

The American Dream



Object: Luis Cruz Azaceta, *Lotto: The American Dream*, 1992.
Screen print on paper. Ulrich Museum of Art, Museum purchase.

Ulrich Museum of Art



Description:

Students will learn about the concept of the American Dream and use that knowledge to analyze Azaceta's artwork. They will also create their own American Dream artwork, and conclude with a postcard project to convey what they've learned to a friend or family member.

Grade Level: 9-12

Subject: Visual Art, US History

Length of Lesson: Two 50-minute sessions

Standards:

VA: Cr2.3.II Redesign an object, system, place, or design in response to contemporary issues.

VA: Cr2.3.III Demonstrate in works of art or design how visual and material culture defines, shapes, enhances, inhibits, and/or empowers people's lives.

VA:Re7.1.I Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.

VA:Re8.1.I Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

VA:Re8.1.II Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.

VA:Pr6.1.II Make, explain, and justify connections between artists or artwork and social, cultural, and political history.

VA:Re11.1.I Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art.

VA:Cn10.1.II Synthesize knowledge of social, cultural, historical, and personal life with art-making approaches to create meaningful works of art or design.

Objectives:

Students will gain an understanding of the American Dream and its benefits/disadvantages, gaining a diverse understanding of different life experiences in the United States.

Students will use applied knowledge to analyze a related work of art and create an artwork that has them examine their own position on this issue.

Students will summarize what they have learned and present it in written form in a way for someone else to learn.

Explore the questions: How does art demonstrate diverse perspectives and experiences? How does it help us understand how other people live?

Materials:

A way to project the image of the artwork (projector or SMART board, screen sharing if virtual)

Pencil

Paper

Materials for artwork in medium of choice

Lesson 1:

Activate Prior Knowledge: Ask the students what they know of the American Dream and zoning cities. If they have no prior knowledge, then ask them to take a guess at what it could mean.

Teacher input: Present the history of the American Dream, its origins, what it means, who it applies to, what demographic benefits from it most, etc. Also give a description of zoning cities and its impact politically, racially, and economically.

Art Looking: Bring out the artwork and inform them of its title. Use Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) to encourage looking closely and sharing ideas about what they see and what it may mean.

Reflection: After discussing the artwork, ask the students to think about their own American dream, have them write down what their American dream is and any obstacles that could prevent them from achieving that dream.

Lesson 2:

Refresher: Show the image of the artwork again. Ask students to remind you what conclusions they drew from the artwork.

Art-making: Tell the students to examine what they wrote about their own American Dream again. What would that dream look like? Have them draw a representation of their American Dream in the center of their paper and draw barriers to that American Dream around the edges. You can let them choose the medium for this artwork or assign a medium ahead of time.

Presentation: Have the students pair up and present their artwork to their partner, explaining what their American Dream is, what barriers they might face and how those are represented in their artwork.

Summation: Give the students time for reflection through a writing assignment on what they learned and how they transferred what they learned through their own artistic response. Can be a formal essay or a journal-type entry.

Resources:

Ulrich Museum of Art object portal information on the artwork: <https://de1.zetcom-group.de/MpWeb-mpWichitaUlrich/v?mode=online#!m/Object/7720/form/ObjCatalogViewFrm>

Background info on the American Dream:

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp#:~:text=Criticism%20of%20the%20American%20Dream&text=The%20spread%20of%20settlers%20into,live%20in%20the%20United%20States.>

Visual Thinking Strategies:

https://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/teaching_visual_thinking_strategies.shtml

More about the artist: <https://luiscruzazaceta-art.com/bio>