



Barbara Kruger, *Untitled*, 1989, Lithograph Print, 27"x22"

Landon Peacock
Talking Back with Prints
Unit Theme: Communication
Printmaking and Cultural Investigations
Morley-Stanwood High School- Mecosta County School District

*Across time and cultures art has been used as a vehicle to
communicate*

Nine weeks- Classes meet once a week for 80 minutes

Active Advocates

Investigating Media Messages

NERD ... Be cool

Unit Overview

A guest art educator named Tom Dareneau in a class I am taking made a comment that will forever stick with me and influence how I create lesson plans. When asked about where he begins the process of creating a lesson plan he responded, “I look for where there is a need, either in the community, the school, or with the students.” That answer hit all the right notes with me and is exactly how I found inspiration for my unit titled “Talking Back with Prints”. Students, like the rest of us, are pressured by messages promoted in media. This pressure can have negative affects on students, for example, the increase in suicides and self harm that occurred with adolescent girls that resulted from the rise of social media. Additionally, media represents a narrow way of being that can cut students off from becoming the best and most original versions of themselves. In this unit I designed lessons that encourage students to be critical of the visual culture they are immersed in, to value and embrace the parts of themselves that are not popularly represented in media, and to feel empowered by creating art that talks back. This is demonstrated best in the final project Nerd...Be Cool. Before diving into this lesson students will work in groups of three on an Integrated Performance task titled “Investigating Media Messages”. This task will require them to search social platforms, advertisements, and other media in order to identify specific ways that “being cool” is promoted and defined within the visual culture they regularly encounter. This investigation will be followed by a reflective writing on the characteristics and interests of the students that are not influenced by popular messages of being cool. These two assignments will then both be used to create an idea for their final piece that will require students to describe a relationship between a media message and a personally valuable characteristic or interest. The students will use a combination of woodcut prints, collage, and drawing to create a mono print as their medium for their final piece. It is my hope that by asking students to identify specific media messages and to contemplate how those messages can impact them at a personal level, students will develop necessary skills to become critical agents when navigating visual culture.

I will kick off the unit with a lesson titled “Active Advocates”. The first day of the lesson I will focus on introducing students to specific ways that images communicate, which includes juxtaposition, narrative, context, formal elements, and hierarchy. I termed these strategies communication devices and they will be implemented in every lesson in this unit. I strongly emphasize visual communication in this unit because much like needing to learn words before one can read and write, students need to understand the language of the visual world before they become visually literate. Building visual communication skills will help students to more accurately navigate visual culture and reduce their susceptibility to harmful messages promoted within. Equally as important, it will equip students with a liberating tool—an ability to talk back articulately and powerfully. This is where the rest of the lesson “Active Advocates” kicks off. In this lesson students will pick a social or political issue they are passionate about. They will research this topic and

discover realistic ways they can actively participate as an advocate of their cause. Through a series of multimedia artworks that incorporate linocut prints, students will experiment with different processes and communication devices to create six mono prints that communicate the issue and what can be done to make a difference. Working with multiple iterations is meant to encourage students to take risks and seek multiple solutions. More importantly this lesson is intended to empower students by creating artworks that communicate tangible solutions to real world problems.

Unit Rationale

Within our society images are ubiquitous and loaded with meaning. Students are in constant contact with a rich visual culture and there are messages that are both helpful and harmful lurking within. This lesson is designed to equip students with the necessary skills to both interpret meaning from images and to effectively communicate their ideas with images. It is my hope that this unit will better prepare students to make informed decisions about their identities, values, and desires as they navigate the visual world. This unit takes the first step toward media literacy by investigating the mechanics of how images communicate. It is also my intention to show students they have agency to influence larger conversations by communicating their beliefs and ideas with images they create.

Active Advocates

Three eighty minute classes

Overview

Summary

In this lesson students will choose a real world issue they are passionate about in order to create several mono prints that explore ways they can actively participate as advocates for their chosen cause. The cause could be social or political or a combination. The final work will require students to use three different linocut prints in the one piece. They will use their linocuts to make six iterations on which they will be encouraged to experiment, plan, and use the linocuts in different configurations. Experimentation will also extend to drawing, painting, and collaging over the prints. In each iteration they will also be required to implement communication devices in new and creative ways. The first day in this lesson will be dedicated to defining and explaining communication devices so that they can be effectively implemented in projects for the rest of this unit.

Rationale

Becoming a voice for change requires more than passion, it requires action. Without action, passion is powerless. This lesson is designed to not only encourage students to see themselves as active advocates, but to seek out tangible solutions to real world problems and communicate those solutions in works of art. The act of creating the mono-prints in this assignment serves both as a source of empowerment for the students and are in themselves an instrument of action. Because every voice needs words, students will be using specific methods of visual communication, that I termed communication devices, in order to introduce their cause and articulate how they can be an active advocate.

Key Concepts

- Art can be a powerful instrument for social or political change.
- Learning specific strategies for communicating with images is a necessary skill for creating artworks that are impactful and influential.
- Making a difference requires action.

Essential Questions

- How does creating artwork that supports a cause you care about make you feel?
- In what ways did the communication devices used contribute to making your mono print influential to others?
- How did the freedom to experiment through your iterations contribute to generating ideas and solutions?

Standards

Va:Cr2.1.IIIa- Experiment, plan, and make multiple works of art that explore a personally meaningful theme, idea, or concept.

Students will be creating multiple multimedia artworks that explore a social, political, or societal issue they are passionate about.

Va:Re.7.2.IIa- Evaluate the effectiveness of an image or images to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.

Once all six iterations are finished students will select the one that they think is most effective in communicating their social, political, or societal issue and how change can be made.

Objectives

- **Knowledge-** Students will show thorough understanding of a social or political issue and possible ways to support that issue in the iterations of their mono prints.

- **Skill-** Students will demonstrate an ability to find solutions through experimentation by attempting different approaches with materials and communication devices in the iterations of their mono prints.
- **Skill-** Students will demonstrate an ability to effectively identify and implement communication devices both in the iterations of their mono prints and in the intersection of communication devices worksheet.
- **Disposition-** Students will show they want to be more than a bystander when confronted with issues they care about. The solutions they find for becoming an active advocate should be apparent in their prints and will serve as evidence of this disposition.

Assessment

Rubric for Active Advocates Multimedia Lesson

	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Help	Needs Work
Experimentation with materials	The student took risks in layering several different materials and demonstrated a growth in inventiveness of media application through each multimedia artwork	It is evident that the student explored working with several different materials and discovered different effects resulting from the combination of different materials.	The student used multiple mediums but was timid with combining them. A few effects resulting from the combination of different materials is present.	The student used multiple mediums but combined the materials very little or not at all. The combination of materials did not result in discovery of new effects.
Implementation of communication devices	The implementation of at least one communication device is clearly evident. The device is used precisely to communicate the issue and is instrumental to presenting courses of action that inspire.	The implementation of at least one communication device is clearly evident. The device contributes to communicating the issue and courses of action.	A communication device can be detected using some effort. It has loose connections to communicating the issue and courses of action.	A communication device can be detected using some effort. Connections to commenting the issue or courses of action can not be made.
Meaningful Solutions to real world issues	The student presented a relevant real world issue with practical and inventive solutions for action. The solutions were presenting in a persuasive and inspiring way.	The student presented a real world issue with practical solutions. The solutions provide the viewer with possible actions for supporting the cause.	The student presented a real world issue but solutions were not realistic or relatable to the issue.	The student presented an issue but it was not relatable to the student. Solutions were unrealistic or not understood in the artwork.

Intersection of Communication Devices



Thomas Eakins, The Agnew Clinic, oil on canvas, 84"x118", 1889

In what ways is hierarchy present in this work by Thomas Eakins?

How do formal elements play a role in communicating a hierarchy?

What contextual clues contribute to communicating a hierarchy? (hint: is there a social injustice represented, where are the women?)

How does narrative contribute to communicating a hierarchy or hierarchies?

The Intersection of Communication Devices worksheet is a formative assessment that checks for understanding in identify communication devices, interpret their uses and functions in an artwork, and demonstrate understanding that they can work together to communicate meaning.

Procedures

Week 1, Day 1

Hook: Before the student come in I will have linocut printing materials at each of their desks. At the start of class I will introduce them to the linoleum block, carving tools, and brayer. After explaining the uses for the tools, I will ask the students to handle them and familiarize themselves with the tools.

Development:

1. **Demonstration:** I will give a demonstration on the uses for the different carving tools and techniques for creating shading and texture.
2. **Presentation:** Next I will present a powerpoint that introduces students to the communication devices. In this presentation the devices will be defined and in small groups and as a class exercises will be included that ask students to identify communication devices in works of art and explain how they work in combination with one another.
3. **Assessment:** As a formative assessment using Thomas Eakins painting *The Agnew Clinic* students will work in pairs to complete a worksheet that checks for understanding of how to identify communication devices, interpret their uses and functions, and that they can work together to communicate.

Culmination: A series of artworks will be shown on the projector. Students will be called on to identify a communication device and explain its use. Next students will be asked why they think it is important to understand how images communicate. They will have an opportunity to volunteer their response.

Week 2, Day 2

Hook: Presentation- I will start the class by presenting the work of the world famous printmaker Barbara Kruger. The focus of the presentation is about her work that addresses toxic expectations of women that are present in our culture.

Development:

1. The introduction of the assignment will build off the hook. To begin, I will ask students to think about a social, societal, or political issue they are passionate about. The next half hour will be dedicated to researching the issue and actions that can be taken to help the cause.
2. Next students will work on planning their prints and start working on their linocuts.

Culmination: Students will have an opportunity to share the issue they selected and how they plan to communicate a plan of action in their print.

Week 3, Day 3

Hook: Demonstration- This class will begin with me giving a brief demonstration about layering acrylic washes over the prints.

Development: The bulk of the class period will be dedicated to completing the project. I will circle the room to help with ideas and execution.

Culmination: Students will select the work they think is most successful and tape it to the white board. I will exhibit these works in the hall.

Investigating Media Messages

Two eighty minute classes

Overview

Summary

In this lesson students will work in groups of three to seek out images from social platforms, advertisements, and other media sources that promote an idea of what it means to be cool. After finding dozens of images the groups will post them to a concept board and work together to identify two themes that are present. As an integrated performance task the groups will next fill out a worksheet that asks them to identify communication devices that are used in the images from their themes. Each group will then present their themes to the class and discuss how the communication devices were used. The themes from each group will be listed on the white board and left up for the remainder of the unit.

Rationale

Students use social media, watch movies, and are exposed to advertisement and may never give any thought to how these media sources carry messages that can influence them. This lesson is designed for students to actively seek out and identify messages in media as an awareness of their presence. Furthermore, by investigating the specific methods by which messages are communicated through images, students will gain the ability to easily identify messages in the future and be less susceptible to their influence.

Key Concepts

- Many people are unaware that messages promoted by media sources impact how they see the world and interact with those around them.
- Images are not neutral objects. They can be loaded with meaning and be communicating very specific messages.
- Learning how images communicate is a skill that can help identify messages in media

- Ideas we have about the world and ourselves are often developed with influence from media.

Essential Questions

- How do you define being cool?
- What influences do you think played a role in your development of this definition?
- In what ways do media messages that promote an idea of being cool influence your behavior and social interactions?

Standards

Va:Pr 6.1.IIIa - Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artworks, to impact the viewers understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.

Students will collect images from media sources that they will use to question how messages from the images influence their social experience by inflicting specific pressure to be cool.

Objectives

Knowledge- Students will demonstrate an understanding of communication devices by filling out their integrated performance task worksheet.

Skill- Students will show that they can identify media messages by finding themes on their concept board.

Disposition- Students will become skeptical when interacting with media sources after exposing influential messages in their investigation of images on social platforms, advertisements, and other media sources.

Assessment

List three ways your themes were communicated using formal elements	List two ways context is important for how your themes are communicated
List one way either juxtaposition, hierarchy, or narrative is used to communicate one of your themes	List two additional ways your theme is communicated in the images

Week 4, Day 4

Hook: The class will start with a short conversation about their definitions of being cool, who and what they think is cool, and why.

Development:

1. I will divide the class into groups of three to begin collecting images from media sources to promote an idea of being cool. Half of the groups will start in the computer lab where they will print images, and the other half will stay in the classroom and cut images from magazines. After 25 minutes the groups will switch.
2. Next, the groups will pin their images to a concept board and arrange them into similar categories in order to identify two themes.

Culmination: In the remaining 10 minutes of class, students will have an opportunity to talk about the images and messages they discovered and how they think they have been influenced by them.

Day 5, Week 5

Hook: Students will be asked one way in which they think they are cool and one way in which they think they are not. They will then have an opportunity to share their response with the class.

Development:

1. **Integrated Performance Task (Formative Assessment)-** Students will get back in their groups of three and work on the worksheet that asks them to identify how communication devices are used in the two themes they found on their concept board.
2. **Student Presentation-** Each group will present the two themes they identified on their concept boards and how communication devices were used in the images. The themes for each group will be listed on the white board.

Culmination: As a class, students will comment on the themes from all the groups and connections they see between the themes and the behaviors of their peers and relatives.

NERD ... Be cool

Four eighty minute classes

Overview

Summary

In this lesson students will create a woodcut print that is inspired by both the concept board from the “Investigating Media Messages” assignment and reflections of valued characteristics and interests that are not widely represented in media. The main focus of the assignment is to successfully implement communication devices in a way that the viewer can understand a relationship between media messages and a personally valuable characteristic or interest.

Rationale

Young students are susceptible to pressure to be cool, and this pressure affects their behavior, identity, and sense of self worth. Students perception of cool is often influenced by sources with suspect motivations such as peers, advertisements, and social platforms. This lesson is designed to promote self love and guide students to reflect on personal characteristics and/or interests they value that are not popularly represented within culture and for them to feel that these qualities are worthy of admiration. The process of creating an artwork that confronts cultural perceptions of being cool with personally valuable characteristics and interests is meant to show students they have control over themselves and who they want to be.

Key Concepts

- Media messages have persuasion over behavior, identity, and self worth.
- Personally valuable characteristics or interests are often at odds with pressure students feel from media messages.
- Turning a critical eye on media messages can help students identify harmful messages and give them the power to talk back.

Essential Questions

- How has the unique and valuable parts of who you are been impacted by media messages that attempt to define what it means to be cool?
- Who do you think is creating messages in media and what is their motivation?
- What communication devices did you use in your final print and how is it communicating a relationship between your personally valuable characteristics and interests and media messages that define what it means to be cool?

Standards

Va:Pr 6.1.IIIa - Curate a collection of objects, artifacts, or artworks, to impact the viewers understanding of social, cultural, and/or political experiences.

Students will collect images from media sources that they will use to question how messages from the images influence their social experience by inflicting specific pressure to be cool.

VA:Cr2.3.IIIa- Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.

Students will investigate messages that define being cool that are prevalent within visual culture. They will then compare those messages to personally valuable characteristics and interests and create artwork that explores how visual culture affects facets of their identity that they cherish.

Objectives

- **Knowledge-** Students will demonstrate an understanding of communication devices including juxtaposition, context, hierarchy, and narrative by implementing a device in their final print.
- **Skill-** Students will use a communication device to express a relationship between popular ideas of being cool and a personal characteristic or interest they value.
- **Disposition-** Students will demonstrate they are less susceptible to persuasion from media messages by explaining ways they can impact their beliefs, ideas, values, and/or identities in their final print.

Assessment

Key- 'the relationship' is used meaning the relationship between media messages of being cool and valued characteristics and/or interests	RUBRIC FOR NERD... Be Cool FINAL PRINT			
	Excellent	Proficient	Needs Work	Needs Help
	Uses formal elements to communicate the relationship	The use of line color and composition are a key component to understanding the relationship	The use of line color and composition enhance the understanding of the relationship	The use of line color and composition but have little relevance to the relationship
	Uses context to communicate the relationship	The use of context is easily identified. More than one form of context including time, place, or situation is used. The use of context is a key component to understanding the relationship	The use of context is easily identified. At least one form of context including time, place, or situation is used. The use of context enhances the understanding of the relationship	The use of context is suggested but not fully rendered. It loosely relates to the relationship
	Uses one communication device including juxtaposition, hierarchy, or narrative to explain the relationship.	The communication device is easily identified and is a key component to understanding the relationship	The communication device is easily identified and understood. It enhances the understanding of the relationship	The communication device is suggested but not fully rendered. It loosely relates to the relationship
Use of a media message that defines being cool	The media message is easily identified. It is implemented with ingenuity to highlight personal significance and expand understanding of its relationship to valued characteristics and interest.	The media message is easily identified. It communicates a personal significance to the student and the relationship to their valued characteristics and interests	The media message is suggested but not easily recognized. It has some relevance to valued characteristics and interests, but does not expand understanding of the relationship	There are no communication devices that can be identified.

Partner Critique for NERD...be cool Reference

What communication devices can you identify in the piece?

How easy is it to identify which communication devices are used?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What do you think the media message that defines being cool is?

How easy is it to identify that media message?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

How effective are the communication devices implemented so that a relationship between a media message that defines being cool and a personally valuable characteristic or interest communicated?

What do you think the personally valuable characteristics or interests of the artist is based on this reference?

How easy is it to identify that characteristic or interest?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Instructional Procedures

Week 6, Day 6

Hook: I will share statistics with the class about the increase in suicides and self harm that resulted from increased social media usage.

Development:

1. **Lecture-** I will give a brief talk about how social media usage can lead to a separation from ones true self. I will read text from *Reviving Ophelia*, by Mary and Sara Pipher.
2. I will ask students to reflect on the themes listed on the white board and list as many additional ways that they think media messages persuade them to be cool or fit in. Next they will make a list of personal characteristics and interests that are important to them that are not represented on the white board and that they believe were not developed by influence from media sources. They will then write 1-2 pages about those personal characteristics and interests and why they think those characteristics might represent their true selves.

Culmination: Students will have an opportunity to share their writings with the class.

Week 7, Day 7

Hook: Students will have instructions for their final print laid out at their desk along with the rubric that will be used as a **summative assessment** to determine their grade. I will go over the instructions and rubric with them as a class.

Development:

1. Next students will begin brainstorming an idea that explains a relationship between media messages and personally valued characteristics and interests. They will then make a quick mock up reference using a combination of drawing and collage that represents what their final project will look like.
2. **Critique-** Next students will work in pairs to critique each others references. The students will be given a worksheet to critique each others references. This will be a **formative assessment** to explain how well communication devices are implemented, if a media message is identifiable, and how well a relationship between a personally valuable characteristic or interest is communicated.

Culmination: Materials will be put away and desks cleaned. Students will be given an opportunity to share their idea for their final print with the class.

Week 8, Day 8

Hook: I will share my exemplar and artist statement with the class.

Development: This entire class will be used as studio work time to work on the final project. I will be circulating the room to provide individual guidance on craft and execution of project.

Culmination: Desks will be cleaned up and materials put away.

Week 9, Day 9

Hook: Students will have an opportunity to show their work in progress to the class and receive brief remarks.

Development:

1. The next 40 min will be dedicated to finishing up the final project.
2. **Formal Critique-** Students will work in pairs to critique the formal elements of the piece. In this critique they will discuss how the composition, color, line, and texture, contribute to communication in their final piece.

Culmination: I will hand out a worksheet for students to bring to three friends or family members. The students must explain their project to these three people and have them fill out the worksheet. The worksheet will ask them to rate how well the student communicated the media message, the valued characteristic or interest, and the relationship between the two. Students will then put their materials away and clean their desks.

Exemplar for final project



Chuck Hart, monster 20 point buck, 30" spread



John Snell, 12 yrs old, 8 point buck, 18" spread



Hank Thomas, 8 point buck, 22" spread



Landon Peacock, Smilodon, Common name- Saber-Toothed Tiger, Woodcut print on paper

Exemplar explanation

I grew up in a rural town in Michigan and being an outdoorsman was the popular thing for young men to aspire to. Advertisements from outdoor stores like Cabela's or Gander Mountain had a clear influence on how people dressed and the activities they engaged in. Kids in my high school would often wear camouflage apparel to school and arrive on their ATV's or snowmobiles.

The Polaroids in my exemplar are collage elements that mimic the Polaroids that were boastfully posted at my town's sporting goods store. The images displayed the kills from local hunters and the dimensions and specs of the animals were written out like stats from a football game. The image of my Smilodon skull woodcut print represents how I was both influenced by the pressure to be an outdoorsman, but also rejected facets of it that were considered popular. Growing up in this small town did in fact play a role in my lifelong fascination with the natural world. However, the way others in my hometown engaged with the natural world seemed disingenuous and part of a pre-packaged deal that required little imagination. My relationship with the outdoors involved observation and a growing curiosity about plant and animal life. This led to an obsession with prehistory and a deep joy from learning about and imagining past ecological environments that existed on the very land we live on today.