style, to 'that painting just looks older', etc. If paintings are not in the correct order, use guiding questions and reorder the pictures based on student responses.

7. Ultimately, if using the suggested paintings, the timeline should look like this:



Activity 2: Looking Through the Window

1. Explain to the students that using art can be a great way to help visualize the people and places of the past. Throughout the course, we will be experiencing various pieces of art that were created by American painters, musicians, and writers. These will give us a window to the past.
2. Show students the window shadow box, which already has the first painting displayed. Suggestion: *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (Emanuel Leutze)



3. This particular piece, painted by a German American immigrant in 1861, will help to make a connection between the end of USI and the beginning of USII. *Westward* provides an excellent starting point for USII.3(a):

The student will demonstrate knowledge of how life changed after the Civil War by identifying reasons for westward expansion.

4. Explain that the window box will be used throughout the course of the year and that they will be using the paintings, the stories behind the paintings, and changes in artist's techniques and materials brought on by technological advances to study history.

Activity 3: Setting the Scene

1. In order to help students create a personal connection with this yearlong theme, they will each create their own window scene. A window template and paper will be provided. (Template attached)
2. Students can use whatever materials or methods they wish (drawing, painting, collage, Photoshop) to create a scene of their own personal experience or of some aspect of modern life that they find significant.
3. Distribute the window template.
3. This would be most effective given as homework so that students have time to think about the subject matter and what type of picture they want to create.

Observations and Conclusions

This preliminary activity should accomplish several goals. First, through the timeline activity, students should be able to identify the range of history to be studied in the course. Secondly, they will get a glimpse of the over-arching structure of the class. Thirdly, they should recognize art as a fully integrated aspect of the study of history and the social sciences.

Assessment

Informal: Monitor group discussions during the timeline activity. This will provide a prime opportunity to gauge students' prior knowledge, as well as dispositions toward the subject matter. The class timeline construction and discussion will also provide a good source for assessing prior knowledge.

Formal: Setting the Scene can be used as a formal assessment based on creative effort, interpretation, and completion.

Differentiation/Extension:

As this is the preliminary activity at the start of the course, the teacher will not yet be familiar with students' individual ability levels. The grouping for the timeline activity will, hopefully, create a random sort of the students. Working in these groups should help to diffuse nervousness about the activity and allow students to recognize some of their own strengths and weaknesses and help to determine their role in the classroom community.

Various levels of teacher support and questioning will be necessary depending on the composition of the class.

Setting the Scene is a very open-ended activity and will allow even students who are intimidated by art production to create something visual and concrete without the stress of creating something aesthetically 'perfect'.

Resources:

- *New York* (George Bellows)
- *Food Will Win the War* (Unkown)
- *Chop Suey* (Edward Hopper)
- *Train Station* (Raphael Soyer)
- *The Problem We All Live With* (Norman Rockwell)
- *Robot Occupation* (Eliot Daughtry)
- *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (Emanuel Leutze)

Virginia SOLs History and Social Science

Reshaping the Nation and the Emergence of Modern America: 1877 to the Early 1900s

USII.3 The student will demonstrate knowledge of how life changed after the Civil War by:

- a) identifying reasons for westward expansion;
- b) explaining the reasons for the increase in immigration, growth of cities, new inventions, and challenges arising from this expansion;
- c) describing racial segregation, the rise of “Jim Crow”, and other constraints faces by African Americans in the post-Reconstruction South;
- d) explaining the rise of big business, the growth of industry, and life on American farms;
- e) describing the impact of the Progressive Movement on child labor, working conditions, the rise of organized labor, women’s suffrage, and the temperance movement.

Turmoil and Change: 1890s to 1945

USII.4 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the changing role of the United States from the late nineteenth century through World War I by:

- a) explaining the reasons for and results of the Spanish-American War;
- b) explaining the reasons for the United States’ involvement in World War I and its leadership role at the conclusion of the war.

USII.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the social, economic, and technological changes of the early twentieth century by:

- a) explaining how developments in transportation (including the use of the automobile), communication, and electrification changed American life;
- b) describing the social changes that took place, including Prohibition, and the Great Migration north;
- c) examining art literature, and music from the 1920s and 1930s, emphasizing Langston Hughes, Duke Ellington, and Georgia O’Keefe and including the Harlem Renaissance;
- d) identifying the causes of the Great Depression, its impact of Americans, and the major features of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal.

USII.6 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the major causes and effects of American involvement in World War II by:

- a) identifying the causes and events that led to American involvement in the war, including the attack on Pearl Harbor;
- b) describing the major events and turning points of the war in Europe and the Pacific;
- c) describing the impact of World War II on the homefront.

The United States since World War II

USII.7 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the economic, social, and political transformation of the United States and the world between the end of World War II and the present by:

- a) describing the rebuilding of Europe and Japan after World War II, the emergence of the United States as a superpower, and the establishment of the United Nations;
- b) describing the conversion from a wartime to a peacetime economy;
- c) identifying the role of American's military and veterans in defending freedom during the Cold War, including the wars in Korea and Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis, the collapse of communism in Europe, and the rise of new challenges;
- d) describing the changing patterns of society, including expanded education and economic opportunities for military veterans, women, and minorities.

USII.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the key domestic issues during the second half of the twentieth century by:

- a) examining the Civil Rights Movement and the changing role of women;
- b) describing the development of new technologies and their impact on American life.

Arts

Cultural Context and Art History

6.13 The student will identify major art movements in American culture from 1877 to the present, with emphasis on relating these movements to changes in science and technology.

6.14 The student will identify how artists contribute to society.

Aesthetics

6.21 The student will respond to works of art and analyze those responses in terms of cultural and visual meaning

Resources

Art

- USII.3a *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (Emanuel Leutze)
USII.3b *New York* (George Bellows)
USII.3c *A Day's Wages* (Harry Roseland)
USII.3d *Poor Man's Cotton* (Hale Woodruff)
USII.3e *McSorley's Bar* (John Sloan)
- USII.4a *Spanish American War Battle Scene* (Gilbert Gaul)
USII.4b *Food Will Win the War* (Unkown)
- USII.5a *Chop Suey* (Edward Hopper)
USII.5b *The Migration Series – Panel 1* (Jacob Lawrence)
USII.5c *New York Night* (Georgia O'Keefe)
USII.5d *Give* (Joseph Vavek)
- USII.6a *The Arizona, Pearl Harbor A Day That Will Live in Infamy* (James Milton Sessions)
USII.6b *The Battle of Midway* (Robert Benney)
USII.6c *Train Station* (Raphael Soyer)
- USII.7a *United Poster* (Unkown)
(<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-87.jpg>)
USII.7b *Freedom From Want* (Norman Rockwell)
USII.7c *Fallout Shelter Handbook Cover* (Unkown)
USII.7d *Library* Jacob Lawrence
- USII.8a *Wonder Woman #1* (H.G. Peter)
The Problem We All Live With (Norman Rockwell)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Long Way Home (Jo Chen)
USII.8b *Robot Occupation* (Eliot Daughtry)

General

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