

Lesson Plan: Seeing Is Believing, But How Do You Feel?: Art, Social Studies and Social-Emotional Learning

Collection Spotlight: James Pate, Techno-Cubism: The Art of Line Painting

Subject Area: Visual Arts, Social Studies

Grades: 6th-12th

Theme: Using critical thinking to discuss a local artists' community impact.

Student Learning Objectives:

- 1) Students will be able to explain the relationship between cultures, communities and artists specific to their region.
- 2) Students will be able to investigate and identify their own emotional experiences through personal and collaborative artistic processes and analysis.
- 3) Students will be able to apply the See, Think, Wonder routine to discuss stereotypes, prejudices and cultural biases which have consequences for minority groups.

Artist Biography: James Pate is one of Dayton's most well-known and awarded living artists with more than one dozen of his large-scale charcoal drawings on display at the Dayton Art Institute. Pate is well known for his highly detailed and visually complex pieces showing a modern and personal take on the art style, Cubism, which Pate has named "Techno-Cubism." Using lines, angles and the shapes created with them is a large part of his contemporary art style similar to traditional Cubism. Pate depicts musicians, athletes and fellow artists, and he often depicts important aspects of the lived Black experience.

Pate's works speak to contradictions or inconsistencies of being human, of the beauty found in human potential which too often collides with the harsh realities of urban life. Through his art, Pate addresses societal issues, especially the damaging effects of racism on communities, and he demonstrates the different paths people may take in their lives.

Curricular Connections

Ohio's Learning Standards

Visual Arts:

VA.HIS.4RE- Explain the relationship between cultures, communities and artists.

VS.HSI.2CO-Investigate emotional experiences through personal and collaborative artistic processes.

Social Studies:

SS.8.18-Cultural biases, stereotypes and prejudices had social, political and economic consequences for minority groups and the population as a whole.

SS.8.18.a- Identify examples of cultural bias which has consequences for given minority groups.

Learning Activities Sequence

Lesson Opener (5 minutes):

After reviewing the student learning goals on Slide 3, advance to Slide 4 in the Seeing Is Believing PowerPoint Presentation. Briefly introduce James Pate as a local artist who is highly awarded and created his own artistic style called “Techno-Cubism”. You may include more information about James Pate from the Artist Biography at the beginning of this lesson plan. Focus on the second portion of the Artist Biography discussing how Pate focuses his art on racism and the Black lived experience, as this will be a focus for the lesson. Advance to Slide 5 and read the quote from James out loud. Before moving on, pose these questions to spark inquiry and prepare for discussion:

What does the word bias mean? What does the word prejudice mean?

What is an example of a minority group in the United States?

How does bias or prejudice affect people from minority groups?

Main Learning Activity (20 minutes):

Advance to Slide 6. On this slide includes agreements for courageous conversations. Read the agreements out loud, as they will support the discussion. The four agreements are:

1. Stay engaged (definition for students: pay attention to the discussion and stay involved with your peers)
2. Experience discomfort (definition for students: feeling uncomfortable with certain topics is normal, lean into why you might feel uncomfortable)
3. Speak your truth (definition for students: with respect, be open to your thoughts and feelings without saying things you think would make someone else happy)
4. Expect and accept non-closure (definition for students: the conversation will not feel like it has an end, there is not a quick fix to the problems we may discuss, but talking about issues is ongoing)

Explain that these agreements are to ensure that during discussions about sensitive topics, everyone will feel safe, heard, and will walk away with a sense of learning. Ask the students to reflect on the agreements:

Have you heard of the agreements for courageous conversations?

What will be the easiest agreements for you today?

What do you think could be the most difficult?

Is there an agreement that might be missing from the list that could support your learning?

Advance to Slide 7. On this slide, students will review the routine called “See, Think, Wonder”. Pass out the See, Think, Wonder packets to each student. Students are going to have a class discussion about two (or three, if time allows) of James Pate’s artworks. Explain the routine to students: first, students will take 2 minutes to observe the piece of artwork. From there, students will have one minute to write their thoughts about what they see, one minute for what they think, and one minute for what they wonder about the artwork.

Advance to Slide 8. This slide includes a photograph of James Pate’s *Love Force* (2024). Say to students: This image depicts Dayton artist and educator Willis “Bing” Davis. This artwork consists of 36 individual scratchboards, joined together to make an image. In scratchboard technique an artist uses sharp tools to scratch off or engrave through black ink and expose white clay underneath.

Set a timer for students to observe the work, write about what they see, think and wonder. After students have had enough time to write their thoughts, open the class to discussion for five minutes. Remind students to keep

the four agreements for courageous conversations top of mind as they share their thoughts. Ask guiding questions like:

What is going on in this picture/artwork?

What do you think about when you look at the artwork?

What questions come to mind? What do you wonder?

After at least four students have shared their thoughts, advance to Slide 8. This slide includes a photograph of James Pate's *Middle School Revolt* (2017). Say to students: This image is called *Middle School Revolt* and was created by using charcoal on paper.

Set a timer for students to observe the work then write about what they see, think and wonder. After students finish writing their thoughts, open the class to discussion for 5 minutes. Remind students to keep the four agreements for courageous conversations top of mind as they share their thoughts. Ask guiding questions like:

What is going on in this picture??

What do you think about when you look at the artwork?

What questions come to mind? What do you wonder?

After students have had time to share their thoughts say: When you hear the title *Middle School Revolt*, what does it make you think about? Can you make a connection from the title to your own school life? Take two minutes to sketch about an issue in the classroom you want to change.

If time allows, after at least four students have shared their thoughts, advance to Slide 10. This slide includes a photograph of James Pate's *Ayo's Chair* (2020). Say to students: This image is called *Ayo's Chair* and was created by using charcoal on paper. *Ayo's Chair* depicts James' son reading a book while surrounded by Black artists and Black historical figures.

Set a timer for students to observe the work then write about what they see, think and wonder. After students finish writing their thoughts, open the class to discussion for 5 minutes. Remind students to keep the four agreements for courageous conversations top of mind as they share their thoughts. Ask guiding questions like:

What is going on in this picture?

What do you think about when you look at the artwork?

What questions come to mind? What do you wonder?

Lesson Closure (5 minutes):

After at least four students have shared their thoughts, advance to Slide 11. Students will now have the chance to reflect on the prior knowledge questions, the See, Think, Wonder routine/discussion, and the four agreements for courageous conversations. Ask students guiding questions on Slide 11 and allow time for one to two responses for each (also listed in their See Think Wonder packet with space to write).

Collect the packets to review later as an exit ticket and thank students for their openness during the discussion.

Evaluation

Students will submit their See, Think, Wonder packets with reflection questions answered to the teacher. The teacher can use this evaluation to assess understanding of the activity, measure participation as well as plan for future discussions based on questions or ideas that were not shared.

Learner Accommodations

For learning diverse students, consider printing the PowerPoint presentation to include physical copies on tables or to share. In addition, where possible, give students more time to observe the artwork and extended time to write down their thoughts.

Explanation and use of Four Agreements for Courageous Conversations to support safety and inclusion when students are discussing sensitive topics.

Multimodal PowerPoint presentation created with many grade levels and proficiency levels in mind.

Colorful, easy to follow packets based on multiple grade level bands.

Built-in scaffolding and inquiry questions to support all learners in discussion.

Extension Activities

Teachers could extend this activity by providing a social/emotional learning check-in with a color chart (green-ready to learn/feel good, yellow-unsure, blue-sad or red-angry) or temperature gauge (high emotion or angry-top of thermometer, calm or regulated- middle of the thermometer, sad or low energy- low temperature) regarding how they felt about the activity and discussion. After difficult conversations, students may need to draw attention to their emotions before moving on to another topic or another class. Providing students with the chance to check-in with their teacher anonymously or directly will help students transition.

Teachers can extend the lesson by incorporating math and geometry. James Pate created an art style called Techno-Cubism which is the use of lines, points and shapes to create images or portraits. Perform the See, Think, Wonder routine with *Bing's Portrait* by James Pate. Direct students to follow instructions on Extension Slide 11 to create a portrait using geometry standards (draw points on a paper, connect points using lines/straight edge to create a portrait, identify angles, shapes etc.)

Materials & Resources

Computer or Laptop

Screen or Projector

[Seeing is Believing PowerPoint Presentation](#)

See, Think, Wonder Packets

Pencils or Pens

Discussion

[Beginning Courageous Conversations About Race by Glenn E. Singleton and Cyndie Hays](#)

References

“James Pate, Techno-Cubism: The Art of Line Painting.” *Dayton Art Institute*,

<https://www.daytonartinstitute.org/exhibits/james-pate-techno-cubism/>. Accessed 21 Feb. 2024.

James Pate: The Ice Cube of Contemporary Art – National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

<https://freedomcenter.org/voice/james-pate-the-ice-cube-of-contemporary-art/>. Accessed 22 Feb. 2024.

Ohio Department of Education. (2022). Ohio's Learning Standards. Columbus: Ohio Department of Education.

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/OLS-Graphic-Sections/Learning-Standards>.

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