This packet is designed to help connect the Montclair Art Museum's exhibitions with your classroom curricula and the Common Core Standards. Museum visits and related activities developed for this curriculum guide are cross disciplinary, addressing art, literacy, social studies, and other subject areas and therefore can be incorporated into lessons across the curriculum.

The exhibition Constructing Identity in America (1766–2017) includes 90 paintings, sculptures, and works on paper, mostly from the Museum's permanent collection, that encompass a broad range of definitions of personal identity throughout American history and culture, from the 18th century to today. The artists who created these varied works provide their unique insights into what it means to be American. The Museum's collections reflect the diverse roots of American culture, as well as both individual and common experiences shared across civic, artistic, geographical, professional, and religious identity. Other aspects of identity are addressed in terms of personal spaces and a sense of place. Explorations of ethnic identity are complemented by works related to characteristics of group and community, as well as notions of nonconformity.

The purpose of this curriculum guide is to introduce the exhibition, its themes, and select artwork to educators, along with corresponding lessons to be used in the classroom before and after a Museum visit.

This guide includes:

• Vocabulary terms in a fun format to help prepare your students for their Museum visit—an art vocabulary word search for elementary school students and a museum vocabulary crossword puzzle for middle and high school students.

• Two featured artworks for the elementary school, middle school, and high school levels.

• Each featured artwork includes an image to display in your classroom, background information, age-appropriate discussion questions, a vocabulary game or writing activities.

• Classroom projects to extend the learning before or after your Museum visit.

PREPARING YOUR CLASS FOR A MUSEUM VISIT

• Discuss the visit with your class before you come. This curriculum guide and our pre-visit packet will help you inform students about what they will see and do on their trip.

• Teachers are encouraged to preview the galleries and exhibitions before your schedule group tour. Please present this curriculum guide or your tour confirmation letter to Museum staff during normal operating hours for one free admission.

• Additional information about the artists and exhibitions is always available on the Museum website at montclairartmuseum.org.
Abstract—Art that does not represent images of our everyday world, such as people, places, or things. Colors, shapes, and lines may be used to represent an idea or a feeling.

Artist—a person that makes art, such as paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, photographs, collage, mixed-media, or performance art.

Background—the part of a picture or scene that is farthest away, usually nearest the horizon.

Composition—the way different parts or elements of the artwork are arranged, including shapes, objects, and colors.

Depth—the illusion of space in an artwork, or the distance between the nearest and furthest elements in an artwork.

Focal Point—the main point of interest that draws the viewer’s eye into a picture.

Foreground—the area of the picture or scene that appears to be closest to the viewer, often at the bottom.

Horizon Line—the line where the earth meets the sky.

Landscape—An artwork that depicts the outside world such as the land, the sea, the city, and sky.

Pattern—the repetition of shapes, lines, or colors.

Portrait—a work of art that represents a specific person or a group of people. Portraits usually show the likeness of the person as well as revealing details about his or her personality and interests.

Self-Portrait—a portrait an artist creates using himself or herself as the subject.

Still Life—An artwork of a group of objects arranged on a table, such as flowers, fruit, or bowls.

Texture—the surface or “feel” of an artwork or object in the artwork, its smoothness, roughness, softness, etc.
ACROSS:

2 The person responsible for purchasing works of art for the museum’s collection, caring for the artworks, planning and developing exhibitions, and researching, writing, and lecturing about art.

3 A panel that provides information about an artwork including the title of the artwork, artist’s name, medium, date completed, information about the artwork, and how it became part of the museum collection.

4 An institution where artwork or artifacts of artistic, historic, or scientific value are collected, conserved, exhibited, and interpreted.

7 The preservation, repair, and prevention of deterioration of artwork and artifacts.

9 The name of an artwork. Sometimes it refers to something in the artwork, other times it might not.

10 A space dedicated to art-making.

11 The materials used by an artist to create artwork (e.g. paint, canvas, pencil, clay, marble).

DOWN:

1 An object that encloses or surrounds a picture or painting.

2 A group of objects that a museum owns, preserves, or has acquired through purchase, donation, or gift.

5 A room within a museum where art is exhibited.

6 A knowledgeable volunteer who guides groups on tours of the museum’s exhibitions.

8 A prearranged group of artworks that correspond to a particular theme.
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Dulce Pinzón (b. 1974)

Bernabe Mendez (Spiderman), 2007

C-print on sintra

29 7/8 x 39 3/4 in.

Museum purchase; funds provided by Marilyn Greene

2007.23
Dulce Pinzón (b. 1974)
*Bernabe Mendez (Spiderman)*, 2007
C-print on sintra
29 ⅞ x 39 ¾ in.
Museum purchase; funds provided by Marilyn Greene
2007.23
ABOUT THE ARTIST
Dulce Pinzon was born in 1974 in Mexico City, Mexico. She studied Mass Media Communications at the Universidad de Las Americas Puebla in Mexico and earned her MFA in photography from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She lives and works between Mexico and Brooklyn, New York. Her work has been exhibited internationally.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK
This photograph is part of the series *The Real Story of the Superheroes*. Experiencing the challenges of being an immigrant in New York City, Pinzón began this series of photographs in 2004 to illustrate the realities of Latino immigrants living in America. The series is made of 20 color photographs of Mexican immigrants dressed in the costumes of American and Mexican Superheroes.

This photograph required some heroic efforts to produce; both photographer and subject were hung on harnesses high above New York City to get the shot. The individual in this work is Bernabe Mendez, originally from the State of Guerrero in Mexico. He worked as a professional window cleaner in New York, sending home $500 a month to his family in Mexico.

Pinzón writes, “The Mexican immigrant worker in New York is a perfect example of the hero who has gone unnoticed. It is common for a Mexican worker in New York to work extraordinary hours in extreme conditions for very low wages which are saved at great cost and sacrifice and sent to families and communities in Mexico who rely on them to survive.

The Mexican economy has quietly become dependent on the money sent from workers in the U.S. Conversely, the U.S. economy has quietly become dependent on the labor of Mexican immigrants. Along with the depth of their sacrifice, it is the quietness of this dependence which makes Mexican immigrant workers a subject of interest.

The principal objective of this series is to pay homage to these brave and determined men and women that somehow manage, without the help of any supernatural power, to withstand extreme conditions of labor in order to help their families and communities survive and prosper. Each photo pictures the worker/superhero in their work environment, and is accompanied by a short text including the worker’s name, their hometown, the number of years they have been working in New York, and the amount of money they send to their families each week.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
Everyday heroes are part of every community. Every human being has the capacity to act heroically through simple, ordinary actions of kindness, courage, and love.

What’s going on in this artwork?
What does it mean to be a hero?
Who are the everyday heroes in your community, school or family? Why do you think so?
Which superpowers would you like to have?
How would you use these superpowers to help others?
**VOCABULARY GAME**

Rearrange the letters of each word to create different words using as many letters as possible! Earn 2 points for each letter. Let’s play!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hero</strong>: a person admired for achievements and noble qualities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-point words: He</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-point words: Hoe Her Ore Roe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points: 28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photograph: a picture made by a camera.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph: a picture made by a camera.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Immigrant: a person who comes to a country to live there.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigrant: a person who comes to a country to live there.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points:</td>
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</table>

Labor: the services that are performed by workers for wages or money.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Points:</td>
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</table>

Survive: to remain alive.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survive: to remain alive.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Points:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total points:
Lesson Overview:

Students will write a short essay that explores everyday heroes and their superpowers and they will illustrate their essay with a drawing.

Learning Objectives:

• Students will make close observations of an artwork and interpret its meaning through participatory dialogue.
• Students will write a short essay that explores the theme of everyday heroes in their community, school, or family, and which superhero powers they would use to help others.
• Students will create a drawing to illustrate details in their essay.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1
Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases based on grade reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Materials:

• Image of Bernabe Mendez (Spiderman) by Dulce Pinzon
• Paper
• Pencil
• Drawing materials: color pencils, markers, pastels, etc.

Procedure:

1. Display the image of Bernabe Mendez (Spiderman) by Dulce Pinzon.
2. Lead a discussion about the image using the discussion questions provided.
3. Play the vocabulary game provided.
4. As a class, brainstorm a list of everyday heroes in your community, school, or families and how they help others.
5. Students choose one person who is an everyday hero from the list and write an essay about him or her. What makes this person a hero? How do they help others? Students can work independently or in small groups.
6. Students imagine a superpower for their everyday hero and explain in their essay how he or she would use it to make their community better or safer.
7. Students illustrate details from their essay with a drawing using the art material provided.
Wardell Milan (b. 1977)

*One could still dream to devise an optimistic antidote against the defeatist and cynical claims of the Return of the Order*, 2008

Digital C-print

Ed. 2/4

39 ¾ x 50 ¾ in.

Gift of Robert Nossa and Jennifer Odell

2008.4
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Wardell Milan is a visual artist residing in New York. Growing up in Tennessee, as a teenager he began to explore photography. He earned a BFA in photography and painting at the University of Tennessee, and an MFA from Yale University. In 2004, he moved to New York City and started to exhibit in different galleries. His work consists of drawings, paintings and photography, as well as constructing three-dimensional dioramas. In these dioramas, the artist stages moments that never existed, creating a dualism between reality and fantasy. His work examine how the world impacts us and how we respond.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Architectural elements made from cardboard serve as stage sets for figures cut from family snapshots, bodybuilder magazines, and other sources.

Milan says, “In my photographic work, illustrating fantastic landscapes and alternative worlds, are a mixture of history, a set of stories and images, autobiography and mythology collapsed into each other.

This photograph presents detritus left from an unknown disaster. Imploded homes, family photographs askew on the walls, pianos and knickknacks upturned litter the once tranquil suburban landscape. The aim is not to illustrate a landscape ravaged by a violent explosion, but to consider the objects and keepsakes that individuals collect and value.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What is going on in this picture?
What do you see that makes you say that?
What more can you find?
What kind of feelings do you have looking at this photograph?
How many family photographs can you find?
Who do you think are the people in the family photographs and what are their stories?
What is a keepsake or memento?
What keepsakes are most important to you and your family?
VOCABULARY GAME

Rearrange the letters of each word to create different words using as many letters as possible! Earn 2 points for each letter. Let’s play!

Example:

**Mythology**: the myths dealing with the gods, demigods, and legendary heroes of a particular people

4-point words: to my go
6-point words: too log got gym
8-point words: myth moth yoyo loom tool
10-point words: gloom
Points: 86

**Diorama**: a scenic representation in which sculptured figures and lifelike details, usually in miniature, are realistically displayed with a painted background.

Points:

**Snapshot**: an informal photograph that is taken quickly.

Points:

**Keepsake**: something kept in memory of a person, place, or event.

Points:

**Total points:**
CLASSROOM PROJECT: THE MEMORY BOX

Overview:
Students will create a diorama with family keepsakes, photograph it, and present it to the class.

Learning Objectives:
• Students will make close observations of an artwork and interpret its meaning through participatory dialogue.
• Students will interview family members to identify keepsakes and objects that have a special meaning.
• Students will create a diorama using personal and family keepsakes.
• Students will photograph their diorama and present their work to the class.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning word and phrases based on grade reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4
Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

Materials: Shoe box, glue, tape, scissors, paint or magazine images for the background of the box Keepsakes and family mementoes, camera or mobile device, lined paper and pencil, photo paper

Procedure:
1. Display an image of One could still dream to devise an optimistic antidote against the defeatist and cynical claims of the Return of the Order by Wardell Milan
2. Lead a discussion about the image using the discussion questions provided.
3. Play the vocabulary game provided.
4. Students choose a family member to interview about important mementos and family heirlooms. First, students will list key questions, then conduct their interview, and finally take notes about the interviewee’s responses.
5. Students gather family heirlooms, mementoes, family photos, and keepsakes at home and arrange them inside of a shoebox to assemble their diorama (no need to glue them in place). They can paint and/or collage images in the background using magazine images, words or photographs.
6. Using a camera or a mobile device, students photograph their diorama.
7. Students will present a photograph of their dioramas to the class.
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Catherine Opie is an American fine art photographer. She was born in Ohio in 1961. At age 9, she received a Kodak camera and started to photograph her family and community. She completed an MFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 1988. She is currently a tenured professor of photography at UCLA and she lives in Los Angeles with her companion, painter Julie Burleight.

Opie melds traditional photography with unconventional subjects. She investigates the ways in which photographs both document and give voice to social phenomena in American today—documenting political movements, queer subcultures, and urban transformation.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

This photograph is part of the Portraits series that includes more than 50 photographs created between 1993 and 1997. The subject matter is her community of gay and lesbian friends that are depicted in a respectful and dignified way.

Opie isolates her subject against vibrantly colored backgrounds to separate the subjects from their worlds while still representing their world through their bodies.

She says, “My work is about place and identity and how they inform each other, and that includes myself: but iconic images need to be simple, powerful, and specific.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What’s going on in this artwork?

Who is the person depicted in this photograph?

Imagine their age, where they live, their hobbies, and friends.

The subject of the photograph is looking directly at the viewer. If you were to start a conversation with this person, what might be the dialogue?

How is this artwork similar to a traditional portrait?

How is it different?
VOCABULARY GAME

Use the clues to unscramble each word! Earn 2 points for each word you unscramble correctly. Let’s play!

Ttrraopi____________________________
A representation of a person usually showing the face.

Epennmoah_________________________
Something unusual or difficult to explain that can be observe and studied, such as interesting fact or event.

Eiittynd____________________________
The distinguishing character or personality of an individual.

Cconii_____________________________
Widely known and recognized, especially for distinctive excellence.

Yiitgnd_____________________________
The quality or state of being worthy, honored, or respected.

Total points: _________________________

Answers: portrait, phenomena, identity, iconic, dignity
Lesson Overview:

Students will create a photographic portrait of someone in their family, classroom, or community.

Learning Objectives:

Students will make close observations of an artwork and interpret its meaning through participatory dialogue.

Students will be the directors of their own photo shoot, deciding what the subject of the photograph should wear, the pose, facial expression, background, and lighting.

Students will write an exhibition label explaining how these choices help to convey information about the subject.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Materials:

• Camera or mobile device
• Photo paper
• Photo shoot props and background
• Lined paper
• Pencil

Procedure:

1. Display the image Jo by Catherine Opie.
2. Lead a discussion about the image using the discussion questions provided.
3. Play the vocabulary game provided.
4. Students choose someone in their family, classroom, or community as the subject of a photograph.
5. Students will decide what the subject should wear, the pose, facial expression, background, and lighting.
6. Students will write an exhibition label for their photograph including artist name, title, year, medium, and size of image.
7. The label should also explain why they chose that particular subject and how the choice of clothing, pose, background, and lighting help to convey information about the subject.
Fahamu Pecou (b. 1975)
Rock Well: Radiant Pop Champ, 2010
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in.
Collection of Teddi and Scott Dolph
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dr. Fahamu Pecou is an interdisciplinary artist whose works combine hip-hop, fine art, and popular culture. Born in Brooklyn, New York, he was only four years old the night his father, who had long battled schizophrenia, murdered his mother as he and his siblings watched television in a nearby room. Fahamu and his siblings were eventually sent to South Carolina to live in a public housing project with his mother’s aunt, a stern woman who had little patience for a sensitive boy who liked to sketch the cartoons he saw on television.

Fahamu moved to Atlanta to study painting at the Atlanta College on Art where he graduated in 1997. He received his PhD from Emory University in 2018.

At times, he played the role of an artist whose fame is similar to a hip-hop star in performance art pieces, pulling up to gallery openings with bodyguards and a limousine. His work transformed when he traveled to South Africa in 2008 and witnessed the idealization of hip-hop stars abroad.

Pecou’s paintings, performance art, and academic work addresses concerns around representations of black masculinity and identity through satire and caricature. In his drawings and paintings, he depicts himself as the shining superstar of his own hip-hop universe with magazine covers and staged photo shoots.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

This painting is part of the series Art History Next. Pecou uses Norman Rockwell’s Triple Self-portrait (http://www.nrm.org/MT/text/TripleSelf.html) as a reference to question the notions of identity and inclusion and to give a version of his own triple self-portrait.

Pecou says, “The work was created along with a broader collection of paintings that reimagined famous artist self-portraits. The idea being that by challenging the understanding and appreciation of the referenced artworks, and juxtaposing my own ideas within the context of the dialogue of the original source material, I hope to build upon the ideas of these artists and create a brand new-dialogue. Remixing the themes of Rockwell’s original piece, my work incorporates three of my personal heroes, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Andy Warhol, and Muhammad Ali. Like the great masters that look on in Rockwell’s portrait, this holy trinity of influences on my own practice continue to help inform and shape my view of art, innovation, and courage. The portrait of a Black artist creating a self-portrait, Rockwell also becomes a commentary on notions of identity, inclusion, and access.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What is going on in this artwork?

Which objects are familiar to you?

Take a closer look at the Norman Rockwell Triple Self-Portrait and compare it to the Fahamu Pecou’s. What similarities can you find? What is different?

What do you think the two artists are trying to tell us about themselves?

Can you identify people in the upper left corner of the Pecou’s piece?

Can you identify people depicted in the upper right corner of the Norman Rockwell’s piece?

Who do you feel inspired by in your life?
VOCABULARY GAME
Use the clues to unscramble each word!
Earn 2 points for each word you unscramble correctly. Let’s play!

Fsle ttrproia _________________________
A portrait of oneself done by oneself.

Lgdaeiou _____________________________
A discussion or series of discussions to end a disagreement.

Rsteai _________________________________
The use of humor, irony, and exaggeration to expose and criticize people.

Aeiuccrrta _______________________________
A picture, description, or imitation of a person in which certain characteristics are exaggerated in order to create a comic effect.

Peetteorsy _______________________________
An often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things with a particular characteristic.

Nnnoevitc _______________________________
A custom or a way of acting or doing things that is widely accepted and followed.

Lsef meeets ______________________________
A feeling of having respect for yourself and your abilities.

Total points: ___________________________
Lesson Overview:
Students create a double or triple self-portrait using artists or pop-culture icons as inspiration.

Learning Objectives
• Students will make close observations of an artwork and interpret its meaning through participatory dialogue.
• Students will paint a self-portrait inspired by artists or pop-culture icons of their choice.
• Students will write an exhibition label explaining their artistic choices.

Common Core Standards:
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.1
Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.2
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

Materials:
• Canvas board or thick paper
• Pencils
• Acrylic paint or gouache
• Brushes and water
• Lined paper
• Pencil

Procedure:
1. Display the image *Rock Well: Radiant Pop Champ* by Fahamu Pecou.
2. Lead a discussion about the image using the discussion questions provided.
3. Play the vocabulary game provided.
4. Student will create their own double or triple self-portrait painting.
5. Students can choose a similar or a different type of composition, with or without a mirror, as long as the artwork has at least two different representations of themselves. They can begin with thumbnail drawings to experiment with different compositions before finalizing their idea.
6. Students choose two or three artists or pop-culture icons as inspirations for their artistic style or medium. They must represent them in their piece.
7. Students write an exhibition label for their painting including artist name, title, year, medium, and size of painting. The label should also include an explanation for how their chosen artists or pop-culture icons inspired their artwork.
SEDUCED BY ONE ANOTHER, YET BOUND BY CERTAIN SOCIAL CONVENTIONS

& EVEN THOUGH WE KNEW BETTER WE CONTINUED THAT TIME HONORED TRADITION OF THE ARTIST & HIS MODEL

YOU FRAMED THE LIKES OF ME & I FRAMED YOU, BUT WE WERE BOTH FRAMED BY MODERNISM

Carrie Mae Weems (b. 1953)  
_Framed by Modernism_, 1997  
Three gelatin silver prints with sandblasted text on glass  
Museum purchase; prior gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edward F. Weston, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Kasser and Acquisition Fund  
1997.32a-c
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Carrie Mae Weems is one of the most celebrated American artists working today. The recipient of a MacArthur “genius grant” in 2013 and a 2015 W.E.B. DuBois Medalist at Harvard University, she was the first African American artist to have a retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum. A cultural icon, Weems appeared as herself in Spike Lee’s series “She’s Gotta Have It,” and was an influence for Beyoncé’s “Lemonade” music video.

At 20-years-old, Weems was given her first camera as a gift. “I think that the first time I picked up that camera, I thought, ‘Oh, O.K. This is my tool. This is it,’” she’s said. She began exploring a range of topics behind and in front of the lens, placing first her family members then herself in the frame to challenge representations of African Americans, especially women, in popular culture. A storyteller, she challenges assumptions about women, people of color, and working-class communities using insightful text and lush imagery. Her work often investigates and critiques power dynamics—within family relationships, race, gender, class, and political systems.

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Painter Robert Colescott commissioned Carrie Mae Weems to photograph his likeness for his solo show at the Venice Biennale in 1997, the first for an African American representing the United States. Instead of making a traditional portrait, Weems made a series of photographs that questioned the traditional relationship between artist and model.

Colescott appears in the photograph, fully clothed and uncomfortably averting his gaze from the nude Weems behind him. The poses assumed by Weems echo the figures in Colescott’s painting *Venus II*, which stands beside her. In the traditional artist/model relationship, the artist has the power. However, in this artwork Weems restructures the imbalance of power by positioning herself as both subject and author.

At a lecture at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in February of 2018, Weems said the following about *Framed by Modernism*. “I think one of the things that’s interested me for a long time is the way in which we might become accomplices in our own victimization. What are we responsible for in terms of what happens to us? What do we relinquish? And so, this role of responsibility in all things, I think, is absolutely key and I try to explore that a lot in my work.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What’s going on in each image? What’s the same and what’s different in each one?

Why do you think photographer Carrie Mae Weems inserts herself as the subject of her photographs, in this case as the model in the artist’s studio?

Looking at the images and text, what do you think are Carrie Mae Weems’s critiques of the relationship between an artist and a model?

In the era of the #metoo movement, what do you think she means when she says, “One of the things that’s interested me for a long time is the way in which we might become accomplices in our own victimization. What are we responsible for in terms of what happens to us? What do we relinquish?” Do you agree with her statement?
WRITING ACTIVITY

It’s been said that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Write as many words as you can that relate to Carrie May Weems’s *Framed by Modernism*. Compare your word list with other students in the class. Can the entire class reach a thousand unique words about this artwork?

CLASSROOM PROJECT: WHO HAS THE POWER?

Lesson Overview:

Students write a short story and create an artwork that explore power dynamics within a relationship.

Learning Objectives:

• Students will make close observations of an artwork and interpret its meaning through participatory dialogue and a writing activity.
• Students will write a short story that explores a power dynamic in a relationship between two people.
• Students will create an artwork using a medium of their choice to depict an imbalance of power in a relationship.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.10
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.6
Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.
Materials:
• Image of *Framed by Modernism* by Carrie May Weems
• Paper
• Pencil
• Materials for drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, mixed media, digital media, etc.

Procedure:
1. Display the image *Framed by Modernism* by Carrie May Weems.
2. Lead a discussion about the image using the discussion questions provided.
3. Students explore the image with close observation through the writing activity provided.
4. As a class, brainstorm and make a list of relationships with inherent power dynamics. For example, parent/child, teacher/student, employer/employee.
5. Each student selects a power dynamic as the focus of their artwork. Students begin exploring that power dynamic by writing a short story. Things to consider:
   a. Who has the power and how does it manifest itself?
   b. How does age, gender, race, class, etc. play into this power dynamic?
   c. How is power given and taken within this relationship?
   d. What can the person with less power in the relationship do to flip the dynamic—overtly or subtly?
6. Students use their short story about relationships and power dynamics as the source material for an artwork. How can they represent the essence of their story visually? The artwork can be created using any medium of their choice: drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, mixed media, digital media, etc.
7. Students may work in pairs as one-another’s models for drawing or painting or the subjects in one-another’s photographs.
Bisa Washington (b. 1952)

*Never Forget*, 1999

Lithography and relief with chine collé

Gift of the Rutgers Center for Innovative Print and Paper

2000.21.4
ABOUT THE ARTIST

Bisa Washington is a sculptor, weaver, print maker, writer, blacksmith, fiber artist, oral historian and art educator. Her early work was inspired by African art, particularly masks and the African spiritual traditions of the Yoruba. Born in upstate New York, her family relocated to Newark, NJ where she still lives today.

As a young artist who could not afford to buy art materials and supplies, she turned to one of her instructor and mentors, Ben Jones, for advice. He advised her to “make art with anything and everything!”

“I took it from there,” she said, “and have never had a problem since because I knew I could make art out of anything.”

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Overlaid over a circular web, we see four profiles of African heads encased in iron masks with covered mouths and spiked hooks. The contraption shows the extent to which captors of the Middle Passage prevented their human cargo the ability to talk or scream in anguish. A square of handmade paper in the center of the circle superimposed with a photo of a lynching victim is symbolic of American’s painful racist history.

Both the spirals on the masks—known as veve—and the two roosters are symbols of deities Papa Legba in the Haitian Voodoo and Elegba in the West African Yoruba religion. In both traditions, Papa Legba or Elegba are the gatekeepers of crossroads who open roads and clear paths of obstacles.

We also see two hands palm side up showing an open eye in one and a heart in the other. In North African, Middle Eastern, and Jewish traditions, the Hamsa, or eye in the palm, is a protective symbol that deflects the evil eye and brings good luck. An open palm showing a heart is typically interpreted as charity given from the heart.

An excerpt from a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “the power of love in the face of senseless cruelty and violence,” is printed in a continuous spiral around the work, offering an antidote of love to the overall theme of racial terror and the legacy of slavery in the collective memory of African Americans.

Washington says, “Much like the traditions of veve and mandala, [Never Forget] ...is a focus for meditation and prayer.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What do you notice?

What do you think the different symbols represent—the roosters, the eye in the palm, the heart in the palm, and the masks?

Why do you think the artist included the repeating phrase, “The power of love in the face of senseless cruelty and violence” in the artwork?

How can art help Americans come to terms with racial terror and the legacy of slavery in our nation’s history?
VOCABULARY GAME
It’s been said that “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Write as many words as you can that relate to Bisa Washington’s *Never Forget*. Compare your word list with other students in the class. Can the entire class reach a thousand unique words about this artwork?

CLASSROOM PROJECT: MAKERS OF HISTORY

Overview:
- Students create a mixed media artwork to memorialize a historical period or event.

Learning Objectives:
- Students will make close observations of an artwork and interpret its meaning through participatory dialogue and a writing activity.
- Students will conduct research on a historical period or event using the internet and primary sources, such as speeches and documentary photography.
- Students will create a mixed media artwork using a variety of materials and artistic processes.

Common Core Standards:

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9**
Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7**
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.10**
Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1**
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.4**
Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
Materials:
- Image of *Never Forget* by Bisa Washington
- Paper
- Pencil
- Graphic organizer
- Cardboard or Bristol board
- Glue
- Scissors
- Materials for painting, printmaking, drawing, etc.

Procedure:
1. Display the image *Never Forget* by Bisa Washington.
2. Lead a discussion about the image using the discussion questions provided.
3. Students explore the image with close observation through the writing activity provided.
4. Washington titled this artwork from 1999 *Never Forget*. Since then, “Never Forget” has been used as a slogan for the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. It’s often used as a motto for the Holocaust. Ask students to choose an event in history or a historical time period that they feel should not be forgotten by society as a focus for the artwork.
5. Students create a graphic organizer for famous quotes or speeches, words, symbols, documentary photography, and other imagery related to that historical event or time period. They may conduct research online or in the library to complete their graphic organizer.
6. Students will use their graphic organizer as an inspiration board for a mixed media artwork. They can incorporate between 3 and 5 components from their graphic organizer into their artwork. The different components can be drawn, painted, collaged, and/or printed onto their artwork.
7. Bisa Washington’s artwork includes a quote from a Martin Luther King, Jr. speech that is repeated in a spiral as a mantra. Encourage students to use words or text in an innovative way in their artwork.
8. Students should arrange all the components on one piece of cardboard, paper, or Bristol board. Once they are happy with the composition, they can glue it in place.