

Middle and High Schools Social Studies Lesson

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Objective

To incorporate important artwork into the secondary social studies classes to aid students in their comprehension and memory of different eras/events.

Materials

- Spiral bound notebook
- Images from the internet or photocopied from books/magazines of the era/event being studied and the artwork that relates to it.
- Glue or glue sticks
- Pens, pencils, and/or colored pencils

Procedure

1. Throughout the semester students will keep a chronological *Visual Verbal Journal** of the eras studied, the significant events and people, and the artwork that reflects this. Each journal page will be done in a way to summarize or review the time period.
2. While teaching about each time period/event the teacher should also introduce the significant works of art to help the students familiarize themselves with the corresponding art movement.
 - a. Students could be given homework assignments to investigate artwork on their own for their own interpretation of what artwork is best reflective of society at that time.
3. To begin the student will choose a work of art they feel represents the mood of the society or a reflection of an important event. More than one image can be used. They should have printouts/photocopies of these.
4. Significant photographs, newspaper articles, etc can also be included.
5. Images should be glued to a page in the journal; the fact that there are lines on the page should not matter. Encourage students to layer the images in a creative and significant way.
6. Written information about the time period or event should be added. This can be done in an inclusion of facts, song lyrics or poetry from the era, a personal response to the happening, or a summary of it.
 - a. A reflection on how the artwork they chose is representative of the event/era should also be included.
7. As the journal builds throughout the course, the student will create a visual aid of each important event/era.

*Visual Verbal Journal = a creative document that allows the user to record thoughts, images, ideas, events in a unified manner. This is different from a scrapbook in that it is not meant to be simply a recorder of events, but an intellectual reflection of the event.

Example

While studying the world wars, students can be introduced to many different styles of artwork that convey the feelings and emotions of the people living through these major events. They can also be shown artwork that depicts specific events. One of the styles that displays the response of some Europeans is DeStijl. Mondrian was the leader of this group of artists that strove to eliminate all emotion from their artwork. This was in response to the German Expressionists (ie. Kirchner's 1908, *Street, Dresden*) who did nothing but show emotion and feeling towards the wars in their work. The De Stijl wanted to rid themselves and the world of the emotions they were feeling. Thus, Mondrian created a new style that was pure geometry and line without any emotional content.

Using images of Mondrian's De Stijl work, like *Trafalgar Square*, 1939-43, that is representative of a town that he took refuge in during war (remember, artists were considered degenerates by the Nazi's). His attempt to rid any emotion from the image can be seen in the clear cut lines and shapes. The use of texture and the easily accessible primary colors give us some hint of human interaction, but as a viewer it's purposefully difficult to read. Juxtaposing this on the page with an image done at about the same time like Kathe Kollwitz, *The Mothers from War*, 1923 will create a strong understanding of the conflicting responses during this tumultuous time. One artist is trying to eliminate feeling, while the other is emphasizing it.

