

Writing About Visual Arts

8th Grade ELA and Visual Arts

Adapted by Paige Satcher

CORE SUBJECT AREA

ELA

ART FORM + ELEMENTS

Visual Art
Theme, Color, Space, Balance
Historical

OBJECTIVES

TSW examine two pieces of artwork (Norman Rockwell's Freedom from Want and Kevin Carter's photograph of a Sudanese child), analyzing the stark contrast between them.

TSW write a formal essay about the contrasting meanings behind the two pieces.

TSW edit, revise, and publish their essays.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Computer, projector, and screen to examine artwork
Writing tools (paper/pencil or computer)

VOCABULARY

ELA Vocabulary: compare, contrast, edit, revise, publish. Visual Art Vocabulary: subject, background, foreground, painting, photograph

DURATION

3-5 class periods (depending on time allotted for revising, editing and publishing)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Norman Rockwell's Freedom from Want: <https://www.nrm.org/2016/11/freedom-want-1943/> Kevin Carter's Photograph of a Vulture and a Sudanese Child: <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/vulture-little-girl/>

LESSON SEQUENCE

TTW show students the Norman Rockwell painting entitled "Freedom From Want". TSW discuss the elements and meaning of this painting by answering questions such as:

MSCCR STANDARDS

W.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content. W.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. W.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed. W.8.6 Use technology, including the internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas efficiently as well as to interact and collaborate with others.

MSCCR CREATIVE ARTS STANDARDS

VA: Re7.1.8a. Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others. VA: Re7.2.8a. Compare and contrast contexts and media in which viewers encounter images that influence ideas, emotions, and actions. VA: Re8.1.8a. Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

- What are your first impressions of this painting?
- Use vivid language to describe what is happening in this scene.
- What message is the artist trying to communicate through painting technique, colors, etc.
- What do you think was the artist’s intent when creating this piece?
- Why do you think Norman Rockwell titled this piece “Freedom from Want”?

TT and TSW have a candid discussion about the luxuries of living in America. TSW discuss what they think life is like for children in other parts of the world.

1. TTW show students the photograph taken by Kevin Carter in Sudan in 1993. Take a moment of silence for students to look at the image.

2. As with the Norman Rockwell painting, examine the elements and meaning behind the photograph by asking questions such as:

- What are your first impressions upon viewing the photograph?
- What do you think is happening in this scene? (After students discuss on their own, the teacher may want to present the facts behind the photograph. (It was taken in 1993 in Sudan, a place where it is an everyday struggle to obtain enough food and water to survive.)
- Use vivid language to describe what is happening in this scene, including the background and foreground.
- What message is the photographer trying to communicate through his angle, subject, background, etc.
- What do you think was the artist’s intent when taking this photograph?
- How does this photograph starkly contrast with the Norman Rockwell painting?

Teacher Note: Before assigning the essay, model for students how you expect the essay to be written. Depending on the needs of your students, you may choose to assign this as a compare/contrast, informative, or persuasive essay. Model the chosen essay type accordingly.

3. TSW use these two pieces to write an essay that contrasts the artwork. The essay must reference the elements, subjects, and underlying meanings gathered through the artist’s details.

4. TSW use the following days to edit, revise, and publish their work.

EXTENDED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Research Integration: Take this lesson one step further by turning it into a research project.

Option 1: Students may research the origins of the artwork and the creators of the two pieces.

Option 2: Students may research more about the hardships of life in the country of Sudan or other third-world countries.

SOURCES

Original lesson by Paige Satcher

TIPS + FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The essay portion of the lesson could be a compare/contrast, informative, or persuasive essay, depending on what your students’ focus needs to be. Use the artwork to develop a prompt and writing mode that works best for your students.

This lesson would be ideal to use around Thanksgiving or Christmas.