

MINING LESSON PLAN:

What's 'Mine' is Bought

by Nate Milch

This lesson is meant to have students think deeper about how the economy influences the ways we live and perceive the importance of certain things, specifically with the example of mining in the West and the worth we give the land in terms of monetary value. Through using collage as a medium to explore the themes of mining and the economic influences of it, students can draw parallels between the extraction of their collage materials from their sources to the extraction of materials from the earth and consider how the ways they manipulate those materials change their value.

Objectives:

Students will use visual art to understand the economic impacts mining has on life in the West, as well as be able to draw parallels to the ways the economy impacts other aspects of life today.

Grade level:

Secondary education: art classes grades 8-12, American history grade 11 + AP | IB levels

Duration:

2-3 class sessions

Materials:

- Art paper
- Scans of primary sources (artworks, articles, entries, etc.)
- Magazines
- Catalogues
- Newspapers
- Scissors
- Adhesive

Vocabulary/Key Terms:

- Production – The act of changing and combining materials for consumption.
- Advertisement – A notice created with the intention to convince the public to buy a product or service.
- Supply and Demand – The ratio of goods and services to people who want to purchase them.
- Value – Material, monetary, or personal worth.
- Composition – The combination of elements and principles of design within an artwork.
- Curate – The act of building a specialized collection

Activity

In advance, ask students to spend a week collecting items such as catalogues, magazines, newspapers, things with advertisements to get them to start thinking about the ways in which advertisement and the idea of consumption plays into their everyday lives. This leads into creating the connection between the ways in which mining has direct ties to our economic system and why the concept of supply and demand and consumerism is so important to the mining industry as a whole.

To begin the lesson, ask the students what they notice about the ways that products or ideas are advertised to us; *what do companies do to make us want them or feel like we need them?* Use this discussion to move into artwork used to essentially “advertise” the land to be used for mining and how the value of this land was seen through how profitable its resources were. Talk about who was benefiting from mining; when mining towns flourish and plummet and which people were constantly benefitting from the mining industry.

Thomas Moran (American), *Wilhelmina Pass, Weber Canyon, Utah*, circa 1880s, oil on panel. Partial gift of Dr. and Mrs. James David Brodell and Sons, Warren, Ohio and funds from the Emma Eccles Jones Foundation, UMFA2020.1.1.



- How does Moran's artwork essentially advertise the land to potential buyers and executives?

Patrick Nagatani (American), *Cow Pie/Yellow Cake', Uranium Mine, Homestake Mining Company, near Mt. Taylor, Milan and Grants, New Mexico, 1989*, chromogenic color print. Gift of Dr. Mark Reichman, UMFA2003.25.27.



- Which economic impacts of mining does Nagatani's work show? How does the symbolism he chose to include in his composition showcase the benefit of certain people at the deficit of others?

Harry Squires (American), *American Fork Canyon*, 1880, oil on canvas. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph J. Palmer, UMFA1991.069.047.



- Squires has painted a beautiful landscape of American Fork Canyon, how does his subject matter show what he values in the landscape? Would his values be similar or different to Indigenous groups that inhabited the area first? What about businessmen?

Andrew Rice, *5 cent theater*, 2020. Laser engraved block after a collage.



Andrew Rice's artwork is made of images from a catalogue from the early 1900s. Then discuss more about the ways that these images were trying to sell ideas and products to people and what they were trying to sell.

- How does putting all of these different images into one collage change their meaning and become a critique of consumerism?

Using Andrew's piece as an example of collage, have students create their own collages using images from now and appropriating images related to the primary sources in the exhibition to create a composition that compares the way the economy drives life today as it did during the early 20th century. Have students consider the parallels between the extraction of their own images to the extraction of the earth to become a new product.

- *Does the act of turning images into a collage change their overall worth?*
 - *Does extracting the earth and monetizing it make it worth something?*
- Encourage sharing ideas and collaborating among students.

- To finish, have each student write a short (3-6 sentences) statement that ties what they learned about how the mining industry has affected communities economically, both positive and negative, to other aspects of life affected by the economy today and how it connects to the art they created.

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- Students share work with each other and critique work
- Students explain how their collage represents the influence of economics on life and draw parallels between the past and now

Additional Resources

State Core Links:

- U.S. II Standard 1.2: Students will explain the connections between the growth of industry, mining, and agriculture and the movement of people into and within the United States.
- U.S. II Standard 1.4: Students will use historical evidence to compare how industrial capitalist leaders used entrepreneurship, free markets, and strategies to build their businesses.
- Standard L1.V.CR.3: Engage in making a work of art or design without having a preconceived plan.
- Standard L1.V.R.1: Analyze, select, and curate artifacts and/or artworks for presentation and preservation.
- Standard L1.V.R.2: Analyze and describe the impact that an exhibition or collection has on personal awareness of social, cultural, or political beliefs and understandings.
- Standard L1.V.R.1: Hypothesize ways in which art influences perception and understanding of human experiences.

Artist Spotlight:

More about the artist on page 6 | Andrew Rice is an artist local to Salt Lake City who focuses primarily on printmaking and collage, often bringing both of these practices together into his works. *5 cent theater* sources images from a 1908 Sears Robuck catalogue, creating a composition that illustrates consumerism and the culture behind it in the early 20th century.

Contributer Bio:

Nate is an undergraduate student at the University of Utah working toward his degree in Art teaching. He hopes to create a classroom environment that effectively combines his passion for the arts with his desire to participate in social change and liberation. To him, the arts can provide as revolutionary an education as any text can, and he hopes to share this insight with his future students. When he isn't studying or creating art, Nate also enjoys playing video games, finding funny knick knacks at thrift stores for his friends, and eating leftovers.

Heading image | Photograph of the Buckeye Mine at Silver Reef, Utah, ca. 1885. detail, Mark A. Pendleton Photograph Collection, P0008, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah.