

InsideART

Title

“On the Bones of the Oppressors”: Race, Racism, and the Civil Rights Movement

Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson

2 class periods

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

This lesson is an introduction to the work of Griffith J. Davis, Emory Douglas, and Hank Willis Thomas who explore race and racism in U.S. history through their visual art.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts

Social Studies

Curriculum Standards**Next Generation Sunshine State Standards**

- Visual Arts:

VA.912.C.1.2: Use critical-thinking skills for various contexts to develop, refine, and reflect on an artistic theme.

VA.912.C.1.4: Apply art knowledge and contextual information to analyze how content and ideas are used in works of art.

VA.912.C.3.1: Use descriptive terms and varied approaches in art analysis to explain the meaning or purpose of an artwork.

VA.912.C.3.3: Examine relationships among social, historical, literary, and/or other references to explain how they are assimilated into artworks.

- Social Studies:

SS.912.H.2.5: Describe how historical, social, cultural, and physical settings influence an audience’s aesthetic response.

SS.912.P.9.8: Discuss the nature and effects of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

SS.912.A.2.5: Assess how Jim Crow Laws influenced life for African Americans and other racial/ethnic minority groups.

SS.912.A.5.7: Examine the freedom movements that advocated civil rights for African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and women.

SS.912.A.7.6: Assess key figures and organizations in shaping the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power Movement.

National Standards for Arts Education

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

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

National Council for the Social Studies

Time, Continuity, and Change

Culture

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Power, Authority, and Governance

Production, Distribution, and Consumption

Instructional Objectives

The student will:

- critically view and analyze selected works by Griffith J. Davis, Emory Douglas, and Hank Willis Thomas from the *Still Here* art exhibition;
- develop reading, writing, and discussion skills;
- consider the Black Power Movement within the context of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s;
- analyze current print advertisements for racial, ethnic, gender, and class depictions.

Pre-Teaching: Read through the Notes View on the PPT presentation. Make photocopies of the lesson handouts. Activate the PowerPoint and advance to slide 2.

Learning Activities Sequence

Attention-Getter: [Slide 2] Show the photo and allow students 1-2 minutes to study the image. Then ask:

- Are there any individuals in the photograph you can identify?
- Where do you think this is taking place?
- When do you think this photo was taken?
- What do you think the people in the photo are talking about?
- Later, the photographer who took this photo said: “It was ironic to me that Montgomery, Ala., and Washington, D.C., had to meet at Accra, outside the United States.” What do you think he meant by that?
- How does how the black and white photography deliver information differently from that of colored photography?

[Slide 3] Tell students that the photo, taken by Griffith J. Davis, captured the first meeting of U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon and Martin Luther King, Jr. and their two wives (Patricia Nixon and Coretta Scott King) during Independence Day celebrations in Accra, Ghana, Africa on March 6, 1957. It was the first trip to Africa for all of them.

[Slide 4] Explain that today the class will be exploring the photographic works of Griffith J. Davis, Emory Douglas, and Hank Willis Thomas.

Learning Activities:

[Slide 5]: Independent Reading & Whole Class Discussion

Independent Reading: have students read the article (Handout 1) “How my dad captured this famous photo of Martin Luther King Jr.” (*Tampa Bay Times*, January 17, 2020), highlighting as they read, then answering the questions (Handout 2).

Whole Group Discussion: debrief on the reading by asking for volunteers to share their answers with the rest of the class.

[Slide 6]: Brief biography of Griffith J. Davis.

[Slides 7-11]: Selected photographs taken by Davis.

[Slides 12-13]: Brief biography of Emory Douglas

[Slides 14-16]: Selected works by Douglas

[Slides 17-18]: Brief biography of Hank Willis Thomas

[Slide 19]: As for a volunteer to read aloud the quote. As for other students to paraphrase what the artist was trying to convey with the statement.

[Slides 20-24]: Selected works by Thomas. Ask students to consider how race and racism are depicted in the images. Also encourage students to note the “look” of the images --- that is, cheery colors, defined figures, and happy expressions add to a certain historic subliminal portrayal that are still with us today.

[Slides 25-29]: Tell students that Thomas is also interested in exploring how race and racism is present in advertising and consumerism. Show the images to students, asking them to reflect on these themes as they view.

Closure:

[Slide 30]: Read aloud the quote by Thomas. Tell students that they will now have the opportunity to review print ads in popular magazines, considering how race, gender, class, and other characteristics are portrayed.

Evaluation

Distribute magazines to students along with Handout 3 (Advertisement Analysis). They can work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Optional Extension Activity

Students can create their own works of art in the style of Hank Willis Thomas by identifying a contemporary print advertisement, stripping it of its copy/text, and re-titling it.

Materials and Resources

- Computer
- Projector
- Screen
- PowerPoint presentation: “*On the Bones of the Oppressors*”
- Paper, pencils or pens for writing
- Assorted popular magazines
- Handout 1 (HO1): “How my dad captured this famous photo of Martin Luther King Jr.”
- Handout 2 (HO2): Reading Questions
- Handout 3 (HO3): Advertisement Analysis

Special Learner Accommodations

- Extra time for note-taking
- Translation dictionaries for ELLs
- Visually-rich PPT
- Reading support

References

Jimarez Howard, J.A. (2018). Hank Willis Thomas's new show literally shines a light on whitewashed histories. *Garage*. https://garage.vice.com/en_us/article/59jdv5/hank-willis-thomas-jack-shainman-what-we-ask

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Picard, C. (2019). ‘Public art is propaganda, frankly’: Hank Willis Thomas discusses gun violence and the urgent need for alternative memorials. *The Art Newspaper*. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/interview/hank-willis-thomas-public-art-is-propaganda-frankly>

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Zwickel, J. (2016). The art of revolution. *CityArts Magazine*.
<https://www.cityartsmagazine.com/art-revolution/>