

Unit 7 Aesthetics

Unit 7 Challenges and Opportunities for Learning

Enhance this unit on aesthetics with a trip to the Art Gallery of Ontario or another gallery. Alternatively, have students do drawing activities from Betty Edwards' *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* (see her text or YouTube tutorials), perhaps with classical music playing in the background to create a studio/atelier atmosphere. Another idea is to have students create a mural on the board with multicoloured chalk (e.g., using combinations of five basic symbols of various sizes and colours), with contemporary music playing in the background (e.g., Radiohead). Of the 10 most valuable paintings in the world (look this up on Google Images), which do students think belong among the greats and why? You may also explore with students the question of whether graffiti is art.

Unit 7 Culminating Activity (assessment of learning)

The Unit 7 culminating activity—essay, PowerPoint presentation, or short film—is a framework around which students develop their knowledge and understanding of aesthetics. Use the ideas that follow to help your students begin working towards completion of their essay, film, or PowerPoint presentation.

Description of Culminating Activity

Students write an expository essay (1000 words maximum), give a PowerPoint presentation, or show a short student-made film to answer the question: “What counts as art?” Necessarily, students will also engage the question: “What does not count as art?” Students will create illustrations and/or other forms of art (song lyrics, collage, drama, sculpture, and dance for example). Ask students to share their work informally (in circles, if they write an essay) or formally (if they choose one of the presentation formats).

Learning Goals

Students improve their research and writing skills by working on a topic of interest, and practising proper referencing techniques.

Learning Skills

The development of learning skills and work habits is an integral part of a student's learning. (*Growing Success*, p. 10). Specifically, teaching and assessment of these learning skills—responsibility, collaboration, independent work, organization, self-regulation, and initiative—will enhance students' success in the culminating activity, entire course, and post-secondary life.

Use BLM E to track students' learning skills for this unit and for the culminating activity.

Prior Learning Needed

Although Chapter 19 opens with a review of different forms of artistic expression (SE pp. 473-476), students may need to refresh or broaden their horizons on the variety of art forms. This will help students begin to explore answers to the question: “What counts as art?” Familiarity and experience with different art forms will vary greatly among students.

Materials Needed for Culminating Activity

- If students present their PowerPoint presentations or short movies, a projector will be needed.
- Instead of the rubric provided in BLM 19.1, you may use BLMs F or H for assessment purposes.

Motivational Strategies for Engaging Students

Consider using the “Thought Experiment” (SE pp. 478-479) in Chapter 19 as a way of stimulating interest in the question of what counts as art. Presenting such classic works of art as Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* and John Cage’s *4’33”* may help stimulate students’ interest in the culminating activity.

For additional background on Duchamp’s *Fountain*, check out the following link where art historians Francis Naumann and Michael Taylor discuss the scandal created in 1917 by Duchamp’s work:

<http://www.sfmoma.org/explore/multimedia/videos/111>

And to “hear” Cage’s *4’33”* look up the following video titles on the Internet (available on YouTube):

John Cage: *4’33”* for piano (1952)

John Cage “*4’33”*”

Accommodations

To help students, scaffold the culminating activity essay by breaking it down into stages. Consider using BLM D to help students build their argument and/or develop the exposition for the essay or presentation. Conduct progress checks and provide constructive feedback on drafts along the way, possibly building in peer evaluation at some stages to facilitate the process. If there are peer tutors available in the school, or lunchtime help available through the English, Special Education, or ELL departments, consider utilizing these resources to assist students.

For some students, it may be easier to write an argumentative essay instead. In this case, they will argue in their thesis statement and through their supporting arguments for or against something that has been put forward as “counting” as art (e.g., the body sculptures in the unit opener).

Differentiated Instruction (alternative assessment opportunities)

Instead of an essay or oral presentation, consider asking students to present their ideas about what counts as art in a play (skit) or comic-book format. You may also ask students to consider ways of using art to show the meaning of art, as in doing a painting, collage, or dance, but these approaches are more difficult to assess (i.e., going off the rubric).

You may even suggest that some students could create an architectural model or map of an aesthetic idea (e.g., the sublime).

Assessment Criteria

Use BLMs F or H and also see the assessment rubric on BLM 19.1.