

Studying the Artist, Carl Van Vechten Using Visual Literacy

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Standards

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.4.W.7

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Conduct short research projects that build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.4.SL.1

Comprehension and Collaboration: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 4 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.4.SL.1.c

Comprehension and Collaboration: Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.4.SL.4

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.4.SL.5

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Add audio recordings and visual displays to presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

Resources

Library of Congress website www.loc.gov

[Portrait of Peter Abrahams](#) Photographed by Carl Van Vechten

Overview and Rationale

This lesson comes as a precursor to a Harlem Renaissance Unit. Carl Van Vechten was a famous Caucasian photographer, photographing African American life during the time period. The teacher will present a picture from Carl Van Vechten's collection and lead students through a series of questions about the photograph. The teacher will then lead a discussion about how people can learn about the artist from his or her work. They will then be sent on an investigation to find out about Carl Van Vechten through his photographs. There are enough photographs for each pair of students to choose a different one. The students will then answer the questions they answered about the teacher's picture about their own. They will create a PowerPoint presentation answering at least 5

of the questions. The class will end with a discussion about the facts they felt they learned about their mystery photographer just from viewing his photographs. The teacher will then read the actual biography, and the class will compare and contrast their assumptions with the truth.

The Harlem Renaissance was an important time in United States history. This lesson serves as a great launching point. The students will get an idea about the art that was present during the Harlem Renaissance, and they will be able to get an idea of the theme of the Harlem Renaissance just from viewing their photographs. This activity serves as a jigsaw, as each pair of students will bring new knowledge about the photographer to the classroom discussion. The students will learn on their professional presentation skills with this lesson as well. They will be expected to use professional language when presenting, and they will be expected to use correct spelling on their PowerPoint presentation.

Objectives

- Students will be able to make inferences about Carl Van Vechten by studying one of his photographs.
- Students will be able to create a presentation that displays their findings.
- Students will be able to explain their findings orally to the class.
- Students will participate in a class discussion concerning the life of Carl Van Vechten using the inferences they made from their photographs.

Materials

-access to loc.gov

-access to PowerPoint

-whiteboard and markers

Procedure

Day One

1. Without giving any background information, the teacher will show the students the picture found off of the Library of Congress website, Portrait of Peter Abrahams by Carl Van Vecthen.



2. The teacher will ask the students the following set of questions, facilitating a discussion about the picture.

What do you see?

What is happening?

What items are displayed?

Describe items.

What did you see first?

Why are they included?

Any cultural differences?

Time period?

What do you feel when you look at this photos.

Does this picture tell a story

Is this an important picture?

Why is this picture important?

Summarize what you see.

3. The teacher will then discuss with the students how we can tell something about a photographer by examining his/her work.

4. The teacher will then reveal to the class that they are going to explore this photographer solely by his pictures first and by his biographical information later. The photographer is Carl Van Vechten.

Day Two-Day Three

5. Students will pair up, and each pair will choose a different photograph from the Van Vechten Exhibit on the Library of Congress website, located at loc.gov/pictures/collection/van.

6. The students will answer at least 5 of the guiding questions they answered from the teacher's photograph concerning their photograph, and they will put together a PowerPoint to present their information. The PowerPoint must include the photograph, references to the 5 guiding questions the students answered, and all information must be presented in a clear and visible manner.

Day Four

7. The students will present their PowerPoint to the class focusing on using professional language.

8. A classroom "recorder" will take note of what each pair believes this photograph says about the photographer, Carl Van Vechten, on the whiteboard.

9. The teacher will facilitate a discussion with the class about the mystery man, Carl Van Vechten, reading his actual biographical information at the end.

10. The teacher will introduce the Harlem Renaissance unit that the class is about to start.

Assessment

IL-ISBE-ELA-CC-2010.4.SL.4

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

Rubric	Target (3 pts)	Acceptable (2 pts)	Unacceptable (1 pt)
Photograph (1, 25%)	The students chose a photograph from loc.gov Carl Van Vechten Exhibit, and it is displayed in their PowerPoint presentation with proper source information as outlined in directions.	The students chose a photograph from loc.gov Carl Van Vechten Exhibit, and it is displayed in their PowerPoint presentation, however, it is lacking proper source information as outlined in the directions.	There is no photograph present in the presentation, or the photograph is from a different exhibit.
Analysis of Photograph (1, 25%)	Students answered at least 5 of the guiding questions orally and made some reference to the questions in the PowerPoint presentation.	Students answered at least 3 or 4 of the guiding questions orally and made some reference to the questions in their PowerPoint presentation.	Students answered 2 or fewer of the guiding questions orally and made some reference to the questions in their PowerPoint presentation.
Oral Grammar (1, 25%)	Students spoke using correct grammar with 1 or 2 mistakes.	Students made 3 to 5 grammatical errors during their presentation.	Students made 6 or more grammatical errors during their presentation.
PowerPoint Conventions (1, 25%)	Students PowerPoint presentation has 0 to 1 spelling errors and all information is visible in the presentation.	Students PowerPoint presentation has 2 to 3 spelling errors and all information is visible in the presentation.	Students PowerPoint presentation has 4 or more spelling errors or some information is not visible in the presentation.

Reflection