

# Facilitator's Guide

*"Man is used to the fact that there are languages which he does not at first understand and which must be learned, but because art is primarily visual he expects that he should get the message immediately and is apt to be affronted if he doesn't" - Edward Hall, 1966*

As a facilitator for this exploration of visual literacy, photography, and history, your role is to motivate and guide students to discover their own interpretations and meanings. Please note that the success of this curriculum does not require that you be an expert in visual literacy and photographic technique. ARTi, the learning agent, is the expert! ARTi will provide the core visual literacy and photography content to your students. Your role involves executing the warm up activities to engage students in the theme of equality and facilitating the discussions, presentations, and final photography exhibit. The intent is that you will learn with your students, actively developing awareness of visual communication.

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## Visual Literacy

Simply, visual literacy can be defined as the ability to understand and produce visual messages (Arizona State University, 2002). Visual literacy involves thinking critically and analytically about visual information in order to assess both the meaning and the intention of that information as well as using these skills to create new forms of visual communication. The International Visual Literacy Association offers a detailed definition:

Visual literacy is "a group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visual actions, objects, and/or symbols, natural or man-made, that are [encountered] in [the] environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, [we are] able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, [we are] able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communications" (Fransecky & Debes, 1972, p. 7).

The need for visual literacy skill building increases as visually rich forms of information dominate our methods of communication. "In the era of 'reality TV', infomercials, docudramas, and other hybrid genres that media now offer in abundance, it is increasingly difficult to know when looking at an image whether it has been contrived or doctored, and if so, precisely how and for what purpose" (Brunner, 1994, p.17).

ARTiFACT addresses the fact that students do not naturally acquire and refine visual literacy skills and thus are unable to immediately understand a visual message. By offering a series of interactive on and off the computer activities, students will gain the skills to 'read' a photographic image and compose images to convey meaning.

### **Visual Literacy and History**

It is accepted that the study of history involves human construction. History is grounded in "...an interpretative framework through which we organize and interpret human experience through time" (Gabella, 1994b p. 343). ARTiFACT capitalizes on the fact that historical interpretations exist in multiple forms including but not limited to painting, poetry, music, photography, and film.

As students progress through the curriculum, you may observe that students have clear conceptions about what forms provide historical knowledge. Not surprisingly, the arts are not included. Experiencing the curriculum will increase students' awareness of the variety of forms that promote historic information.

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### **Photographic Formal Features**

The key formal features explored throughout the curriculum are listed and defined for reference.

#### Forms of Composition

- Central Composition: This composition is a static-symmetrical form resembling the effect of a bull's eye. "A central composition can be enormously effective in cases where the subject consists of a complete and self-contained form..." (Feininger, 1973, p.116)



- Dynamic Composition: A dynamic composition conveys the feeling of motion. Tilting or diagonal lines effectively represent action. Dynamic compositions evoke strong feelings of speed, life, drama, and violence.



- Static Composition: A composition is static if the elements seem at rest. The use of primarily horizontal and vertical lines conveys a static feeling. Static compositions evoke feelings of security, peace, reliability, firmness, and undisputed strength.



- Symmetrical Composition: Use of symmetry represents a high degree of order in a composition. It is a powerful symbol of formality and monotony.



Line:

- Straight horizontal lines convey stability, permanence, tranquility, reliability, and extension in the horizontal direction. This is the most static of all lines.

- Straight vertical lines suggest distance in the vertical direction, height, and stability to an extent. While vertical lines suggest equilibrium, there is always the fear that a vertical line may tip or fall.



- Converging verticals are often found in images of man-made structures. Converging vertical parallels are a powerful symbol of height.



- Diagonals are straight lines that expand from corner to corner and have the impression of toppling. Objects arranged along the diagonal appear to slide and move. The diagonal line is the most dynamic of all the lines symbolizing movement and life.



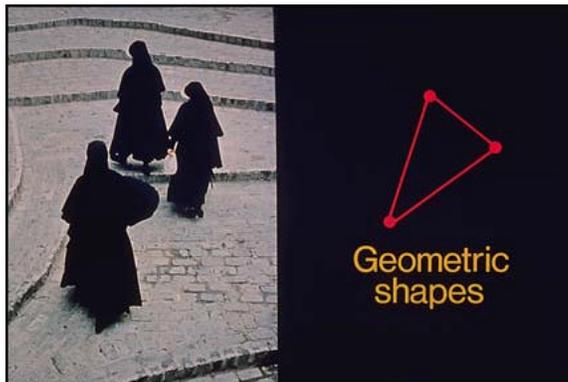
- Jagged lines (the skyline of a city) create excitement and the feeling of sharpness.



- Curving lines offer a smooth, rolling quality to an image.



- Lines of arrangement or composition are imaginary lines created by the placement of elements to produce the effect of a line. Skillful and careful arrangement of elements can create imaginary lines that enhance meaning.



- Lines of motion or force (a reaching hand, a car traveling left to right) imply movement or direction along lines key to the composition.



- Line of the horizon can evoke certain feelings. A high horizon suggests earthy qualities while providing a detailed view. A low horizon conveys lofty qualities, evoking the sense of endless space. A horizon dividing the photograph into two or more equal parts places equal emphasis on earth and sky, creating a monotonous impression.



Subject:

Subject choices determine what is included and excluded from the photograph. Both simplicity and framing comprise subject decisions.

- Simplicity involves an awareness of foreground and background to reduce visual confusion.



- Framing involves "...surrounding the subject with suitable foreground matter arranged to form a more or less complete frame" (Feininger, 1973, p. 118). An essential component to framing is the effective positioning of key elements and details. Remember, a part can have a more powerful effect than a whole.

Contrast:

High, medium or low contrast involves increasing or decreasing intermediate shades of gray. Dropping out the grays can improve a composition by eliminating unwanted details and thus clarifying meaning. High contrast images evoke power and tension, while low contrast images create somber, heavy feelings.



low contrast



normal contrast



high contrast

Angle of view:

Drastic use of different camera angles (or points of view) can create illusions of depth and space. Also, camera angles can dramatically evoke relational feelings. Upward angles portray the subject as powerful and authoritarian. While, downward angles depict the subject as little and less powerful.



upward angle



low angle

## Standards

ARTiFACT provides opportunities for teachers to meet both History-Social Studies and Art Education standards.

## History Standards

### California State Standard

### ARTiFACT

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#### *Chronological and Spatial*

- Explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.
- The project portion of the curriculum requires students to visually represent their perspective of the present idea of equality. Discussions spurred by the historical content will encourage students to make connections.

#### *Research, Evidence and Point of View*

- Pose relevant questions about events encountered in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photos, maps, art and architecture.
- ARTi and the teacher will facilitate and prompt student questions about photographs historical content and implications.

### National Standard

### ARTiFACT

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- Curricula should provide opportunities for students to participate in activities that allow for individual development and identity.
- A student that provides exemplary work in the project-based component of ARTiFACT will demonstrate significant personal growth in reflection on the world and their role in it.

## Art Education Standards

### California State Standard

### ARTIFACT

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#### *Creative Expression*

- Demonstrate beginning skill in the manipulation of digital imagery.
- Students will have the opportunity to manipulate their images and reflect on the ethical implications of their choices.

#### *Aesthetic Valuing*

- Identify how selected principles of design are used in a work of art and how they contribute to their personal responses to the work and its evaluation.
- With repeated practice, students will refine their ability to not only identify the formal features of photography but also to reflect on the connection between the features connection and the meaning of the image.

### National Standard

### ARTIFACT

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- Students should be able to communicate proficiently in at least one art form, including the ability to define and solve artistic problems with insight, reason, and technical proficiency.
- After completing the curriculum, students will be able to effectively convey a message through photography.
- Students should be able to develop and present basic analyses of works of art from structural, historical, and cultural perspectives, and from combinations of those perspectives.
- After completing the curriculum, students will be able to critically 'read' photographic images.
- Students should be able to relate various types of arts knowledge and skills within and across the arts disciplines including history and culture.
- After completing the curriculum, students will be able to understand and apply the formal features of photography to convey meaning relating to history.

## **Preparation and Materials**

Preparation: For each activity in the curriculum, you should review the historical content as well as familiarize yourself with the formal feature of photography that is covered. As stated earlier, you will not need to be an expert in the visual literacy skills, but you should be comfortable with the vocabulary. In addition, each activity will involve a warm-up session and a journal assignment. These will need to be reviewed ahead of time so you will be prepared for the inevitable questions that may arise.

On a technical note, it is always a good idea to check that the program and the computer are functioning as planned before you are relying on them to work. To start the computer-based units:

Insert the ARTIFACT curriculum disk into the drive.

Click on the disk to open it.

Click on the Developing History file.

Materials:

ARTIFACT Facilitator's Guide

ARTIFACT CD-ROM

Journals for each child

Disposable cameras for each child

Photography Reference Books

Historical Reference Books

Magazines and Newspapers for cutting up

Scissors, glue and/or tape

Photo Manipulation Program (Freeware)

## **Problem Description**

As preparation for the project component of the curriculum, students will be presented with a structured problem (computer lessons) to develop the skills necessary to complete the project. Students will be challenged to create a visual narrative of the equality topic they have chosen. Students will be asked to select images that convey the setting of the topic, major events in history that represent the topic, and a conclusion to the narrative. As they build their narrative, the selected images will follow them through each of the activities. By the end of the computer-based curriculum, students will have “written” a visual narrative of equality. Each activity in the problem-based, interactive computer component of the curriculum will help students build both their narrative and visual literacy skills.

Activity 1 - Setting up the Story and Subject

Activity 2 - Major History Event 1 and Angle of View

Activity 3 - Major History Event 2 and Contrast

Activity 4 - Major History Event 3 and Line

Activity 5 - Major History Event 4 and Rule of Thirds

Activity 6 - Conclusion of the Story and Composition

### **Activity 1 -**

Time: 1 day simulation, including a 30 minute discussion period

20 minutes for computer activity

15 - 30 minutes of homework

Development of Learning goal(s): Activities 1 - 5 will involve building the component skills necessary to enhance visual literacy skills in photography. In the process, the activities will build an understanding of the various intentions of purposeful photographic image creation, increase awareness of the context of photographs, and communicate historic information.

#### Objectives:

Students will be familiar with the issue of inequality.

Students will understand the setting of the (in)equality unit they have chosen to study.

Students will be able to describe subject.

Students will have a beginning knowledge of the effects of subject choices including simplicity and framing on the meaning of a photograph.

#### Warm-up:

To introduce the idea of equality, students will participate in a simulation of inequality the day before the first activity. Choose an arbitrary trait based on physical appearance or characteristics to group students. Examples include first letter of name, clothing type or color, presence or absence of glasses, etc. Using this arbitrary grouping assign students different privileges. For example, allow one group of students to choose their seats while the other group must sit in assigned seats. Continue to assign unequal privileges to each group throughout the day. To ensure students experience both sides of the issue, switch privilege status half way through the day. Leave time (30 minutes) for a substantial discussion and debriefing of the activity. Students should begin to question the "why" of this situation. When students begin to inquire, engage students in a discussion of how they felt.

Why did students feel the need to question the situation?

If students found the situation was unfair, why did they think it was so?

Ask students if they can think of times in history where parallel situations occurred?

Be sure to debrief students on this activity. Ask them to discuss their emotions. How did the activity make them feel? The first entry in their journal should allow them to reflect on this activity and ask questions to which they want answers. It is very important that students are reassured equal status in the class. Make sure students do not leave without making a statement regarding the necessity of respecting all people and the equality of all humans.

#### Activity (Computer-based):

The first activity in the computer-based component of the program introduces students to three situations in history that parallel their warm-up experience in class. Students are invited to view three movies that briefly introduce these situations: the Civil Rights Movement, Women's Liberation, and Social Class Reform. After watching each video, students are asked to choose which of the three situations they would like to learn more about. After selecting their topic of choice, students will be asked to help tell the narrative of the situation through visual representations. Their first assignment will be to select the photograph that they believe best represents the issue at hand. If the student selects an inappropriate choice, he or she will be given feedback and invited to choose again. Once the student has selected the correct image, the formal feature of the photograph that best explains why this image was the best choice will be examined. In this case, students will discover framing and how it affects subject-matter choice.

The breakout formal feature activity and each of the computer-based activities to follow will adhere to the following format: introduction, exploration, and application of the formal feature within the larger narrative development. After an exploration of subject, students will be invited to frame an image to elicit a certain effect in the viewer as a result of subject-matter choice. Key vocabulary that will be covered includes framing, subject matter, simplicity, background, foreground, horizontal and vertical. At the end of the lesson, students will be given a journal assignment. The questions are found below.

#### Journal Questions:

Why did you decide to frame the image the way you did?

What effect do you think it will have on the viewer of your photograph?

What did you lose by your framing decision? What did you gain?

Lastly, cut and paste images from newspapers and magazines that are examples of subject choice decisions. Focus on framing and simplicity. Write a brief explanation for why you chose to include these images.

## Activity 2

Time: 15 minutes for warm-up and discussion

20 minutes for computer activity

15 - 30 minutes of homework

Development of Learning goal(s): See Activity 1.

### Objectives:

Students will begin to build a narrative of their selected topic.

Students will be able to describe angle of view.

Students will have a beginning knowledge of angle of view's effect on the meaning of a photograph.

Students will be familiar with the visual literacy vocabulary associated with angle of view.

### Preparation:

For the warm-up activity, display or print the images in Appendix 1: Supporting Materials.

### Warm-up:

A provocative way to engage students in the curriculum is to address a common belief that photographs are snapshots of the truth. Frame a discussion around this idea, carefully gauging students' preconceived ideas about photographic images. The tension surrounding this issue will motivate students to fully understand the formal features of photography and their use in conveying meaning.

Ask students the questions associated with each image.

OJ Simpson Photographs: Which of these two photographs represents reality? How do you know?

All-American Beauty: Is this woman real?

Explain how the photograph was created and then ask the same question.

This conversation will also serve as an informal assessment on what students learned in the previous activity. Are students using the vocabulary related to subject (framing, foreground, background, horizontal and vertical orientation)?

#### Activity (Computer-based):

The student's second assignment will be to continue to build their narrative of equality. Students will again continue to view and select photographs that act as a visual representation of history. As students continue the narrative, they will eventually break away into a lesson on angle of view. Students will be asked to select the photograph that best represents a chosen emotion. Students will be given as many opportunities as necessary to make the best selection. The selection will be examined in light of angle of view. Students will then engage in an interactive exploration of angle of view. In order to apply and assess new knowledge, students will match words ('power', 'tension', 'unification', etc.) with the picture that best portrays each feeling. Once the student has matched all the photographs with a word, the narrative will continue with those pictures. The student will get a chance to reflect on their decisions and if they match the story as it unfolds. Students will be guided to discover angle of view and how it affects the mood of the photograph. Key vocabulary that will be covered includes angle of view, perspective, upward, downward and straight on angles. At the end of the lesson, students will be given a journal assignment. The questions are found below.

#### Journal Questions:

Why did you decide select this particular angle of view?

What effect did it have on the meaning?

What did you lose and gain by your choice on angle of view?

Lastly, sketch at least one image for each of the following: an angle of view that shows power of the subject matter, an angle of view that portrays height, and an angle of view that makes the viewer feel powerful. Write a brief explanation for why you chose to draw the images the way you did.

### **Project Description**

The project component of the curriculum requires students to develop their own narratives that reflect the theme of equality in their own lives. Students will receive some guidance through this experience; however, most of the component skills necessary for successfully completion of the project are built in the problem-based component of the curriculum. Each student will be given a disposable camera to capture moments he or she feels reflects the topic of equality in present day life. The students will then select five images that best represent their narrative and best demonstrate the formal features learned. Students will also be given the chance to manipulate their images for effectiveness.

Activity 1 - Planning Your Narrative of Equality

Activity 2 - Selecting Your Narrative of Equality

Activity 3 - Displaying Your Narrative of Equality

## **Activity 1 - Planning Your Narrative of Equality**

Time: 15 minutes for warm-up

30 minutes for planning and discussion

2 hours outside of class over the next week or two

Development of Learning goal(s): The project-based component of the curriculum will provide the opportunity for students to create photographs that convey an intended message by using the formal features of composition including subject, rule of thirds, balance, line, angle of view, and contrast. By composing visual representations, students will be applying their knowledge of the chosen situation to their present experiences or interpretations of the theme of equality.

Objectives:

Students will effectively use the formal feature of photography to compose photographs.

Students will visually represent an intended message.

Warm-up:

Engage students in a discussion about the situations they have explored through ARTiFACT.

Encourage students to share their interpretations and assist them in forming connections between the past and the present in relation to the theme of equality. Their journal entries throughout the unit should help them articulate and discuss freely their perspectives.

Activity:

In-class - Begin by asking students to individually brainstorm on the feelings and message they would like their photographs to tell in regards to the theme of equality. Students should also engage in some planning on how they will use the formal features to convey their intended feelings and message. Encourage students to revisit their journal to see the progression of their thoughts and ideas.

Over the next week - Provide each student with a disposable camera with a specific due date.

Ask the students to document their photography process, recording the challenges and decisions they encountered.

Journal Questions:

Which formal features did you employ? And how?

What composition decisions did you make? And why?

What challenges did you face when doing this project?

What did you enjoy about this project?

## **Activity 2 - Selecting Your Narrative of Equality**

Time: 1 hour

Development of Learning goal(s): See Activity 1.

### Objectives:

Students will distinguish the strong compositions of their collection.

Students will self-assess their photographs to ensure that the intended message is clear.

Students will make informed decisions about the manipulation of their images.

### Preparation:

The photographs will need to be developed. Depending upon your resources and student skill level, the images can either be scanned by the students or will need to be saved to a disk. We recommend saving the images to a disk to free class time for student exploration of image manipulation. The freeware photo-manipulation program needs to be available on the computers.

### Warm-up:

As students will be anxious and curious to see their developed photographs, gauge whether a discussion will be productive. A discussion could center on students' reflections on the process of capturing images. Students could share their journal responses as a whole class or in small groups.

### Activity:

First, students should review their photographs and select five they feel best represent their intended message and use of the formal features. Remind students that they will need to justify their choices in the final art show. Once the photographs are chosen, students will begin to manipulate their images using the graphics program included with the curriculum. After spending time exploring, students will decide on the final versions of their five photographs.

### Journal Questions:

What did you change/manipulate in your photographs?

What effects did your manipulation have on the feeling and/or meaning?

Do your five images tell your intended narrative?

Why did you choose those five photographs?

### **Activity 3 - Displaying Your Narrative of Equality**

Time: 1 hour for the "Art Opening" and Activity

Development of Learning goal(s): See Activity 1.

#### Objectives:

Students will practice their public speaking skills by presenting their collection to the class.

Students will educate their peers on the specific situation they chose to study.

Students will practice their visual literacy skills by actively 'reading' their peers' visual representations.

#### Preparation:

Display the students' work like an exhibit. Invite teachers, parents, and any other interested people to the opening day.

#### Warm Up:

Engage students in a role-play. Tell them they are museum curators and need to write captions to accompany the photographs. Have each student write the caption for a couple of their peers' photographs and post the interpretation next to the corresponding picture. Then, let students roam around the exhibit reading the captions. Students will be able to assess whether their photographs successfully convey their intended message. Finally, ask students to present their collection, providing justifications behind their decisions.

#### Journal Questions:

Were you successful at conveying your message?

Were your 'readings' of other students' work accurate?

### **Assessment Strategies**

Given the subjective nature of much of the work in the unit, assessment strategies will focus on students' individual growth and reflective ability. Assessment of student performance and progress will include informal, formative strategies as well as formal, summative activities. To begin the unit, execution of the activity involving three questions in regards to a photograph (outlined earlier, p. 7) will offer insight into the students' initial understanding of visual literacy and photography. This same exercise will serve as a summative assessment enabling you to evaluate how students' responses to the photograph have changed.

Informally, we recommend recording students' level of engagement and interest throughout the unit. Do the warm up activities serve their purpose to motivate students and spark emotional attachment to the theme of equality? Have the students' interest increased over time? Question students as they experience the interactive computer activities. Are they involved with the content at hand? Record students' participation in class discussion and note the quality of comments with regards to the use of key terms and connections. To assist in more formal evaluation, rubrics are provided.