
Exploring Power through Art

Museum Lessons by K–12 Educators

K–12 Educator Programs are made possible by the Sherman Fairchild Foundation, May and Samuel Rudin Family, Foundation, Inc. Anonymous Foundation, Anonymous, Anna and Kenneth Zankel, and Jephson Educational Trust.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's school tour program is made possible by the generosity of Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman.

Additional school programs are made possible by the Brodsky Family Foundation, The New York Community Trust, Susan J. Schulte Fund, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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Foreword

Heidi Holder, PhD
Frederick P. and
Sandra P. Rose
Chair of Education

We are excited to present *Exploring Power through Art: Museum Lessons by K–12 Educators*, a curriculum guide that examines the intersections between artworks in The Met collection and the theme of “power.” This educator resource consists entirely of lesson plans written, workshopped, and refined by New York City teachers. Broadly, we hope that the lessons featured in this guide will help students of all ages see art as a means of understanding and interacting with the world around them, recognizing that art and museums are relevant to their lives. Specifically, we hope they help students of all ages interrogate questions of power in art, art making, and museums.

Since the Museum’s founding more than 150 years ago, the work of its Education Department—dedicated to making art meaningful and accessible for everyone—has been central to the mission of The Met. *Exploring Power through Art: Museum Lessons by K–12 Educators* provides relevant educator resources, created in partnership with teachers, to bring art to life for all students—in their classrooms and at The Met.



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Introduction

1. Title I schools receive federal funding due to the percentage of low-income families in their school population. District 75 schools provide highly specialized instructional support for students with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorders, significant cognitive delays, emotional disturbances, sensory impairments, and multiple disabilities.

These lessons were created as part of the 2020–2021 academic year of The Met Professional Learning Community (MetPLC), a yearlong program for K–12 teachers working in Title 1, District 75, and other high-need schools across New York City.¹ In the MetPLC, teachers learn from experts and participate in social-justice and arts-education training as well as professional development and peer-group coaching sessions throughout the school year. During these sessions, teachers collaborate with Met educators and each other to create lessons that engage students in topics that affect their lives, generating the curriculum-aligned, shared unit of study that follows.

Teachers in The MetPLC utilize The Met collection and galleries as an extension of their classroom. As a result, the lessons in this guide have been not only workshopped and refined in groups of educators but also implemented successfully with students.

The Theme of Power

Participating teachers selected the theme “power” to help guide their artwork selection and the focus of their lessons. The choice of theme was made in response to the social upheavals experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and the wave of protests that followed the murder of George Floyd in May 2020. Questions about different types of power, who has power and why, positive and negative elements of power, and how museums and art reflect or create power motivated the group to develop these robust and socially engaged lessons. As the unit of study coalesced, Met staff identified four primary subthemes in the lessons’ examination of power via The Met collection. The lessons in this guide are organized by the following subthemes:

- ❖ Bodies
- ❖ Community and Place
- ❖ Consumption, Labor, and Industry
- ❖ Identity

**How to Use
This Resource**

This guide is intended to be a flexible tool for you to use and adapt to meet the learning needs and goals of your students. Because the lessons are based on artworks in The Met collection, they can be used without adaptation at The Met or in a classroom, viewing the art onscreen. However, they can also be adapted for use at other museums and provide inspiration for teaching with similar works of art and different works by the same artists. The activities accompanying these lessons typically use simple materials, such as pencils and paper, which are safe for gallery teaching. Though both the lessons and individual teaching styles vary, most of the lessons in this guide can be carried out in less than thirty minutes, making them an excellent resource for teachers interested in integrating art into their teaching practice in a manageable yet authentic way.

We invite you to browse through this guide to identify both subthemes and single lessons that excite you and match well with your goals and student population. Although there is considerable variation in the lessons, they share a similar organization, allowing them to be integrated in part or in full into classroom structures and teaching routines.

**Lesson
Component Key**

Learn what you can expect to find in each component of the lessons in this resource.

- Essential Question** The guiding question for the specific lesson. All essential questions fit under the theme “power” and connect with their section’s subtheme.
- Goals** Some goals are academic, whereas others emphasize students’ social-emotional learning or their growth through an increased understanding of social justice issues, the role of museums and artists, and other topics.
- Artwork** Basic information on the focus work of art or object. For additional resources and information, please explore The Met’s collection online.
- Questions** Questions to pose to students about the focus artwork to inspire their observations, inferences, and personal connections. Questions are listed in order of recommended sequence to scaffold the conversation toward student interpretations.



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Note: School names reflect teachers' employment during their participation in The MetPLC program.

Featured Artworks

Power of Bodies



Artemisia Gentileschi (Italian, 1593–1654 or later). *Esther before Ahasuerus*. 1620s. Oil on canvas. 82 in. × 8 ft. 11 ¼ in. Gift of Elinor Dorrance Ingersoll, 1969 (69.281)



Pair of Ear Ornaments with Winged Runners. Peru (Moche), 400–700 CE Gold, turquoise, sodalite, and shell. Diam. (each) 3 ¾ in. Gift and Bequest of Alice K. Bache, 1966, 1977 (66.196.40–41)



Unlined Summer Kimono (Hito-e) with Carp, Water Lilies, and Morning Glories. Japan, Meiji period (1868–1912), ca. 1876. Resist-dyed, painted, and embroidered silk gauze with plain-weave patterning. 59 7/8 × 49 1/8 in. Gift of Naoki Nomura, 2006 (2006.73.2)



A Lady Playing the Tanpura. India, Rajasthan (Kishangarh), ca. 1735. Ink, opaque and transparent watercolor, and gold on paper. 18 ½ × 13 ¼ in. Fletcher Fund, 1996 (1996.100.1)

Power of Community and Place



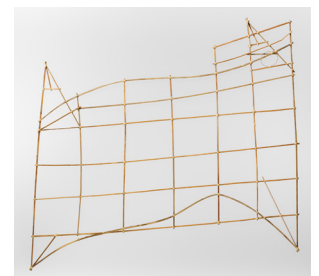
Ogden M. Pleissner (American, 1905–1983). *Backyards, Brooklyn*. 1932. Oil on canvas. 24 x 30 ½ in. Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1932 (32.80.2) © Estate of Ogden Pleissner



Aaron Douglas (American, 1899–1979). *Let My People Go*. Ca. 1935–39. Oil on Masonite. 48 x 36 in. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2015 (2015.42) © 2024 Heirs of Aaron Douglas / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY



Buddha of Medicine—Bhaishajyaguru (Yaoshi fo). China, Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), ca. 1319. Water-based pigment over foundation of clay mixed with straw. H. 24 ft. 8 in., w. 49 ft. 7 in. Gift of Arthur M. Sackler, in honor of his parents, Isaac and Sophie Sackler, 1965 (65.29.2)

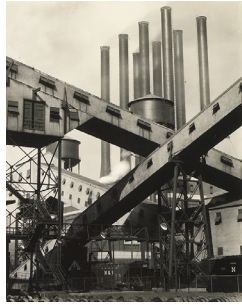


Navigational Chart (Rebbilib). Republic of the Marshall Islands (Marshallese), 19th–early 20th century. Coconut midrib and fiber. H. 35¼ in., W. 43¼ in., D. 1 in. The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of the Estate of Kay Sage Tanguy, 1963 (1978.412.826)

Power of Consumption, Labor, and Industry



Vik Muniz (Brazilian, b. 1961). Valentina, The Fastest. 1996. Gelatin silver print. 13 3/8 x 10 1/2 in. Purchase, Anonymous Gift, 1997 (1997.230.1) © Vik Muniz



Charles Sheeler (American, 1883–1965). Criss-Crossed Conveyors, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company. 1927. Gelatin silver print. 9 1/4 x 7 3/8 in. Ford Motor Company Collection. Gift of Ford Motor Company and John C. Waddell, 1987 (1987.1100.1) © The Lane Collection



Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, known as the Crown of the Andes. Colombia (Popayán), ca. 1660 (diadem), ca. 1770 (arches). Gold and emeralds. H. 13 1/2 in., diam. (body) 13 1/4 in. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, Acquisitions Fund and Mary Trumbull Adams Fund, 2015 (2015.437)

Power of Identity



Figure Pendant. Colombia (Tairona), 10th–16th century. Gold. H. 5 3/8 in., W. 6 5/8 in., D. 2 in. Gift of H. L. Bache Foundation, 1969 (69.7.10)



Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987). Self-Portrait. 1986. Acrylic and silkscreen on canvas. 80 x 80 in. Purchase, Mrs. Vera G. List Gift, 1987 (1987.88) © 2024 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Leonora Carrington (Mexican, b. England 1917–2011). Self-Portrait. Ca. 1937–38. Oil on canvas. 25 1/16 x 32 in. The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002 (2002.456.1) © 2024 Estate of Leonora Carrington / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Glenn Ligon (American, b. 1960). Untitled: Four Etchings. 1992. Intaglio prints, edition 7/45. Each sheet: 25 x 17 1/4 in. Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1998 (1998.456.2a–d) © Glenn Ligon



Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000). The Photographer. 1942. Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on paper. 22 1/8 x 30 1/2 in. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2001 (2001.205) © 2024 The Jacob Landau Institute / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

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Theme

Power of Bodies

Educator

Danielle Fulton

Subject area

Special

Education

Grade level

Elementary

School

**THE
MET**

Essential Questions

How can we see choice in power?

How do people make powerful choices with their bodies?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Identify features of the artwork that represent choice as a component of power through their PMC (preferred mode of communication).
- ◇ Make connections between choice as a component of power expressed through art and power expressed in their own lives through their PMC.
- ◇ Understand that a big part of power is making choices.
- ◇ Understand that artists have power to choose whose stories to tell.
- ◇ Understand that art can show us stories of people who make important choices that impact other people's lives.
- ◇ Understand that artists are also able to choose how they depict stories; here, the artist decided to show Esther's story through the depiction of the figures' powerful poses.



Artemisia Gentileschi (Italian, 1593–1654 or later). *Esther before Ahasuerus*. 1620s. Oil on canvas. 82 in. × 8 ft. 11 ¼ in. Gift of Elinor Dorrance Ingersoll, 1969 (69.281)

Questions

- ◇ What do you see?
- ◇ What do you notice about what the central female figure is doing with her body? Does it look like she has power in this situation? Why or why not?
- ◇ What do you notice about what the male figure is doing with his body? Does it look like he has power in this situation? Why or why not?
- ◇ What do you notice about this scene (clothing, staging, lighting, etc.)? How do these choices the artist made impact how you read this scene?
- ◇ Both Esther and Ahasuerus are making choices in this story. Who do you think is powerful here and why?

Key Information

- ◇ This painting is by an artist named Artemesia Gentileschi. Gentileschi's artwork was famous during a time when it was very hard for women to be artists.
- ◇ This painting tells the story of Esther. Esther is married to a king named Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus was going to hurt people. Esther wasn't supposed to even talk to the king without permission, but she made the choice to see him and ask him to save the people's lives. The king listened, and the people were saved because of Esther's choice.
- ◇ Gentileschi also made a choice in painting this picture to look theatrical, to help viewers focus on important pieces of the story. For instance, she chose to paint Esther and Ahasuerus in fancy clothes, to use dramatic lighting, and to paint them as though they were on a stage.

Activity

Ask students to choose which figure from the painting they think has the most power. Then ask students to take 1–2 minutes to create individual tableaus of that character. Request that students display their tableaus to the class in groups. Ask students the following reflection questions: “Which character did you think had the most power? How did you show that power in your tableau?”

Theme

Power of Bodies

Educator

Christopher M.
Aviles

Subject area

Social-
Emotional
Learning

Grade level

Elementary
School

THE
MET

Essential Questions

How do we show power through what we wear on our bodies?

How can we experience power through our senses?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Draw personal connections with a work of art.
- ◇ Understand how our senses and perceptions can help us feel powerful.
- ◇ Understand that wearing different kinds of ornamentation on our bodies can help people communicate their power to others.
- ◇ Understand that wearing ornaments with important designs on our own bodies can also help us feel powerful.
- ◇ Understand the idea that a pair of two things represents union, equality, peace, and harmony.
- ◇ Understand that the design of these objects shows harmony in the partnership between the world of gods and humans. The act of being a messenger transcending worlds is powerful.



Pair of Ear Ornaments with Winged Runners. Peru (Moche), 400–700 CE Gold, turquoise, sodalite, and shell. Diam. (each) 3 3/8 in. Gift and Bequest of Alice K. Bache, 1966, 1977 (66.196.40–41)

Questions

- ◇ What do you see as you look at these objects?
- ◇ What do you notice about the figures? Who do you think they might be?
- ◇ Take the figures' pose. What new details do you notice?
- ◇ How does knowing that these objects were worn like earrings change your perception of them?
- ◇ If you could wear these ear ornaments, how do you think they would make you feel?
- ◇ What do you wear on your body when you want to feel and show your power?

Key Information

- ◇ Moche artists used materials such as shell, turquoise, and stones that are a variety of colors to create the picture on these pieces of powerful jewelry.
- ◇ The half-human and half-animal figures on the earrings are seen as “winged runners” with bags in their hands to show they are messengers who share information with gods.
- ◇ These are ear frontals, which is a type of earring used, especially by royalty, to stretch their ears.

Activity

- ◇ Ask students to sketch a piece of jewelry or ornamentation that they would like to wear to show their power. Encourage them to include a design indicating their power.
- ◇ As students are working, ask them to consider their answer to the following question:
 - “Where on your body would you wear this item, and why?”

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Theme

Power of Bodies

**THE
MET**

Educator

Anita Walsh

Subject area

Art

Grade level

Elementary
School

Essential Questions

How do artists and craftspeople use art to both express themselves and tell stories?

How do the garments we wear express power and tell powerful stories?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Explore and analyze works of art from around the world.
- ◇ Use visual clues, text panels, and prior knowledge to decode the stories in these pieces.
- ◇ Understand that powerful symbols of family identity are embedded in this garment's design.
- ◇ Understand that this kimono is an example of the ways that garments can be used to mark special occasions.
- ◇ Understand that this garment shows the power of craftsmanship and skill passed through the generations.



Unlined Summer Kimono (Hito-e) with Carp, Water Lilies, and Morning Glories.
Japan, Meiji period (1868–1912), ca. 1876. Resist-dyed, painted, and embroidered silk gauze with plain-weave patterning. 59 ⁷/₁₆ x 49 ¹/₁₆ in. Gift of Naoki Nomura, 2006 (2006.73.2)

Questions

- ◇ What do you see? What questions do you have?
- ◇ What do you think this garment might be used for? Why do you think that?
- ◇ What kinds of garments do you wear for a special occasion? How do you choose those garments?
- ◇ How might the inclusion of family crests on this garment provide a sense of meaning for the person who wears it?

Key Information

- ◇ This kimono was worn by a 13-year-old girl for an important Buddhist coming-of-age ceremony (her *jūsan-mairi*, or, literally, “thirteenth temple visit”) to receive blessings as she entered adolescence.
- ◇ The imagery is created in three ways—woven, painted, and embroidered—reflecting highly skilled work.
- ◇ The artist came from a long lineage of textile artists. The wearer’s granddaughter donated this kimono to The Met.
- ◇ Elements of the design have symbolic value. For instance, fish can be symbols of power and will; they are known for swimming upstream no matter what the conditions are. They cannot be distracted or deterred by anything. In addition, the morning glory included here blooms in the summer when this kimono was worn. The flowers only bloom in the morning and symbolize “brief love” or “bond of love.”

Activity

Ask students to design a garment that would make them feel powerful during a transitional moment. Ask them what images and symbols they would include on it, and how they would wear it.

Theme

Power of Bodies

THE
MET

Educator

Seth Leeper

Subject area

Special

Education

Grade level

High School

Essential Questions

How do artists show us the power of beauty?

How can we interrogate and expand beauty norms to make them more inclusive?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Represent diverse expressions of beauty.
- ◇ Connect the idea of beauty to people's actions, like their ability to create art or music, rather than simply the appearance of their body.
- ◇ Understand that beauty has many diverse expressions in physical appearance, for instance, in what people choose to wear on their bodies.
- ◇ Understand that this individual would often have been defined by their relationship to the male hero of a story.



A Lady Playing the Tanpura. India, Rajasthan (Kishangarh), ca. 1735. Ink, opaque and transparent watercolor, and gold on paper. 18 ½ x 13 ¼ in. Fletcher Fund, 1996 (1996.100.1)

Questions

- ◇ Before looking at the work, let's take a moment to think about the idea of beauty. What is it? Who has it? Why is it important, or not important? How is beauty used? Are beautiful people more powerful than less beautiful people? Is beauty only physical or is it also based in our behavior?
- ◇ What do you notice about this figure?
- ◇ What might she be thinking? What do you see that makes you say that?
- ◇ If we could step inside this artwork, what do you think it would sound like?
- ◇ How does the artist communicate this figure's beauty to us? What about her power?
- ◇ What makes an action beautiful?

Key Information

- ◇ The woman depicted is playing a tanpura as a member of the royal court.
- ◇ This figure may be Radha, who is known for her relationship with the Hindu deity Krishna.
- ◇ This figure is a *nayika*, an archetypal heroine in Indian art and poetry. Nayikas are the embodiment of the beauty in Indian culture of this period.

Activity

Ask students to take a moment to think of an action that is beautiful to them. Give them 30 seconds to strike a pose or make a facial expression to communicate this. Discuss how striking the pose or making the expression conveyed the beauty of the action.

Theme

Power of Community and Place



Educator

Gordon Baldwin

Subject area

Art

Grade level

Middle School

Essential Question

How do we see our community?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Learn how different people can interpret the same images differently.
- ◇ Understand how artists work with their environment to create emotional images.
- ◇ Understand that the artist uses a unique point of view to allow viewers to see a part of a community not visible from the outside.
- ◇ Understand that this artwork shows the power in showing our communities from our own perspectives.
- ◇ Understand that artists can create images to be records of everyday moments, like a visual diary.
- ◇ Tell stories through images.



Ogden M. Pleissner (American, 1905–1983). *Backyards, Brooklyn*. 1932.
Oil on canvas. 24 x 30 1/8 in. Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1932 (32.80.2)
© Estate of Ogden Pleissner

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Theme

Power of Community and Place

Educator

Abimbola

Kai-Lewis

Subject area

English Lan-

guage Arts/

Social Studies

Grade level

Middle School

THE
MET

Essential Question

How do communities reflect collective power?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Understand the role of individuals, institutions, and people in establishing collective power within the community.
- ◇ Understand that *Let My People Go* conveys a narrative of community emancipation, connecting African-American emancipation from slavery with the Biblical story of the Israelites' freedom.
- ◇ Understand that, as a product of a partnership between a visual artist and a writer, this work is an example of the power of collaboration and community during the Harlem Renaissance.



Aaron Douglas (American, 1899–1979). *Let My People Go*. Ca. 1935–39. Oil on Masonite. 48 x 36 in. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2015 (2015.42) © 2024 Heirs of Aaron Douglas / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Theme

Power of Community and Place



Educator

Molly McGaley

Subject area

Mathematics

Grade level

Middle School

Essential Question

How can works of art help show that communal power is stronger than individual power?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Actively engage in looking for meaning that shows the power in a group of people or things.
- ◇ Engage in discussions that activate and promote critical thinking.
- ◇ Understand that, through imagery, this mural helped to teach viewers about Buddhism. It also reminded monks how to meditate on what they learned.
- ◇ Understand that this is an example of how a work of art can serve a purpose or teach a lesson to its observers.



Buddha of Medicine—Bhaishajyaguru (Yaoshi fo), China, Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), ca. 1319. Water-based pigment over foundation of clay mixed with straw. H. 24 ft. 8 in.; w. 49 ft. 7 in. Gift of Arthur M. Sackler, in honor of his parents, Isaac and Sophie Sackler, 1965 (65.29.2)

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Theme

Power of Community and Place

THE
MET

Educator

Yotam Zohar

Subject area

Art

Grade level

Middle School

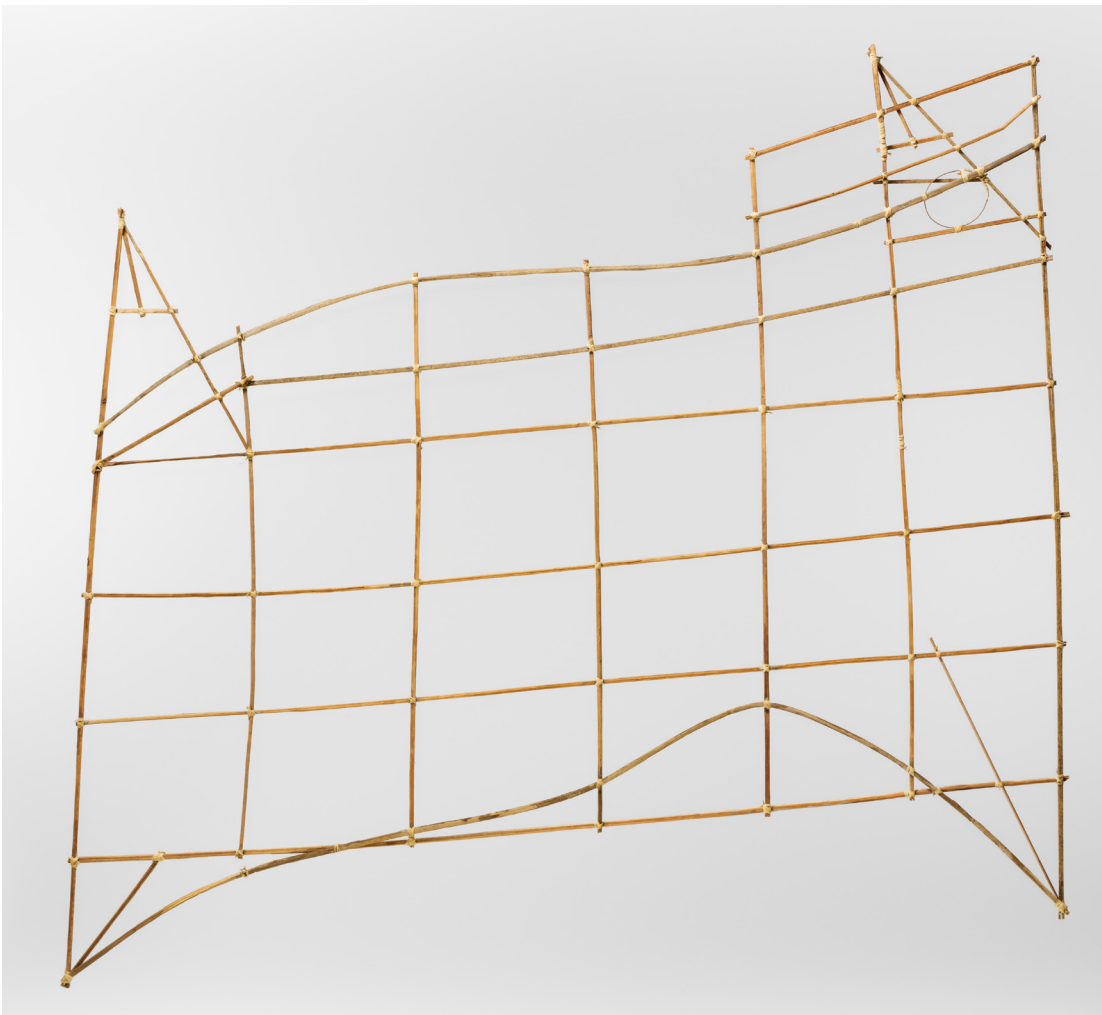
Essential Question

How do we voyage?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Discuss the role of voyaging, transiting, and passage-making in the shaping and acquisition of power.
- ◇ Understand that mapping is a powerful way that people communicate with others in their community.
- ◇ Understand that this navigational chart is an example of a tool that helps people move safely from place to place.
- ◇ Understand that knowing what to expect can make a journey go much more smoothly.



Navigational Chart (Rebbilib). Republic of the Marshall Islands (Marshallese), 19th–early 20th century. Coconut midrib and fiber. H. 35¼ in., W. 43¼ in., D. 1 in. The Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Collection, Gift of the Estate of Kay Sage Tanguy, 1963 (1978.412.826)

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Theme

Power of Consumption, Labor, and Industry

Educator

Uraline
Septembre
Hager

Subject area

General
Education/
Mathematics

Grade level

Elementary
School

THE
MET

Essential Question

How do artists show us the power dynamics of labor and consumption?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Discuss power as it relates to labor and consumption.
- ◇ Understand that the materials in this artwork spark reflection on the relationship between labor and consumption.
- ◇ Understand that art can help us question the objects in our own lives, including who made them and under what conditions.



Vik Muniz (Brazilian, b. 1961). *Valentina, The Fastest*. 1996. Gelatin silver print. 13 3/8 x 10 1/2 in. Purchase, Anonymous Gift, 1997 (1997.230.1) © Vik Muniz

Questions

- ◇ What do you see?
- ◇ How do you think the subject of this portrait, Valentina, feels? How can you tell?
- ◇ How do artists decide what materials to use when they create drawings? What materials do you use when you draw?
- ◇ What do you think about when you think about sugar? How does sugar make you feel?
- ◇ What do you think it would have felt like to touch the drawing from which the photo was taken? To smell it? To taste it?
- ◇ How does knowing the original portrait was made from sugar change how you understand the artwork? How does it change how you feel about the figure?

Key Information

- ◇ Vik Muniz made portraits of the children of sugarcane workers on the Caribbean island of St. Kitts.
- ◇ Muniz creates these portraits by arranging sugar crystals on black paper, then photographing the sugar drawings.
- ◇ Once he is finished with the artwork, Muniz wipes the sugar away. The only thing that remains from the portrait is the photograph.
- ◇ Sugar harvesting in the Caribbean was done for many years by enslaved people, as part of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
- ◇ Harvesting sugar is very difficult for laborers. Even though sugar can be consumed quickly and easily, much work goes into laboring in a sugarcane field.

Activity

After organizing them in small groups, ask students to create a Venn diagram. On one side, ask them to write words that come to mind when they think of sugar cane labor. On the other side, encourage them write words that come to mind when they think of eating sugar. Ask them: are there any words that overlap between these two circles? Why or why not?

Theme

Power of Consumption, Labor, and Industry

THE
MET

Educator

Pam Texada

Subject area

Mathematics

Grade level

Middle School

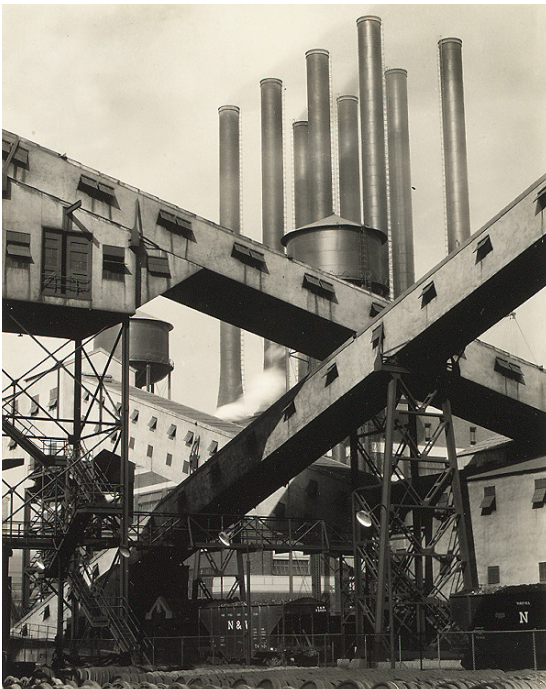
Essential Question

How do artists show us the relationship between industry and power?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Examine power in a representation of industry, using terminology about patterns, shapes, proportional relationships, and tessellations.
- ◇ Understand that this photograph conveys power through the coherency of its sharp edges, overlapping shapes, and defined forms.
- ◇ Understand that, while the images in this series focus on a single place, they also function as a general representation of American industry and capitalism.
- ◇ Understand that there are no humans in this image, but human labor is required for any industry.



Charles Sheeler (American, 1883–1965), *Criss-Crossed Conveyors, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company*. 1927. Gelatin silver print. 9 ¼ x 7 ⅞ in. Ford Motor Company Collection, Gift of Ford Motor Company and John C. Waddell, 1987 (1987.1100.1) © The Lane Collection

Questions

- ◇ What do you see?
- ◇ Using five words, how would you describe this photograph?
- ◇ Which shapes in this image would you describe as powerful? Where do you see power in them?
- ◇ Imagine there were people in this setting. How might they interact with the equipment and buildings?
- ◇ What do you think it would be like to work at this plant? What do you see that makes you think that?

Key Information

- ◇ The artist, Charles Sheeler, was a realistic painter and a photographer.
- ◇ This photograph is part of a series commissioned by Ford Motor Company.
- ◇ Sheeler's works were reproduced in 1920s in Europe and the United States; this was a process of industrial production in the early modern age.
- ◇ This image became an icon of American architecture and was used by advertising agencies in the 1920s.

Activity

Ask students to imagine that a plant like this was going to be built near their home. Invite them to write a paragraph or letter to their community describing how they would feel about this, and any actions they would like to propose.

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Theme

Power of Consumption, Labor, and Industry

THE
MET

Educator

Meghan Clark

Subject area

Global History

Grade level

High School

Essential Question

How does the reuse of materials demonstrate power?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Describe how the imperial use of various types of power (and shifts in its balance) are demonstrated by the use or reuse of materials in artwork.
- ◇ Understand that looting treasures and turning them into trophies is one way imperial and colonial governments have demonstrated their power.
- ◇ Understand that this artwork is a unique example of a longstanding artistic tradition: destroying something in order to create.



Crown of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception, known as the Crown of the Andes. Colombia (Popayán), ca. 1660 (diadem), ca. 1770 (arches). Gold and emeralds. H. 13½ in., diam. (body) 13¼ in. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, Acquisitions Fund and Mary Trumbull Adams Fund, 2015 (2015.437)

Questions

- ◇ What do you see?
- ◇ What might the artwork’s materials tell us about the people who created it and the place where it was created?
- ◇ In which elements of this artwork can you identify types of power? Note the media, design, and any symbols you can identify.
- ◇ How does knowing that this artwork was created out of looted materials impact your understanding of it?
- ◇ How does the way this crown is displayed affect how you view it? How does this artwork affect how you view the environment around it?

Key Information

- ◇ Spanish conquistadors melted down looted artifacts from pre-Columbian civilizations, then repurposed the gold. Many, if not most, pre-Columbian gold art works were melted down and destroyed in this way.
- ◇ This crown was made to adorn a sacred image of the Virgin Mary in a Colombian cathedral. The crown is topped by imperial arches and a cross that symbolizes Christ’s dominion over the world.
- ◇ It was common (and controversial) to adorn sculptures of the Virgin Mary with luxurious gifts—including jewels and elaborate clothing—for the purpose of honoring her and gaining her blessing.

Activity

- ◇ Invite students to make a drawing of something they believe is powerful. Then, request that students swap drawings with a classmate.
- ◇ Ask each student to make at least one change to their classmates’ drawing.
- ◇ Then invite students to reflect on the following questions:
 - “How does it feel to have someone change something you created, and why?”
 - “How does the meaning of the work change once altered, and why?”

Theme

Power of Identity

Educator

Ishita Mitra

Subject area

General

Education

Grade level

Elementary

School

THE
MET

Essential Question

Which parts of a person are powerful, and how can that power be represented?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Identify aspects of themselves that are powerful.
- ◇ Identify different types of power.
- ◇ Analyze a powerful figure from The Met collection.
- ◇ Create their own visual representations of their power.
- ◇ Understand that power can be shown many different ways.
- ◇ Understand that we can hold power for ourselves by putting it into special objects.
- ◇ Understand that figure pendants demonstrate how people wear items that communicate their identity to others.



Figure Pendant, Colombia (Tairona), 10th–16th century. Gold. H. 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in., W. 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ in., D. 2 in. Gift of H. L. Bache Foundation, 1969 (69.7.10)

Questions

- ◇ Take 30 seconds to carefully observe this sculpture. Start by looking at the very top of the figure and move your eyes down to the bottom. What part of the sculpture stands out or seems the most important to you? Why?
- ◇ Let's focus on the figure's headdress. What do you notice?
- ◇ What does the size of the object tell us about how it might be used?
- ◇ What details about this sculpture let us know that it is powerful? How does the material communicate its power?
- ◇ Are there parts that look human or not human?
- ◇ This item could only have been worn by powerful individuals in Tairona society. How do powerful people in our own society communicate who they are?

Key Information

- ◇ This piece was made out of gold by a group of people called the Tairona. They were one of the many different cultural groups originally living across what is now Colombia.
- ◇ These pieces are called *caciques*. (The word *cacique* literally means *chieftain* or *person leading the group*). Everyone in the Tairona community knew that a person wearing a *cacique* must have been powerful.
- ◇ *Caciques* are small: they are only about one to six inches high, and they were worn on necklaces. One of the ways we know they were worn as pendants is because there are loops on the back.

- ◇ *Caciques* usually were made to represent rulers/chieftains, ancestors, or shamans/priests, and sometimes the *caciques* were shown to be half human, half animal.

Activity

Ask students to design a pendant that communicates who they are and what makes them powerful. Then ask them to discuss how and when they would wear their pendant.

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Theme

Power of Identity



Educator

Sunny Halidisz

Subject area

English as a
New Language

Grade level

Middle School

Essential Question

How do you define who you are?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Analyze a self-portrait to understand the artist's choices.
- ◇ Learn that how we see ourselves in the world is a powerful way to define our identity.
- ◇ Learn that portraits do not need to be about perfection or about looking exactly "correct."
- ◇ Understand that creative self-portraits can tell us something about the artist's personality.
- ◇ Understand that artists choose art-making techniques that match with their goals and vision.



Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987). *Self-Portrait*. 1986. Acrylic and silkscreen on canvas. 80 x 80 in. Purchase, Mrs. Vera G. List Gift, 1987 (1987.88) © 2024 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

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Theme

Power of Identity



Educator

Sandy Del Duca

Subject area

English

Language Arts

Grade level

High School

Essential Questions

How do artists express their identity and beliefs through their work?

How does asserting your identity and beliefs affect power?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Determine what the artist might be conveying about her identity and beliefs.
- ◇ Understand that expressing individuality is empowering.
- ◇ Understand that artists have the freedom to blend components from real life with components that they have imagined.



Leonora Carrington (Mexican, b. England 1917–2011). *Self-Portrait*. Ca. 1937–38.
Oil on canvas. 25 $\frac{5}{16}$ × 32 in. The Pierre and Maria-Gaetana Matisse Collection, 2002
(2002.456.1) © 2024 Estate of Leonora Carrington / Artists Rights Society (ARS),
New York

Theme

Power of Identity



Educator

Elizabeth
Fidoten

Subject area

Visual Arts

Grade level

High School

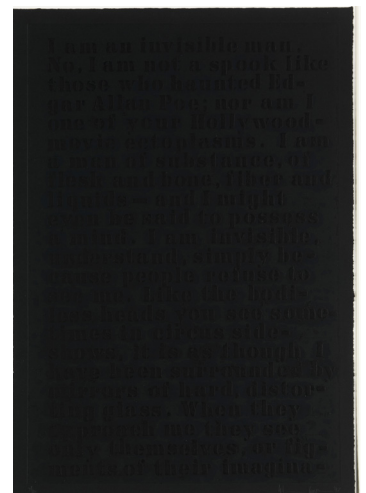
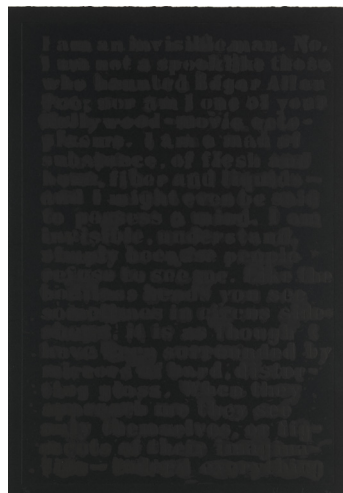
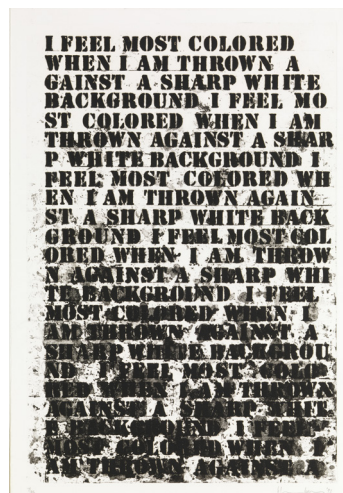
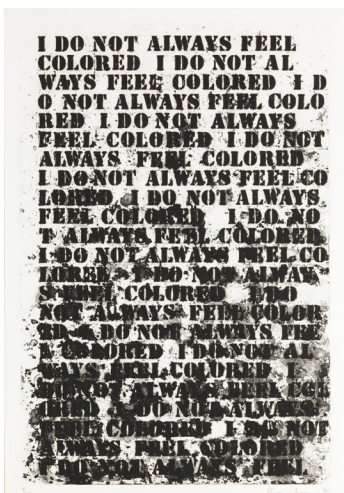
Essential Question

How do artists use text to explore identity and challenge systems of oppression?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Investigate artworks that challenge and dismantle stereotypes and assumptions.
- ◇ Use a critical visual language to call out systems of oppression.
- ◇ Learn that visual artists can appropriate texts and play with language to help draw attention to a political or social issue.
- ◇ Understand how the artist, Glenn Ligon, draws attention to racism, especially the barriers that Black people experience when expressing their voices.



Glenn Ligon (American, b. 1960). *Untitled: Four Etchings*. 1992. Intaglio prints, edition 7/45. Each sheet: 25 × 17 ¼ in. Gift of the Peter Norton Family Foundation, 1998 (1998.456.2a–d) © Glenn Ligon

Theme

Power of Identity



Educator

Alex E. Pajares

Subject area

Global History/
Art History

Grade level

High School

Essential Questions

How does the use of power affect individuals and social systems?

How can art be used to influence human perception?

Goals

Students will...

- ◇ Create connections and make predictions based on historical information.
- ◇ Interpret art in order to determine its purpose/function in relation to the notion of power.
- ◇ Understand that artists can use their power to teach people about cultures that are unfamiliar to them. They can also help people connect with each other based on what they have in common.
- ◇ Understand that what people choose to create, or what they otherwise do for work, can be a big part of their identity.
- ◇ Understand that power is present in every social system, and it can be abused or used by individuals to benefit themselves or others.



Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917–2000). *The Photographer*. 1942. Watercolor, gouache, and graphite on paper. 22 1/8 × 30 1/2 in. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift, 2001 (2001.205) © 2024 The Jacob Landau Institute / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY

Questions

- ◇ Looking at this artwork, complete the following sentences:
 - I see...
 - I think...
 - I wonder...
- ◇ Where do you see power in this artwork? As you respond, be sure to explain what kind of power.
- ◇ Which of the figures in this artwork do you think has the most power? Explain who they are and what makes them powerful.
- ◇ Who has the least power? What shows that they do not have power?
- ◇ This also shows us an artist at work. What do you think makes artists powerful?
- ◇ What does this artwork tell us about Harlem, the community that it depicts?

Key Information

- ◇ Jacob Lawrence was known for his portrayal of African-American historical subjects and contemporary life.
- ◇ *The Photographer* is one of thirty paintings Lawrence created between 1942 and 1943 showing everyday life in Harlem. Lawrence and his siblings had moved to Harlem to live with their mother, and Harlem became his muse as an artist.
- ◇ Itinerant photographers, like the one depicted here, regularly traveled around the Harlem neighborhood during this time to create tintypes (images on iron sheets).

Activity

Ask students to choose an aspect of their identity that makes them feel powerful. This could be something they do (such as the way they create) or a part of who they are (such as their cultural heritage). Ask them to create a sketch that demonstrates why this part of them is powerful.