

Lesson Plan - *Portrait of Aya-I-Ga, also known as Neighbour and Nipper*

(Neighbour was awarded the Albert medal, in 1912 by His Majesty King George V.)

KLA English
STAGE/S year 5 –10 secondary
TIME = 45mins total

PRIOR LEARNING

Knowledge of how photographs are constructed including:

- how shot sizes relate to the human scale
- how camera angles affect the power of the subject
- how location and lighting affect mood.



National Library of Australia

nla.pic-an22765121-s1-v

<http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview?pi=nla.pic-an22765121&referercode=cat>

OUTCOMES

This activity enables students to deconstruct the choices the photographer has made while capturing the image. It allows students to observe the viewer and subject interaction. Participants also examine the roles of model and photographer in exploring the social power relations created by the camera.

YEAR 5 – Oral communication, visual grammar, research skills, recognising, discussing, responding and comprehending multimodal texts.

YEAR 10 - Appreciate, reflect, evaluate, inferring attitudes, connect ideas, discuss and respond, create logical arguments, analyse texts, draw conclusions and use oral communication skills.

RESOURCES

Electronic whiteboard
Four print copies of the photograph

LESSON DEVELOPMENT: SITUATIONAL ROLE PLAY

Portrait Photography is a practice that involves collaboration between the sitter, the spectator and the photographer.

Divide the class into four groups:

1. The photographer
2. The sitter (person in the photograph)
3. The spectator (person viewing the photograph)
4. The photograph itself

(Each group discusses the image from their particular perspective.

Each group chooses a spokesperson. The spokesperson must provide their feedback in character.)

PHOTOGRAPHER

Consider:

- How have you composed the image in terms of location, shot size, camera angle and lighting?
- What are the clues in the frame?
- What is the focal point?
- What happened before or after this image was taken?
- What camera technology did you use?
- Why did you take this image?
- What is your relationship with the person in the photograph?
- If you were to take this image again what would do differently?

SITTER

Consider:

- Mimic the pose; describe how you feel about being photographed?
- Are you happy with the way you are represented, if not why?
- What is your relationship with the photographer?
- Discuss if your image of yourself matches the cameras image of you, if not why not.
- What happened before or after this image was taken?

SPECTATOR

Consider:

- What can you see?
- How has the photographer composed the image in terms of location, shot size, camera angle and lighting?
- What do the clues in the frame tell you about the sitter, the photographer and their relationship?
- Why do you suppose this image was taken?
- Do you think this is a stereotypical photograph of an Aboriginal person at this time, if so why?
- What happened before or after this image was taken?

THE PHOTOGRAPH

Consider:

Roland Barthes description of the photograph:

'I cannot penetrate, reach into the photograph; I can only sweep it with my gaze. Like a smooth surface the photograph is flat.' (Barthes, 1993:106)¹

- How does it feel to be a photograph?
- Why were you taken?
- How were you used?
- Where have you been since?
- Do people treat you differently from when you were taken to today?
- Where are you now?
- Do you think of yourself as a powerful medium, if so why?
- Do others see you as a powerful medium?
- What camera technology was used to take you?

(The spokespersons from each group provide their feedback, standing in front of the projected image.)

CONCLUSION

In the nineteenth century visual stereotypes were used to argue that Aboriginal people were primitive in contrast to Western civilization. Visual stereotypes have been used in history to scapegoat, vilify, segregate, physically abuse and even endorse state-sponsored genocide.

Read students the story behind the image.

<http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview?pi=nla.pic-an22770373&referercode=cat>

The purpose of this exercise is to reinforce the fact that looking takes time and that there are many, many ways of directing your looking. Each different perspective adds other layers of meaning until like an onion skin we build a structure of understanding.

As Tony Schirato and Jen Webb state in their text, *Reading the Visual*, 'every act of looking and seeing is also an act of not seeing even when we are attentive.' (Schirato and Webb, 2004: 13)²

http://www.stephen-stratford.co.uk/am_warrant.htm

¹ Barthes, R. (1993) *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. London: Vintage

² Cambridge Film Consortium. (2003) *Reading Films Inset Day: The Arts PictureHouse*: Cambridge.

EVALUATION

- How effectively did each group engage with the experience of their character to deconstruct the choices the photographer had made while capturing the image?
- Did the spokesperson use the first person affectively to relay the views of their group?
- How much information were students able to observe from the visual grammar of the image alone?
- Ask students what they learned from the exercise in relation to inferring attitudes and the analysis of texts to create logical arguments.
- Did students appreciate, reflect and evaluate the viewer and subject interaction in exploring the social power relations created?