

Inside Art 2015 — *Enhanced!*

Title

Does photography tell the truth?

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

Today's students may be surprised to learn that Photoshop is only the most recent method used to manipulate photography. Since the medium's inception, photographs have been altered for a variety of reasons.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts
Social Studies

Curriculum Standards

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards

Visual Arts:

VA.912.C.12: Use critical thinking skills for various contexts to develop, refine, and reflect on an artistic theme

VA.912.C.1.4: Apply art knowledge and contextual information to analyze how content and ideas are used in works of art.

Social Studies:

SS.912.H.2.3: Apply various types of critical analysis (contextual, formal, and intuitive criticism) to works in the arts, including the types and use of symbolism within art forms and their philosophical implications.

National Standards for Arts Education

Standard 1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

Standard 6: Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

National Council for the Social Studies

Time, Continuity, and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Common Core

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Instructional Objective

Students will be able to describe the phenomenon of spirit photography in the 19th century, the societal context in which it emerged, and the reasons why photographers have altered images.

Learning Activities Sequence

Teacher Background: Before using the PowerPoint presentation in the classroom, review the “Notes View” section on all the slides. There you will find descriptions of art work and photographers, talking points, and questions to prompt discussion.

Attention-Getter: Access the PowerPoint presentation for this lesson, “*Enhanced! (Day 3 PPT).*” Begin by projecting the image on slide 2. Use the Visual Thinking Strategies approach to guide students in their viewing:

- What is going on in this photograph?
- What evidence do you see to support that?
- What else can you find?

Explain that the photograph is of Mary Todd Lincoln, taken around 1870, by American “spirit photographer” William H. Mumler (1832–1884).

To date, the U.S. Civil War has been the deadliest conflict in U.S. history, with an estimated 620,000 people who died in the line of duty, and hundreds of thousands more who died from disease. In this context, spirit photography emerged. This type of photography attempts to document spirits or ghosts in photographic imagery. Despite evidence that proved the medium a fraud (using double negatives), spirit photography was popular into the beginning of the 20th century.

Share other images of spirit photography (slides 3 and 4) with students.

Ask students: Why do you think spirit photography remained popular, despite being exposed as fraudulent?

Guided Presentation: Share the images on the PPT with students, pausing to ask questions as indicated in the Notes View.

Activity #2:

Students may choose from either of the following activities:

- Assume the role of a historical figure that lived during the 19th century. Create a self-portrait using double or multiple exposures, in the manner of spirit photography,
- Locate a portrait that used spirit photography and describe the image, context, and background.

Closure:

Remind students that what one sees is not always reality. What are other examples of things that may not always be what they appear?

Optional Extension Activities

Read the *National Geographic* article entitled, "Killing Lincoln: The Story of Lincoln's Ghost" found at: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/killing-lincoln/articles/the-story-of-lincolns-ghost/>

Materials and Resources

Computer and Projector
PowerPoint Presentation: *Enhanced! (Day 3)*
Photographic equipment or Internet access

Internet Links

Fourandsix Technologies. (2014). *Photo Tampering throughout History*. Retrieved from: <http://www.fourandsix.com/photo-tampering-history/>

References

Civil War Trust. (2014). *Civil War Casualties*. Retrieved from: <http://www.civilwar.org/education/civil-war-casualties.html>

Fineman, Mia. *Faking It: Manipulated Photography before Photoshop*. NY: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

National Geographic (nd). Killing Lincoln: The story of Lincoln's ghost. Retrieved from: <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/channel/killing-lincoln/articles/the-story-of-lincolns-ghost/>