

A Collaborative Curriculum written by:
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“Visions of Homelessness”

A Curriculum for Grades 9-12

The goal of this study is to broaden the awareness of our students to the issues of homelessness in their own environment, the greater society and the world. As students engage in a variety of activities and become familiar with the multiple issues that may lead one to homelessness, students will gain insight, sensitivity and incentive to impact change both in their own lives and the lives of others. Using the arts as a tool for exploration and expression, students will demonstrate learning and growth.

Unit Plan

Lesson One: Conversations about Homelessness

**Small groups of 5 or 6 students will discuss these questions
And report to the whole class.**

Brainstorming questions on having a home versus homelessness:

1. What are Basic Human Needs?
2. What is the essential part of being in a home?
(A safe and nurturing environment)
3. Does anyone have any personal connection with someone who faced being homeless?
4. What would you have to give up if you found yourself suddenly homeless?
5. What emotional changes do you think you would experience?
6. What would you put in your backpack- your only possession?
7. How do you think people become homeless? (Choices/no choices)
8. Interview someone who has some direct personal experience with homelessness. (Neighbor/ family member/ friend)
9. How do we end homelessness?
10. What are social/political/economic issues that impact homelessness?
11. How can we effect change?
12. Why should we as individuals be concerned about homelessness?
13. How can we find our more about these issues?

Lesson 2: Dispelling Myths (Learning about stereotyping)

Students will be introduced to people who are homeless and will interview or share a planned experience where an exchange has been pre-arranged. Ideally, the game show “To Tell the Truth” - which presents three “homeless people” and has the audience ask questions to help identify the “real” homeless person would be a good way to capture the interest of junior and senior high school students. Spending a few hours working in a shelter or a food kitchen might also be a way for students to reflect on their understanding of issues related to homelessness, poverty, loneliness, etc.

Possible people to interview:

1. a homeless person
2. a politician
3. a teacher
4. a friend, relative, or neighbor who has a personal contact with someone who has faced homelessness

Students will write about their experiences and report back to the group.

Students will use the interview as the basis of an art project:

1. A song
2. A short story or play.
3. A Collage of word and image.

Lesson 3: Poetry /Visual Art Project

Students will begin with a paper divided into five sections. Each section will signify one of the senses, smell, sight, sound and taste and touch. Students will be asked to find words to describe each word as it relates to his/her early memories. Students will create a poem based on these images.

We will look at the work of various artists to see how individual style, color and line affect the mood of the work. Picasso’s Blue Period, Marc Chagall’s narrative work, Ben Shahn’s illustration’s and paintings, etc. will be used as examples.

Students will be asked to illustrate their poems based on a particular artist or style of painting.

Lesson 4: Visual Thinking Strategies/ Looking at Images

Students will view visual images- from posters, books, photographs or a select group of slides of Artists who have expressed issues related to homelessness.

The VTS questions posed to the class are simple, repetitive and very important:

1. “What do you see in the picture?”
2. “What more do you see?”
3. “What evidence do you find for that?”
4. “ Is there anything more?”

Opinions are validated by visual evidence only. This strategy is very simple but reinforces breaking through assumptions and stereotypes with the practice of looking closely and questioning our interpretations.

Students will be encouraged to explore the images in a non-judgmental way and will be given acknowledgement for their perceptions.

Suggested Art +Artists:

Schools of Art:

Expressionist

The Ash Can School

Outsider Art *– Contemporary Artists who self-taught and often live on or express being outside society

Social Realists

Painters:

Picasso’s Blue Period

Van Gogh’s drawings of people from a Mental Institution

Romare Beardon’s Collages + Paintings of City Scenes

Alan Crite’s and Jacob Lawrence’s City People/ City Scenes

Kathy Kollwitz

Ben Shahn

Frieda Kahlo and Diego Rivera

Edward Munch

John Biggers

Rauschenberg

Photographers: Dorothea Lange Margret Burke-White Gordon Parks

Ruth Orkin Helen Levitt

(relate Art to Literature- such as Grapes of Wrath, Rachel and Her Children)

Lesson 5: 3-Dimensional Constructions

Students will work together in small groups to create three-dimensional pieces using found objects, recycled materials and other traditional and non-traditional art materials.

This art project encourages students to bring in objects reflective of what is important to them and create constructions - building box homes, filling suitcases or backpacks, creating shopping carts, and making mobiles help to create another sense of the real life decisions which must be made by a homeless person.

What stuff do we really need to be alive?

Building group spirit and cooperation will be an expectation of all group work. Each student will write about their assemblage.

Suggested 3-d Artists:

Joseph Cornell – Box constructions

Alexander Calder- mobiles

Betty Saayr

Louise Nevelson

Marisol

Henry Moore (whose inspiration came from drawing people in the subways of London during the Blitz (Spelling?)- bombing of London during WWII)

Lesson 6: Community Service Requirement

On a weekly or monthly basis, students will volunteer at a shelter or food kitchen. Students will keep journals and sketch books, which will be shared regularly with the class.

Students will be encouraged to create an “Artist Book” based on their experiences with community service. Artist books are hand made books that have a flow of image, word and folded paper or insert that capture a sense of the quality of something- a feeling, a place, a moment in time.

Lesson 7: Quilt Making

Students will work in small groups to create quilts to donate to a shelter. Students will brainstorm words and images that they feel will help create a more comforting environment.

See the Quilts of Faith Ringold and Claire Wainright.

Both contemporary artists have taken the Art of the Quilt to a more personal significance. Faith creates quilts – fabrics from her family and writes childrens books about her quilts as the stories of her life with the written word as a framing images of people and places. Claire works with social groups- about the cultural and social issues in their lives. Images are of people, houses and cities, historic and contemporary issues. Her works contain social, political and economic insights.

Students may be able to engage the people who are in the shelters to participate in the quilt making, in words, poetry, songs, and images.

(P.s. Men and Boys love using fabric- attachments can be made with hot glue guns which are cheap and easy to use))

Lesson 8: Research, Discussions, and Art: The Economic and Political Conditions of Homelessness

Students will raise questions:

How many homeless people are in our city today?

How many are women and children?

Why are so many people so rich when many people don't even have a place to live?

Have students use the Internet to find information on these issues.

Create information boards on the data they discover. Have the students put up a bulletin board on this information to share with the school along with their artwork.

Look at artwork from Depression era and contrast it with salon paintings. (Ben Shahn, Raphael Soyer, Reginald Marsh, and all the photographers versus The Impressionists, European and American portrait paintings of the rich)

Students will create short skits in small groups, which reflect people's lives from differing social milieu. "Act Out Art" – speak for the paintings.

Lesson 9: Taking Action

Students will be asked to brainstorm ideas for impacting change. Students will create artwork, greeting cards, etc., for fund raising.

Lesson 10: Poster Art

Students will study poster design and will create posters to support the action they decide to take to help end homelessness.

(Look at Ben Shahn's posters on social issues)

Lesson 11: Information Exchange

Students will communicate with other groups of students across the city and country to share lessons and ideas for implementing change.

Lesson 12: Homelessness March on Washington, D. C. Spring break 2003