

EXPLORING CIVICS THROUGH HISTORIC SPACES:

A MODEL FOR CIVIC LEARNING AT MUSEUMS,
HISTORIC SITES, AND CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

FIFTH GRADE

90 minutes

EXPLORING CHANGE THROUGH ART



OVERVIEW

This activity is geared toward students in fifth grade and is intended to take place in a museum setting.

Members of a community often have individual roles that support the community as a whole. As communities develop and grow, rules, customs and ideas are formed centered on who may or may not be suited for certain roles.

Many factors can lead to those ideas shifting, including demand for certain roles to be filled or people desiring change in their community. Art can be a powerful tool to express the desire for change or convince others to support change.

In this lesson, students will explore art created during a time of change for the community connected to a historic site/museum. Students will then create their own poster that honors their own identities or shares a similar message.

OBJECTIVE: Students will be able to explain the expansion of roles for a particular group in the United States through the lens of a historic site/museum and identify ways in which a symbol can change over time.

EAD DRIVING QUESTIONS

Civic Participation

CDQ1.2

- Why might we want to make changes at local, state, or national levels? How can we promote change in an effective way?
- Why might you question decisions that are made for/ in your community?

We the People

HDQ3.2

- How has the U.S. population changed over time?
- How have push-pull factors changed the U.S. population over time?
- How have different groups (e.g., religion, race, ethnicity) shaped our society?

MATERIALS

■ PRIMARY SOURCE FOCUS

- Object or primary source related to a group fighting for change connected to site/museum.
- Artwork that expresses the desire for change or is aimed at convincing others to support change
- Artwork from that period that shares a similar message or is a contrast to the depicted artwork.

■ Markers and colored pencils

- Legal size paper or drawing paper

PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION (10 MIN)

Introduce students to the historic site/museum.

Introduce students to the space using an object from the collection. Provide an overview of the space and a brief description of the communities that lived there.

- What historical events or movements were significant in the United States at this time? Who do we see represented in this community?
- How might the policies and practices present in the United States during this time impact who we see or not?

Provide background on the group or groups of people connected to the artwork that will be discussed. Let students know how the group was limited in opportunity during the time period leading up to the creation of the featured artwork

2. INVESTIGATION (40 MIN)

Introduce an object or primary source related to a group fighting for societal change.

Ask students what they notice.

- What groups are represented?
- What do you see? What does this make you think? What does that make you wonder?

EAD DRIVING QUESTIONS CONT.

We the People

HDQ3.2

- How do we engage with hard histories (e.g., enslavement, genocide, terrorism)?

Institutional & Social Transformation- A Series of Refounding?

HDQ5.2

- How have people improved U.S. society over time?
- How have Americans resisted or reacted to the expansion of rights and citizenship claims?

CDQ5.2

- What are the institutional and non-institutional ways that people have made changes to society?

A People with Contemporary Debates & Possibilities

HDQ7.2

- How do we evaluate and reflect on the actions of people in the past?
- How do we acknowledge the failures and accomplishments of people and leaders while respecting their humanity?

CDQ7.2

- How can we assess and challenge leaders when we see the need for change?

- What does this object reveal about this group during this time period?
- How might members of this group have felt during this time?

Provide context on how individuals were actively fighting for change at this time or which events were taking place that led to access to more opportunities.

Display artwork or object related to artwork on which the final activity will be based.

Provide context related to the artwork, including who made it, their goal for producing the artwork, and the intended audience. Ask students what they notice looking at the artwork.

- Who is represented?
- What do you see? What does this make you think?
- What does that make you wonder?
- What does this object tell you about this group during this time period?
- How might this artwork have encouraged change or expressed the desire for change?

Display an object or case connected to expanded roles for the group. Share examples of expanded roles for the group due to changes in the community connected to the historic site/museum.

- How might the efforts of individuals fighting for change have impacted the roles available or perceptions about the roles available for ____ at this time?
- How do you think it made ____ feel to have these new roles?

If possible, make connections to how the efforts of the movement impacted roles available for that group today.

3. ACTIVITY (30 MIN)

Move students to a classroom space. Display featured artwork and another artwork from that time period that shares a similar message or is a contrast to the artwork. Ask students what they see in the images.

- What is the difference between the works?
- Who are the works representing?
- What messages are the works trying to convey?

EXAMPLE FROM THE INTREPID MUSEUM

Museum educators brought students to a model of *Intrepid* and shared that *Intrepid's* keel was laid on December 1, 1941.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor, and the U.S. entered World War II shortly thereafter. Rather than the normal time of 3-5 years, *Intrepid* was built in about 17 months.

Educators asked:

- What significant political and historical events happened in the United States in the 1940s?
- Other than the war, what changes were people facing on the homefront?
- How do you think the Navy managed to build *Intrepid* so quickly?

Educators then shared that during World War II, the United States still largely followed Jim Crow laws, segregating Black and white Americans. There were also many laws restricting the role of women in the workforce and in the Navy.

Women could not serve on *Intrepid* at any point during its service. However, World War II offered an opportunity for women to become a greater part of the workforce, as the military needed supplies and personnel as quickly as possible.

Provide context about both pieces of artwork.

- What do you think this artwork represents now?
- What does the artwork make you feel when you look at it?

If applicable, share examples of modern artwork with similar themes.

- Who do you see in these images?
- How might themes in this artwork be similar to _____?

Students will be designing their own artwork to inspire change in the style of the artwork that was discussed.

Distribute large paper and colored pencils. Allow students time to brainstorm what identities are important for them to put into their artwork.

- How can the artwork express a similar message while honoring their own identities?

4. ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS (5 MIN)

Students will share their artwork with the group.

Ask students:

- How has the role of _____ in the community connected to the historic site/museum changed over time?
- What symbols are present in the artwork we explored today?
- How have the meanings of those symbols changed over time?

EXAMPLE FROM THE INTREPID MUSEUM

Museum Educators brought students to an aircraft at the Museum and discussed how women were hired in numerous workforce positions formerly held by men. This included building aircraft.

Close to half a million women worked in factories across the country building aircraft. A major job women had was riveting, which was a way of attaching pieces of metal when building airplanes. Over time, the image of “Rosie the Riveter” was born - the strong woman contributing to the war effort.

Educators showed “Rosie the Riveter” images, including the famous Westinghouse poster that regained popularity in the early 1980s.

Educators asked:

- Why was it important that women joined the effort to build aircraft?
- How do you think the women building airplanes felt about their jobs?

However, women worked a multitude of roles beyond riveter, especially in shipyards, where “Winnie the Welder” was much more common. Women worked in shipyards as welders, electricians, machine operators, pipefitters, mechanics, painters, optical technicians, and more.

Educators asked:

- How do you think it made women feel to have these new roles in shipyards?



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