

Intermediate-Level Activity

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- compare and contrast works of art depicting different viewpoints about war and speculate about how each artwork reflects society's values at the time;
- write captions describing works of art in different media;
- analyze an ancient Greek gravestone and its historical context, especially the **Persian Wars**;
- manipulate a photograph of a recent war in recent history for a different effect than in the original.

Materials

- Reproduction of *The Father's Curse: The Ungrateful Son* by Jean-Baptiste Greuze
- Reproduction of *Gravestone of Pollis* by Unknown Artist
- Reproduction of *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudrae*, attributed to the Master of the Jardin de vertueuse consolation
- Reproduction of *A Harvest of Death* by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, photographer, and Alexander Gardner, printer
- Background Information and Questions for Teaching about the works of art
- Photocopies of a reproduction of *The Father's Curse*
- Photocopies of a reproduction of *Gravestone of Pollis*
- Student Handout: *Background about the Battle of Gettysburg*
- Video: *Evolution* on the Campaign for Real Beauty Web site (www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/home_films_evolution_v2.swf) (optional)
- Newspapers and history books containing wartime images
- Adobe® Photoshop®, Adobe® Photoshop® Elements, or another digital-imaging software, such as the free program GIMP (www.gimp.org/); alternatively, use materials for a mixed-media work—paint, paintbrushes, colored pencils, glue, and assorted magazines (*National Geographic* would work well)

Lesson Steps

1. Display a reproduction of *The Father's Curse* without mentioning the title. Refer to grade-appropriate questions in steps 2–4 of the Beginning-Level Activity to lead a discussion about the work. Explain that Greuze aimed to use subjects from everyday life as a vehicle for moral lessons, such as the importance of doing good deeds or honoring one's parents. (For more information about this artist, visit the Getty Museum's Web site [www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/greuze/greuze.html]). Pass out photocopies of a reproduction of the drawing. Ask students to look closely at the image and write a caption below it that expresses the moral depicted. Tell students that the title of the drawing is *The Father's Curse: The Ungrateful Son*. Ask students how the title affects their understanding of the drawing. Ask students to speculate what they think the artist wanted to communicate.

HISTORICAL WITNESS

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2. Display a reproduction of *Gravestone of Pollis* without mentioning the title. Allow students time to look closely at the work. Next, ask them to describe what they see. What is the person holding? What does the figure's body language communicate about the person? Point out that the figure's lower legs are cut off at the knees and explain to students that they are seeing a fragment, approximately two-thirds of the original object. Ask students, if they could touch the sculpture, what words they would use to describe how it feels. Instruct students to look closely at the rectangular shape of the object and imagine the missing lower third of the rectangle. Have students consider the material that was used to make the object. Ask students to speculate what this object might have been used for. Explain to students that this tall, thin plinth of marble marked an individual's grave. Ask students to discuss what they think is being communicated about the individual on the gravestone. Pass out photocopies of a reproduction of *Gravestone of Pollis*. Point out the **inscription** above the figure. Ask students for examples of inscriptions that typically appear on gravestones (i.e., name, major accomplishments, life dates). Have students discuss with a partner what they think the inscription on the *Gravestone of Pollis* says, and have them write their English version of the inscription above the figure.
3. Tell students that the inscription translates as: "I speak, I, Pollis dear son of Asopichos, not having died a coward, with the wounds of the tattooers, yes myself." Based on this inscription, what can students infer about ancient Greek attitudes toward an individual's participation in a war? How might have Asopichos, Pollis's father, felt about his son going to war? How do you think Asopichos's opinion compares and contrasts with that of the father depicted in the Greuze drawing? Discuss with students how Greuze's attitude toward war differs from that of the ancient Greeks. Which views more closely resemble today's attitudes toward war in the United States? Are individuals in contemporary society considered ungrateful to their parents if they leave the family to fight in a war? When are youth considered ungrateful today?
4. Explain to students that the tattooers, the enemies named in the gravestone's inscription, were probably the Thracians, a fierce people who occupied the area to the north of Greece. The soldier likely fought in the Persian Wars. Share with students relevant information about the Persian Wars from the "Persian Wars Resource Pages" on the EDSITEment Web site (edsitement.neh.gov/PersiaGreeceWars01.asp).
5. Explain to students that, just as individual soldiers are depicted differently depending on an artist's intentions or a society's values, battle scenes are also depicted differently. Display a reproduction of *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudrae* from the fifteenth-century Flemish **illuminated manuscript** *Book of the Deeds of Alexander the Great*. Allow students time to look at all the details in the work of art, then ask them the following questions:
 - What do you notice first?
 - What do you notice about the setting?
 - Describe the **foreground**, **middle ground**, and **background**.
 - What do you notice about colors in the work?
 - How would you describe the mood?



6. Ask students to speculate about what is written below the battle scene. Allow them time to write a description of the battle. After students write their descriptions, explain that *Book of the Deeds of Alexander the Great* was probably made for an aristocrat who would have particularly appreciated the manuscript's battle scenes, such as the one depicted in *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudracae*, as well as the court intrigue depicted in other pages of the book. Ask students whether stories and depictions of battles in print or in the media are still appreciated today. Why do they think so?
7. Display a reproduction of *A Harvest of Death* by Timothy O'Sullivan and Alexander Gardner and ask students the questions from step 5 of this activity. Instruct students to write a caption for the photograph.
8. Explain that the photograph was taken during the **American Civil War** in southern Pennsylvania after the **Battle of Gettysburg**. Distribute photocopies of the handout *Background about the Battle of Gettysburg* and discuss the information with your class. Point out to students that *A Harvest of Death* is not an action shot. At the time that O'Sullivan took the photograph, cameras were not yet capable of capturing instantaneous motion.
9. Lead a discussion about how war is depicted differently in all four images. Ask students the following questions:
 - Which of the artworks we discussed is the most true to life? Why?
 - Does the **medium** of each artwork affect your response? Are photographs inherently more realistic?
 - Is the photograph more realistic than the manuscript or vice versa? Why or why not?
 - How do Greuze, the unknown Greek sculptor, the Master of the Jardin de vertueuse consolation, and O'Sullivan feel differently or similarly about war? Which artist do you think portrays war most realistically?
 - Are the images of battle scenes more or less realistic than the Greek sculpture or the Greuze drawing? Why or why not?
 - How do different portrayals of war affect a viewer's ability to relate to the cost of human life?
 - How are today's depictions of war similar to or different from the four images?
10. Discuss with the class whether we can rely on photographs to portray reality. Point out that there are many ways that photographers have manipulated their images throughout history. Certain photographers during the American Civil War—such as Mathew Brady and Alexander Gardner—would reposition dead bodies for sentimental or heroic effects. You may wish to show students an early version of photographic manipulation by viewing the original and manipulated versions of the photographer Felice Beato's *Interior of the Pehtang Fort Showing the Magazine and Wooden Gun* (see Related Works of Art). In his image of the Pehtang Fort, captured by European troops in the 1860 Opium War with China, Beato experimented with his **negative** by editing out a building in the background of the **composition** in order to bring attention to the objects of war in the foreground. To connect to present-day manipulations of photographs, you may also wish to show students the short video *Evolution* on the Campaign for Real Beauty Web site (www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/home_films_evolution_v2.swf) so they can see how photographs can be digitally manipulated.

HISTORICAL WITNESS

★ SOCIAL MESSAGING ★

11. Ask the class to think about images of war they see on TV or in newspapers. Which Getty Museum artwork most resembles images of war we see in the news today? In what ways? Which work least resembles modern-day news images? How? Tell students they will look through history books, magazines, or newspapers to find a photograph that depicts an aspect of life during wartime (either during battle or at home). The image could depict a current war or a war that took place in recent history (i.e., in the past fifty years). Instruct students to photocopy the image or print it from the computer. They will manipulate the photograph to alter its mood. Instruct students to remember their discussions of the colors and compositions of the Getty artworks depicting battle scenes. Can students change the **color palette** of their photograph to alter the mood? Can they add objects or people in the foreground, middle ground, or background to change the message? For instance, if the photograph depicts a heroic war scene, students might want to add buildings that have been damaged by the war in the foreground. Or if the photograph depicts an injured soldier, students could put this soldier in the background and add smiling soldiers to the foreground.
12. Allow students the option to manipulate the photograph digitally or through mixed media. You may wish to use the lesson "Creating composite pictures" on the Adobe® Digital Kids Club Web page (www.adobe.com/education/digkids/lessons/collage.html) for instructions on how to use Photoshop® software to manipulate images. If students are manipulating their photographs using mixed media, pass out paint, paintbrushes, colored pencils, glue, and assorted magazines, such as *National Geographic*. You may also wish to allow students time to find images for their **collage** on the Internet. Students can cut out images from old magazines and glue them onto their original photographs. They can use paint or colored pencils to add objects or people to the composition or change certain colors to alter the photograph's mood.

Assessment

Assess students' creative use of software or mixed media to manipulate a photograph to alter its mood.

Extensions

1. Use *A Harvest of Death* or *Alexander Fights in the Town of the Sudrae* as jumping-off points for in-depth discussions about the American Civil War and the Gettysburg Address or the conquests of **Alexander the Great**, respectively.
2. Allow students to choose an image listed in Related Works of Art. Have each student analyze his or her chosen artwork and write an essay about how war is depicted in the image.

