SILHOUETTE SELF-PORTRAITS

EXPLORING THE QUESTION “WHO AM I?”
TO COMMUNICATE IDENTITY THROUGH SYMBOLS
ART & LANGUAGE ARTS / ARTS & HUMANITIES GRADES: 10-12

I. Class Demographics – (5pts)
Include contextual information about the class the lesson will be taught to such as the total number of students, male/female student ratio, ethnicities, G.T., Special Education, grade level, etc.

This lesson was taught to 280 students total over the course of two semesters (arts & humanities is a semester-long elective at our school and the students change classes in January.) Class male/female ratio for 2014-15 school year is 59% male / 41% female. My class population consisted of 96% Caucasian students and 4% ethnic minority students. Further breakdown of demographics included 28% G/T and 21% special education population. Grade level dispersement was 4 sophomores, 150 juniors and 126 seniors. Freshmen are not permitted to take arts & humanities, except in rare or special circumstances. Students enrolled in two or more years of band or chorus are also not required to take arts & humanities. We also have approximately 5% of the student population who will complete the course on-line. 85% of our student body will take arts & humanities as an elective and complete their requirement with an additional elective in visual arts, music or drama.

II. Context – (10 pts) Explain how the lesson fits into the unit:
A. Identify unit topic and unit objectives
B. Identify essential questions addressed by this lesson
C. Describe the students’ prior knowledge or focus of previous lesson
D. Describe any modifications if necessary
A. Context of Lesson: Unit Topic and Objectives
Based on the Cincinnati Art Museum Exhibit: Henry Ossawa Tanner: Modern Spirit

I became an artist at the age of thirteen. I was walking out with my father one fine, fair afternoon in Fairmont Park, Philadelphia, and there for the first time I saw an artist at work. Since that moment I, too, have been an artist.

—Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1913

Just as Henry Ossawa Tanner discovered his own artistic identity at the age of 13, our students also have moments of realization or discovery about who they are. This activity allows students to consider just who they are and how that can be visually represented to others in an effort to understand the extensive diversity that exists in our classroom. By understanding more about each other at the outset of the class, we establish a framework for inclusion throughout the semester. Students begin to identify those with whom they share interests or may even be introduced to others that intrigue them, which opens the door for new relationships with students who might not be as much like them. This mini-lesson also fosters the concept that each student in my class matters and has worth in the classroom. Students not only create their first piece of artwork, but also engage in developing a rubric/scoring guide collaboratively and talking about their artwork during class time. We establish the expectation of listening to others, asking clarifying questions when necessary and appreciating the creative process . . . all necessary lessons at the beginning of a semester.

B. Big Ideas & Essential Questions
Big Ideas
- Individual and personal identity is something all humans encounter at some point in their lives.
- Identity can be influenced by stereotypes and assumptions.
- Artists have used artwork to question stereotypes and assumptions made about identity.

Essential Questions
- What is my identity?
- How is my identity influenced by stereotypes?
- How would I alter these assumptions through my own perceptions or the perceptions of others?
- How do artists deal with identity in their own works?

C. Prior Knowledge/Prior Lesson
Students have just entered arts & humanities class when this part of the unit is taught [Arts & What Unit]. Any prior knowledge would come from students’ experiences in other classes or in their own personal lives. This first activity builds on concepts learned in the middle school art class (elements/principles) and appropriate review is given prior to starting the project.

Essentially this lesson was designed for my humanities students as a way to get to know each other at the beginning of the semester and a method for me to learn more about each of them (and learn their names). Part of what happens in my classroom is learning to appreciate the arts and understanding our differences as human beings helps create amazing art. While we might not “like” every art form, we can learn to appreciate the talent and creativity behind the diverse art forms we study. So instead of wasting time with those “bingo” activities to “find-a-person-who-likes-ice-cream,” we start by creating a personal work of art—a silhouette collage—each unique and diverse as the student who created it.

D. Modifications
Modifications were made for two students who had fine motor difficulty and could not manipulate the materials or the cutting/pasting. A peer tutor worked with those students, who selected their symbols and then directed the peer tutor on placement. Although most students had little to no difficulty with tracing the silhouettes of their classmates, those who had issues with tracing could opt out of this part of the process and merely get started on their projects. The project allows for a great deal of freedom in selection of images and execution of the product, which provides a vehicle for “built-in” modifications, as needed.
III. **Lesson Objectives/Learning Targets** – (10 pts)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. State what students will demonstrate as a result of this lesson</td>
<td>B. Objective must be student centered... (Students will.....) (I can...)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson Objectives**
- Students will create a representation of identity in terms of their self-image through a silhouette self-portrait that incorporates elements of personal identity.
- Students will examine other students' self-portraits to expand understanding of identity.

**Learning Targets**
- I can create a representation of myself through a silhouette self-portrait.
- I can incorporate at least 5-7 symbols which represent aspects of who I am (personal identity) in my silhouette self-portrait.
- I can complete a self-assessment and reflect on the process involved in creating my self-portrait.
- I can explain in words to my classmates how my final product represents who I am (personal identity).
- I can listen to my classmates, ask clarifying questions (if necessary) and respond appropriately as an audience member.

IV. **Connections** – (5 pts)
List all Kentucky Core Academic Standard(s) being addressed in the lesson. Please include written language of the targeted standard(s)

**KENTUCKY HUMANITIES CORE ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

**Academic Expectations**

**Structure in the Arts**
AE 1.12 Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.

AE 1.13 Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts.

AE 2.23 Students analyze their own and others' artistic products and performances using accepted standards.

**Enduring Knowledge/Understanding**

*Students will understand that:*
+the elements and principles of design of visual art are intentionally applied in creating works of art
+responding to or critiquing works of art involves an understanding of elements, principles and structures appropriate to each area of the arts

*Students will:*
+expressively use the elements of art, principles of design and a variety of processes in creating artworks

**Humanity in the Arts**
AE 2.26 Through the arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share some common experiences and attitudes.

*Students will understand that:*
+the arts are powerful tools for understanding human experiences both past and present.
+the arts help us understand others' (often very different) ways of thinking, working and expressing ourselves.

**Purposes for Creating the Arts**
AE 1.12 Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.

AE 1.13 Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts.

AE 2.22 Students create works of art and make presentations to convey a point of view.

AE 2.26 Through the arts and humanities, students recognize that although people are different, they share some common experiences and attitudes.
Enduring Knowledge/Understandings

Students will understand that:
+ the arts provide forms of nonverbal communication that can strengthen the presentation of ideas and emotions
+ create new artworks created to fulfill a variety of specific purposes

Processes in the Arts
AE 1.12 Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes.
AE 1.13 Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts.
AE 2.22 Students create works of art and make presentations to convey a point of view

Enduring Knowledge/Understandings
Students will understand that:
+ openness, respect for work and an understanding of how artists apply elements and principles of design in creating and performing are personal attitudes and skills that enhance enjoyment of the observer.
Students will:
+ be actively involved in selecting media, techniques, subject matter and processes for creating artworks for specific purposes, applying the elements of art and principles of design
+ use knowledge of the elements and principles of art and art terminology to create expressive artworks, to describe and critique their own work creations and the creations of others (e.g., how the communication of ideas relates to media, techniques, or processes used)
+ identify and apply criteria for evaluating visual arts (e.g., skill of artist, originality, emotional impact, variety, interest, technical quality)
+ demonstrate behavior appropriate for observing the particular context and style of the artwork being viewed; discuss opinions with peers in a supportive and constructive way
+ describe personal responses to artwork; explain why there might be different responses to specific works of art (e.g., personal experience, interest, medium used, effectiveness of message)

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS ELA-Reading.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively) as well as in words to address a question or solve a problem.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

Art Connections
Standard 1. Understands connections among the various art forms and other disciplines.

Visual Arts
Standard 3. Knows a range of subject matter, symbols, and potential ideas in the visual arts.
Standard 5. Understands the characteristics and merits of one’s own artwork and the artwork of others

Language Arts
Standard 1. Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

- Students are expected to use prior learning from the middle school arts & humanities core content (elements of art and principles of design) while creating their artwork.
- Students are expected to compose a self-reflective artist’s statement as part of any art project in my classroom. It is part of the assessment rubric.
V. Lists Resources needed to teach lesson – (5 pts)

VOCABULARY

- Collage - a paste-up made by sticking together pieces of paper or photographs to form an artistic image
- Identity - the individual characteristics by which a thing or person is recognized or known
- Mixed Media - combination involving the use of two or more artistic media, such as ink and pastel or painting and collage, that are combined in a single composition
- Narrative - art that tells a story or the story being told within the artwork
- Negative Space - space between objects or the parts of an object, for example the area between a cup and its handle. Also the space between an object and the edges of the canvas, i.e. the space around an object. The opposite of negative space is positive space.
- Portrait - any likeness of a person, in any medium
- Positive Space - area or part of a painting's composition that the subject occupies. For instance, the positive space could be a vase of flowers in a still life painting, a person's face in a portrait, the trees and hills of a landscape painting. The area around the positive space is called the negative space.
- Representation - a creation that is a visual or tangible rendering of someone or something
- Self-Portrait - a representation of an artist drawn, painted, photographed or sculpted by the artist
- Silhouette - dark shape and outline of someone or something visible against a lighter background, esp. in dim light.
- Symbolism - use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities

MATERIALS

- Overhead projector
- Paper for tracing and pencils
- Examples of a variety of self-portraits
- Choices for media: colored pencils, oil pastels, crayons, tempera paint, paper scraps, images, brushes, watercolors, markers, junk craft supplies, magazines, etc.

WEB RESOURCES - Henry Ossawa Tanner

- http://www.sullivangoss.com/henry_Tanner/
ARTIST BACKGROUND: Henry Ossawa Tanner

Henry Ossawa Tanner was born on June 21, 1859, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the first of nine children. He and his siblings were brought up in a home where education was especially valued. His father, Benjamin Tucker, was a college-educated African-American Methodist Episcopal preacher. His mother, Sarah Miller Tanner, was a private school teacher. Sarah had lived in the south early in her life and had escaped slavery by traveling north via the Underground Railroad. Tanner's middle name, Ossawa, was in honor of the Kansas town where Abolitionist John Brown held his first anti-slavery campaign.

Henry Tanner's parents knew the value of reading to their young children and used the Bible to share stories. Young Tanner was filled with vivid imagery of powerful Biblical scenes and transferred these images in his adult life.

As a teenager on a walk, Tanner observed a landscape painter and decided then and there to be an artist – despite his color blindness. He spent free time looking at art in the Philadelphia galleries. Tanner's decision to be an artist was not well-received by his preacher father who, in an attempt to re-direct his son's ambition, sent young Tanner to apprentice at a local flour mill. The apprenticeship was hard on Tanner's frail body and he fell seriously ill. Fortunately, two years of recuperation gave Tanner time to paint. In 1880, at the age of 22, Tanner became the first full-time black student to enroll in the Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. Dean and teacher, Thomas Eakins, greatly encouraged and influenced Tanner and other minority individuals, including women, to pursue their interest in studying art in an academic setting. It was largely through Eakins' efforts that Philadelphia became the center for minority artists at this time.

Tanner spent the summer of 1888 in Highlands, North Carolina, where he executed many drawings of the Blue Ridge Mountain area, including its residents. These sketches of rural African-Americans were foundational for his later work.

In common with many artists, he rarely had a steady paycheck. Henry Tanner was fortunate to secure funding in 1881 from patrons, prompting a move to France where he remained for most of his adult life. He found Paris to be more accepting of his African heritage than in America. He appreciated having his work critiqued on pure artistic merit without prejudice. Tanner took classes at the Académie Julian in Paris where he painted some of his most important work. The Banjo Lesson and The Thankful Poor were exhibited in Parisian salons and galleries and in time received recognition in America as well. It was his ability to portray African-Americans with pride and dignity that brought Tanner international recognition.

Tanner began to steer away from genre paintings of humble rural African-Americans in the 1880s and focused on Biblical images he remembered as a child, much to his father's approval. He submitted one such painting, Daniel in the Lion's Den, to the 1896 Paris Salon Exhibition where he was awarded an honorable mention, an honor not realized by any other American that year. Several trips to the Middle East and the Holy Land provided opportunity to observe the barren landscape, the textiles and dress of the population, and other cultural imagery. Tanner used his trademark loose brushstrokes, muted palette, and dramatic lighting to capture his religious subjects.

Henry Ossawa Tanner married Jessie Olssen, a white opera singer, and was father to son Jesse Ossawa. The couple owned a small house in the country where they welcomed young artists of all races who sought guidance and encouragement in pursuing their passion for art. Tanner was known for his generosity and hospitality to these visitors who stayed in his home.

Tanner died in his sleep at home in Paris on May 25, 1937, at the age of 78 and is buried in nearby Sceaux next to his wife who proceeded him in death by 12 years. He is remembered as the most distinguished African-American artist of the 19th century and the first artist of his race to achieve international acclaim. He inspired many African-Americans to pursue their dreams of being artists.

from Debra J. Herman, M.F.A., Concordia University, River Forest, Illinois
VI. Instructional Strategies – (15 pts)
PROCEDURE

Note: To save time, prep in advance by tracing silhouettes during a previous lesson or class period by using an overhead projector or other strong light source. Students can take turns tracing or teacher can trace them all.

1. Begin with a discussion of scoring guides and rubrics. Talk as a class what should be involved in assessing the final product.
2. What is a symbol? Reinforce that symbols are things that represent an idea, a concept, etc. Give examples (flag represents freedom, the mockingbird represents the character of Tom Robinson, etc.)
3. What is identity? Discuss identity with students. Give time for students to brainstorm with each other the types of images, symbols and ideas that personally represent identity or self. What symbolizes your identity? Focus on symbols and not things you merely “like.”
4. Ask “What is a self-portrait?” Show examples of traditional and nontraditional self-portraits. View and allow time for class discussion and commentary. Model talking about artwork using appropriate terminology. Encourage students to use terminology from prior experience in middle school, other art electives or by looking at the glossary provided in class.
5. Explain that answering the question “Who am I?” results in establishing identity. Allow students times to collect or create images that respond to the question. Not everyone shares the same identity. We are all different. We all have much to share with each other.
6. Distribute student silhouettes (or trace silhouettes, if not prepped prior to class.)
7. Arrange the images and symbols within the silhouette portrait using elements of art and the principles design. Review elements and principles, if necessary.
8. Add elements to the negative space (review negative and positive space) to enhance personal identity or personal story.
9. Choose media to render the final composition.
10. Write a personal reflection on the meaning of the self-portrait. Make an artist’s statement reflecting on identity.

This is the printable that students are given prior to beginning the instruction.

Name_____________________________ Period _____

PROJECT ONE: Personal Symbol Silhouette Collage 100 Points Possible (Final Product)

Big Ideas & Essential Questions

- Identity is something all humans encounter.
- Identity can be influenced by stereotypes and assumptions.
- Artists have used artwork to question stereotypes and assumptions made about identity.
- What is my identity?
- How is my identity influenced by stereotypes?
- How would I alter these assumptions through my own perceptions or the perceptions of others?
- How do artists deal with identity in their own works?

PROCEDURE

1. What are some images, symbols or ideas that personally represent your identity or yourself? Brainstorm and list those here:

2. What is a self-portrait?

3. Answering the question “Who am I?” results in establishing identity. Find images in your magazines/catalogues that represent who you are—not things you “like.” Symbols can be obvious or implied.

4. Trace your silhouette with the help of a classmate.
5. Arrange the images and symbols within the silhouette portrait using elements of art and the principles design. Review elements and principles on the handout if you don’t remember.

6. Add elements to the negative space to enhance personal identity or personal story.

7. Choose media to render the final composition.

8. Write a personal reflection on the meaning of the self-portrait at the bottom of your rubric. (You could actually use this information to make an artist’s statement reflecting on your identity.)

**TERMS TO KNOW**

- **Collage** - a paste-up made by sticking together pieces of paper or photographs to form an artistic image
- **Identity** - the individual characteristics by which a thing or person is recognized or known
- **Mixed Media** - combination involving the use of two or more artistic media, such as ink and pastel or painting and collage, that are combined in a single composition
- **Narrative** - art that tells a story or the story being told within the artwork
- **Negative Space** - space between objects or the parts of an object, for example the area between a cup and its handle. Also the space between an object and the edges of the canvas, i.e. the space around an object. The opposite of negative space is positive space.
- **Portrait** - any likeness of a person, in any medium
- **Positive Space** - area or part of a painting's composition that the subject occupies. For instance, the positive space could be a vase of flowers in a still life painting, a person's face in a portrait, the trees and hills of a landscape painting. The area around the positive space is called the negative space.
- **Representation** - a creation that is a visual or tangible rendering of someone or something
- **Self-Portrait** - a representation of an artist drawn, painted, photographed or sculpted by the artist
- **Silhouette** - dark shape and outline of someone or something visible against a lighter background, esp. in dim light.
- **Symbolism** - use of symbols to represent ideas or qualities

**VI. Assessment** – (10 pts)
Include your data results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Formative assessment:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Summative assessment:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Monitoring of student work in class / note progress of individual work being completed or not completed</td>
<td>- Final self-assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Final reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Scoring rubric for silhouette portrait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[See chart below]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grade distribution for final grades</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>130 students in the “A” range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>120 students in the “B” range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28 students in the “C” range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 students received “F”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(failure to turn in project at all)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This is one just example of a rubric designed by students after class discussion about what goes into a scoring guide. Each semester’s rubric may be a little different. For example, this semester my students had two different scoring guides to choose from. Note that this rubric involves both teacher/student input and a “discussion” between teacher/student before final scoring. This helps to solve the issue of students just giving themselves perfect scores or me not understanding the symbols on the collage. It is much like the evaluation process in our district which requires evaluator and evaluatee to have a conversation. It also involves self-reflection, which is part of each and every project design in my class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>Class Period:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assignment: Silhouette Collage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date Completed:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
<th>Rate Yourself 1-10</th>
<th>Teacher’s Rating 1-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 1 – Selected symbols that represent you</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9 – 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 or less</td>
<td>Rate Yourself 1-10</td>
<td>Teacher’s Rating 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2 – Uses a variety of media for project. (A variety is three or more different media. Paper is ONE media.)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9 – 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 or less</td>
<td>Rate Yourself 1-10</td>
<td>Teacher’s Rating 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 3 – Communicates who you are visually without use of words or letters.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9 – 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 or less</td>
<td>Rate Yourself 1-10</td>
<td>Teacher’s Rating 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 4 – Effort: took time to develop idea &amp; complete project? (Didn’t rush.) Good use of class time? (Didn’t waste time talking and socializing.)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9 – 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 or less</td>
<td>Rate Yourself 1-10</td>
<td>Teacher’s Rating 1-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 5 – Craftsmanship – Neat, clean &amp; complete? Skillful use of the art tools &amp; media? Followed directions?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9 – 8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6 or less</td>
<td>Your Total</td>
<td>Teacher Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teacher Comments:

**REFLECTION:** Student Comments – How does this silhouette represent who you are as a person? Explain the symbols you selected to complete the project. What types of media/materials did you use to complete the project? Why did you select these? Is there anything you would have done differently?

- ✓ It is mandatory to complete a reflection for every project you do in this class.
- ✓ It is expected you will answer all parts of the question.

*Complete your reflection in this space and continue on separate paper, if you need additional space:*
VII. Reflections – (10 pts)

After delivering your unit/lesson, reflect on its success.

* What evidence/data demonstrates that students met goals and objectives?
* In what areas did students exceed goals and objectives?
* What might you do differently next time?

The grade distribution of the final score on the rubric indicates that students are successful in completing the project. For many of my students, this is the first time they have created a self-portrait and/or a silhouette. What signifies success more than the rubric, however, is the actual student silhouette explanations in class. Although many students are uneasy with public speaking, not one student refused to hold up his or her silhouette and talk about it. I now give students the option of standing up or sitting in the desk while talking, which has taken pressure off of the students who would equate standing with giving a speech. At the beginning of the course, I try not to cause any major distress by pushing students too far from their comfort levels. Listening to what students say also gives me an indication that the targets, goals and objectives have been met with great success.

The areas of exceeding goals and objectives really depends on the class, but overall I have noticed that students consistently exceed my expectations in regards to talking about their own works. I am also surprised at the depth and level of personal information students share while connecting to the symbols on their silhouettes. For example, last semester one of my openly gay male students explained the pain he feels when other students do not get to know him as a person because he is gay. He eloquently explained this using an image from MC Escher on his silhouette. This semester a student with Asperger’s Syndrome explained how she deals with autism through a series of puzzle pieces that comprised her silhouette. She allowed to students to ask her clarifying questions.

These are just two examples from many that make this project one that always exceeds my expectations – and those of my students. And more than anything, these are examples of how such a diverse population of students begins to have more understanding about each other through a small art project.

I am constantly refining this lesson from semester to semester. The most obvious change that I need to make is to add a day – to change from two days to three days. This has resulted from watching students rush through the project to meet my two-day deadline.

For next year, one of the things I am going to do is arrange these in an online gallery with artist’s statements on our class website so students can have access to the works throughout the semester. We do not leave them hanging for more than 3 weeks in the classroom to make way for other projects; students say they wish we had room for them all semester. An online gallery might be one way to handle this.

Another change I’ve thought about is allowing students to create 3-D sculpture instead of a 2-D silhouette. This has resulted again from student comments on their class evaluations.

VIII. Impact on the awareness of diversity on lesson plan – (20 pts)

A. What impact did your lesson plan have on your students to enhance their awareness of diversity?
B. What is the purpose of the lesson?
C. Why did you select this lesson?
D. Why is it important to your school community?

Diversity encompasses many things in an arts-driven classroom, including anti-bias, identity and establishing a framework for art criticism. When students first come into my class, it always amazes me how many do not know each other. In a school with 1800 students, I guess this shouldn’t surprise me, but it is difficult to work together collaboratively if you do not know the person you’re working with. This lesson impacts my students in awareness of diversity because it gives them the opportunity to hear about other students who may come from a different part of the area/state/country/world, who do not share the same socio-economic background, who
may come from different cultural, ethnic or religious groups . . . and breaking through stereotypes and bias.

Through sharing symbols which represent them, we all learn about each other. By allowing students to talk about these symbols, they can choose the information to share. By giving students opportunities to listen to other students in a nonthreatening environment, they can discover similar interests and maybe even forge new friendships. They can learn from varied experiences and perspectives which ultimately enriches the curriculum. Yet it goes further than this. It allows me to establish that the classroom is student-centered. It allows us to decorate with artwork that shows a vast array of student backgrounds, showcasing the diversity of the class.

Why is a lesson like this so important? Because it develops COMMUNITY within the classroom through honoring student experience through shared inquiry and dialogue. It establishes a system of social and emotional safety in the class community, one in which opinions and comments matter and students view themselves as valued, cared for and respected. These are critical in a class environment, especially one which cultivates risk through creativity and encourages aesthetic art criticism without targeting an artist with biased personal judgment.

Furthermore, because my own personal experiences are quite different from those of my students, it encourages me to make a commitment to avoid and challenge stereotypes and be open and culturally aware while allowing students to define their own identities in the classroom. I have a chance to model short personal anecdotes through explaining my own silhouette, which invites appropriate student sharing.

Students ultimately receive the message that our classroom is about embracing diversity, building relationships, engaging in effective art criticism and valuing open communication.

IX. Teachability – (10 pts)

How can this lesson be adapted for other grades and ability levels?

Any grade level from kindergarten through 12th grade can use a silhouette project. It is easily adaptable for virtually any content area or purpose.

It can be adapted based on specific units being taught and by altering the procedures for producing the final product. Younger elementary students, for example, could have blank silhouettes provided instead of allowing students to trace each other. Responsible students could be assigned for tracing instead of the process I use where you stay behind and trace the next person (and so forth).

As far as the purpose of the silhouette, this can be adapted for specific units. For example, a teacher who came to one of my workshops at the Cincinnati Art Museum adapted this for Martin Luther King, Jr. day and provided a silhouette of MLK. She then asked students to find symbols that represented Dr. King and create a collage to honor his legacy. Students then explained why they selected the images.

Another teacher in one of my workshops had the students create literary silhouettes for To Kill a Mockingbird.

Bonus Points – (3 pts)

Provide a maximum of 3 examples of student work/evidence (no student photos)