

## What is American Culture?

Grade Range: 5-8, 9-12

### Lesson Objectives

To integrate art and technology in the curriculum as students answer the question "Is there an American culture?"

### State Standards

NYS

ELA Standard 3: Write stories that observe the conventions of genre and contain interesting and effective language and voice

Arts Standard 1: Creating in the visual arts

Math, Science & Technology Standard 2: Use a range of equipment to integrate several forms of information in order to create a good quality video presentation

Social Studies Standard 1: History of United States and

New York Social Studies Standard 5: Civics, citizenship and government

### Time Required

10 hours

### Technology and Materials Needed

- Art Supplies including:  
paper, paint, cardboard, magazines
- Video Camera with animation capabilities and DV firewire output
- iMac or better computer with iMovie or other movie editing software
- Tripods
- Video Monitors

---

Children's Media Project (CMP) was founded in 1994 to give young people "creative space" - literally and figuratively - to exercise their imaginations while gaining skills to express themselves through electronic media. Children's Media Project brings creativity into today's

activities through a combined use of art and technology that stimulates students to learn more, do more - and be more.

This lesson plan was created by Children's Media Project (CMP), which worked with Ulster County BOCES and five schools to create a video animation piece that answers essential questions from the NYS Social Studies Core Curriculum. The program integrates art and technology as students answer questions such as: Is there an American Culture? How can an individual help to bring about changes in a society? Why do some people view the same event differently? And, why was the U.S. a magnet to so many people?

The workshop took place over two days. To offer your students the opportunity to learn animation, you have two choices. Do the animation unit on your own by following our lesson plan or we will be happy to discuss coming to your school and replicating this unit. Call Martha Dewing at 845.485.4480 to discuss the logistics and cost for implementing this workshop.

The children participating in this project were selected from several fifth grade classes by writing an essay stating why they wanted to participate.

There were a total of 25 children and each group of five came with a teacher. There were three CMP staff teachers and two aides. Each video was created in two days. The children worked from 8:45 am to 1:30 pm, with time to view their creation in the end.

Two Parts of Project:

1. Prior to commencement of the project, all children had discussed in depth with their teachers the question "What is American culture"?
2. Two-day workshop.

---

Procedures  
Day 1

1. Settle down and introductions (15 minutes)
2. Brainstorm the five groups' understanding of the question, "What is American Culture?" "Is there one?" Etc. This session should be very rich since the children have already discussed the question in depth. One of the teachers writes down on the board the kernel of each offering. (30 minutes)
3. Writing an "Exquisite Corpse" poem is a surrealist exercise created at the beginning of the 20th century to help people who felt unable to write poetry. Form four groups of children. One child writes two lines and then folds the paper over so only the second line can be read. Pass the paper to the next child who reads the line that is visible and writes two more lines. Fold the paper so that only the last line is visible and repeat, giving each child a chance to add to the poem. The groups come together, share what they have written and then the entire group edits what has been written and creates one poem. The children's "Exquisite Corpse" poem becomes the narration for the video and from this poem the children will create the visuals for their animation. (1 hour)
4. "How to" animation demo. This is an interactive demonstration where each child acts as animator and camera person, animating five frames. (30 minutes)
5. A working lunch (15 minutes)
6. Break into five groups and assign each group a chunk of the poem. (15 minutes)
7. Students brainstorm how they will animate their section of the poem. (30 minutes)
8. Half the group begins to work on the backgrounds while the other half does the figures. (1 hour and 15 minutes)
9. Clean up and recap the workshop, reviewing with the children what is remembered about the process of animation. Ask those children who play an instrument to bring it with them to the next class so they can compose the music to go with the video. CMP provides drums. (15 minutes)

DAY 2

1. Settle down and form groups (15 minutes)
2. Finish backgrounds and figures. (1 hour)
3. Start animating. Set up backgrounds with one camera per group. Rehearse action using the student-created figures. One person operates camera while the rest of the group moves his or her figures. (1 hour 45 minutes )
4. A working lunch (15 minutes)
5. Half of the class does voiceovers, while the other half creates the music led by one of CMP's teachers as conductor. (1 hour)
6. Children clean up. (15 minutes)
7. Record the soundtrack. This is done with the students by one of CMP's teachers.
8. Edit soundtrack and do the credits. This is done with the students by one of CMP's teachers. (Done while children are working on the animation)
9. View the final video with the class and make sure that there is enough time for an active discussion eliciting feedback from each of the children about the process. (15 minutes)

For both days of the workshop, teachers fully participate with the children. Instead of acting as chaperones, the teachers add great benefit to the teamwork process. This also gives the teachers a chance to learn how to incorporate media and technology into the classroom. CMP strongly encourages teachers to get paint on their hands while maintaining the "youth-produced" theme. During the workshop we invite teachers to ask our facilitators questions on all aspects of creating and executing a project of this nature.

#### Assessment Criteria

Produced three products

1. the Exquisite Corpse poem and used it
2. to create animation which also had
3. sound added to it.

Verbal checkpoint assessments made by the facilitators for each portion of the project .

---

## Related Links

### Children's Media Project

<http://www.childrensmediaproject.org>

Children's Media Project brings creativity into educational activities through a combined use of art and technology that stimulates students to learn more, do more - and be more.

### Unmuseum: Stop Motion Photography

<http://www.unmuseum.org/stopact.htm>

History and technique of stop-motion photography or animation.

### Stop Motion

<http://library.thinkquest.org/10015/data/info/reference/techniques/stop.motion.html?tqskip1=1&tqtime=0327>

A quick guide to stop-motion animation including a "Get Into the Action" section which encourages first time users to give this process a try.