

MINING LESSON PLAN:

The Human Element

by Shae Howell

Students will create a physical representation of the assigned body part/body function, using only their own bodies and movement within the group. The movement will take place in front of a sheet, with a light behind the group. The silhouette will be captured on video. There will be several available roles for the production ensuring that all students have an opportunity to participate. The final art piece is a collaborative effort that will reflect the various physical and mental impacts of coal mining on the human body.

Objectives:

Students will:

- Learn about the physical and mental impacts of coal mining
- Participate in a group collaboration using movement, dance, shape and light to convey meaning
- Gain experience filming, directing, collaborating, and participating in a group movement piece
- Learn about the way in which different body parts function
- To show an understanding of performance art

Grade level:

7th-12th grade US and Utah History and Theatre classes

Duration:

2 hours

Materials:

- White sheet or cloth
- Large construction or theatre light
- Duct tape to tape sheet up onto ceiling
- iPhones for filming
- Resource material

Vocabulary/Key Terms:

- Collaboration – the action of working with someone to produce or create something.
- Choreography – the sequence of steps and movements in dance or figure skating, especially in a ballet or other staged dance.
- Performance art – an art form that combines visual art with dramatic performance.
- Black lung – pneumoconiosis caused by inhalation of coal dust.
- Pulmonary disease – a type of disease that affects the lungs and other parts of the respiratory system. Pulmonary diseases may be caused by infection, by smoking tobacco, or by breathing in secondhand tobacco smoke, radon, asbestos, or other forms of air pollution.
- Crystalline silica dust – silica dust is made up of small particles that become airborne during various work activities including cutting, drilling, chipping, sanding, or grinding materials that contain crystalline silica.

Activity

Step 1:

The students will look at the resource material and videos in the UMFA's digital exhibition *Mining in the West*, to get an idea of the physical and mental impacts of coal mining on the human body.

Some prompts to get their minds thinking about the physical predicament of coal miners, the toll taken, and how movement can convey a visual message:

- Who are these people?
- What are some of their characteristics as miners?
- What do you think visually happens to the lungs, heart, or brain when toxic chemicals damage it?
- What are some ways you could visually express the movement of these body parts?
- Discuss performance art, and how it is different from two-dimensional art.
- (See *The United States v. Tim DeChristopher* by Andrea Bowers.)
- How does performance art overlap with dance, theatre, and film?

Step 2:

Break the class up into five groups. Each group will be assigned a “body part” or “function.” The five different groups will be: lungs, immune system, heart, brain, and DNA. Within each group, ask who would like to volunteer to be the videographer (assuming there are at least 7 in one group; if not, the instructor will be the filmmaker and record the performances on their phone). The rest of the group will participate in creating a visual representation of their body part, using only the poses and movement of their bodies. Each group will work together to collaboratively come up with a way they can physically represent the action/movement/characteristics of each given organ/bodily process. Using movement and dance as a medium the students will explore the physical and psychological trauma associated with working in coal mines.

Questions to consider and guide research:

- What does the body part/organ look like? Where is it in the body? How does it work and support a healthy body? If you could hear it, what sounds would it make? What happens if it stops working? What diseases are specific body parts susceptible, and how are they affected by that disease? How might certain types of labor (mining, etc.) contribute?
- An example would be to clump together in the shape of a heart, and everyone pulse in unison to give the impression of a beating heart, and then have a student move their body to show a disease in the heart.

Step 3:

After the sheet has been taped up to the ceiling, and the light has been situated behind the sheet (give enough space for the group to stand between the light and the sheet to show only a silhouette of the group of students), have the groups each perform their body part.

Step 4:

Each group will have five minutes to perform their piece for the camera behind the sheet. The group should plan on how they will enter the “stage,” and how they will exit. The piece should be thought of like a choreographed dance, or a play. If there is space in the room, it is suggested that each group goes at the same time to get a visual idea of all the movement happening in the body at the same time.

Methods for Assessment:

Students will write a reflection and use at least three words from the vocabulary list in their writing to reflect an understanding of the concepts.

Additional Resources

State Core Links:

- Standard L2.V.CR.1: Individually or collaboratively formulate new creative problems based on own existing artwork.
- Standard L2.V.CR.2: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.
- Standard L2.V.CR.3: Demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form through experimentation, practice, and persistence.

Artwork Spotlight:

Coal miners at the end of their shift, 1926. Multimedia Archives, Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah Photo number: p0028n034



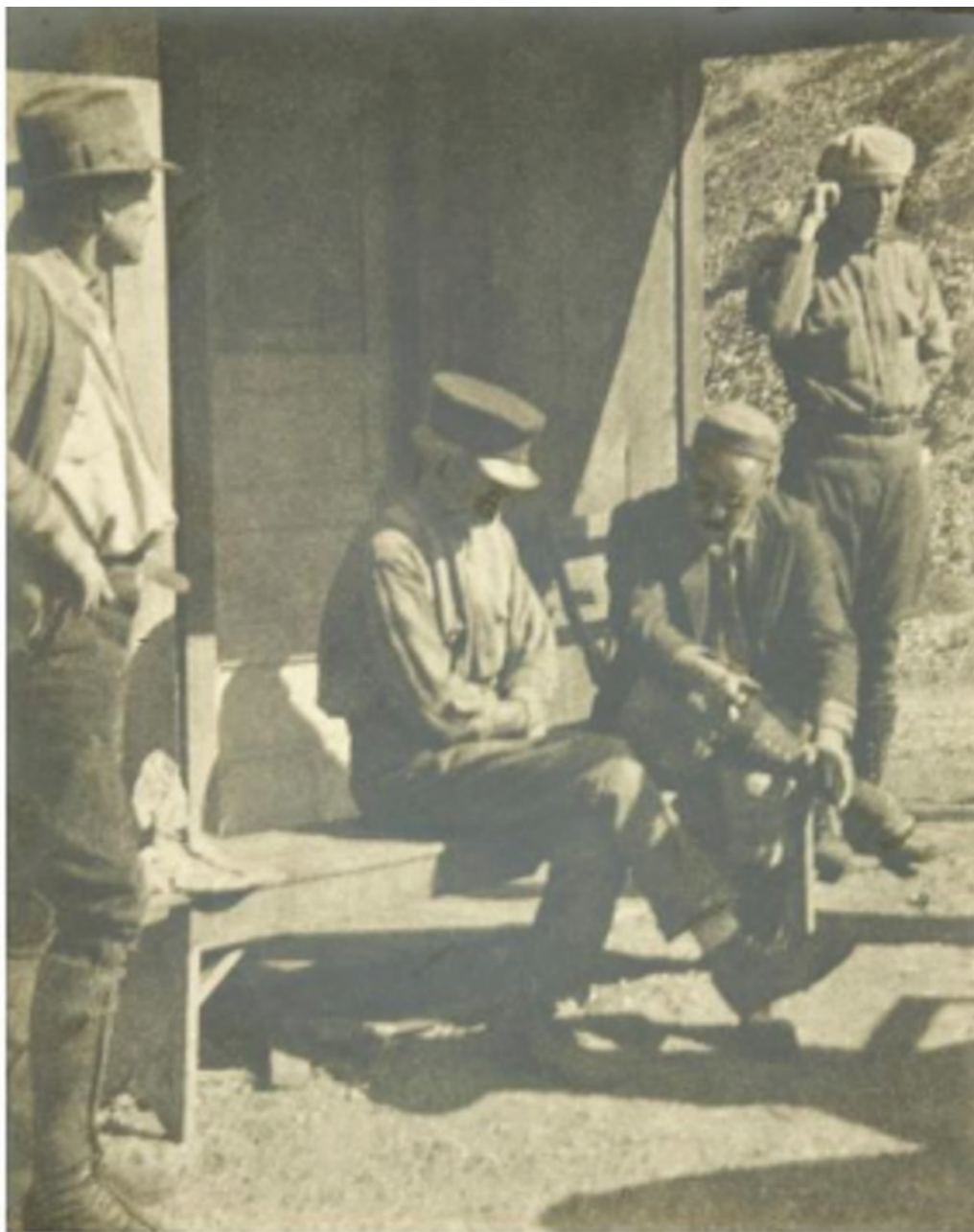
Andrea Bowers (American), *The United States v. Tim DeChristopher*, 2010, single channel HD video, 16:15 minutes. Purchased with funds from the Phyllis Cannon Wattis Endowment Fund, UMFA2010.17.2.



George Janecek (b. 1946), *Roger McKinnon and Ernie Martinez; Castle Valley Mine series*, 2015, inkjet print. Gift of George Janecek, UMFA2015.7.19.



Louis Fleckenstein (1866-1943), *Miner's Cabin in Wild Rose Canyon*, 1932, gelatin silver print. Gift of Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl to the Dr. James E. and Debra Pearl Photograph Collection, UMFA2002.41.33.



Other Resources:

[Faces of Black Lung II](#)



Contributer Bio:

Hello! My name is Shae Howell. I am a senior in the Art Teaching Program at the University of Utah. I was born and raised in Utah, and grew up dancing and performing on stage. In my spare time, I enjoy hanging out with my husband, cooking, exercising, walking, and traveling. I'm inspired by people who have built beautiful lives out of ashes from their broken past, and people to defy the odds. I hope you enjoyed the lesson and feel inspired to move and create in new ways!

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.