Pre-Visit Guide: 30 Americans

Big Ideas & Major Themes

Here are some relevant topics relating to the exhibition to review with your students before experiencing 30 Americans.

- The artists whose work is gathered in this exhibition come from a wide range of backgrounds in terms of class, region, and sexuality. The collectors of this art believed the themes, questions, and experiences these artists were tackling represented the American experience.

- Many of the artists in this exhibition are referencing the past—whether the distant (though still all-too-relevant) antebellum era or the 1960s and 70s. They deal with topics ranging from trauma and violence to nostalgia, media representation, and beauty.

SC Standards Addressed

Visual Art CR.AL.1; R.I.L.5.1; R.I.M.5.1; R.AL.5.2; R.AM.5.2; C.AM.6; C.AH.7.1

In the Classroom

Prepare students for your visit with one or more of these activities.

- Engage students in a discussion about beauty and how so-called ideal standards of beauty can be exclusionary. Have students do an informal inventory of a magazine to see how many BIPOC individuals are represented in the ads.

- Watch the Art21 video on Nick Cave and his Soundsuits. Ask students to design an object that would either hide one’s identity or solve a similar problem.

- Ask students to research artists who have used found or post-consumer objects in their work, either focusing on the 30 Americans artists or not. Have students consider why that artist chose that particular material and what significance it had historically, culturally, politically, or personally.

Resources

Want to explore more? Review these references to learn and share information with your students.


- Learning for Justice lessons https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons