



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2008 Volume III: Pride of Place: New Haven Material and Visual Culture

Discovering New Haven's History of Public Art

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.03.05
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On an average day people view a multitude of everyday objects, buildings, signs, and artwork occupying the landscape we live in. Many people pass these elements of the built environment without even being aware of their existence, context of creation, or intended message. Their stories have become lost over time as viewers bring different background knowledge to the interpretation of the work. I intend to connect students with works of art they have access to on any given day yet may never have known existed. Those artworks tell the history of the place students live and later will help them tell their own visual story.

Through investigation of these artworks students will become familiar with the visual cues that will allow them to interpret the history behind the artwork. Full understanding of these historical works will better enable the students to develop their own artwork. We will begin our investigation by asking students to give their personal interpretation. What is the theme of the artwork? What time period or moment in history is the work intended to represent? Who created the artwork? Who commissioned the work and how may this have influenced the artist's design? Why was this historical period or person chosen for the site where it is located? As our research finds the answers, students will reformulate their interpretation of the artwork and begin to understand the time period it was intended to represent as well as the artist choices for its representation. At the conclusion of our research into the creation of public artworks and the stories behind them, students will partake in the creation of their own public artwork. We will have backers and committees that will approve proposals and limit budgets. My intent is to bring this unit full circle and remind students of what happened during the creation of the artworks they have researched and interpreted.

(Recommended for Art and Art History, grades 7-12)

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