

InsideArt, Fall 2015 — *A Family Affair*

Title

Rust Belt Realities: A history of Braddock, PA through the lens of LaToya Ruby Frazier

Estimated Time for Completion of Lesson

1-2 class periods

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson

In this lesson, students will become familiar with the work of LaToya Ruby Frazier, learn about the rise and fall of the steel industry in America, and examine the impact that industry has had on a community.

Intended Grade Levels

Grades 9-12

Infusion/Subject Areas

Visual Arts

Social Studies

Curriculum Standards

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards

- Visual Arts:

VA.912.C.1 Cognition and reflection are required to appreciate, interpret, and create with artistic intent.

VA.912.H.2 The arts reflect and document cultural trends and historical events, and help explain how new directions in the arts have emerged.

- Social Studies:

SS.912.A.3.2 Examine the social, political, and economic causes, course, and consequences of the second Industrial Revolution that began in the late 19th century.

National Standards for Arts Education

Standard 3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas.

National Council for the Social Studies

Time, Continuity, and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

People, Places, and Environments: Socials studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments

Common Core

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.SL.2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Instructional Objective

The student will:

- Describe and analyze the work of LaToya Ruby Frazier in class discussion after viewing key images from “The Notion of Family” collection;
- Discuss the significance of Frazier’s social documentary as presented in Frazier’s TED presentation in small groups;
- Create a photograph in order to evaluate the relationship between environmental contexts and families.

Learning Activities Sequence

Attention-Getter: *Grandma Ruby's Recliner*

(Slide 2) Think-Write-Pair-Share:

Present the following questions to students orally, one-by-one:

On your paper, list everything that you see in this picture.

What inferences can you draw about Ms. Frazier's family based upon this image?

Can you tell what the community is like surrounding Ms. Frazier's family? What do you see that makes you think that?

Where do you think this photograph was taken? (i.e. could you predict Ms. Frazier's hometown based upon these photographs?)

If not the exact city, could you describe what the area is like?

Learning Activities:

Historical Background Mini-Lecture:

(Slide 3) Ms. Frazier's work is centered around Braddock, Pennsylvania, a historical steel mill town from industrial America.

(Slide 4) Braddock is home to Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, the Edgar Thomson Works which was opened in 1872. Carnegie led the expansion of the American steel industry in the late 19th century. The Carnegie Steel Company played a central role in what is now referred to as the second industrial revolution in American History. At the end of his life, Carnegie took on the role of philanthropist, donating almost all of his fortune to local libraries, education, and scientific research.

(Slide 5) The steel mill was once referred to as the most powerful rail mill in the country and produced up to a half a million tons of rails annually.

(Slide 6) Due to the success of the steel industry, Braddock experienced a time of great prosperity.

(Slide 7) In the 1950's, Braddock was home to a number of department stores, theaters, and restaurants.

(Slide 8) In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the steel industry helped make the United States the most powerful nation in the world. The rise of global competition in the late 20th century ultimately led to the deindustrialization and depopulation of Braddock and other industrial towns like it. This had led to a cultural phenomenon known as the "Rust Belt", a term used to describe the northeastern region of the United States that was formerly home to American industrial towns that has been experiencing economic decline and urban decay since the mid-20th century.

(Slide 9) The Frazier family has been in Braddock for multiple generations. LaToya Ruby Frazier's work showcases three generations represented in her grandmother (Grandma Ruby), her mother, and herself. The three women each experienced Braddock at very different stages of the steel industry. Grandma Ruby experienced Braddock at its peak of prosperity, her mother experienced the closing of the steel mills and white flight to suburban developments, and LaToya witnessed the War on Drugs and further deterioration of the community.

Video: *A visual history of inequality in industrial America*, TED Talk (5:03)

https://www.ted.com/talks/latoya_ruby_frazier_a_visual_history_of_inequality_in_industrial_america?language=en-t-49101

(Slide 10) The video is a brief presentation by Ms. Frazier describing her work as a photographer. Students should take note of any concepts or phrases that they do not understand while viewing the clip.

After students watch this clip, they should take a moment to write down and ask any questions they may have about the content.

Whole Class Discussion Question:

Based upon the presentation and the photographs you have seen, why do you think that Ms. Frazier has chosen photography as her medium of expression? What makes you think that?

Small Group Discussion (Slide 11): Organize students into groups of 3-4 to discuss the following questions. Once the small groups have had an opportunity to discuss their responses, come together as a whole class to review. Each group should nominate a representative from each group share parts of their group's discussion.

1. In what way(s) is Ms. Frazier's work a form of social activism?
2. In what way(s) does the work of Ms. Frazier reflect forces in American history that have taken place in her community?
3. Why do you think that Google Maps/Earth images conceal the industrial waste that Ms. Frazier photographed in her community (TEDTalk)? Should Google Maps/Earth revise their map search to reveal the findings of Ms. Frazier? Why or why not?
4. In the presentation Ms. Frazier says, "The history of a place is written on the body and the landscape." Explain what is meant by this phrase.

Extension for Question 4: Can you provide an example of another place in the world where this sentiment rings true? For instance, China's unparalleled rise in industry has led the Ministry of Health to blame hundreds of thousands of deaths per year on air pollution.

Visual Analysis: Selected Images from LaToya Ruby Frazier

Tell students that they will now have an opportunity to view and analyze some of Frazier's photographic work.

(Slide 12) *Aunt Midgie and Grandma Ruby*

List the objects you see in this photograph.

Where do you think this photograph was taken?

What inferences or conclusions can you make based upon what you observe in this photograph?

What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

(Slide 13) *Momme*

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) approach:

What is going on in this photograph?

What makes you think that?

What inferences can you draw about the relationship between LaToya Ruby Frazier and her mother?

What more can you find?

Closure: (Slide 14) Whole Class Discussion: Take a second look at *Grandma Ruby's Recliner*. In what way does this image and the others we have seen, add to the history of Braddock?

Evaluation

Arrange and create a photograph depicting the relationship between yourself and/or your family and your community. Provide a title for the photograph. In a brief paragraph, describe how this photograph adds to the history of your community.

Note: This may be used as a homework assignment. As an alternative, students may use found images from magazines or drawings.

Optional Extension Activity

In small groups, assign students to research former legends of industry in their communities. As an example, in the Tampa Bay, Florida region, some notable figures from Tampa Bay history include: but are not limited to: Howard Frankland, Henry Plant, D.P. Davis, Vicente Martínez Ybor, and O.H. Platt. Students should consider the following questions in their research (modify accordingly for your community):

- How did this individual spark growth in the Tampa Bay region?
- Was his/her contribution to the area positive?
- Were there any unintended consequences of their industry? (i.e. unexpected environmental or social effects)

Materials and Resources

Powerpoint Presentation
Pencil and Paper
Internet Connection
Projector
Student Cameras (optional)

Internet Links

LaToya Ruby Frazier (2015). <http://www.latoyarubyfrazier.com>

The New York Times (2014). *LaToya Ruby Frazier's Notion of Family*
http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/10/14/latoya-ruby-fraziers-notion-of-family/?_r=1#

<http://fcit.usf.edu/florida/lessons/yborcity/yborcity.htm>

References

Frazier, L. (2015). *LaToya Ruby Frazier: A visual history of inequality in America* [Video file]. Retrieved from

https://www.ted.com/talks/latoya_ruby_frazier_a_visual_history_of_inequality_in_industrial_america/transcript?language=en.

National Archives and Records Administration. (2015) *Photo Analysis Worksheet*. Retrieved from http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf.