

Understanding the Self and

“Art condenses the experience we all have as human beings, and by forming it, makes it significant.” —Trevor Bell, artist



We all respond to aesthetic.



We are all social beings.

Sharon Warwick

How does one begin to write a lesson based on Boyer's human commonalities? One approach is to begin by choosing one of the commonalities, and look for images that represent that commonality from different cultures and times. Share those images with your students and challenge them to develop their own interpretations of the commonality from many choices of media. When the artwork is complete, have students share the meanings and reasons for their aesthetic choices.

Choose one of the commonalities, and look for images that represent that commonality from different cultures and times.

The Symbol of the Hand

Artists sometimes show what it means to be a person by using a common and most humble symbol for a human being—the hand. Hand gestures, styles, positions, and movements communicate great ideas about emotions like love, hope, despair, and aging. Though challenging to draw in proportion and shade in value, hands have been the source and subject of artworks in cultures around the world and throughout the ages.

Through ornament, clothing, and gesture, hands can reflect culture and reinforce our connections to each other. Imagine the hands of a Nepalese dancer and the meaning of their pose. The simple and universal art activity of drawing hands can reflect many or all of the enduring themes in art represented by the eight universal human commonalities. You can find a wonderful lesson on drawing hands in *Discovering Drawing* by Ted Rose and Sallye Mahan-Cox (Davis Publications, 2007).

Gesture Drawing

Students can create gesture drawings to express each of the eight human commonalities. Have stu-

Others through art



dents explore a variety artworks that have drawings of hands in various positions, then examine photographs of hands as found in the visual culture of magazines, computer search engines, and videos. It is helpful to ask some questions to engage students in careful and meaningful observations. How do the hands look? How are they positioned? What do they symbolize in that gesture? How does the surface or skin quality affect the meaning of the gesture?

Positioning the hand of a classmate or one's own hand can facilitate drawing the contour of the hand in eight different positions. It is important to consider the position of the hand as a symbol, as an object of beauty, and as an indicator of direc-

tion. Avoid obvious or cliché gestures that might be misunderstood as improper. Here we refer back to the human commonalities and use hands to express each of the eight common human experiences.

Students may present their hand gesture drawings as a grid, a hand-made book, a sketchbook, or a composition of all eight commonalities in a single drawing. This will motivate them to consider meaning and style carefully. Consideration of matting, framing, or displaying the artwork is part of the artist's personal aesthetic, and individuality should be encouraged. Student responses will vary. ↻

Sharon Warwick is national art consultant for Davis Publications. swarwick@davisart.com

Boyer's Human Commonalities All of us...

- experience the life cycles.
- work.
- use symbols.
- know time and place.
- search for a larger purpose.
- have an aesthetic response.
- seek social bonding.
- have a connection to nature.

NATIONAL STANDARD

Students select and use subject matter, symbols, and ideas to communicate meaning.

WEB LIN