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The objectives of this unit are to help students

- appreciate the importance of visual culture in human society
- recognise that different people and different societies have different uses for visual culture
- understand the impact of technology on visual culture over time

DAVID CONSIDINE, coordinator of the media literacy project at Appalachian State University, states, "if we teach [students] to become critical viewers, we do more than give them the ability to analyse the construction of isolated images; we also give them the ability to think critically about the composition of the picture, enhancing their ability to read words and worlds."

This unit investigates the nature of human vision, and includes historical and multicultural approaches to help students examine how societies communicate visually.

In this Unit ...

Blindness has students evaluate the relative advantages and disadvantages of blindness and deafness.

The Blind Person and the Aeroplane gives students the task of writing a description of a large jet airliner that would help a blind person understand what it looks like. Before writing, students must organise and evaluate important facts and consider the most appropriate method of conveying those facts to a person who is blind.

Technology and Literacy: The 1400s introduces students to Johannes Gutenberg's contributions to printing technology. Students are asked to analyse some of the social changes that resulted in Europe as the result of less expensive and more widely available printed materials.

Technology and Literacy: The 1800s has students assess the relationship between the Industrial Revolution and literacy.

Mechanical Reproduction and Visual Representation asks students to describe the benefits of technological devices that help people "see" phenomena we are otherwise unable to see.

The Multinational Logo involves students in the creation of a logo that would serve a common purpose in a variety of cultures and languages.

Design a Sign is suggested as a group project. Students are asked to create a universal sign to help foreign visitors locate an immigration document at the airport.

What Is Art? has students investigate the nature of art and to distinguish aesthetic imagery and documentary imagery.

Blindness

SOME PEOPLE ARE BLIND. They may be able to see some light or some shapes. However, they cannot see most of the things that sighted people can see. Some people are deaf. They may be able to hear some noises, and can often feel the vibrations that some sounds make. However, they cannot hear most of the things that hearing people can hear.

Record your answers. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

1. Imagine that you suddenly become either blind or deaf. Which of the two do you think would cause you to make the most changes in your everyday life? Explain your answer.

- What one activity in your life would be the most affected by being deaf? Explain why.

- What one activity in your life would be the most affected by being blind? Explain why.

2. There are some people who argue that a deaf person should not be considered disabled. Instead, they say deafness is a culture of its own. Deaf people share a culture and a language (sign language) with other deaf people, just as speakers of English share a culture and a language with other English speakers.

- Do you believe that the characterisation of deafness as a culture can apply to a similar characterisation of blindness? In other words, do you believe that blind people are disabled, or are they simply members of a different culture? Explain your answer.

3. Some sighted teenagers are quick to say they would have no problem dating a blind person. They are surprised to find out that some blind people do not want to date sighted people. Why do you think a blind person might not want to date a sighted person? List and describe three reasons.

Technology and Literacy: The 1800s

IN THE late 1700s and early 1800s, the world experienced the Industrial Revolution. This was a period known for the rapid invention and spread of new manufacturing technology. The Industrial Revolution caused an important shift in the economy of many countries. Prior to this time, agriculture was the largest source of jobs for many people. Within a few decades, manufacturing became the largest source of employment.

Answer the following questions. Use another sheet of paper, if necessary.

In the 1870s, compulsory (required) education of children was introduced.

1. How did compulsory education laws benefit workers?

2. How did compulsory education laws benefit employers?

One of the activities that saw significant changes during the Industrial Revolution was printing. As the result of printing advances, it became easier and less expensive to make printed packages. This meant that companies that manufactured products could now sell them in branded packaging.

Once a product is branded, the manufacturer of that product is more interested in advertising its particular brand. For example, if a company made generic (unbranded) biscuits, that company would have little interest in spending the money to advertise its biscuits. By doing so, that biscuit company would be helping its competitors in the biscuit business, without receiving help from the other companies to pay for the advertising.

However, once a biscuit company places its product in a box or bag with the company's name on it, the biscuit company does benefit from advertising its products. This is because people will buy the particular brand of biscuit they see advertised. In the 1800s, radio and television had not yet been invented. This means that most advertising was done in print media, such as newspapers and magazines.

3. Do you think manufacturers of biscuits and other branded products wanted more people to be able to read or not? Explain your answer.

4. How did compulsory education benefit companies that advertised their products? Explain your answer.

The objectives of this unit are to help students

- recognise that even the most mundane of implements are the product of attitudes and values in addition to basic human needs
- understand the factors that enter into the design of buildings and spatial arrangements
- call on their creativity to generate material culture of their own

“[M]aterial culture can be considered to be the totality of artifacts in a culture, the vast universe of objects used by humankind to cope with the physical world, to facilitate social intercourse, to delight our fancy, and to create symbols of meaning ...”

– Schlereth, Thomas J., ed., *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982) p. 2.

This unit focuses on the visual “things” that humans create. The impulse to create these things can be economic, social, political or utilitarian. Students investigate a variety of common objects and places to develop a better understanding of the underlying motivation for their production.

In this Unit ...

The Beetle and the Ute requires students to evaluate how carmakers incorporate design elements into their cars in order to appeal to specific gender groups. Students also suggest additional design elements that would be attractive to female and male motorists.

The Brake Light asks students to generate reasons in support of a law requiring a third, centre brake light on new automobiles. Students also assess the government’s efforts to make cars safer and the impact that safety features have on the cost of cars.

Number Plates engages students in Internet research to collect information about their state or territory’s official symbols and slogans. Students then integrate this information as they create a new number plate design of their own.

The Time Capsule asks students to identify important themes in contemporary Australian life, and describe the everyday items that they would place in a time capsule to visually describe it for future generations.

It’s Fake, but It Looks Real has students investigate the human impulse to create artificial representations of natural items.

Don’t Judge a Book by Its Cover asks students to evaluate this adage and provide exceptions.

Money, Money, Money provides students with information about the introduction of the euro in 2002. Students then identify the social and technological circumstances that underlie the designs of this currency, and examine the possibility of moving toward digital currency.