

MINING LESSON PLAN:

Research and the Activist

by Sydney Porter Williams

A lesson plan where students research Salt Lake City's Inland Port, a relevant Utah issue. Students will evaluate the port as a design solution, choose a stance on whether or not they support the port, and create protest signs to back their decision.

Objectives:

- Given research prompts, students will study the history of and update themselves on issues facing Utahns today and evaluate Utah's inland port as a design solution.
- Given research prompts and art materials, students will decide on a political issue and learn how to support that decision through activist means.
- Train students in research and opinion-forming.

Grade level:

Intended for secondary students in social studies, history, government, debate, science, and art classes. Could also be simplified to use with younger audiences in similar classes.

Duration:

60 minutes

Materials:

- Computers/tablets for conducting research
- Cardboard (boxes or sheets)
- Scissors
- Black and white paint
- Paintbrushes

Vocabulary/Key Terms:

- Activist – A person who uses or supports strong actions (such as public protests) in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue (Merriam-Webster)
- Activism – Using art as a tool to not only comment on needed societal changes but also to inform others on these pressing issues and inspire them to act. (Urban Dictionary)
- Inland Port – “Port” originally referred to a place where freight ships anchored to unload and transfer goods. An inland port may refer to a place that performs the same actions but is not connected to water.

Activity**Visual Analysis (10 minutes):**

The teacher will show Bower’s drawing of DeChristopher and give background on the activist (see additional resources below).

- Students will perform a visual analysis of the artwork.
- Ask “What might his shirt mean?”
- Ask “Why might Bower have drawn him instead of taking his photograph? What is the significance of a portrait drawing?”

Research (20 minutes):

Students will research Salt Lake City’s inland port and decide on if they are in support of it or if they choose to oppose it.

- Students may perhaps research this topic using local Utah news sources, or the Inland Port’s website. Library searches may reveal additional writings on this topic.
- What is an inland port? Where is Utah’s inland port located? Who is paying for it? Who does it benefit/harm? What is the controversy surrounding this port? What affects will it have/has it had on Salt Lake City’s environment, ecosystem, and economy?
- Do you think this port is a viable design solution for the problems it is trying to solve? Does it create new problems?
- Do you support this inland port? Why or why not?
- While students are researching, the teacher will lay out supplies.

Artmaking (15 minutes):

Students will create protest signs supporting their argument in support of or against Salt Lake City's inland port.

- Students will cut pieces of cardboard out of boxes
- Students will develop a phrase to write on the cardboard and paint it with black and white paints. Students should aim for a short phrase, perhaps a few words, that one could read and understand in a few seconds.
- Students may add images to their cardboard or cut it into various shapes, considering design elements such as shape, balance, space, typography, etc.

Discussion (10 minutes):

Teacher will lead a discussion about students' work.

- Did you choose to support the port or not? Why?
- How does your artwork visually or textually support your argument? Students may turn their protest signs into letters or postcards to send to politicians/decision makers.
- Students may post their protest signs on social media with hashtags.

Clean Up:

Students will clean up their workspaces.

Ways to extend the lesson:

- Students may have a debate for and against the port based on the information they learned.
- Students may turn their protest signs into letters or postcards to send to politicians/decision makers.
- Students may post their protest signs on social media with hashtags.

Methods for Assessment:

- Students may be assessed based on their engagement with the research portion of this lesson and how they inform their visual arguments.
- Students may also be assessed based on the strength of their visual argument, as shown on their finished protest signs.

Additional Resources

State Core Links:

- [Standard ESS.4.3:](#) Evaluate design solutions for developing, managing, and utilizing energy and mineral resources based on cost-benefit ratios on large and small scales. Define the problem, identify criteria and constraints, analyze available data on proposed solutions, and determine an optimal solution. Emphasize the conservation, recycling, and reuse of resources where possible and minimizing impact where it is not possible. (ESS3.A, ETS1.A, ETS1.B, ETS1.C)
- [English Language Arts Grade 9-12 Writing Standard 7:](#) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. [Additional link.](#)
- [Standard 7–8.V.CR.4:](#) Collaboratively shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using traditional or contemporary practices of art or design.
- [Standard L3.V.CR.1:](#) Visualize and hypothesize to generate plans for ideas and directions for creating art and design that can effect social change.
- [Social Studies – 4th Grade, Standard 3 Objective 1:](#) Describe and model ways that citizens can participate in civic responsibilities (e.g. current issue analysis, recycling, volunteering with civic organizations, letter writing)

Artwork Spotlight:

Andrea Bowers, *Tim DeChristopher (I Am the Carbon Tax)*, 2010, pencil, paper.
Purchased with funds from The Paul L. and Phyllis C. Wattis Fund, UMFA2012.6.1



Bowers created this drawing of Tim DeChristopher in 2010 as part of a series that interviews him on a protest of parceling out Utah lands for use by the oil and gas industries. As a student at the University of Utah, DeChristopher attended an auction of public Utah land, raising the prices and winning land until he was identified as a fraud and removed from the auction. However, his performance caused an uproar that shut down the auction and brought attention to malpractice, resulting in the dismissal of the entire auction. DeChristopher was sentenced to two years in federal prison but has continued his activism work since his release.

- [Sltrib article](#)
- [Peaceful Uprising](#)

Images from 2019 protests of the inland port:



Contributer Bio:

Sydney Porter Williams is a Salt Lake City-based teaching artist. Currently earning an MFA in Community-Based Art Education, she works to address issues facing Utah and the world today, including environmental problems, mental health struggles, and other difficulties our society is working through. Sydney is passionate about education and building community through artistic means and believes we can improve our world through conversation and collaboration.

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.