Unit 5: The History of Photography

Content Area: **English Language Arts**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 1**
Length: **3-4 Weeks**
Status: **Published**

Brief Summary of Unit

Unit 5: The History of Photography

Students will be introduced to the history of photography and the significant people who have contributed to the new art form. Also contemporary photographers and current trends in the medium will be explored. They will be able to identify specific factors that have influenced photographers' works. Students will select a photographer, photographic style or movement to research in depth. Their findings will be presented as a research paper and oral presentation utilizing the technology in the classroom.

Revision Date: July 2025 - Samantha Berk

Standards

ELD standards:https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wdmsiGOdCHlrjU-WPvAtENnEgi0EStZXo0uiFYv1Nu4/edit

1.5.12acc.Cr1a	Individually and collaboratively formulate new creative problems based on student's existing artwork.
1.5.12acc.Cr1b	Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
1.5.12acc.Cr2a	Through experimentation, practice and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.
1.5.12acc.Cr2b	Demonstrate awareness of ethical implications of making and distributing creative work.
1.5.12acc.Cr2c	Redesign an object, system, place, or design in response to contemporary issues.
1.5.12acc.Cr3a	Engage in constructive critique with peers, then reflect on, re-engage, revise, and refine works of art and design in response to personal artistic vision.
1.5.12acc.Pr4a	Analyze, select and critique personal artwork for a collection or portfolio presentation.
1.5.12acc.Pr5a	Evaluate, select and apply methods or processes appropriate to display artwork in a specific place.
1.5.12acc.Pr6a	Make, explain and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural and political history.
1.5.12acc.Re7a	Recognize and describe personal aesthetic and empathetic responses to the natural world and constructed environments.
1.5.12acc.Re7b	Evaluate the effectiveness of visual artworks to influence ideas, feelings, and behaviors of specific audiences.
1.5.12acc.Re8a	Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.
1.5.12acc.Re9a	Determine the relevance of criteria used by others to evaluate a work of art or collection

	of works.
1.5.12acc.Cn10a	Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research and experimentation to explore other subjects through artmaking.
1.5.12acc.Cn11a	Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts.
1.5.12acc.Cn11b	Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural and historical contexts and make connections to global issues, including climate change.

Essential Questions

- • How does understanding formal elements of composition help when making a comparative analysis of photographic styles?
- • What are the key terms related to the history of photography?
- • What factors influence the work of photographers?
- • What factors influence/ed the development of the photographic medium?
- • What photographic techniques, styles and artists are significant to the history of photography?
- • Why is studying the history of photography valuable to the contemporary photographer?

Essential Understandings

- • Knowledge of the formal elements of design contribute to a successful comparative analysis.
- • The future of photography as an art form is based on knowledge of its past and present.
- • The study of the evolution of photography has value and meaning to the contemporary photographer.

Students Will Know

- • How past and contemporary photographic techniques, styles and artists have impacted the history of photography.
- • How to make a comparative analysis of at least two photographic styles.
- • Specific factors and events that have influenced photographers' works.
- • The key terms related to the history of photography.

Evidence/Performance Tasks

Fine Arts students demonstrate differentiated proficiency according to their ability to answer the essential questions through formative and summative assessments. Evidence of progression may be demonstrated in divergent ways through the Artistic Process of Creating, Presenting/Producing, Connecting, and Responding.

Tasks will include:

- Preview/Answer essential questions

- Meaningfully and appropriately participate in class critique and discussions
- Complete class projects including weekly critique assignments
- Complete self-assessment rubrics
- Participate in assessment discussions with teacher
- Complete final exam

- Complete rubric.
- Descriptive and analytical comparison between two different photographers or styles.
- Participate in class discussions.
- Research photographic artist, technique or photographic art movement and present findings to class in multi-media presentation.
- Share contemporary articles and museum happenings related to photography for class discussion.

Learning Plan

- Class Discussion Starter: Begin with an open discussion on "Why is the study of the history of photography valuable?" Have students share thoughts in journals, then discuss as a class to build relevance and engagement.
- Chronological Presentations: Deliver engaging presentations on major eras and movements in photography using slideshows, video clips, physical prints, and timelines (e.g., early processes, portraiture, documentary photography, modernism, digital age).
- Artist & Movement Spotlights: Highlight key photographers from each movement (e.g., Niepce, Stieglitz, Dorothea Lange, Cindy Sherman) and analyze their impact, style, and contributions.
- *Suggested Activies:*
    - *Interactive Timeline Activity: Students create a collaborative visual timeline using class materials, placing major photographic movements and technological developments in chronological order.*
    - *Assigned Research Project: Introduce a research and oral presentation assignment where students select a specific photographer, movement, or innovation in photographic history to explore in depth.*
- Guided Research Days: Provide dedicated class time with structured research support (e.g., source evaluation, note-taking organizers, citation help) to assist students in developing their projects.
- Oral Presentations: Students present their findings to the class using visual aids (posters, slideshows, photo samples), with a focus on communicating the historical and artistic significance of their topic.
- Peer Evaluation and Self-Reflection: Students evaluate presentations using a rubric and complete a reflection on what they learned from others and how their own understanding of photographic history

deepened.

- Comparative Analysis Activity: Students select two different photography styles or movements and write a short analytical comparison focusing on visual characteristics, historical context, and cultural impact.

- Wrap-Up Discussion & Reflection: Conclude the unit with a class discussion reflecting on how the history of photography influences contemporary photographic practices and personal creative choices.

Suggested Lesson Plan Topics:

- The Origins of Photography: Camera Obscura to Daguerreotype
  Students will explore the early development of photography, including the invention of the camera obscura and early photographic processes like the daguerreotype and calotype. They will create a timeline and sketch or build a basic pinhole camera model.

- Photography as Historical Documentation: 19th Century to WWII
  Students will analyze how photography was used to document major events, such as the Civil War and World Wars. They will examine images by photographers like Mathew Brady and Dorothea Lange, discussing the impact of photography on public opinion and historical memory.

- The Evolution of Portrait Photography
  Students will study the rise of portraiture in the 19th and early 20th centuries. They will compare vintage portraits to modern selfies and studio portraits, then take their own historically inspired portraits using traditional posing and lighting techniques.

- The Shift to Art Photography: Pictorialism to Modernism
  Students will explore photography's transition from documentation to fine art, studying key movements like Pictorialism and Modernism. They will analyze works by artists such as Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Weston and recreate images using similar compositional techniques.

- The Digital Revolution: From Film to Pixels
  Students will investigate the transition from film to digital photography. They will compare analog and digital cameras, explore how editing software changed the photographic process, and create a photo series that reflects this shift in technology and style

Materials

The materials used in this course allow for integration of a variety of instructional, supplemental, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available.

Handouts, writing samples, Digital Cameras, Sketchbook, Various Pencils, Sharpies, Markers, Various Papers, Various Erasers, Mirrors, Blending Sticks, Charcoal, Graphite, Sharpeners, Colored Pencils, Oil Pastel, Chalk Pastels, YouTube Videos, Value Scales, magazines, glue, scissors, Watercolor, Watercolor paper, paint brush, ink, printing materials, chromebooks, ipads, Paint, Color Wheels, Drawing Pen, Rulers

Websites:

- The Metropolitan Museum of Art – Timeline of Photography
  https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/phho/hd_phho.htm
  (Detailed timeline and overview of photographic history from early processes to contemporary photography.)

- The George Eastman Museum – History of Photography
  https://eastman.org/history-photography
  (Comprehensive resource with historical essays, key figures, and photographic movements.)

- National Gallery of Art – Photography: Key Movements & Artists
  https://www.nga.gov/features/slideshows/photography.html
  (Visual and textual spotlight on major photographers and movements.)

- Library of Congress – Photography and Historical Documentation
  https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/about-this-collection/
  (Primary source photographs from significant historical events with context and analysis.)

- PBS LearningMedia – History of Photography Lesson Plans
  https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/tdc02.sci.phys.energy.photohistory/history-of-photography/
  (Multimedia lesson resources including videos, presentations, and activities.)

- Computer, Whiteboard, document camera and projector
- Handouts
- PowerPoint
- Student examples

Suggested Strategies for Modifications

Suggested Strategies for Modifications:

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations:

Fine Arts Accommodations & Modifications

- Hands on activities to support unit objectives.
- Individualized instruction.
- Mini lessons in addition to large group instruction.
- Multi-media presentations.
- Peer critique of presentations.

- Use of rubric as self-evaluation tool.
- Videos to enhance instruction where needed.
- Visual Aids and writing samples.