

POSTCARDS FROM UTAH ARTISTS



Cyrus Dallin: *Paul Revere*



John Hancock



Sacajawea



Massasoit

Theme: Searching for Visual Clues

ART CRITICISM

Motivation: The artist as the creator is the first source of information about an artwork, but another creditable source is the art critic. He or she, like the artist, can guide the viewer's eyes to see meaning in an artwork. It is often the writings of an art critic that help the viewer move beyond the initial response to an artwork and develop a clear understanding of an artwork that results in an informed opinion. In the following lesson, the students will act as an art critic by recording in writing their initial response, their description of the artworks, their analyses of the visual clues built into the artwork by the artist, provide their interpretation of the artwork based on their observations, and come to a judgement of it.

Art Criticism Objective: Students will be able to use a critical model to identify visual clues used by artists to help describe subjects and tell their stories.

Art Criticism Lesson: Divide the students into groups of four. Have students look at the four Cyrus Dallin postcards from the postcard set. Ask the students if they recognize any of the famous individuals in these sculptures: Paul Revere, John Hancock, Sacajawea, and Massasoit. Have the students pick one of these four famous people on which to conduct research so they will know about them. Now, have each group act as art detectives and write down visual clues that Dallin used to help a viewer recognize the individuals he sculpted. You may need to suggest that they look at things like clothing, the position of the figures, and other details. Also, ask the students to think about stories they know about any of these famous people and how these stories helped them to know who these people are. Encourage the individuals in each group to contribute to the discussions.

ART HISTORY

Art History Objective: Students will be able to identify different styles of artworks by artists who have portrayed images of famous people and compare these styles to one another.

Art History Lesson: Chuck Close creates super-sized paintings of famous artists and friends from photographs he takes. His paintings expose the faces of his subjects to the viewer on a level of intimacy previously only viewed by a mother or spouse. Chuck Close said, "I paint heads because heads matter to everybody. If you paint a face big enough, it's hard to ignore!" (Scholastic Art, 1995)

To help the students gain an appreciation of this kind of close-up view, make a transparency of the black and white portrait image of the famous modern composer, Phil Glass, by Chuck Close. Most school and district media center coordinators are a great resource for the materials and expertise to create transparencies.

Show the students this image on an overhead projector. Ask them to look for the details in the image like facial hair, pores of the skin, and wrinkles. To give the students a better understanding of how close you would need to get to a person to see such details and to help them understand how a person who is the subject might feel, give each group of four students two magnifying glasses and ask the students to take turns looking very close up through the glasses at one another's faces. Have the students share their feelings as to how they felt both as the viewer and as the subject. Ask the students if they would want a nine-foot Chuck Close painting of their own face in their house. Explain to the students that many of Chuck Close's subjects had trouble with their own images and did not want them hanging in their houses.

Now show the students the Martha Graham Paper Doll Quilt created in 1999 by Rebekka Seigel. Explain that this quilt is part of a series of twelve quilts that Rebekka Seigel has created about famous women. Ask the students if they know who Martha Graham was and what she did for a living. Have the students look for clues that Rebekka Seigel gave us about Martha Graham's life in this quilt.



Rebekka Seigel



Martha Graham Paper Doll Quilt

All of Rebekka Seigel's paper doll quilts have several removable outfits to dress up the person featured in the quilt. Just like Cyrus Dallin did, Rebekka researched each outfit and patterned them after outfits worn by the person. (images used by permission of the artist)

Next, have each group of students discuss and compare Cyrus Dallin's approach to portraying images of famous people with that of Rebekka Seigel and Chuck Close. Have the students complete the following descriptive matrix to help them look at the differences and similarities of each of these artists' approaches. Use this list as a tool for formative assessment of the student's processing of this information.

The matrix is included at the end of the lesson.

Student groups will analyze the different styles of each artist and decide in what ways and where each artist's works would be most appropriate within a community. As assessment, students should summarize their decisions and the reasons for that choice.

Art Production Objective: The students, working in small groups, will be able to create a mixed-media quilt that tells about a famous living person.

Art Production Lesson: Have groups of students select a famous person to feature in a mixed-media quilt. Ask the students to research the life of the person they have selected. Some things they could look for are quotes, clothing, gestures, pets, hobbies, careers, family, friends, accomplishments, creations, or other unique details. Have the groups of students sort out and select the best of materials and information they have gathered about the famous person. Now, they should discuss what kind of images they will need to create to best represent the selected information. Have the students find and select appropriate materials to use for these images: cloth, magazine clippings, text, papers, and textures.

The groups may want to create drawings or paintings to illustrate the information, these can be integrated with the other materials. Next, have the students arrange the images and text or other elements to be used in the collage quilt until the design looks complete. Help the students use balance, rhythm, contrast, repetition, proportion, and unity in their designs. Ask them to check the relationship between the size of the images, the colors, the lines, the values, and their use of positive and negative space. Depending on the materials available, the students can glue, sew, or staple the finished design to a large sheet of oak tag, cardboard, or cloth. Have the students create a label for the quilt which contains the names of the students in the group, a title for the quilt, and a statement about the famous person they selected. Exhibit the finished quilts and allow the students to create juror's notes for the quilts created by the other groups. These notes should be positive comments that relate to the different parts of the images that are most successful in telling about the famous person.

Aesthetics Objective: Student will be able to discuss, compare and write about their conclusions for a selected art story problem.

Aesthetics Lesson: Each group of students must select a famous person they want to commission an artist to portray. Each group must select one of two very different artists for the commission:

Cyrus Dallin, the sculptor, and the “Pop” artist, Andy Warhol. The selection should be based on the information they learn about the two artists and the works of art each has created. Then each student must also write a statement that justifies the selection they have made concerning the commission.



Andy Warhol
Marilyn Monroe

Background Information: Andy Warhol created many images of Marilyn Monroe. Who was Marilyn Monroe and why did Warhol choose to create a picture of her? (She was a Hollywood celebrity in the 1950s and '60s. Warhol used her face because almost everyone who saw the print would recognize her.) What is Warhol saying by displaying this celebrity's face so prominently? Does he think that society should admire Marilyn Monroe? Why or why not?

Cyrus Dallin also relies on the celebrity status of his subjects to help his viewers recognize his subjects, like Paul Revere. What does Cyrus Dallin want society to see about his subjects? How does Dallin's approach differ from Warhol's approach? Which of these two approaches best fits the kind of image your group would like for your famous person? Cyrus Dallin sculptures sell for \$300,000. Andy Warhol's "Orange Marilyn," an acrylic and silkscreen ink painting on canvas, which was created in 1964, sold for a record price of \$17,327,500

at Sotheby's auction house in May of 1998. How would the selling price of an artist's artworks influence you if you were on a committee to choose an artist to create an image to represent a famous person? Does a higher price tag make an artwork better? Which artist's artworks match the social values of your community? Which artist creates images that the majority of the people in your community would see as beautiful. How would your famous person react to the artist that you have selected to do the commissioned artwork.

Have the students discuss these topics in their groups and write down their own responses to help them to decide which artist will get their vote. Have the class vote as a class on which artist to choose to do this commissioned artwork. Next, have the students write a press release for the school newspaper about the assignment, the two artists, and the reason why they selected that artist to do the commissioned artwork.

Assessment: Use the sample rubric on the next page to assess the performance of each student in each of the four disciplines.

