

InsideArt, Fall 2015 — *A Family Affair*

Title

Culture and Family: Past and Present

Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson

1 class period

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

Students will become familiar with the work of mother-and-son artists Deborah Willis and Hank Willis Thomas, while considering the role of the family in transmitting culture.

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

Social Studies:

- SS.912.H.1.3: Relate works in the arts to various cultures.
- SS.912.H.1.2: Describe how historical events, social context, and culture impact forms, techniques, and purposes of works in the arts, including the relationship between a government and its citizens.

National Standards for Arts Education

- Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.
- Standard 4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.
- Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

National Council for the Social Studies

- Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Common Core

- LACC.1112.L.3.5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- LACC.1112.L.3.6: Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.5: Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

Instructional Objective

The student will:

- define what a proverb is;
- analyze proverbs;
- give an example of a proverb from his or her culture or family;
- become familiar with the work of Deborah Willis & Hank Willis Thomas.

Learning Activities Sequence

Attention-Getter: As students walk in, have a few proverbs written on the board that they may have heard. For example:

- Actions speak louder than words.
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder.
- Don't count your chickens before they hatch.

After reading each proverb, ask for volunteers to explain its meaning. For the examples listed above, explanations may include:

- Actions speak louder than words. (It's more important to prove what you mean or believe by your actions, rather than by what you say.)
- Absence makes the heart grow fonder. (People, places, or things become more valuable the longer they are absent or missing.)
- Don't count your chickens before they hatch. (Don't get overly confident about your success until it actually happens.)

Explain that proverbs are usually short, often witty sayings that express collective wisdom in a culture or society. Ask students to consider how the proverbs just discussed express wisdom in our culture.

Learning Activities:

Small Group Assignment: Distribute Handout 1, Proverb Activity. Working in groups of two or three, have students consider each proverb, writing out its meaning, and noting any other proverb they may know that is either similar or contradictory.

PowerPoint-Guided Presentation and Class Discussion: Access the presentation, "Day 5. Deborah Willis & Hank Willis Thomas" and project it in the classroom. Before class, be sure to review notes to the teacher in the "Notes View" of the PowerPoint.

Slides 2, 3, and 4: as they are presented, pause to read aloud the selected proverbs from the Proverb Activity that appear in the art work, *From the Words to Live By Series, 1-9, 2008* (note that not all the proverbs from the work are on Handout 1).

Slide 5: Provide an overview of the artists' biographies (see Teacher Background Reading 1).

Slide 6: *Sometimes I See Myself In You, 2008*

Slide 7: *Thomas and Thomas, 2008*

Class Discussion: Facilitate a class discussion by asking:

- In what ways does the collaborative work of Thomas and Willis Thomas reflect the social institutions of family? Of culture?

Closure:

Ask students to think of a proverb or saying they have heard in their family, home culture, or neighborhood. In their student journal, have them write:

- The proverb (if a student's home language is something other than English, ask him/her to write it in the home language and include the English translation).
- The meaning of the proverb.
- In what context or situation is the proverb typically said or heard.
- Who usually says this proverb.

As an alternative, students can also research proverbs online (search: "American English proverbs") or they can be given a list of proverbs from which to choose and complete the activity.

Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on their engagement throughout the lesson and their student journal entries will be reviewed for completion.

Optional Extension Activities

- Have students conduct independent research on some of Deborah Willis & Hank Willis Thomas' other works.
- Allow students to create an art work based on the proverb they wrote about in their student journals.

Materials and Resources

PowerPoint Presentation: Day 5. Deborah Willis & Hank Willis Thomas

Handout 1 (HO 1): Proverb Activity

Teacher Background Reading 1 (TBR 1): Artists' Biographies

Internet Links

PBS. *Through a Lens Darkly*. <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/through-a-lens-darkly/>

Deb Willis. <http://debwillisphoto.com/home.html>

Hank Willis Thomas. <http://www.hankwillisthomas.com>

References

Thomas, Hank Willis. <http://www.hankwillisthomas.com>. Accessed July 9, 2015.

Willis, Deborah, Hank Willis Thomas, and Kalia Brooks. *Progeny: Deborah Willis and Hank Willis Thomas*. New York: Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, 2009.

Willis, Deb. <http://debwillisphoto.com/home.html>. Accessed July 9, 2015.