

Lesson One: Historical and Contemporary Personas

Objectives

1. Students identify subject matter in detail.
2. Students interpret feelings, moods, or ideas communicated through color.

Arizona Visual Arts Standards

RELATE: Artworlds

PO 101, 202 and 302: Discuss how artworks are used to communicate stories, ideas and emotions.

RELATE: Meanings or Purposes

PO 101, 202 and 302: Interpret meanings and/or purposes of an artwork using subject matter, symbols (and/or themes)

EVALUATE: Art Issues and Values

PO 202 and 203: Debate whether art is different from visual culture in general.

EVALUATE: Elements and Principles

PO 101: Identify an element and principle in an artwork that supports its meaning and/or purpose.

EVALUATE: Elements and Principles

PO 201: Describe an artist's use of elements and principles in an artwork to support its meaning and/or purpose.

EVALUATE: Meanings or Purposes

PO 101 and 201: Discuss how an artist uses subject matter, symbols and/or themes to communicate/s meaning and/or purpose in an artwork.

Preparation

Preview "Historical Personas" PowerPoint.

Decide whether to ask individual students or groups of students to complete the "Questor Questions about "Contemporary Persona" worksheet and accordingly make a copy for each group or student.

Assemble a collection of color publicity photographs of contemporary public figures from the worlds of politics, entertainment and/or sports - for example, CD covers, posed photos, poster photos, publicity photos (not candid shots) in newspapers or magazines. You may choose to ask secondary students to bring in photos of favorite public figures.

Activities

Unit Preview: Introduce the lessons of *Projecting Persona* unit by discussing its two themes. Introduce the *theme in life* (we all want others to like and respect us) by asking students to name an occasion when they dressed, talked or acted in a particular way because they wanted to make an impression or feel part of a group, for example, first day of school, party, first date, wedding, birthday, meeting older relatives, etc.

Introduce the *theme in art* (Public figures use images of themselves to help them reach their goals) by showing examples of publicity photographs of two or three contemporary figures with which your students are likely to be familiar. Explain that to help them reach their goals, many public figures in politics, entertainment and sports try to control how they appear. For example, a politician might want to look like a strong and trustworthy person so people will vote for him or her. A musician, dancer or actor might want to look beautiful, funny, clever or scary so people will be interested in his or her performance. An athlete might want to appear strong, flexible, fast, bold, charming or self-confident to attract fans. The public image of such people is called a “persona.” A persona is a mask, a second self or a character created to impress or put on a show for others.

Inquiry: Show “Historical Personas” to introduce:

- Unit themes and key questions

- Contemporary public figures in politics, entertainment and sports

- Persona

- Teddy Roosevelt, an important historical public figure person who visited Tempe

- Analysis of subject matter detail in Roosevelt photograph

- Two early 20th Century images of personalities (Annie Oakley and Jim Thorpe)

- Publicity photographs of early 20th Century male and female musical entertainers

- Introduction to color in contemporary publicity photos

Guided Practice: Ask individuals or groups of students to analyze the use of subject matter and color in a publicity photograph to create a persona for contemporary political, entertainment or sports figures using the “Questor’s Questions about a Contemporary Persona” worksheet.

Transfer at TCA: Explain that when students visit “Mercy: A Pilgrimage to Roy Orbison” at the Tempe Center for the Arts they will examine the persona of a singer-songwriter and guitarists of the mid-20th Century.

Extension Ideas

Lead a discussion around the following question: If you were running for class president what persona would you want to create?

Ask students to poll classmates about their perception of numerous contemporary figures and analyze the impact of carefully crafted publicity images on those perceptions.

Analyze how artists have created personas for powerful rulers in art history:

- Ancient Egyptian portrait sculpture

- Chinese imperial portrait paintings

- European portrait painters (Van Dyke, Gainsborough, Jacques Louis David)

Language Arts: Create a word wall to teach vocabulary for poses, gestures and facial expressions, sometimes called “body language.” Use a charades game with vocabulary cards to help students build vocabulary.

Vocabulary

Pose

| | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|-----------|
| Sitting | Jumping | Standing | Slouching |
| Leaning | Twisting | Other... | |

Feelings Communicated by Pose

| | | | |
|---------|-------------|--------|----------|
| Excited | Friendly | Sneaky | Proud |
| Brave | Embarrassed | Lonely | Other... |

Arm or Leg Gestures:

| | | | |
|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| Reaching | Flexing | Grasping | Throwing |
| Pointing | Kicking | Marching | Other... |

Feelings Communicated by Arm or Leg Gestures

| | | | |
|------------|------------|---------|----------|
| Threatened | Protective | Shocked | Smug |
| Confident | Hysterical | Enraged | Other... |

Facial Expressions:

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Smile | Frown | Scowl | Wide-eyed |
| Sneer | Laugh | Pout | Other... |

Feeling Communicated by Facial Expressions

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Exhaustion | Confusion | Guilt | Anger |
| Happiness | Hope | Jealousy | Other... |

Assessment Checklists

1. Objective: Students identify subject matter in detail.
___ Student accurately responded to the subject matter question on “Questor’s Questions About a Contemporary Persona” worksheet.
2. Objective: Students interpret feelings, moods or ideas communicated through color.
___ Student explains communication of color on the last question on “Questor’s Questions About a Contemporary Persona” worksheet.