

Blue Man Lesson Lab

The Art and Science of Joy

The Joy of Haiku

Elementary School

Applying the Blue Man Creative Impulses

Documentation is fundamental to science. The work of the scientist often centers on developing empirical procedures for understanding our world. Documentation of the results of empirical procedures is a large piece of the scientific puzzle. The Blue Man is a creative scientist. The Blue Man observes, notes, and joyfully soaks in life. The Blue Man investigates experience through rhythm and sound, and documents discovery through music and movement. Joy is felt and shared in the Blue Man's world, but can joy be documented? Can joy be artistically rendered? The Japanese art of haiku asks the poet to put simple structure and form to natural phenomena. The art form can also capture experience. This lesson will ask learners to become both scientists practicing the skill of documenting joy and artists creating a joy haiku.

Lesson Summary

Begin the lesson by asking learners "What is joy to you?" Ask learners to think about the following questions: When are you joyful or happy? How would you describe a joyful person in your life to someone who did not know her or him? If joy had a particular taste, smell, or sound, what would it be? Encourage learners to be as descriptive and specific as possible. As the learners brainstorm their list, as they provide their answers, edit their answers to one word. Guide the list to sufficient length for each learner's thoughts to be represented, for a variety of words to be included, and for there to be many options available when learners write their haiku.

Once learners have brainstormed their joy words, explain they will be using this set of words to write a joy haiku. Continue the introduction by defining haiku. Explain that haiku have a very specific syllable structure. The first line of every haiku has 5 syllables, the second line has 7 syllables, and the last line has 5 syllables. It may be helpful to find and share examples of haiku. Use haiku examples that span a breadth of topics. The work of Basho, Shiki, and Issa can be a great place start an investigation of haiku.

After learners have been given this additional information, ask learners to revisit the original joy word list, giving learners the opportunity to add, edit, clarify, and describe the original list.

Continue the lesson by guiding learners to count the number of syllables in each word. Write the number of syllables next to each word on the list. (Or perhaps quickly break the learners into groups, assign groups words from the list, provide time to calculate, and ask groups to report out the syllable counts.) Once all words have been assigned a syllable count, walk learners through example haikus using those words. Be sure to create haiku that exemplify the variety of ways the haiku form is interpreted. Create example haiku that use only words from the list, and some that use both list words and others.

After completing an example haiku, ask learners to begin to write their individual haiku. Remind learners to stay within the perimeters of haiku, and be as descriptive and specific as possible. Ask learners to use at least 5 words from their haiku list within their haiku.

Once each learner has created a haiku, ask learners to read their haiku three times aloud to a partner. Ask learners to simply listen the first time they hear their partner's haiku. The second time, ask learners to think about the technical aspects of the haiku. Does the piece stay within the perimeters of haiku? The third time, ask learners to think about the creativity of the haiku. In what ways does the haiku descriptively respond to the question, "What is joy?" Have learners share their answers to these questions with their partners.

After each learner has read their haiku aloud three times, and responded to the haiku reflection questions, ask learners to think about the haikus in general. Did common joy themes emerge? If so, what were those themes? As an exercise in documentation, did joy have a particular sight, sound, taste or feel? If so, what were some of the most powerful sensory images found in the haiku? What did they learn about themselves and their world by using the haiku form to document joy? Finally, what other topics might they be interested in exploring using the haiku form? These questions could be written in a Reflection Guide learners could be asked to complete individually, and then posed as a discussion in the larger group once learners have been given the chance to write their responses in the guide.

Connecting to Standards

- Reading Standards for Literature K-5 Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
- Writing Standards K-5 Texts Types and Purposes
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening K-5 Comprehension and Collaboration, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language K-5 Knowledge of Language, Presentation of Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
- Language Standards K-5 Knowledge of Language, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use, Conventions of Standard English

WJOY

Middle School

Applying the Blue Man Creative Impulses

The Blue Man sounds joyful. Joy is in the beat of the Blue Man's drum. Pipes and paint create joyful conversation. Synthesizers sing joyous melodies. Smartphones send joyful messages. Joy can be heard as pop culture references tickle audience funny bones. Joy permeates the Blue World. The Blue Man is a maestro of bliss, a conductor of happiness, a composer of musical pleasure. In this lesson, learners will create their own radio stations in which they will be like the Blue Man bringing joy to the world.

Lesson Summary

Begin this lesson by asking learners what songs make them think of joy. It might be helpful to play two or three songs to help learners think about their song choices. Encourage learners to think about a variety of musical genres: old, new, pop, country, classical, and children's, for example. Encourage learners to think about this list as a play list that could be created on their smartphone or computer.

Once a group play list has been brain stormed, let learners know they will be disc jockeys at a radio station, WJOY. This radio station is created to spread joy in the world. The task of the learners will be to create 5-7 minutes of programming focused on joy.

Continue the lesson by breaking the learners in to groups. Groups should be comprised of 3-5 learners. Ask learners to appoint the following roles: a Leader who is responsible for making sure all group members participate; a Timekeeper who makes sure the group is aware of how much time the group has to complete the task at hand; and a Scribe, who records group ideas. All learners will be Program Directors and Disc Jockeys.

Once groups have been established, remind learners they are responsible for 5-7 minutes of programming on WJOY. Programming can include: reviewing books about joy (both fiction and nonfiction), playing songs about joy, highlighting good things happening in the world, focusing on joyful people, telling the story of natural wonders, and/or discussing accomplishments in sports, for example.

Groups must first make a programming list that details what will be included in the 5-7 minute segment. Once the programming list has been determined, make sure groups divide researching, writing, and recording tasks evenly.

Segments will need to meet several requirements. Each segment will need to be recorded. Each segment will need to include 3 types of content. Only one song can be used within each segment. Make sure each story fits within the 5-7 minute segment timeframe. The programming segment will be evaluated on accuracy, completeness, attention to detail, and creativity.

Once the groups have recorded their respective segments, have each group share their segments with the larger groups.

After each group has played their segment, have a concluding discussion focused on the following questions: What new things were learned about joy in the segments? What new things were learned about the world in the segment? Were there similarities and differences in segments? What could future segments about joy include?

Connecting to Standards

- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading K-12 Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
- Reading Standards for Literature K-12 Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
- Writing Standards 6-12 Text Types and Purposes, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Range of Writing
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading 6-12 Conventions of Standard English, Knowledge of Language, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
- Language Standards 6-12 Conventions of Standard English, Knowledge of Language, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
- Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12 Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

Documenting Joy

High School

Applying The Blue Man Creative Impulses

Both science and art are full of questions. Sometimes the simplest questions are the hardest to answer. Challenging questions abound within the simplicity of the Blue Man's world. The Blue Man asks audiences to consider fundamental questions about human experience. What does it mean to connect with the world? What is fun? About what am I curious? How does a loud drumbeat make me feel? When do I smile? Why? These questions often fall prey to the commotion of the day-to-day.

These questions are often lost within the pursuit of the next best thing. These questions are often considered less important than other questions. These questions are important. This lesson gives learners the opportunity to respond to the Blue Manesque question, “What is joy?” through creating a short documentary.

Lesson Summary

Begin the lesson by introducing learners to the concept of documentary film. Two examples of documentary film-focused classroom resources include:

Nathan Schultz and Dan Richardson’s Unit Plan for Documentary

<http://teachingmedialiteracy.pbworks.com/w/page/19924124/DocumentaryFilm>)

POV’s Documentary Appreciation and Filmmaking Lesson Plans by Jennifer Merin

<http://documentaries.about.com/od/introtodocumentaries/a/Povs-Documentary-Appreciation-And-Filmmaking-Lesson-Plans.htm>

Introducing the concept might include showing a short documentary clip and discussing nonfiction filmmaking. Using examples from popular documentary can be a powerful window into the documentary genre. Guiding questions for a discussion of documentaries might include: What are distinguishing characteristics of a documentary film versus other forms of film? Compare and contrast documentary film and reality TV? What is the role of a director/screenwriter/actor within documentary film? How are scripts used in documentary film?

Continue the lesson by giving learners a list of questions entitled “20 Questions About Joy.” The “20 Questions About Joy” are: 1. What is joy? 2. When are you joyful? 3. What does joy sound like? 4. What does joy smell like? 5. What does joy taste like? 6. What does joy feel like? 7. What is the color of joy? 8. Where do you find joy? 9. What is the most joyful song you know? 10. Describe the last time you felt joy? 11. When was the last time you talked about joy with someone? 12. Describe a joyful person in your life to someone who does not know her or him? 13. If you were writing a bumper sticker encouraging people to be joyful, what would it say? 14. Have you ever received advice about how to find joy? If so, what was it? 15. When you are sad or angry, how do you turn your thoughts around and find joy? 16. Does joy require money? Why? Why not? 17. Can joy happen every day? Why? Why not? 18. Is it easier to be joyful when you are a child? Why? Why not? 19. Is joy more like climbing a mountain, eating an amazing meal, winning a baseball game, starring in a movie, talking with a friend, or spending an afternoon reading a book? Why? 20. When you are 80 years old, how will you describe joy?

Give learners 15 minutes to reflect and respond to the 20 Questions. Once the 20 Questions have been completed, have a general discussion about what learners discovered about joy during the exercise. Was it difficult to think about joy? Did any main ideas about joy become evident during the exercise? What questions were the easiest to answer? Why? What questions were the most difficult to answer? Why?

After the general discussion, ask learners to choose one of the 20 Questions. Let learners know each learner will be responsible for producing a brief (5-7 minute) documentary about joy based on the chosen question.

Once learners have chosen one of the 20 Questions on which they wish to focus, ask them to reflect on the following questions: Why did they choose that particular question? If the question were a story with a beginning, middle, and end, what would that story include? If that question had several important images or pictures, moments that could tell the story without words, describe those images? The answers to these questions should form the foundation for a brief documentary plot synopsis and storyboards that will guide the creation of the documentary.

The next step in creating the documentary is writing a plot synopsis. The plot synopsis should highlight the action of the story. In writing the synopsis, encourage learners to include a beginning, middle, and an end. Action does not necessarily have to be linear and/or chronological. The main focus should be on including as much detail as possible. The plot synopsis will help to define character and setting, in that who is involved in the story and where the story is occurring will be central to the story, and to the documentary.

Plot synopsis should be used to guide the creation of storyboards. Each learner should create 5 storyboards to visually represent the primary images of the documentary. Storyboards can be literal drawings of particular moments of the documentary, or collages of images that provide a more abstract understanding of the documentary, for example.

After plot synopsis and storyboards are completed, learners can begin to produce their documentaries. Encourage learners to use whatever resources they have available to produce their documentary. Access to high tech cameras and editing equipment is not necessary. Technical precision is not the major point of the lesson. Documentaries will be evaluated on completeness, attention to detail, and creativity.

Once learners have created their documentaries, provide an opportunity for them to be viewed by the entire group.

Following viewing, conclude the documentary lesson with the following questions: What similarities and differences exist between the documentaries? How joy is represented? Do any common themes about joy emerge within the documentaries? Would it be easier to document joy in a fictionalized form? Was it difficult to document joy? Are learners more aware of joy in their day-to-day lives now that they have thought more about it?

Connecting to Standards

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- Writing Standards 6-12 Text Types and Purposes, Research to Build and Present Knowledge, Range of Writing
- College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading 6-12 Conventions of Standard English, Knowledge of Language, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
- Language Standards 6-12 Conventions of Standard English, Knowledge of Language, Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
- Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12 Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity