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The Eye of the Beholder: Climate Change Awareness

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Introduction

Growing up in the mid-1980s, I remember being a very young man, probably in the 4th or 5th grade, that we had to travel quite a few miles from our home into town. We stayed in the deep country in Texas on Highway 27 between Kirvin and Fairfield, Texas. A one-way trip on the bus into town was about 15 miles, and in certain areas along the route, big oil storage containers lined both sides of the road. Back then, they had such a pungent smell that once we got to a particular area, I would always try to hold my breath as long as possible so I didn't have to smell it. Many times, I couldn't hold my breath that long. As I practiced more, my lungs became more robust, and I got strong enough to keep it for close to a mile. I didn't know why they were there, but I knew I wouldn't say I liked having to smell them every morning and every afternoon on our journey.



Caption: 3 images of Highway 27 in Texas

Photo credit to: Willie Keener

When I was a young adult and a barber, I would travel to a town called Corsicana, where I would work for 20 years. Because I was not from there, I didn't know the town's history. I just had a barbering job to provide for my family, and I was going to college then. However, an annual event would permanently shut the entire city down. It was called the "Derrick Days," and people from everywhere would come. The downtown area was shut down for several days, with various events leading into the weekend. I never paid any attention to it and didn't know about the growing concern about the "Derricks Days" and oil production. After getting my education, learning now, and doing research, I almost feel embarrassed not to have known Corsicana's connection to the oil industry. However, I also think enlightened in an honorary way because a town I worked in for so long had such a significant role in the history of Texas and the oil industry.

Looking at things now, I have concerns regarding the overall impact that it has had, both good and bad, within the community, not only in Corsicana but also in the other boom towns that developed in those days. So, I started researching it and found a lot of interesting information that my students and I will work collaboratively with other disciplines to develop understanding. First, my students will build an awareness and knowledge of the industry and its benefits to the community. Then, students will also learn what potential climate issues may have come from that period. This will be a journey of the past, the present, and the future.

We will utilize visual arts to learn about and create artwork that applies the techniques of sublime (landscapes that show the negative impact of climate change) and picturesque (showing positive, healthy, and growth). Students will photograph the oil, gas, petroleum, and railroad industries. These will be developed in a way to make us more aware and document where we are so that in the future, we're able to look back at these images and artworks and gain knowledge from them. The overall goal is to make my students more aware of

climate change caused by the gas and petroleum industry and to develop the eye that's needed to capture the image or artwork to convey specific messages because they say a picture is worth a thousand words. Nowadays, they're worth millions.¹

In class, we will research the “boom towns” from the local area where I was raised and then explore the area where I currently teach at Hearne ISD, a Title I rural school district, to see what's in our area to capture those images to support the research. The low-income status represents many of my students' families and communities. Because many of my students come from low-income families, their daily lives are influenced by the weather and if they go to school daily. At times, the roads are flooded, and extremely cold or severe storms. The climate change content of my unit will connect to what directly affects the local weather and their day-to-day lives. We will utilize this not only to bring awareness to my students regarding environmental concerns but also to hope that it sparks an interest in why the weather has potentially caused so many severe and catastrophic storm issues.

Climate change is already impacting Central Texas, affecting everyone in our community and everything in the natural and built environment. Some of the impacts of climate change include “higher temperatures and more heatwaves, extended droughts, colder winter storms, intense rain and flooding, and worsening air quality.”² This was said to be accurate due to the ash from mining and lignite coal burning to provide electricity to Central Texas. There was a mining plant located in a town named Fairfield. This plant operated from early 1970, the year I was born, until 2015 or so. In my teenage years, I remember going on family picnics with my family. We would go to Big Brown Lake in Fairfield and enjoy ourselves, but it was strange, although it was Texas weather and it's normally hot in the summer, it was like that throughout the year.

We could go to the lake in the fall; the water is always warm. I never understood how that would happen because the water would be cold everywhere in the winter. This was due to the lake water being used in some capacity or some way to help keep the turbines or engines cool with the coal mining/burning process, which kept it warm. I'm not an environmentalist or a scientist. However, I feel that that had to influence the fisheries and the other wildlife in that area that use that lake to live.

Unit Overview

We, as educators, look for instructional strategies to engage our students. As well as meeting their individual needs. I have found that they are more engaged when we base content on their learning styles. We will have more buy-in when we know our students preferred or best learning styles. They will learn more efficiently. Students will also utilize mind maps/sentence stems (an AVID note-taking strategy) while doing their historical research on climate change based on the Texas oil industry and create simple yet profound artwork because they can use this note-taking strategy to assist them in core content. Students will use photography, painting/mixed media, and drawing as contest pieces that allow students to take ownership in their learning. This will reinforce or enhance learning, intrinsically motivate, and produce life-long learning. The students can learn social skills through collaboration based on peer teaching, pair sharing, and small group instruction.

This unit will teach about the oil industry, climate change, and sublime and picturesque landscapes. Students will also learn the fundamentals of art and photography (Elements/Principles of Art and Components of Photography) skills. Students will work four to six weeks to create, reflect upon, and develop a portfolio. There

will be a rubric for the students to utilize for time management and milestone marking to ensure they stay on task. They will have presentations and gallery walks to develop leadership and public speaking skills. We will start with blended learning, terms/mind maps, and sentence stems. Then, sketches/drawings and photography. These will also be cross-curricular based in CTE, English, and Texas History. Every student will have a minimum of 6 sketches/drawings and photographs, with every entry including a mind map/sentence stem.

My Philosophy of Visual Arts Instruction

As a professional photographer, Artist, and Educational Consultant, my philosophy is “Be more than your environment presents and defy societal views.” Art gave me liberty, a voice, a place, and faith. These are the seeds I have in my students and everyone I meet. We never know the challenges others face daily; however, we know how we can make someone feel, and they will never forget that. This is the essence of art.

In art, I aim to ensure that students view culturally diverse representations so they will respect, appreciate, and celebrate one another. This will allow them to understand the importance of cultures and recognize that we aren’t very different. Life is about growth and development. The more you know and experience, the more uniquely creative you can be. This adds value to you as a person and a professional. More so, it allows us to adapt and sustain. I say that to say this-- We are often put in situations and positions that we may know very little about. Still, we can find commonalities when we can communicate effectively and efficiently. This is the key to life: finding likeness, not differences.

Background and Cross-Curricular Approach

I teach at Hearne ISD in Texas for 7-12 graders. Hearne Independent School District is a rural 2A Texas public school in Robertson County, approximately twenty-five miles north of Texas A&M University. As of the 2010 census, Hearne’s population was 4,459. Hearne ISD comprises three campuses: Hearne High School, Hearne Junior High, and Hearne Elementary School, with a combined enrollment of approximately 900 students. The district is 95.5% economically disadvantaged. This past school year, our student demographics were about 43.3% African American, 44.5 Hispanic, 8.2% White, 3.9% American Indian/Two or more races, and 0.1 % Asian. We have 4.1% 504, 20.1% ESL, 3.2% dyslexia, 100% Title 1, 0.9% military-connected, 48.4% at-risk, 19.7% bilingual, and ESL, 3.6% GT, 18.7% SPED, 54.3% intellectual disabilities, 13.6% physical disabilities and 23.6% have behavioral disabilities.³

At Hearne ISD, we are a small rural public 2A school that recently reimplemented visual arts in 2022. Before that, we didn’t have visual arts for about four years. We also offer theatre, band, and music. These are two areas that greatly assist with learning. We have a thriving afterschool program (ACE). Texas ACE (Afterschool Centers on Education) provides no-cost activities before and after school and during summer for K-12 students in Title I schools. The program is federally funded through 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) and administered on the state level by TEA.⁴ When the last bell rings, Texas ACE is just starting with

interactive, hands-on learning disguised as fun and aligned with the school curriculum. Local programs also provide homework help, tutoring, targeted needs-based assistance, and enrichment activities such as sports, clubs, and youth development projects that build character, confidence, and leadership skills.⁵

Hearne ISD is no different than any other school district across the state. We may have a few numbers here and there that may differ either higher or lower, but across the nation, everyone is dealing with the same type of issues. So, the overall look for Hearne ISD is a high level of minority students. To accommodate the needs of our students, we have specialists and educators who are provided with professional development and collaborative opportunities in cross-curricular activities. We also have leadership at the central office level that supports us, allows us to be creative, and gives kids the best experiences to ensure they can develop as productive citizens. We also implemented writing into all Fine Arts programs. To assist with reading difficulties and comprehension.

Here is another resource. About 7 Mindsets - Founded in 2009, 7 Mindsets provides mindset-based and mental health learning solutions for schools and districts nationwide, offering multi-tiered curricula, professional development, and data measurement tools that empower growth, drive measurable impact, and ensure safe and supportive learning communities. 7 Mindsets is used by over 5 million students and educators in all 50 states. The 7 Mindsets approach is a research-based program based on the premise that success depends less on what a person knows and much more significantly on how he or she thinks as they learn.⁶

Content and Learning Objectives

The Texas Oil Boom

The Texas oil boom is part of every native Texan's history. This period affected everyone, no matter their race, in one way or another. Every time they ride the bus, they are part of history, including many other energy sources. In 1894, they found oil and thus began the oil industry. The Corsicana landscape was filled with derricks and other oil equipment for drilling. The fields would produce 1,450 barrels of oil in the first year. A few years later, it produced 839,000 barrels of oil. Then, there was a need for refineries, the factories where crude oil was made pure. Various products were made. One of the most important was lubricating machinery and kerosene for lamps.⁷

Another significant milestone in the oil industry was Spindletop. It did not strike oil. In 1899, an engineer named Anthony F. Lucas was an expert on salt domes; this is where oil is normally found. They found traces of oil, but he needed better equipment. Luckily, he had some investors and was able to continue. On January 10, 1901a, a giant plume of oil shot into the air, and it was said to be seen up to 10 miles away. People traveled from far away to see it. Within nine days, 800,000 barrels of oil were released from Spindletop. This was before it was capped off. the gusher. The word spread quickly worldwide, with newspapers calling Texas "The great gusher."⁸ This began the Texas oil boom era and the age for oil in Texas. Soon, the price of oil dropped. About two years later, they hit an all-time low at three cents per barrel. This started the boom-and-bust cycle of periods of growth and depression. This was the first such cycle the Texas oil industry would experience, which happened quickly.⁹

Natural gas was another abundant energy source. There was a safety issue. It couldn't be transported easily.

Between the 1890s, 1920s, and 1930s, pipes were created that wouldn't leak. This greatly assisted Texas natural gas, and more oil and gas fields developed. The Texas oil industry began to flourish even more.¹⁰ Thousands of people came to Texas with the promise of spectacular wealth to be made. Before the oil business Spindletop, Beaumont had about 9,000 residents. Then it went to a city of 50,000. Another nearby location named Sour Lake grew from a small community to about 10,000 people within months. These fast-growing towns were dubbed boomtowns.

They grew because of economic booms, and the Boomtowns were very busy. Next, oil companies grew during the period when electricity replaced kerosene. This was for lighting homes and industries. However, this didn't affect the oil producers; petroleum had new uses, and more was being discovered. Because it was cheaper than coal, oil immediately replaced coal as fuel for steam engines. The need for internal combustion engines to power other means of transportation was also increasing. Steam was replaced by either gasoline or diesel—oil by-products—for power.¹¹

However, before the development of the internal combustion engine, the oil producers had not made much money from gasoline. This was because demand for it was so low. This situation only changed when Americans began to buy more cars. Between 1895 and 1906, registered vehicles in the United States rose from 5 to some 619,000; by 1916, Texans were driving about 195,000 of the 3.4 million cars in the United States. With the purchase of vehicles and driving longer distances, gasoline demand increased nationwide. Between 1916 and 1920, gasoline production in the United States went from 49 million barrels to more than 116 million barrels per year. In producing gasoline, the Texas oil industry assisted with keeping Americans traveling the nation's roads and highways. Then, the growing popularity of the automobile guaranteed the Texas oil industry millions of customers. Along with creating new uses for petroleum. Many other oil and gas products include synthetic rubber, plastics, and carbon black, used to make ink, tires, and other products.¹²

Equity for All? “Politics and Prejudice, The Root of Capitalism”

The oil boom boosted the state's economic growth but affected Texas in many other ways. Yes, the oil boom attracted many young farm workers to jobs in the oil fields. However, most drilling and production jobs were reserved for white workers. Although facing bias in the oil fields, a few African American and Mexican American workers found jobs as teamsters, and they would haul goods to and from the oil fields. Another downside to oil workers is that they live a very mobile life. They would move from town to town as they followed new opportunities. This is a robust conversation that should be discussed. Too often, we don't want to face the truth and the acts of our ancestors, but if we don't, then we are doomed to make the same choices, not mistakes. Equity for all shouldn't be a conversation; sadly, it is. Oppression in Texas is deeply rooted. Minority or foreigners have been treated in inhumane ways, and slavery is one of the most notable, but not the only. African Americans have had to endure a multitude of inequalities. Many other races, including the Spanish and Indigenous, owned us. This is the true “Bust”.¹³

In 1528, African people were under Spanish Rule. The people of African descent, enslaved and free, were instrumental in the settlement of Spanish Texas. African people of descent settled in Texas around the 17th and 18th centuries. The population included free and enslaved blacks and mixed-race people like me—no matter the case, black people have been treated very poorly. Even if you do have certain rights under slavery that were granted by the Spanish, slavery is slavery.¹⁴ However, special consideration given to Anglo settlers meant that the enslaved population of Texas continued to grow. Enslaved men and women were forced to accompany their enslavers on their journey into Texas. Anglo settlers actively worked to ensure slavery was preserved in Tejas. Several enslaved African Americans arrived with Stephen F. Austin and his Anglo settlers in

1824. However, more than 5,000 enslaved people lived in Texas a little over a decade later. Texas African American life after Texas Independence was shaped by new and existing legal constraints, enslavement, and violence. Even free blacks struggled with new laws because they banned them from residence. Meanwhile, most black Texans remained enslaved. My question is, during these periods of growth and prosperity in Texas, who do you think enabled the generational wealth many have today?¹⁵

In 1836, The Texas Constitution gave more protection to slaveholders. By controlling the lives of enslaved people via new slave codes, the Texas Legislature continued to pass increasingly restrictive laws governing the lives of free blacks, including a law banishing all free black people from the Republic of Texas. Then, Texas's enslaved population multiplied between 1845 and 1850. It went from 30,000 to 58,161 enslaved people in Texas, and by 1860, the number had increased to 182,566. White families brought most enslaved people to Texas from the southern United States. This is very important to me because slavery is directly connected to my family's history. In the pictures, you will see that I own the rights to them: my grandparents, James and Ophelia Cox. Along with the slave cemetery they are buried in. My grandparents were free in body but not in mind—that mentality from slavery/sharecropping. Mollie Dawson, who was a slave, made this state while being interviewed.¹⁶ In years past, this was a very upsetting passage to read. Now it is inspiring and motion. I recall being a “Boy” in Corsicana as a young adult by a white. I politely told him my name and expressed my dislike for that because of the slave ties. He attempted to make an excuse; however, I made it very clear that it wasn't acceptable, it wouldn't be tolerated, and not to address me like that again. He never did again.



Caption: 4 images of Black male and female & cemetery

Photo credit to: Willie Keener

“De slaves was about de same things as mules or cattle, dey was bought and sold and dey wasn't supposed ter be treated lak people anyway. We all knew dat we was only a race of people as our master was and dat we had a certain amount of rights but we was jest property and had ter be loyal ter our masers. It hurt us sometimes ter be treated de way some of us was treated but we couldn't help ourselves and had ter do de best we could which nearly all of us done.”

–Mollie Dawson, enslaved in Navarro County, Texas¹⁷

Capitalism at its best, the British Empire was built on enslavement. They prospered greatly from the mass product of tobacco, sugar, and cotton—tropical crops they could not grow in their own country. Plantations made a transformative site and process in human and natural history. The visual and environmental histories of plantations have exposed the structures of power that are rooted in imperialist, capitalist, and racial formations. Also, the enduring legacy of plantation corporatism continues today. O let me not forget the Dutch; they gave rise to slavery, which should be noted as the first pandemic and creation of climate change. The growing land deprivation and accelerated species loss, Saidiya Hartman stated, “Emancipation does not end slavery, yet extends its power.”¹⁸ This is very similar to what I said previously

The oil boom also affected Texas politics and the environment; these great things occurred. State officials began to pass restrictions to control parts of the oil industry. The legislature passed laws concerning abandoned wells and groundwater protection from oil pollution. Then, the legislature made it illegal to waste oil and natural gas. By 1917, the legislature gave the Texas Railroad Commission, an agency created to regulate railroads, which could enforce laws regarding petroleum production. Also, the commission set specifications for spacing concerning wells and pipeline transport of oil and gas. These guidelines helped prevent going overboard with drilling.¹⁹

This money helped fund the state government and education programs for Texas children. In 1905, the state government began collecting taxes on oil manufacturing. Texas took in over \$101,000 in taxes that year. Money collected by 1919 from oil tax production rose to over \$1 million.²⁰ Higher education in Texas also gained from the state’s oil manufacturing due to the Texas legislature. It had set aside some 1 million acres of land in West Texas. This was for the Permanent University Fund, where Texas universities got money from selling or using this land. At one time, many people deemed the land worthless, but until the Santa Rita No. 1 oil well struck oil in 1923, The income from oil production went into the Permanent University Fund. That eventually grew by more than \$2,000 a day in 1925. The University of Texas and the Texas A&M systems continue to share the money in this fund. They are deemed the two of the most critical education centers in the state. The State of Texas has also benefited from oil manufacturers' philanthropy; they give money or gifts.²¹



Caption: Image of a Texas A&M Barn

Photo credit to: Willie Keener

Climate Change in Texas

Now, here comes the current ugly truth. Capitalism has gone through many stages, and many have hurt different races and cultures. Well, now it's to the point that climate change has no prejudice against our bias. Serve weather like Hurricane Beryl is the latest in many devastating storms. These have recently paralyzed Houston. Emphasizing the city's lack of ability to adequately fortify itself against weather events generated by climate change. The past storms, such as Hurricane Ike in 2008 and Harvey in 2017, made it clear that the city needed to upgrade and or structure plans to remove trees and strengthen its flood-plain protections. There is also a need to bury more power lines underground. However, these efforts fell short. Maybe because the city is entirely overwhelmed by recent storms, these storms have flooded the town and knocked out power to millions. Climate change is heating ocean water, which fuels more powerful storms. They seem to intensify much faster, and experts say cities need to change how they prepare and respond to such events.²²

These storms directly impact my students; keeping the power on can be the difference between life and death. This scenario bears out this week in Texas as temperatures spike while hundreds of thousands experience brutal heat without air conditioning. The cities in Texas were struck by substantial back-to-back storms that powerful May blew trees down and created a lot of property damage. Then Category 1 Beryl moved through in a rarely early start to hurricane season. It knocked out power for millions of customers. There is no secret that Texas's electrical infrastructure can't keep up.²³

We should be transferring money to improve its grid. This will significantly assist in making sure the lights and A/C stay on during increasingly extreme weather. However, Texas is pouring billions of taxpayer dollars into new natural gas-fired power plants and is moving to build more. The natural gas plants came in the wake of

another enormous power outage. This was the deadly deep freeze in February 2021. It killed more than 200 people and left millions of consumers without power and heat for days. Many Texas Republicans have an anti-wind energy rhetoric. However, natural gas plants going offline accounted for most outages, and downed power lines more recently caused mass outages. Most of Texas's electrical infrastructure is outdated or needs an upgrade; it was built in the 1970s and 1980s. This was a time when the weather wasn't as severe.²⁴

Here is a theory from climate scientists and academics: emissions of heat-trapping greenhouse gases continue to push temperatures higher. The severity of the weather in the state is expected to get worse. They also added that Texas will likely see an expanding gap between wet parts of the state. The dry parts of climate change alter precipitation patterns and warm oceans. An area where the gap has increased is rainfall. This year, Huntsville recorded more than 9 inches of rainfall, and on May 2, basically three months of rain in just a day. Other Texas states, such as Wichita Falls, Dallas, and Waco, have already seen nearly double the amount of rain. That didn't usually get that much during the year's first half. The gap is much wider this year.²⁵ "Scientists attribute the global warming trend observed since the mid-20th century to the human expansion of the "greenhouse effect"²⁶ — warming those results when the atmosphere traps heat radiating from Earth toward space." Life on Earth depends on energy coming from the Sun. About half the light energy reaching Earth's atmosphere passes through the air and clouds to the surface, where infrared heat is absorbed and radiated. About 90% of this heat is then absorbed by greenhouse gases and re-radiated, slowing heat loss to space.

Repeated storms pounded East Texas in April by dumping vast amounts of rain that caused extensive flooding. Meanwhile, little to no rain has fallen in West Texas. Many areas have received less than 1 inch. This puts many counties in West Texas and along the Mexico border under extreme drought. This year's drought conditions are dreadful in El Paso, Hudspeth, Kendall, and Bandera counties. This is compared to the same period between 2000 and 2023. Many reservoirs in East Texas are 100% full or higher after torrential spring rains. However, the ongoing drought in West Texas has pushed the two major reservoirs along the Rio Grande to near-historic lows.²⁷

Many say Texans should prepare for hotter temperatures and a greater probability of fires and flooding. A new Texas A&M climate story shows a dramatic rise in 100-degree days, during which the possibilities posed by hurricanes, droughts, and other severe weather conditions are growing.²⁸ The Weather conditions across the state are getting more dangerous by the year. There is a newly updated assessment of extreme weather in Texas. This is based on data from 1900-2023, which predicts trends through 2036. It will show a significant uptick in extreme temperatures. It is expected to rise 10% in intensity by 2036, compared to 2001-2020, and will likely hit the state's eastern regions and urban centers more intensely. Parts of East Texas have already seen an increase in precipitation of 15% or more over the last century; this will cause uncommon flooding in many unlikely areas. With the Gulf Coast, rising sea levels, and plummeting or sinking of land, the danger of storm surges from hurricanes will increase, and they will grow more severe due to climate change and related circumstances.²⁹



Caption: 4 images of severe storms

Photo credit to: Willie Keener

Picturesque Visual Arts

Now, I want to talk about the picturesque and the beautiful things that happen within landscapes. These are depicted in relaxed, calm, easy-going, relaxing settings. They are also looked at as nature at its best whenever we can go out and enjoy ourselves taking Nature's Beauty for these birds chirping, flowers blossoming, or just watching the sunset on a beautiful Lake. This could even come in part as you're riding in Texas on country roads and depends on the season if all the wildflowers are out in different types of wildflowers and different seasons taking in the beautiful sunsets on the landscape as well. I'm getting up early in the morning on a journey, maybe to work or just on a mind-clearing ride, kind of a Zen feeling watching the sun rise over the landscape and looking at how the Sun rises above the landscape to give different variations of tones and shadows.

When I was much younger, we lived in the country and took in a lot of nature. We would run in the woods and play. We would pick flowers and dissect them based on our knowledge, watching wildlife, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, and many other birds. I can recall my grandfather and grandmother planting gardens with all kinds of vegetables and fruits in them. We tended to the gardens and lived off the land as far as the vegetables and fruits went. We had peaches, plums, peas, potatoes, and corn, and as I look back at it, I think back. That was probably the purest part of my life. Although we did have weather storms, they were few and far between in terms of severity.

There was no better feeling at that time, just peace and calm tranquility. Being in the country or rural areas has its sense of therapeutic properties. My students will create pictures and visual artworks that give them a happy place. The place that your imagination takes you when the hardships of life might beat you down. Being still and finding this happy place in your mind to get away for a moment for a few hours, and then after the work is done, you can always reflect. To do that, work and remember that happy place because, as children, they need it, and as children, we need it as adults because we see what's happening and understand what's happening.

Sublime Visual Arts

Sublime has many different appeals. Often, it's associated with beauty and terror simultaneously, and we don't have many ways to display different types of visual arts. One technique that was used throughout centuries was Sublime paintings. This depicted a certain eerie feeling that gave the viewer an opposing view. At the same time, it had a beauty to it. Also, when I think of the sublime, I think of the weather in Texas. Numerous storms happen throughout the year throughout the seasons, and often, they are very tragic and deadly; however, there is a sense of beauty to seeing nature work in its way. For instance, if you look at a tornado, hopefully, you're never caught in one, but if you happen to look at one from afar, look at one on TV, you'll see its beauty. You'll see the beauty of destruction, the view of nature, and how nature is taking itself back from mankind's hands. In my opinion, in its way, taking back from man continues to create different situations that have catastrophic things that happen to prevent nature from doing what it usually does.

However, many types of severe storms come through Texas. We would think and hope that man would not create it, but often, scientists say the difference is due to climate change. With that, you can look at the recent storm that came through Hurricane Beryl, impacting many across the state. Many were without power for weeks and had to change their complete lifestyles. Not only did it impact large cities, but it also impacted my towns, and this is something that's becoming regular and more severe. Even when you look at the destruction that the storm caused, if there were a painter or photographer brave enough to capture those images, they would see the view of large waves and the massive movements of cars and buildings they're making. It's just amazing to see how nature has at work.

We see structures that have taken years to be torn down in an instant by a tornado, hurricane, or strong winds. You see trees that have lived and made it for hundreds to maybe even thousands of years that are pulled straight from the ground by the force of a tornado. So, when you see its visual components and the reporter's taking pictures and making videos of it, there's a sense of beauty to it, and this isn't to be insensitive to the people it affected. It is just nature doing what it does based on the climate. This painting displays the typical colors of a sublime painting: red and black. It has a dark fill, and the painting has a lot of movement in the polluted sky. The Skyscrapers show the effects of climate change.



Caption: Painting of a polluted city

Willie Keener, "Broken City", 2021

So, let's look at the opposite side of the spectrum. We looked at the strong winds of the rainy hurricanes, and let's look at the droughts in Texas. Just look at the high temperatures; look at the power grid that's struggling to maintain power. Droughts have a beauty of their own as well. If you look at the droughts in Texas, when you look at the land that has been overly saturated by water, and then months later, when the heat comes, it's completely dried out. You can see a vein-like pattern that goes through the ground where the ground is cracking and separating, and the earth is waiting for more nutrients to come in, and sometimes they come in overwhelmingly due to the storms. Overall, Sublime is the beauty of nature, which takes back what man has destroyed. My students will create many different visual pieces, whether photography, mixed media paintings, or sketches, to demonstrate what the sublime means to them.

Teaching Strategies and Activities

I teach art and photography. As mentioned previously, the main objective of this unit is to increase collaboration and Cross-curriculum (Texas History, Oil Industry, and Climate change) activities in visual arts. Hearne is known as the "Crossroads of Texas". The railroads have always played a significant role. This comes from the early days of passenger trains to now. We have a rich industry history, and my students will research the role Hearne has played in the history of Texas, the Oil Industry/Oil Boom, and potentially climate change.

This was all evident; however, Hearne was noted for transporting cotton. The students will create works of art that reflect what they have learned.

Collaborative Learning

We mix students of different ages, educational levels, interests, and skills with collaboration. This heterogeneous grouping allows students to learn from one another's differences and provides a chance to interact with diverse individuals. Also, it enables advanced students to mentor their peers or peer teaching. Ultimately, this breaks down learning barriers and gives students a safe learning place. Now, it doesn't take the workload away from the educators. We still must plan lessons, do formal and informal assessments, and be the facilitators of the classroom. I have found that cross-curriculum activities enhance and reinforce learning.

Peer teaching. This is where students learn directly from each other's teaching. I will create Sentence Stems for the students. This preset sentence structure allows you to read their introduction for their presentations. Graphic Organizers (KWL charts and Mind Maps) reinforce learning and help organize information. Gallery Walks are to allow the student to view and make constructive comments about each other's works of art. Blended Learning is where I will utilize technology/videos to assist students based on their learning styles. Kinesthetic Learning is simply movement. We will set up stations so each student can move around the room and engage in different activities.

Reading Art (Critique Sheet)/ Photography History

We must be fundamentally sound in art, which directly correlates to photography. The 5 Lines are Curved, Zigzag, Diagonal, Horizontal, and Vertical. Next are the Shading Techniques: Hatching, Doodling, Cross-Hatching, and Stippling. Then the Color Wheel: Cool, Warm, Analogous, Complementary, Monochromatic, Contrasting, Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary.³⁰

These are essential to taking great photographs. Here is an excellent component that the students will use: Blended learning to learn about the history of photography. They will work in small groups, and each student will add dialogue to the teaching. There will be at least two to three groups of three to four students. They will have to know the first person to do the photography and identify some of the portraits taken then. They will also discuss the advancements of photography in different eras. They will learn about the different camera companies Kodak, Nikon, and Canon within this process.

Then, learn the fundamentals of digital photography. This leads to the proper way to shoot with their cell phones and the use of different editing tools. Starting with the Components of Photography:

Background, Mid-Ground, Foreground, Rule of Thirds, Angles, Focal Point, Depth of Field, S - Women (How women should stand), T - Men (How men should stand),

Classroom and Reinforcement Activities

These lessons should take three 45-minute classes. Prompts and activities might include Costa's (and Bloom's) levels of questioning to assist and engage them in formulating and identifying higher levels of questions. The goal is to support students' entry into art competitions. By asking higher levels of questions, students deepen their knowledge and create connections to the material being presented.³²

Lesson 1: Eye of the Beholder: "Climate Change"

First, the student will be introduced to landscapes and cityscapes (every lesson will spiral week to week).

Week 1

What Elements of art were used to create these? What Principles of art were used to create these? What Components of photography were used to make these? These are the types of questions that will be asked. All student work is research-based, and blended learning will be used throughout the six weeks.

Week 2

They will define visual artwork created in Texas, such as seascapes, railroads, and farmlands. After that, they will compare the different types of landscapes with sketches, creating one of each type. They will then follow up by creating photographs and/or paintings of each with their cellphones. Digital art is included.

Week 3

The students will use a Mind map KWLA. A KWLA chart is a tool for recording the exploration of ideas and learning throughout a lesson or unit. This instructional practice is powerful because it automatically differentiates instruction based on students' prior knowledge and experiences while guiding the educator's next steps through students' natural curiosity. With the addition of the "A" to the traditional KWL chart, students are asked to develop critical thinking skills about applying what they learn.³³ Also, they will continue to work on their artwork and research.

Week 4

Third, students will create a Portfolio that summarizes all their work. The process is more important than the product. They will also continue to work on their artwork and research.

Week 5

They will continue working on their artwork, researching, and using blended learning.

Week 6

Then, they will do presentations (with sentence stems that I create) that help with public speaking and building leadership. Students will also do a Gallery Walk. This will allow students to view each other's artwork and learn to use a Critique sheet to constructively critique their peers' artwork.

Appendix on Implementing Texas Education Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

- §113.19. Social Studies, Grade 7, Adopted 2018.

(a) Introduction.

(1) In Grade 7, students study the history of Texas from early times to the present. Railroads Age of Oil; Texas eras. The focus in each era is on key events, issues, and their impact. Students will analyze the impact of the Oil industry in Texas.³⁴

RULE §117.302 Art, Level I (One Credit), Adopted 2013

(b) Introduction.

1. The fine arts incorporate the study of dance, music, theatre, and the visual arts to offer unique experiences and empower students to explore realities, relationships, and ideas. These disciplines engage and motivate all students through active learning, critical thinking, and innovative problem-solving. (a) Students may fulfill fine arts and elective requirements for graduation by completing one or more of the following art courses: Drawing I, Painting I, Photography I, Design I, and Digital Art will be our focus.³⁵

Notes

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⁴ <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/support-for-at-risk-schools-and-students/texas-ace>

⁵ <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/support-for-at-risk-schools-and-students/texas-ace>

⁶ <https://7mindsets.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/7-Mindsets-Booklet.pdf> 1

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⁸ “The Growth of the Oil Industry,” in Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Texas History, (Holt Mcdougal, Student Edition 2016), 478-481.

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¹¹ “The Growth of the Oil Industry,” in Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Texas History, (Holt Mcdougal, Student Edition 2016), 486-489.

¹² “The Growth of the Oil Industry,” in Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Texas History, (Holt Mcdougal, Student Edition 2016), 483-485.

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¹⁴ Bullock Museum, “Campfire stories, African American” 1800 Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701, <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/african-americans>

¹⁵ Bullock Museum, “Campfire stories, African American” 1800 Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701, <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/african-americans>

¹⁶ Bullock Museum, “Campfire stories, African American” 1800 Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701, <https://www.thestoryoftexas.com/discover/campfire-stories/african-americans>

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¹⁸ <https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-18/conversation/001>

¹⁹ “The Growth of the Oil Industry,” in Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Texas History, (Holt Mcdougal, Student Edition 2016), 483-485.

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²¹ “The Growth of the Oil Industry,” in Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Texas History, (Holt Mcdougal, Student Edition 2016), 486-489.

²² <https://apnews.com/article/beryl-hurricane-disaster-climate-change-extreme-weather-61459123ca7930d975c167868fed8f54>

²³ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/12/climate/texas-power-outages-grid-storms/index.html>

²⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/12/climate/texas-power-outages-grid-storms/index.html>

²⁵ <https://www.texastribune.org/2024/07/01/texas-extreme-weather-climate-change/>

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³⁰ Exploring Art Teacher Wraparound Edition Texas Edition by Ragans Mittler

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³¹ Exploring Art Teacher Wraparound Edition Texas Edition by Ragans Mittler

<https://www.mheducation.com/prek-12/category.43364.art.html?page=1&sortby=relevance&order=desc&bu=seg>

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³⁵ [https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=2&ch=117&sch=C&rl=Y](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC?tac_view=5&ti=19&pt=2&ch=117&sch=C&rl=Y)

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