

Bethany
Washington Crossing the Delaware

One activity from the Art 302 course that gave me a great idea of how to teach in my future art classroom, and incorporate a variety of teaching methods, was the activity in which we spoke about the history of “Washington Crossing the Delaware.” This activity would be useful in numerous ways, with all different age groups, and incorporates many different subjects into an art class. This would be a great activity to turn into a larger unit incorporating research, reading, writing, and presentation in the classroom.

First, I thought it was very nice to introduce the painting, one that is very popular in classrooms around America, and speak about what the piece, in itself, tells about the actual crossing of the Delaware, in comparison to the actual historical information. This not only introduces the piece, but also assists verbal learners in diving into the art content. All too often, students take art for exactly what it shows, instead of going beyond the artwork to understand the truth behind the piece. As a photography student, I often try to work with the idea of “photos representing a true reality” and work to push these boundaries to make others question the “reality” of photos I take. I feel that this could be an important tie into my classroom, as students need to learn that everything can be manipulated, and that artistic license can be taken in every media, even photography.

Second, The “Washington Crossing the Delaware” activity is very beneficial to students as it incorporates other subjects into the study of art, as the readings we have completed suggested. I feel that it is very important that students not only learn the skills that are needed to create art, but also study, research, and write about the art, and the history of each piece. Through these activities, other skills, such as reading, writing and

comprehension, can be further developed. I would like to do separate activities within a larger lesson on this topic, including writing about historic art pieces, researching a historic piece that the students are interested in, and presenting that to the rest of the class.

The incorporation of the history of “Washington Crossing the Delaware” into our lesson gave me a much greater appreciation of the painting, and brought back a sense of childlike curiosity, as I began to wonder about the true history of other famous pieces of art. This could also be incorporated into my future classroom, in an assignment in which each student could investigate a different piece of art and present on the history of the piece and just what they found out about it. I also think this gives students creative ideas about pieces of art that they could make about history, ancient or modern, to make different statements. It is often said that the best way to learn is to learn to teach the subject, and, in this way, students would have to remember their art piece and its history well enough to teach to the rest of the class, creating an experience that will likely lead to deep retention of the information they present.

Next, I thought that this activity was beneficial because we discussed the piece aloud in class. From my past experiences, elementary and high school teachers rarely incorporated in-class discussion into art classes. Classes were generally a “lecture” in which the teacher explained the project, work time, and finally the simple handing in of completed works of art. This process seems to be missing a crucial component of discussing what works well or could be improved within each piece. Students often seem to get discouraged by what is wrong with their piece, and forget that there are also parts

of each piece in which they were successful. Critique and discussion help to increase confidence of students and help them to understand what truly makes art great. As Mrs. Szabo said while we were at Lincoln Middle School, it is important to incorporate students into discussion instead of always talking at them. I fully agree with Mrs. Szabo's opinion, as I personally have learned much more in classes that focused on discussion than I have in other lecture courses. Additionally, questions that are brought up in discussion of both student and historical art pieces, such as "why is the sky light around Washington's head," can lead students into discussions about emphasis, use of color, and artistic license, along with other art topics. These discussions could then lead into art projects in which students work to use these artistic elements in their own pieces.

This activity could be further extended to incorporate a student project in which each student makes their own piece of art depicting a historical event (or the modern time as a historical event). This would allow the students to use their own personal artistic skills to create a piece similar to the ever-popular historic pieces we had studied. After the pieces were completed, we would also be able to have a discussion on the accuracy of each student's piece, and the ability to use artistic license while creating art.

Finally, I feel that this project gives students a greater appreciation of art, and helps them to look past the image into the artistic decisions that were made by the artist. A large part of my philosophy of art education is that I feel that students need to understand the important roles that art and creativity have played, and still play in culture, and I feel that increasing understanding and appreciation of art, and the processes and

decisions behind it, with relation to historical contexts is a very great way to help students understand that art is more than simply lines and shapes.

In addition to the plans that I have already included, in the future, I also plan to incorporate this lesson into my own classroom through discussions of various other pieces of work, and the artists that created them. It is one thing for students to be able to recognize or even emulate a piece of art, but students reach a completely different level of thoughtful understanding when they think about the history of each piece and the conscious decisions that were made by the artist to make each piece what it is. I hope to use this project to help students to make conscious decisions about their artwork, something that I was rarely taught to do before college.

Overall, I hope to help give art a tie to subjects that are often labeled as “more important” than art, and help students to truly understand that there is much more to art than the creation of individual pieces. I want my students to understand that a very specific thought process, including research, opinion, emotion, history, science, reading, and math, associated with art. I hope that each student is eventually able to come to the realization that art is just as important as any other subject. After all, without designers, artists, and creative thinkers, our world would never have become what it is today.