Overview:

A type of interpreter beyond an historian is introduced in this lesson: the artist. Students learn how artists use source material and comment on current events and politics, like historians, but with different results. Andy Warhol's *Jackie* and *Flash Series* are used as examples for class discussion. Students observe and discuss the selection of images, editing, scale, printing, and presentation in order to understand intentions behind the artwork.

Grades: 6-12

Subjects: Art, Critical Analysis, History, Cultural Studies, Editing

PA State Standards:

Arts and Humanities:

  9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts
  9.2.D Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective

Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening:

  1.4.Types of Writing
  1.4.11.B Write complex informational pieces (e.g., research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays)
    • Include a variety of methods to develop the main idea
    • Use precise language and specific detail
    • Include cause and effect
    • Use relevant graphics (e.g., maps, charts, graphs, tables, illustrations, photographs)
    • Use primary and secondary sources

Cognitive Skills:

Identify and Interpret:

  Students will identify subject matter, source material and the method and techniques employed by Warhol in two artworks
  Students will interpret meanings of artworks based upon visual clues

Analyze and Apply:

  Students will analyze Warhol's use of source materials in the creation of artworks based upon formal criteria: color, scale, repetition

Evaluate:

  Students will compare and contrast interpretations of artworks
  Students will assess the impact of source materials on the interpreted meaning of artworks
An Artist Interprets the Sources:

Procedure:

1. Introduce and discuss the role of the artist as an interpreter of source material. Compare and contrast artist with historian in Step 4.

The Artist:

- Interprets data, makes choices, organizes, and creates something unique.
- Represents the world or something imagined or ideas, including both real and imagined qualities.
- Filters history, current events, and cultural and political occurrences for ideas.
- Answers questions he/she is interested in and creates something new.
- Conveys something that he/she wants to be valued and remembered.
- Reflects, critiques, and entertains society.

2. Print out color copies of Andy Warhol’s Jackie and Flash Series, or project these digital files for students to view during class discussion. Use the questions about each artwork on the handouts to guide class discussion.
An Artist Interprets the Sources (continued)

Jackie Series:

View and discuss the Jackie Series. Students should use visual clues in the images to inform their answers to questions on the handout.

1. Identify the artist’s source materials and determine whether they are primary or secondary sources.

2. While looking at the sources and the artwork continue to analyze the artist’s:
   - Selection of images
   - Editing
   - Use of scale
   - Use of printing
   - Final presentation

3. Students should write their interpretation of the artwork. It should include what they think the artwork means and an explanation of how the artist achieved this communication.

4. Read the interpretation of Patricia Pugh Mitchell, Director, Kuumba Trust:

   “I am immediately transported back to that dreadful day in Dallas when it all fell apart, and the curtains closed on the final act of Camelot. I was 10 years old when Jack Kennedy was assassinated. Those from my era may recollect the set of 77 collectable photo cards of the JFK family. My mother had meticulously saved anything and everything about Jack and Jackie, so I asked her to pull out the cards. She knew exactly where to go—the next day she placed the cards in my hand. My mom wore hats and cute suits just like Jackie—although she would never admit it. When I looked at my mother dressed for church—she was a mirror image of Jackie with a tan.”

5. Have students compare and contrast their interpretations with that of Ms. Pugh Mitchell.
An Artist Interprets the Sources (continued)

Flash Series:

View and discuss the Flash Series. Students should answer the questions on the Flash handout based upon visual clues in the images.

1. Students should identify Warhol’s sources for Flash, basing their answers on what is visible in the artwork.

2. Evaluate the accuracy of their answers. Warhol’s sources included:

   Pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald, an advertisement for the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, a photograph of the Book Depository’s sixth floor window, the presidential seal, press clippings of Jackie during the motorcade, photographs of John F. Kennedy taken from the television screen, news wire bulletins fabricated by the poet Phillip Greer to reconstruct the AP wire bulletins of that day, and a picture of a movie clapboard.

3. Students should identify whether these sources are primary or secondary.

4. While looking at the artwork, they should continue to analyze the artist’s:
   - Selection of images
   - Editing
   - Use of scale and color
   - Use of printing
   - Final presentation

5. Students should compare and contrast their answers for the Flash Series with answers for the Jackie Series. Discuss whether having the source material along with the artwork aids in their understanding—explaining why or why not.

6. Have students write their own interpretation of the Flash Series.

7. Review the interpretations of Flash and Jackie in class.

Optional Activities:

Death and Disaster Newspaper Activity >

Analyze Critical Points of View: (link to POVs)

Compare and contrast these points of view with the students’ interpretations.
View these works by Andy Warhol and answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Describe this woman. What is her personality like? What is she expressing emotionally? Where is she going? Who is with her? Why is she alone in some frames and not others?

2. Do these images tell a story? Why or why not? Can you read them in a sequence or pattern?

3. What questions do you have when you look at this piece?

4. Determine whether Warhol used primary or secondary sources.

Source materials are from:
LIFE magazine, two issues published on November 29, and December 6, 1963.
Four Days, a publication detailing the funeral events.
5. Examine the artist’s selections. When were these images taken? Try to identify the time difference between the images.

6. Examine the artist’s editing. What does Warhol crop out of the sources? What is his focus?

7. Examine the artist’s use of the formal principle of scale. Look again at the finished painting. Are all the images the same size?

8. Examine the artist’s printing technique. How many distinct source images did Warhol use? How many times does he repeat each image? Describe the difference between the original sources and the way Warhol printed them.

9. Examine the final presentation. Are the images presented in chronological order or are they random?

10. Using your own interpretation, what is the artwork’s message?

11. Read the interpretation of Patricia Pugh Mitchell, Director, Kuumba Trust:

   “I am immediately transported back to that dreadful day in Dallas when it all fell apart, and the curtains closed on the final act of Camelot. I was 10 years old when Jack Kennedy was assassinated. Those from my era may recollect the set of 77 collectable photo cards of the JFK family. My mother had meticulously saved anything and everything about Jack and Jackie, so I asked her to pull out the cards. She knew exactly where to go—the next day she placed the cards in my hand. My mom wore hats and cute suits just like Jackie—although she would never admit it. When I looked at my mother dressed for church—she was a mirror image of Jackie with a tan.”

12. Compare and contrast your interpretation with that of Ms. Pugh Mitchell.
View these works by Andy Warhol and answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Who and what are recognizable in this series? Make a list. How do these people and things relate or connect with each other?

2. Do these images tell a story? Why or why not? Can you read them in a sequence or pattern?

3. How does Andy Warhol manipulate color in the images? What is the effect of his color usage?

4. What questions do you have when you look at this piece?

5. What do you think were Warhol’s sources for Flash? Base your answers on what you can see in the artwork.

6. How accurate were your answers? **

7. Identify whether these sources are primary or secondary.

** List of Sources:

- Pictures of Lee Harvey Oswald.
- An advertisement for the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle.
- A photograph of the Book Depository’s sixth floor window.
- The presidential seal.
- Press clippings of Jackie during the motorcade.
- Photographs of Kennedy taken from the television screen.
- News wire bulletins fabricated by the poet Phillip Greer mimicking the AP wire bulletins of that day.
- A picture of a movie clapboard.
8. Examine the artist’s content selections. Try to identify the time between the each image.

9. Examine the artist’s editing. What did Warhol crop out of the sources? What is his focus?

10. Examine the artist’s use of the formal principle of scale. Are all the images the same size?

11. Examine the artist’s printing technique. Warhol printed each image using photographic silkscreen. How many distinct source images does he use? How many times does he repeat each image? Describe the difference between the original sources and the way Warhol printed them.

12. Examine the final presentation. Are the images presented in chronological order or are they random?

Synthesize your answers and ideas about the above questions in a written interpretation of the Flash Series.