

SECCA EDUCATION

Ancient Tableaux

Lesson Plan

Related SECCA Exhibition:
Emil Salto: Light Forms



Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art

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Objective:

Students will express their knowledge about Ancient civilizations through tableaux and shadow play.

Essential Question:

What was life like in ancient Egypt?

Relational Capacity-Building Skills:

Historical Empathy - This lesson involves students putting themselves in another time and place, Ancient Egypt, in order to have a greater appreciation of what life was like for them.

Supplies:

Stories from Ancient Egypt, instructions for creating a tableaux, back lit projector screen and projector, and digital images of Ancient Egypt.

NC Common Core Standards

Visual Arts: 6.CX.1 Understand the global, historical, societal, and cultural contexts of the visual arts.

Social Studies: 6.C.1.1 Analyze how cultural expressions reflected the values of civilizations, societies and regions. 6.H.2.3 Explain how innovation and/or technology transformed civilizations, societies and regions over time.

Theater 6.C.1: Use performance to communicate ideas and feelings.

Sequence:

In this lesson, students will develop and perform a tableaux and short shadow play against the projected background from Ancient Egypt. Tableau (A form of the drama strategy image work) A still image or tableau can be used to portray the given subject matter. The students are given a scene to re-enact using only their physical positioning, relationship to other characters, body language and facial expression. There is no speech in a tableaux.

- 1 Students are divided into small groups.
- 2 Each group is given a story depicting life in Ancient Egypt. Suggested scenes may include: Agriculture in Mesopotamia – discovery of wild wheat – storage vessels – invention of the wheel – irrigation; Building of the Zigerat; Class structure of ancient Egypt – pharaoh, nobles and priests, soldiers, scribes, merchants, artisans, farmers, slaves and servants; Mummies!
- 3 Students determine what characters should be included in their tableaux and what props, if any, they will need to convey the story. In creating a tableaux the participants are putting themselves into a scene as characters with thoughts and feelings. They must ask themselves: “What is my role in the scene?”, “Where and how shall I stand to express that role?”, “What facial expression shall I hold to express that role?”, and “Where shall I place myself in relation to others?”.
- 4 Students develop and perform a tableaux based on a story/scene from Ancient Egypt.
- 5 If there is time, students will perform the tableaux a second time prompted by “freeze” and “thought tap” commands. Thought tap involves the facilitator tapping individuals on the shoulder breaking the tableaux momentarily. The person who is tapped is asked to answer specific questions about the scene or character. This encourages thoughtfulness in character and scene development. “Thought tap” encourages participants to really think about the character or situation they are portraying (historical empathy).
- 6 Once finalized, students extend their tableaux into a shadow play using gesture and movement. The shadow play is a nod to the contemporary artist, Emil Salto, and is enhanced by the back lit projection of scenes from Ancient Egypt. In considering the scene as shadow play, students must consider, “How can I manipulate the shadow to further the story?”, “Does the shadow diminish facial expression and if so, how should I gesture to tell the story?”, and “How can I use light and dark?”.

Students perform their shadow plays.

About the artist that inspired this lesson:

Emil Salto - For Danish artist Emil Salto, light experiments are a form of intuitive yet systematic inquiry. The results of Salto's experiments are carefully modulated interactions with light and shadow: monochromes, photograms, and films. Salto uses light as an agent, through which we can touch on questions of time and space, optics and perception.