

GRADE 12 COMPARATIVE CULTURES: Selfie Project

Summary of Learning Opportunity

In exploring definitions and expressions of culture, this learning opportunity directed students to examine different forms of art through the ages and cultures to focus on the art form of portraiture. This involved reading “Before the Selfie, The Self-Portrait” and a discussion on why and how self-portraiture art can be a reflection of the artist and their culture. As we developed this understanding, we turned to artistic techniques such as the rule of simplicity, rule of thirds, lighting, texture and lines. Embedded in this learning opportunity are transferrable skills of interpreting texts, making connections and synthesizing information before communicating ideas to a diverse audience. The teacher created an assessment rubric which reflected elements of the literacy and numeracy learning progressions as well as the curricular competencies.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How can art be an expression of culture?
- How can we apply tools of the artist to create a self-portrait or selfie?
- How can you use photography to reflect different aspects of yourself and your own culture?

Comparative Cultures 12

Learning Standards

- Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
- Explain different perspectives on past and present cultures (perspectives)
- Elements of culture and cultural expressions

Literacy Connections	Instruction and Assessment	Competencies Developed, Practiced, and/or Assessed
LITERACY: Comprehends Text—Interprets Texts, Makes Connections	1. Students first research self-portraits and selfies for inspiration. The teacher used examples of works by artists such as Picasso, Durer, Da Vinci, Rembrandt, Kahlo, Leibovitz. The class discussed the intended message of the portrait and what it might reveal about the artist. Students also researched form and technique.	Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions
LITERACY: Communicates—Expresses ideas and information, Justifies and defends decisions and/or ideas	2. Students were assigned to create one selfie for each of four themes: Culture, Inner Voice, Power, Mask. They then wrote a reflection to make connections to culture and to explore perspective. Students were expected to use personal experience to make meaning, deepen understanding and make a personal connection to the themes.	Explain different perspectives on past and present cultures (perspectives)
NUMERACY: Interprets—Understands the real-world problem, Identifies parameters and limitations	3. During the selfie creation, the teacher emphasized artistic and aesthetic themes like the rule of thirds and symmetry. This connection provided a way for students to interpret the assignment in a numerate way.	Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret and analyze ideas; and communicate findings and decisions

Demonstrations of Student Learning, Teacher Assessment, and Reflection



Mask *Student Reflection*

"Nowadays everyone is sharing everything on social networks. The first question when you are meeting someone new, after the name, is the Instagram name; if we get that, we are checking out the person, which photos she posted and what she is doing in her free time. ... and then again the person is at a crazy party with a bunch of people, having fun. You, instead, are in your pajamas at home watching a movie with your younger brother, it's nice but not exciting. The next day she is posting a selfie and you are just thinking, damn, she is so pretty, you are looking in the mirror and comparing your body with hers, you are starting comparing your life with hers till you are starting feeling you are not good enough and starting feeling depressed about that fact.

My picture represents that modern day society. The social media world is sharing only the exciting, good and pretty moments of life, but everyone behind the screen is confronted with the same problems as us.

I added [edited] the picture on purpose a lot. The body and face structure is still the same, but I made my skin almost perfect. No pimples are noticeable it represents the perfect world of social media where everything has to be perfect, to be accepted."

Teacher's Observations and Assessment

This student is an English Language Learner and while she struggled with articulating herself at times [during our class], [in this assignment] she was able to effectively communicate her understanding through personal experience to describe the culture of social media ("FOMO" and unattainable perfection). Her image conveyed meaning by using line, form, texture and simplicity. The form (the edited selfie with the real version as a backdrop) not only allowed the student to demonstrate perspective, but also connect directly to course content in understanding and interpreting cultural expression.

In expressing her concept of false perfection visually and in writing, the student communicated her ideas and justified her choice of image by discussing how and why she chose to construct the image the way she did.

An unintended outcome of this lesson was the ability of the student to reflect on the importance of the project to her personally - showcasing the Core Competency of Positive Personal and Cultural Identity. This image drew some gasps from other students in the class who immediately began discussing the meaning behind the image.

This student effectively used artistic and aesthetic techniques to present her perspective on modern social media culture. **Proficient**



Teacher's Observations and Assessment

Through the form and composition of their picture, this student demonstrated their unique understanding of power through their hobby (playing soccer). Not only was personal experience used to make meaning and deepen understanding to their personal connection to the concept of 'power,' the student did an excellent job in describing how they incorporated the 'seven elements of art' into their composition. In addition, they even reflected on what they could change about their selfie – demonstrating their ability to effectively evaluate the decisions they made and reassess their approach. **Proficient**

Power

Student Reflection

"My photo of me kicking a soccer ball in the night fully encapsulates my strength and power as soccer is my favourite sport. I have enjoyed soccer since I was a small child and I have grown to have a large passion for the sport as some of my most favourite athletes such as Kevin De Bruyne, Berardo Silva, and Cristiano Ronaldo are soccer players. I chose this specific pose for the photo as it fully encapsulates the POWER and strength needed to play the sport as it is physically intensive. I am also leaning into the ball, signifying the power that I was putting into the kicking of the ball. Soccer is a sport that doesn't require any elaborate equipment to play, just yourself and a ball, which is portrayed in the photo as I am wearing just my clothes.

I incorporated some of the seven elements of art such as colour, value, texture, and space into the composition of the shot. Colour and value are shown through the deep orange hues of the streetlight and the deep greens of the grass. Texture is implied through the roughness of the sidewalk, the slickness of the grass, and the soft glow of the streetlight through the thickness of the fog. Negative space was utilized in the photo by making myself and the soccer ball a silhouette against the foggy night, which also demonstrates the rule of simplicity as the silhouette is the center of attention. The rule of thirds was employed in the photo as I, the player, am on the left-hand side of the frame while the main focus, the soccer ball and my foot are located in the center. The streetlamp is also located on the right side of the frame to add to the background of the shot. If I was to change the photo, I would make the soccer ball line up with a streetlamp so that it appears that I am kicking a glowing ball."



Power

Excerpt of Student Reflection

“For power, I took a picture of myself playing guitar. As I wrote about in my first paragraph, music is a large part of my culture, but it is also my power. Music is how I express myself. One of my favourite past-times is playing guitar, and I’ve written several songs for my band. Another aspect of music that is my power is lyrics. I can express my feelings best through song. Whether that means writing lyrics to go along with a guitar riff or connecting to the lyrics of someone else’s songs. Lastly, if I’ve had a bad day, I always find solace in music again either from my songs or others’. Music is both my power and my culture, as my power is my culture, and my culture is my power.”

Teacher’s Observations and Assessment

This student was able to effectively communicate their understanding through a self-portrait that reflected their sense of power. They articulately communicated the message. I especially loved their quote that “Music is both my power and my culture, as my power is my culture, and my culture is my power.”

The student did not discuss how they incorporated the elements of art into their selfie and is **developing** in their demonstration of the interpretation and analysis of artistic details. The student presented a **proficient** explanation about their perspective and how the selfie expressed their ideas.

Teacher’s Reflection

An integral part of the process for me as a teacher was to create a rubric for this project that revolved around the processes of the assignment (the curricular competencies) and the Learning Pathways. Despite this being my first time merging the competencies and pathways together as criteria, I found it to be a success. I think this is because I made it explicitly clear to the students and used an integrated approach. They were aware that we were working to use both curricular skills and their numeracy and literacy skills – all through an art project.

I also really valued the feedback from students in their written reflections and the images themselves. Students were very engaged in this project despite being uncertain at first (it’s hard to be self-reflective at times!) I think going forward, I would make explicit connections to the content and the core competencies another section of criteria in the rubric. I think connections happened as a by-product, but I would like to be more purposeful about it.

Overall, I found pulling out specific descriptors from the Learning Pathways to be used alongside curricular competencies to be powerful for the students (in taking risks through personal reflection) and for myself in easing the process of assessment through clear criterion.