

Curriculum Unit: Disrupting the Social Status Quo

Lesson Title:

Historical and Cultural Context

Lesson Goal and Description:

Students will learn about the Social Realism movement as it relates to the Mexican Revolution and how Social Realism impacted the history and culture of Mexico. The focus artist for this lesson will be Diego Rivera. The lesson will start with a slideshow explaining the social climate of Mexico between 1910 and 1930s, the art of the Tres Grandes (Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros), the Mexican Muralist movement, and explain how they used art to portray the ugly realities of life for the working class and also explain Social Realism as an art movement. Following the slideshow, the students will watch a short video about Diego Rivera's *History of Mexico* and read handouts about the work of Rivera and the Mexican Muralist movement. In groups of 4-5, students will discuss the historical and cultural significance of Rivera's work, the Mexican Muralism as a movement, and ways murals can be used to disrupt the social status quo.

Grade Level:

High school Beginning Art (Grades 9-12)

Time Frame:

1 - 2 hour class period

Focus Artwork:



Diego Rivera (1886-1957), *History of Mexico from Conquest to Revolution*, 1929-1935, mural, National Palace in Mexico City, fresco on concrete



Diego Rivera (1886-1957), *Sugar Cane*, 1931, mural, Museum of Modern Art, fresco on concrete

Objectives / Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to...

- Define artistic terms related to Social Realism.
- Recognize how certain artistic styles, namely murals, are suitable for different goals and forms of expression
- Identify and discuss the main characteristic of Social Realism as represented by the Mexican Muralist movement and Diego Rivera's art.
- Discuss the historical and cultural significance of Rivera's work and the impact of the Mexican Muralist movement.

Instructional Resources

- LCD Projector
- Computer
- Slideshow presentation on Social Realism and Diego Rivera
- Video - *The History of Mexico City. Documentary based on Diego Rivera Mural in National Palace*
- Handout - Encyclopedia Britannica article - *Diego Rivera*
- Handout - Encyclopedia Britannica article - *Populist Art and the Mexican Mural Renaissance*
- Worksheet: Diego Rivera and the Mexican Muralist Movement

Procedures:

DAY 1:

Anticipatory Set:

- Teacher introduces the new lesson, going over what the students will be doing and what will be expected of them. Students will watch a slideshow, be introduced to Diego Rivera and Social Realism, watch a video about *History of Mexico* mural, and discuss their analysis in groups.

Direct Instruction:

- Teacher sets up slideshow and explains to the class about Diego Rivera and Social Realism. There will be an accompanying lecture to follow the slides. Through the lecture, the teacher will ask questions to deepen the student's understanding and personal connection to the work.
- Teacher will then play a documentary video explaining the subject matter of Rivera's *History of Mexico*.
- Teacher will break the students up into groups and give them a hand out to analyze and discuss the historical and cultural significance of Diego Rivera and the Mexican Muralist movement

Guided Practice:

- Students will work within their groups, discussing the various elements of Diego Rivera's mural and how it exemplifies Social Realism.
- Students will turn in their worksheets at the end of class.
- Students read the readings assigned for this lesson as homework.

Closure:

- The teacher will wrap up the lesson by summarizing the characteristics of Social Realism once more and the impact the Mexican Muralist movement had on art and society as a whole.

Accommodations and Modifications:

- *Visual or hearing impaired students* may be given a copy of the slideshow to study from and aid them in filling out their worksheets.
- *Students with learning disabilities* may be placed in groups with gifted students to glean more knowledge from the discussion.
- The teacher will check in with students with disabilities to make sure they are participating in the discussion and absorbing information.

Multiple Intelligences Used:

- *Visual/Spatial* - students will use their visual and spatial intelligences to look at and analyze the artwork.
- *Intrapersonal* - students collaborate in groups to discuss the meaning of the artwork presented.
- *Linguistic* - students will be introduced to new vocabulary through lecture and effectively describe their analysis through the use of writing and language.

Vocabulary:

- *Social Realism* (noun): A style of painting, especially of the 1930s, in which the scenes depicted convey a message of social or political protest, edged with satire. The goal is to elevate the lower or working classes to be worthy as subject matter for art. Typically, the figures appear stylized and two-dimensional, with bold and expressive shapes and colors.
- *Revolutionary Nationalism* (noun): Refers to an ideology, a sentiment, or a social movement that focuses on the collective idea that one's nation is being persecuted by other nations and thus needs to be liberated from accused persecutors. The political factions that came in power during the Mexican Revolution chose to adopt this political structure, rather than a full-scale Socialist or Communist regime.
- *Mexican Muralism* (noun): was the promotion of mural painting starting in the 1920s, generally with social and political messages as part of efforts to reunify the country under the post Mexican Revolution government.
- *Mural* (noun): a painting or other work of art executed directly on a wall.
- *Los Tres Grandes* (noun): "the big three" painters, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros.
- *Status Quo* (noun): the current situation

Criteria for Assessment:

Did students...

- Define artistic terms related to Social Realism?
- Recognize how certain artistic styles, namely murals, are suitable for different goals and forms of expression?
- Identify and discuss the main characteristic of Social Realism as represented by the Mexican Muralist movement and Diego Rivera's art?
- Successfully discuss the historical and cultural significance of Rivera's work and the impact of the Mexican Muralist movement?

Methods of Assessment:

- During the lecture and slideshow, the teacher will ask students questions to ensure understanding and address any student concerns (formative assessment).
- The teacher will check in on the students during their group discussions to make sure the discussions are successful and on track (formative assessment).
- Students will turn in worksheets that convey their understanding of the topic of Social Realism (summative assessment).

California Visual Arts Standards:

- *3.0 Historical and Cultural Context*
 - *Diversity of the Visual Arts*
 - 3.3 Identify and describe trends in the visual arts and discuss how the issues of time, place, and cultural influence are reflected in selected works of art.

- 3.4 Discuss the purposes of art in selected contemporary cultures.

Name:

Beginning Art Period:

Diego Rivera and the Mexican Muralist Movement

Recall: why are murals a good vehicle for depicting a message that disrupts the social status quo?

What historical events can you see depicted in *History of Mexico*?

Who are the different types of people depicted in the mural *History of Mexico*? What different cultures are represented?

Infer the narrative behind *Sugar Cane*. What is Rivera telling us in this mural?

What social issue(s) is Rivera calling attention to in *Sugar Cane*?

Do you think that the murals are successful in communicating Rivera's Social Realist message? Why or why not? Make sure to give specific examples from the art.