

Visual Arts Lesson Plan

Title: Learning from Ai Weiwei: Art as Activism

Grade/Age Level: 8th grade

CA Art Standards:

8.VA:Re 7.1: Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture, environment, and personal experiences which impacts the message it conveys to others.

8.CN:11 : Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity.

Common Core Literacy Anchor Standards:

Reading Informational Text: RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Writing: W.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Speaking & Listening: SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 8 topics, texts, and issues*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:

- Analyze how Ai Weiwei uses his art to approach social & political issues
- Explain how artists can communicate ideas and concepts through symbolism
- Use a reference to support interpretations of artwork
- Write about the connection between an artwork and a contemporary issue
- Design a concept for an artwork that addresses a specific issue

Materials and Resources:

Art Materials:

- Lined paper & pencils
- Pens & markers
- Large drawing paper
- Rulers or other drawing tools

- Tablets or computers for research

Instructional Resources:

- Article with bio and info about Ai Weiwei
- Images of Ai Weiwei's artworks (specifically *Remembering & Straight*)
- Article about the Sichuan earthquake and Ai Weiwei's response
- Projector/screen or method to display digital media
- Images of other examples of installation art

Vocabulary:

Tier 2:

- Memorial: Something created to honor and remember people or events
- Activism: Taking action to create social or political change
- Human Rights: The basic rights and freedoms that every person has

Tier 3:

- Installation Art: Artwork that fills and/or transforms a physical space so viewers can experience and/or interact with it
- Symbolism: using an object or image to represent a larger concept or idea
- Conceptual Art: Art that conveys a specific concept, idea, or message

Procedures:

Intro: Show images of Ai Weiwei's works, *Remembering* and *Straight*, without explaining. Ask students general questions like: What do you notice? What emotions do these artworks evoke? What message do you think these artworks are conveying? After discussion, give a brief explanation of the art, artist, and historical context.

Reading: Students read a short bio of Ai Weiwei and a short article about the Sichuan earthquake and Ai Weiwei's response to it via his installations.

Discussion: Students discuss questions together as a class, while referencing what they learned in the readings: How and why do artists speak about social issues? Do they have the responsibility to? Can artwork create change? How does knowing the context behind a socially charged artwork change your viewing experience of it?

Writing: Students write a 1-2 paragraph response to the question: How does Ai Weiwei use his art to expose injustice? They can reference the readings and the artwork images.

Art Activity: After doing their own research, students each choose a social, environmental, or political issue that they care about. They also review images of other examples of installation art with activism themes. They will then create a concept sketch (using pencil first, then pens to finish) for an installation artwork that communicates a clear message about their issue. They will title the artwork and write a brief artist's statement explaining their intention. To end, students will display their sketches to the class and discuss each other's work.

Formative Assessment:

- Discussion participation
- Reference to reading during discussion
- Completion of written response, with reference to reading and/or artwork images
- Completion of concept sketch and artist statement
- Concept sketch message and connection to chosen issue is clear & intentional