

About Beauty

Title: In the Eyes of the Beholder

Developed by: Rhonda McLean

Suggested Grade Level(s): 10-12

Suggested Length of Class Time: 3 classes – each approx. 1 hour in length

Subject Areas: English Language Arts

Rationale:

This lesson plan will allow students the opportunity to explore the theme of beauty, a subject about which we all have viewpoints and opinions, yet we are rarely given the chance to think about how these have been formed. Students will be invited to explore the historical, cultural, and social implications of “beauty.” They may begin to develop an understanding of how “that which is beautiful” is something taught to us on both a conscious and subconscious level. Students may begin to think about beauty as meaning more than just the “physical appearance” of a person and to consider beauty in terms of art, the written word, daily life, ideas, taste, sound and movement.

In this 3-part lesson, students will become familiar with their own aesthetic responses to beauty and begin to answer questions such as the following

- What do I find beautiful and why?
- What has history/culture/society ‘taught’ us is beautiful?
- Who, in our society, gets to name that which is beautiful?
- What is beautiful that cannot be seen?
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Logistics:

Classroom setup –

1. The first and third class of this three-part lesson will take place in a classroom. Ideally this classroom will be equipped with a LCD player and computer; otherwise the teacher will need to ensure that a screen/monitor is available for these classes.
2. The second class will take place in a computer lab.

Suggested resources/images –

- Website: Dove’s Campaign for Real Beauty
<http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/home.asp>
- Video: What is Beautiful? (2004), runtime 3min 46sec
http://www.archive.org/details/what_is_beautiful
- Beauty in Science

<http://physics-animations.com/Physics/English/top10.htm>

- NFB Film: Accident By Design: Creating and Discovering Beauty, 1998, written and directed by Daniel Conrad, runtime: 50 min 44sec (available at Halifax Public Libraries)

Suggested Outcomes:

- use writing and other ways of representing to explore, extend, and reflect on their experiences with and insights into challenging texts and issues
- evaluate the responses of others to their writing and media productions
- examine others' ideas and synthesize what is helpful to clarify and expand on their own understanding
- involve students in the critical examination of the symbolism of visual images

Introduction:

Prior to beginning these lessons, it would be beneficial to encourage the students to become more aware of their surroundings, their influences, popular culture and its messages. Encourage students to become “hyper-aware” of their sensory messages: What have they seen/heard/felt/tasted/touched that has elicited a strong response from them? Was any of it beautiful? Encourage entries in a journal over a week or two that chronicle these observances as well as their reflections on what beauty means to each of them.

1st Class

Materials:

Slide Show/Power Point of “Images of Beauty”

Markers

Poster Paper

Computer Lab handout sheet – see below

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:

- Begin the first class by showing the PowerPoint Slide Show, “Images of Beauty.”
- Following the slide show, ask students to break out into small groups of 4-5.
- Supply each student with a marker and a piece of easel paper and encourage each group to come up with a working definition for “beauty.”
- Each group shares their definition and explains why they chose to define the word the way they did.
- Teacher may now lead discussion about what the students think are the biggest influences that determine what we think of as beautiful, keeping track of key points by recording them on the board.
- By the end of the discussion, the board should be full of words, phrases, images, etc., that summarize the students' collective ideas/opinions about beauty and how we are “taught” by our culture what beauty is.
- Give students the final minutes of class time to respond to the discussion in their journals.

2nd Class

Materials:

Computer Lab handout sheet – see below

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:

- Students go to the computer lab.
- The first 10-15 minutes should be spent exploring what websites come up when they “google” the word “beauty.” Since the majority of sites relate to cosmetics, and women’s beauty products, this is an informative exercise.
- For the remainder of the class, students need to follow the instructions on the Computer Lab Handout Sheet (see below). Encourage them to take their time deciding on the images they want to select. This should not be something that is rushed.

3rd Class

Materials:

“All Things Beautiful” Slide Show

“All Things Beautiful” Handout – see attached

CD player

CD of instrumental music

Preparation:

- The teacher, upon receiving students’ submissions from the lab of their 5 beautiful images, will gather many of the images together in a power point production, called “All Things Beautiful”
- The teacher may need to add images of “beauty” if he/she feels that there are areas that the students overlooked. Ideally this slide show will have examples of beauty from the beginning of time right up to present day. It should include images from many different cultures as well as a wide variety of photography and artwork, all of which is considered beautiful. It will include examples of beauty in science – like the veins of a leaf, and our planet Earth, the cell. There should be pictures of celebrities (People Magazine’s “Most Beautiful People”) juxtaposed with photos like National Geographic’s famous Afghanistan girl. The slide show will also include images of lengths people have gone to beautify themselves through the ages – foot binding, neck stretching, plastic surgery, and corsets for example (include some of the images from the first class to round out the images if needed)

Suggestions for Teaching and Learning:

- Encourage students to clear their desks of everything except for a pen. Give each student a copy of the “All Things Beautiful” Handout and begin to watch the slide show. Ideally, have some quiet instrumental music playing in the background. This slide show should take about 30 minutes to view. As the slides appear, comment very briefly about the image. Have students check off boxes on the first page of their handout as to whether they agree with the image as one of beauty or not.

- After the slide show ends, students break into small groups of 4-5 and discuss the results of their check list, by following the questions on page 2 of the handout.
- When there are about 15 minutes remaining in class, encourage students to share the definitions for beauty that their groups created. Then look at the rest of the handout and advise them to give thoughtful responses to the remaining questions.

Extension of ideas:

Cross-curricular link to Visual Arts: Students may wish to create a similar “collection of beautiful images” examining what has been determined as “beautiful art” throughout the ages and into present day.

Sociology/Media Literacy: Students may wish to create a similar “collection of beautiful images” examining what popular culture determines as “beautiful” now and in the past. This could extend to different cultural messages about beauty around the world.

Science: Students may wish to create a similar “collection of beautiful images” examining what is extraordinarily beautiful in the world of science that often gets forgotten when considering the beauty around us.

History: Students may wish to create a similar “collection of beautiful images” examining what has been determined as “beautiful” in different historical periods, and in different cultures around the world. Humans have left evidence of beautification from pre-history onward – this could be a fascinating exploration of how different peoples through the ages have beautified themselves and their surroundings.

Suggestions for Assessment:

Students could be asked to consider the following two questions:

1. Are there any images of beauty you feel should not have been included in the slide show? Why?
2. Are there any images of beauty that you feel have been overlooked and should be included? Why?

Then ask the students to choose one of the questions and answer it in the form of a short, persuasive essay

OR

Students choose one of the questions and answer it by presenting an argument to their class for the inclusion or removal of a “beautiful” image. They should have 2-3 minutes to present their persuasive argument.

Students will also complete a Computer Lab and Part B of “All Things Beautiful” handout. Both of these will be submitted to the teacher for assessment.

“Search for Beauty” Computer Lab

Name: _____

Date: _____

Instructions:

1. Think about what you find to be beautiful.
2. Look for images on the Internet that represent “Beauty” to you. It is likely that you will have many images to choose from. You need to narrow your choices down to your “top 5 representations of beauty.”
3. Once you have decided on your 5 images, fill out the following form:

“Top 5 beautiful images”

#	Internet Address (url) and description of image	Why did this image make your top 5 list?
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

3. Hand in this lab by the end of class.

“All Things Beautiful”

Part A:

As each slide appears, describe it and check off whether you feel the image is beautiful.

Slide Description		Yes	No	Slide Description		Yes	No
1				41			
2				42			
3				43			
4				44			
5				45			
6				46			
7				47			
8				48			
9				49			
10				50			
11				51			
12				52			
13				53			
14				54			
15				55			
16				56			
17				57			
18				58			
19				59			
20				60			
21				61			
22				62			
23				63			
24				64			
25				65			
26				66			
27				67			
28				68			
29				69			
30				70			
31				71			
32				72			
33				73			
34				74			
35				75			
36				76			
37				77			
38				78			
39				79			
40				80			

Small Group Discussion

In a group of approximately 5 students, discuss the slide show using the following questions as a guide:

1. How many checks do you have in the “yes” column? How many are in the “no” column?
2. What images did your group unanimously agree were beautiful? What images did you unanimously agree were not?
3. What images did people disagree on?
4. What do you think North American society dictates is beautiful? Do you think your responses to the slide show were influenced by the society in which you live?
5. What images of beauty do you think were missing from the slide show? What images do you think should not have been included?
6. As a group, come up with your own definition of “Beauty.”

Part B:

Take a few minutes to think about the slide show you viewed. Then respond to the following questions.

1. Of all the images, which single image best represented “beauty” to you? Why?

2. In what ways do you think your culture has contributed to your perception of what is “beautiful?”
