ICP’S COLLECTION IN FOCUS:  
IDENTITY

LESSON PLANS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL
DEAR EDUCATOR,

We are pleased to introduce you to the International Center of Photography’s (ICP) Collection through our new Teacher Guides and Off-Site Guided Tours!

For the first time this winter (while we are moving to our new location), ICP is offering Off-Site Guided Tours, bringing the experience of a museum visit into your classroom! Focusing on visual literacy and utilizing the content of ICP’s extensive permanent Collection, we have developed Teacher Guides around age-appropriate themes including Community for elementary school, Identity for middle school, and Social Justice for high school. These guides include pre-visit, visit, and post-visit activities with related Common Core State Standards and New York State Learning Standards. While the materials draw from a selection of works, we encourage you to explore our Collection in its entirety through ICP’s eMuseum (http://emuseum.icp.org), as the content presents multiple entry points across curricula.

Just like the Guided Tours you may already be familiar with from visiting our museum, these Off-Site Guided Tours are tailored to your group by integrating the aforementioned themes from our Collection into your identified goals and/or classroom learning standards. These tours are conducted in an inquiry-based discussion format, encouraging participants to discover visual information and realize multiple interpretations and meanings. A Museum Educator will customize the tour to your curricular needs, visit your school, and facilitate an interactive lesson using image projections and handouts. These materials will also be available online and can be used independently.

To schedule a visit, please refer to the Tour Information and Guidelines (page 26) and visit us online at www.icp.org/museum/education, email us at grouptours@icp.org, or call 212.857.0005.

The ICP museum will be reopening later in 2015, so we look forward to welcoming you and your students to our new home. Stay tuned for more information!

SINCERELY,

Lacy Austin
Director of Community Programs

Carly Goldman
Coordinator of Community Programs
ABOUT ICP

The International Center of Photography (ICP) is the world’s leading institution dedicated to the practice and understanding of photography and the reproduced image in all its forms. Through our exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, we offer an open forum for dialogue about the role images play in our culture. Since our founding, we have presented more than 700 exhibitions and offered thousands of classes, providing instruction at every level. ICP is a center where photographers and artists, students and scholars can create and interpret the world of the image within our comprehensive educational facilities and archive.
TEACHER GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

These materials are designed to introduce you and your students to ICP’s Collection. Before your Off-Site Guided Tour, you will have a discussion with one of our Museum Educators to customize an experience that is tailored to your identified curricular needs. Our goal is to help you integrate the Collection’s content across disciplines. To this end we have created pre-visit activities as a starting point from which you and your group can view and discuss selections from our Collection, and post-visit activities to use after your experience. Additionally, we have added a “visit” section, which can either be used in conjunction with your Museum Educator’s visit, or be used independently as it offers further images, content, and activities. All lessons include relevant Common Core State Standards and New York State Learning Standards to support curricular connections. The following table of contents is a framework for these resources to begin your ICP experience:

CONTENTS

4 Introduction to the Collection
6 Pre-Visit Activity
12 Visit Activity
15 Post-Visit Activity
19 Exhibition Images
26 Tour Information and Guidelines
27 Bibliography and Links
INTRODUCTION TO THE COLLECTION

Founded in 1974, the International Center of Photography’s Collection contains more than 100,000 items. It spans the history of the photographic medium, from daguerreotypes to gelatin silver and digital chromogenic prints, but is strongest in its holdings of American and European documentary photography from about 1930 through the 1960s. ICP’s founder, Cornell Capa, has also been its most generous patron. His commitment to “concerned photography”—his term for documentary photography devoted to humanistic values—can be seen throughout the collection, which showcases many photographers with goals of social change.

Through exploring works from the ICP’s Collection, students examine how photographers approach their work with varied techniques and goals—and specifically, how they explore the themes of community, identity, and social justice. The accompanying activities help students deepen their understanding of the ideas addressed in the Collection and provide them with hands-on activities that engage them with the photographs. These lessons are broken down as pre-visit, visit, and post-visit activities for elementary (3–5), middle (6–8), and high (9–12) schools. They are designed to be integrated with Social Studies, Humanities, Arts, and English Language Arts curricula.

For the elementary school plans, students explore how photographers document communities. They examine their own community involvement, and think about methods photographers use to capture communities in respectful and accurate ways. They consider how photographic techniques can convey subjective ideas about a community, and document a community to which they belong.

For the middle school plans, students investigate identity. They examine how photographers portray their subjects’ identities and what can and cannot be fully captured. They think about the advantages and disadvantages of photographing people who are familiar or unfamiliar to the photographer. Finally, they curate a photographic exhibition about their own identity, examining the ability of photographs to fully represent their identity.

For the high school plans, students think about social justice issues they care about and explore ways in which photographers have documented social justice issues. They consider the drawbacks and benefits to different methods for documenting these issues. Finally, they explore and create “invented” photographs about social justice issues that do not just capture reality but present new juxtapositions or imagine new worlds.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Museum Education programs are made possible by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, the Keith Haring Foundation, the Robert Lehman Foundation, and by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

ICP’s web presentation of the collection is supported in part by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a Federal Agency.
OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

What is identity?

What can we tell about someone’s identity from a photograph? What can’t we tell?

SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

How does the photographer influence how the subject is portrayed?
What are the limits of photography in revealing identity?
What potential does photography have to change the way we see ourselves and others?

OBJECTIVES

To explore how a subject’s identity is expressed in a photograph.
To investigate how the circumstances around a photograph and the relationship of the photographer to the subject influence the revelation of identity.
To explore how photographs can change the way we see the world.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME

One to two class periods

RESOURCES

Related images, internet access, photographs students bring in from home

RELATED IMAGES

Image 1

Image 2

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

As preparation for this discussion, ask students to bring in a photograph or two of themselves.

1. Tell students that for this unit you will be discussing the concept of identity. Ask them to brainstorm words or phrases they associate with identity. Record these thoughts on a white board or blackboard. You may want to organize them using a word web.
2. Ask them whether they think one can understand someone's identity based on his or her appearance. Why or why not? What might you not be able to tell about someone's identity based on appearance alone?

3. Ask students to turn to a partner and share the photograph they brought in. They should tell their partner what they think can be gleaned about their identity from the photograph—and what can’t. Discuss their own perceptions with their partners.

4. Next, ask students to share the circumstances of the photograph with their partners. How does the story or setting influence their perception of identity? What is the relationship of the photographer to the subject? How does this influence the subject's portrayal? Have students ever been misperceived based on a photograph alone? When and how?

5. Look at the word web again as a class. Which aspects of identity did the photographs capture?

DISCUSSION

1. If possible, make copies of Gillian Laub's photograph (Image 1) to hand out to the same pairs of students. Ask students to discuss the photograph with each other. What do they notice about it? Prompt them to explore facial expression, gesture, clothing, as well as what is in the background.

2. What do they think they can guess about the subject's identity? Encourage them to back up these interpretations with evidence from the photograph.

3. What questions do they have about the subject of the photograph?

4. Give students the title and date of this photograph. Ask them how that information influences their interpretations of the image.

5. Then, give students some background on the photograph: In Mount Vernon, Georgia, when this photographer began taking pictures, the town's high school held two separate proms: one for black students and one for white students. Throughout the year, black and white students attended classes together, played sports together, were close friends with each other, and dated each other, but when it came time for prom, parents organized two separate and racially-divided events. This was the practice nearly every year since the school was integrated in 1971. Ask students to look back at the photograph and discuss how this information influences their perceptions of the subject's identity.
6. Ask students to return to the questions they had about the student in the photograph, Angel Howard. Have some been answered? Have new questions arisen?

7. Students in Mount Vernon say that they would like to have an integrated prom, but the parents insist on keeping them separate. One white student said, “Most of the students do want to have a prom together. But it’s the white parents who say no.” Anita Williamson, the mother of one girl said, “This is the way that they have done it ever since the school system has been open … Why change something that has worked? It’s not broken. The kids are perfectly fine with it.” Another white student calls the practice “awkward,” noting that students of different races do everything else together and are friends, but, the student explains, “It’s how it’s always been. It’s just a tradition.” Ask students to discuss these quotes with each other.

8. Where do they think Angel Howard stands on the issue? Ask students to imagine what Angel would say about the situation based on looking at this photograph. What do her posture, facial expression, and other clues in the image make you think about her point of view?

9. As a class, view the audio slide show about Laub’s project together (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/magazine/24prom-t.html) and/or read the following quote from Angel herself. Angel Howard says: “I wish color wouldn’t be such a big factor … but the prom is the least of my problems. We can’t fix prom until we fix the school and then when the school comes together and no longer sees color, then the prom can come together and no longer see color.”

10. Specifically, look together at the photograph of Cierra Sharpe and Justin Rollins in the slide show. How do students compare the way they are pictured to the image of Angel? Cierra is best friends with a black student named Kera. She says that it was “really hard” for her that she couldn’t attend prom with Kera. Kera says that “it really is hurtful.”

11. What do students think about Laub’s approach to the two photographs? How did her chosen techniques—cropping, focus, etc.—influence the way they saw Cierra’s and Angel’s identity and point of view? What can they guess about her point of view?
12. Laub photographed Mount Vernon’s proms from 2002 until 2007. When *The New York Times Magazine* published her photos, it sparked national outrage and soon after, the school began holding only one integrated prom. Laub says sparking change like this was not her “original intent.” She says: “Photography enables me to look beyond the surface socio-political context—and explore a psychological and emotional landscape that often reveals deeper, more universal truths.” Ask students how they think the photographer’s relationship to her subjects and her “intent” may have influenced the photograph. How would it have been a different photograph if it was taken by someone else?

13. Encourage students to go back to their questions about Angel. What do they still not know about her identity? How did learning about the circumstances influence their interpretations? What are the limits of photography for telling the story of someone’s identity? What other photographs of Angel, Cierra, or others in Mount Vernon would students like to see?

**DISCUSSION EXTENSION**

1. Now look together at Graciela Iturbide’s *Our Lady of the Iguanas* (Image 2). What do students notice about the photograph? What do they notice about her appearance (posture, facial expression, clothing, hair style, etc.)? What hypotheses do they have about her identity?

2. What do they notice about the way the photographer took the image? You can discuss the point of view, the focus, the cropping, the lighting, etc. Tell students the title. What do the photographer’s choices (including choice of title) make them guess about her subjective take on the subject’s identity?

3. In the year this photograph was taken, 1979, the photographer, Graciela Iturbide, was selected with a group of artists to document a town in Mexico called Juchitan. The majority of the town’s population is indigenous Zapotec people with a unique culture dominated by women. This photograph of a woman selling iguanas was part of a series Iturbide made showing the role of women as healers, political leaders, and here, merchants. How does this matriarchal culture compare to students’ own cultures? How do they think this photograph reflects this native culture, if at all?

4. What questions do students still have about the subject’s identity? What other photographs would they like to see of this subject in order to understand other aspects of her identity?
5. Compare Iturbide’s photograph to Laub’s photograph of Angel—what techniques do the photographers use to create these portraits of women (e.g., lighting, angle, etc.)? Can we guess more about the identity of one subject than another—why or why not?

ACTIVITY

1. Go back to the photographs students brought in of themselves. What stories do the photographs tell about their identities? What don’t they tell? What are some problems that might arise if people could only see this single photograph of them?

2. Look together at *The New York Times* write-up about Gillian Laub’s project. Discuss what information it provides in addition to the images.

3. Ask students to write something to accompany the photographs of themselves. What can their writing express about their identities and the story behind the photograph that the photographs alone cannot? What additional photographs would students want people to see to get a more accurate sense of their identity? Include descriptions or drawings.

4. After discussing the photographs of Laub, Iturbide, and their own images, how do students feel about the role that photographs play in the way we see ourselves and others? How can photography change those realities and perceptions?
**COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS**

**ELA Literacy Speaking and Listening Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1**
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on ... topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.2**
Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.3**
Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

**History/Social Studies Standard**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6–8.2**
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**NEW YORK STATE LEARNING STANDARDS**

**Standard 3 for the Arts**
Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.
LIST OF WORKS FOR VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

6. Alonzo Jordan, [Eighth grade class graduation, Beech Grove School, Jasper County, Texas], ca. 1954–55.

DETAILS ABOUT WORKS

1. See Pre-Visit Activity
2. See Pre-Visit Activity
3. See Post-Visit Activity
4. See Post-Visit Activity

5. Gordon Parks was the first African-American photographer to be hired full time by *LIFE* magazine. In 1950, *LIFE* asked Parks to return to his hometown of Fort Scott, Kansas, where he had left 20 years earlier. In this assignment Parks reexamined childhood memories from his hometown, including happier childhood moments to times of serious racial discrimination. This series of photographs, which represent a rarely seen view of the everyday lives of African-American citizens years before the Civil Rights Movement, were slated to appear in April 1951 but were never published.ii

6. Living in Jasper, Texas, a town known for one of the most brutal race crimes in US history, Alonzo Jordan, a barber by trade, took up photography to fill a need he recognized in his community. Over the course of his career, Jordan actively documented the world in which he lived and worked, focusing on those civic events, social organizations, schools, churches, and activities that were integral to the daily life of the people he served. In so doing, he created images that not only affirmed the identities of his subjects, but strengthened self-esteem by enabling people to see themselves as individuals and in relation to others in the context of the social fabric of family and community.iii
7. Cornell Capa chose the phrase “concerned photographer” to describe those photographers who demonstrated in their work a humanitarian impulse to use pictures to educate and change the world, not just to record it. Born Cornel Friedmann on April 10, 1918, in Budapest Hungary, he was the youngest son of assimilated, non-practicing Jews. At 17, his brother, who would also become a famous photographer, was forced to leave Hungary by its anti-Semitic dictator. While he was not part of this community of Talmudic Scholars, he did have strong personal associations with Judaism.

**SUGGESTED SEQUENCE**

2. Alonzo Jordan, [Eighth grade class graduation, Beech Grove School, Jasper County, Texas], ca. 1954–55.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT THESE WORKS**

1. What do students notice? Look carefully at elements such as gesture, setting, and facial expressions. Think about photographic elements such as cropping, lighting, focus, and point of view.

2. What hypotheses do students have about the identity of the person or people in this photograph? Challenge students to provide evidence.

3. What do students think the photographer’s perspective is on the subject(s) she or he is depicting? How can they tell?

4. What questions do students still have about the identity of the subject(s)? What are the limits of photography in communicating elements of identity?

**POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES**

1. **Create a virtual exhibition in your classroom.**

   Before, after, or as an alternative to asking students about these works, you can assemble the photographs in your classroom for a virtual exhibition. You can share them with your students in a variety of ways:

   1. Display them as if they were a gallery exhibition in the classroom by taping up print-outs along the walls.

   2. Hand out copies to small groups of students.

   3. Show a projected PowerPoint to the whole class.
II. Interact with the virtual exhibition in a variety of ways:

1. Ask students what they notice about the exhibition as a whole. Challenge them to list techniques they see the photographers using as they capture their subjects’ identities. What are some commonalities between the images? What are some differences?

2. Ask students to identify their favorites and explain why they chose them.

3. Challenge students to work in small groups to “curate” an exhibition of three images from the virtual exhibition. Discuss the meaning of the term “curate.” Students should select three images that they feel are related by a theme (or a subtheme related to the overarching theme of identity). They should then write a title for their exhibition and an introduction to the exhibition (a paragraph or two describing their curatorial point of view).

   Invite them to display their exhibitions somewhere in the classroom along with their introductory text. Encourage the other groups to view the exhibitions and ask questions about the curatorial choices. Could they imagine any other images fitting in with the exhibition themes? What important ideas came up around the concept of identity?

4. Ask students to research the photograph they feel the most connected to and write a wall label for it. A wall label contains information about an object in a museum or gallery show. Display the labels under the images in a classroom “gallery” show. Ask students to discuss the qualities of the different labels. Which label qualities helped them to understand or relate to the images best? What did the labels bring up about the theme of identity?

5. Ask students to research one photograph and lead an activity or discussion around it. Use the pre-visit discussion and activity as a model.

6. Challenge students to be inspired by one photograph or photographer to make photographs of their own. Which aspects of the photographer’s work were they most inspired by (e.g., a technique, subject matter)? How did they make it their own?
POST-VISIT ACTIVITY: IDENTITY OF THE FAMILIAR AND UNFAMILIAR

OVERARCHING QUESTIONS

What is identity?

What can we tell about someone’s identity from a photograph?

What can’t we tell?

SUPPORTING QUESTION

How is it different to photograph someone familiar versus someone unfamiliar?

OBJECTIVE

To explore how photographers capture the identity of those who are familiar versus those who are unfamiliar.

SUGGESTED TIME FRAME

One to two class periods

RESOURCES

Related images; access to the Internet and a printer

RELATED IMAGES

Image 3  Image 4

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION

1. Ask students if they have ever taken a picture of someone they didn’t know. How was the experience different from taking a picture of someone they knew or even taking a picture of themselves?

2. Do students think it is easier to capture the identity of someone they know or someone they don’t know? Ask students to debate this point.
DISCUSSION

1. Look together at Diane Arbus’s *A Boy with Straw Hat and Flag about to March in a Pro-War Parade, New York* (Image 3). Ask students to offer hypotheses about the subject’s identity and back them up with evidence.

2. Diane Arbus was known for photographing both everyday street scenes and marginalized people. In this case she photographed a boy rallying in support of war at the height of the Vietnam War protests. What does this information add to students’ thoughts about his identity? What do you think the photographer’s opinions on his identity are and why?

3. Some people accused Arbus of exploiting her subjects—including little people, giants, and circus performers. The critic Susan Sontag said her work was “anti-humanist” and that her work “shows people who are pathetic, pitiable, as well as repulsive, but it does not arouse any compassionate feelings.” What do students think? Do students think photographing someone different from themselves can be exploitative? Why or why not?

4. Compare Arbus’s photograph of a stranger on the street to one by Malick Sidibé, *Mère et Enfants* (Image 4), of a family posing for a portrait in his studio. Sidibé is a Malian photographer well-known for his black-and-white studio portraits from the 1960s and ‘70s, created in his studio in Bamako, Mali. In this photograph, Sidibé captures a mother with her four children, framed by painted glass. What do students think about the identity of these subjects? What does this framing add to students’ reading of the image or the identity of the people in the photograph?

5. One might say that Sidibé’s approach of meeting his subjects and then creating more affirming portraits of them is very different than Arbus’s approach using a more critical eye and remaining more distanced. Do students agree? Do they see affirmation in Sidibé’s portrait and/or critique in Arbus’s? How does this affect the way they view the identities of the subjects?

6. Look at both photographs again. What do students think are the advantages and disadvantages to photographers documenting subjects who are familiar or unfamiliar to them? Further, what do students think are the advantages and disadvantages of documenting subjects in an affirming or critical manner? How do they see these aspects played out in these photographs?
ACTIVITY

1. For this activity, students will curate an exhibition about themselves. First, make a list of 5–10 aspects of their identities (e.g., gender, religion, hobbies, etc.). Then have students go through their social media accounts and select a few photographs that they think best capture their identities. If students do not have access to social media accounts at school, ask them to bring in photographs from home.

2. Next, have them print out these photographs, or make copies of the photographs brought in from home. As curators of their exhibitions, they should think about how each photograph reveals something about their identities. They should also think about how the photographer of each one influences the photograph. How is a school photograph/portrait—taken by a stranger—different than a selfie? Next, they should write a title, a curatorial introduction, and wall labels for their exhibition.

3. As an extension, students can think about which aspects of their identity are not captured through the existing photographs. They can then add to their exhibition by taking one or more additional photographs of themselves either with the help of another student or by themselves. They should then write a wall label for the new photograph(s).

4. Share students’ exhibitions as a class. What is revealed about their identities? What is still unknown?
**ELA Literacy Speaking and Listening Standards**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.1**
Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on ... topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.2**
Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.6.3**
Delineate a speaker’s argument and specific claims, distinguishing claims that are supported by reasons and evidence from claims that are not.

**History/Social Studies Standard**

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6–8.2**
Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

**Standard 3 for the Arts**
Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.
Image 6

Alonzo Jordan, [Eighth grade class graduation, Beech Grove School, Jasper County, Texas], ca. 1954–55.
TOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

Our Museum Education program provides guided and self-guided tours, interpretative materials, and events for educators. These resources introduce visitors to photography while building visual literacy and critical thinking skills. Led by Museum Educators, tours are conducted in an inquiry-based discussion format, encouraging audience members to discover visual information and realize multiple interpretations and meanings. We will return to our regular group tour offerings when we move to our new location later in 2015.

OFF-SITE GUIDED TOURS

For the first time this winter (while we are moving to our new location), ICP is offering Off-Site Guided Tours, bringing the experience of a museum visit into your classroom. When you book an Off-Site Guided Tour, a Museum Educator will travel to your school, introduce ICP’s resources, and facilitate an interactive lesson using image-based projections and distributed materials.

NYC Title 1 Public Schools, K–12: Free* (max. 25 students)
K–12: $150 per 25 students plus 2 required chaperones
College Students, Adults, and Seniors: $150 per 25 students

*This is a pilot program and will be offered on a first-come, first-served basis.

To request a tour, please visit: http://www.icp.org/museum/education/group-tours. For more information, please call Group Tours at 212.857.0005 or email grouptours@icp.org.

MUSEUM EDUCATION POLICIES

RESERVATIONS

Reservations are required for all group visits at least three weeks in advance.

PAYMENT FOR GROUP TOURS

Payment is due before the date of your visit. Checks should be made out to the “International Center of Photography” and mailed to ICP Community Programs; 1114 Avenue of the Americas at 43rd Street; New York, NY 10036. Payment by credit card can be arranged by calling 212.857.0005.

Upon arrival, if the number of visitors has dropped below the required group-size minimum (stated above), the group is still held responsible for paying the minimum fee of $150. Please note that the refunds will not be given for pre-payments if the number of the people in the group is less than the prepaid amount.

CANCELLATIONS

If you need to cancel your tour please contact 212.857.0005 as soon as possible. Off-Site Guided Tours that are cancelled with less than 3 days’ notice will be charged a $100 fee. Groups that do not give 24 hours’ notice will be charged in full.
END NOTES


BIBLIOGRAPHY AND LINKS


Common Core State Standards
www.corestandards.org

New York Learning Standards