



Collaborative Arts Resources for Education

Duane Michals and Point of View

Related Subjects: Visual and Performing Arts, English-Language Arts

Grades: 6-8

Medium: Photography

Author: Museum of Photographic Arts

Time Required: Two 60-minute sessions

Summary

In this two-session lesson, students will examine narrative points of view through two works by photographer Duane Michals. Michals is best known for his thought-provoking photographs that suggest larger stories and often are often accompanied by his hand-written text. Students will use the Visual Thinking Strategy to analyze and discuss two photographs by Duane Michals while learning the pronouns and attributes associated with first- and third-person points of view. Students will also write two short stories in both voices using a personal photograph and a classmate's photograph as prompts.

Materials

Digital or printed images of the following works by Duane Michals

This Photograph is My Proof (1967)

Certain Words Must Be Said (1976)

One personal photograph from each student. The image should depict one or more persons and a discernible background setting. The image should be candid, meaning that the persons should not be posed or "smiling for the camera".

Glossary

Narrative Point of View – establishes from which perspective a story is told

First-Person Voice – a narrative point of view in which the narrator is also a character of the story

Third-Person Voice – a narrative point of view in which the narrator is not a character in the story

Pronouns - a word that substitutes for a noun or phrase

Character – a person in a story



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Plot – the plan of a literary work

Short Story – a narrative shorter than a novel and usually featuring only a few characters

Teacher Preparation

- Familiarize yourself with the Visual Thinking Strategy.
- Familiarize yourself with the life of photographer Duane Michals.
- Write the vocabulary words on the board. You will refer to them throughout the lesson.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Interpret photographs using evidence based reasoning to support their hypotheses
- Identify key words that indicate the point of view a story is written in
- Use two points of view to create two narrative interpretations of an image

Procedure

Session One

1. Introduce the concept of point of view, how one event or story can be told through first-person voice or third-person voice. Ask the class to identify the words that would indicate if a story is being used in first-person or third-person. Write these words into two columns. The columns should eventually contain these words.

First Person

I

me

we

my

us

Third Person

he

she

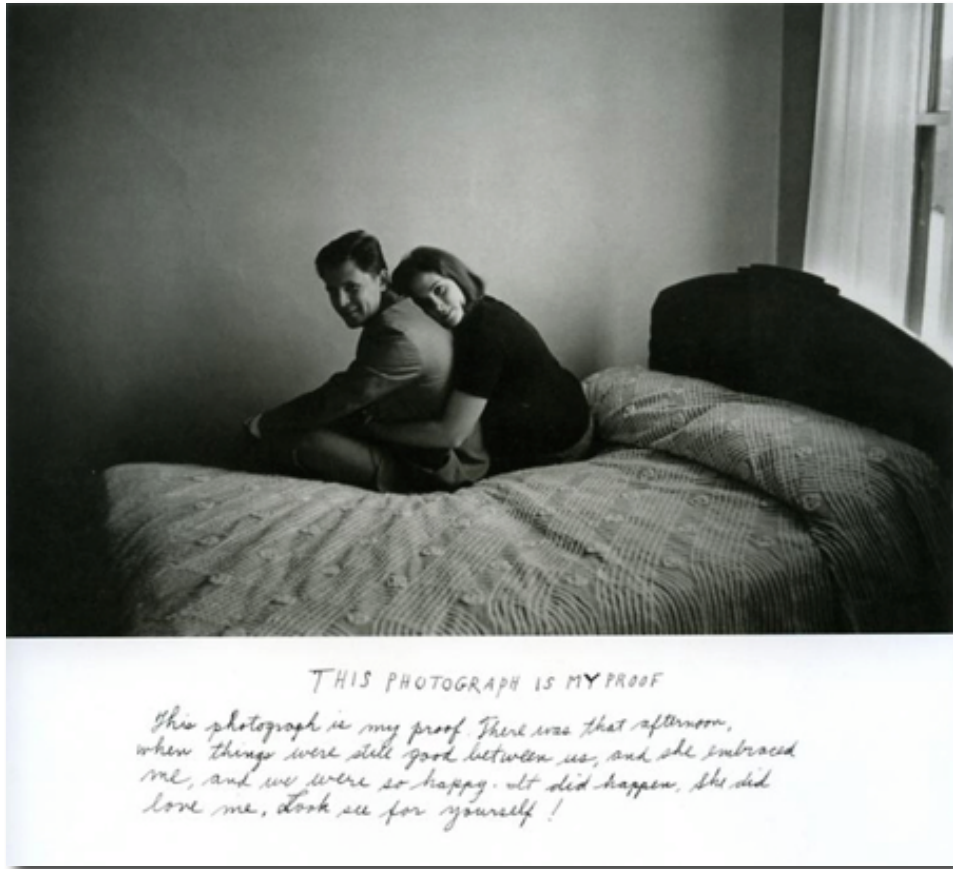
them

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them



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2. Show the photograph *This Photograph is My Proof* (1967) by Duane Michals. Instruct your students to spend one minute looking at the photograph in silence. Cover up the text on the image so that the students can only see the photograph. After one minute, ask your students the following questions, using the Visual Thinking Strategy:

What's going on in the picture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can you find?

3. Reveal the text that accompanies the image. Read it aloud to the students:

This Photograph is My Proof

This Photograph is my proof. There was that afternoon when things were still good between us, and she embraced me, and we were so happy. It did happen. She did love me. Look see for yourself!

Ask the students to reexamine the image with the text. What more do we know now?

Discuss the point of view of the text:

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Is it first-person or third-person?

Ask students to identify the words a first-person voice and write them on the board.

Which of the two people in the image is the voice of the text? Explain why you think that.



4. Now, look at the second image by Duane Michals: *Certain Words Must Be Said* (1976). Instruct your students to spend one minute looking at the photograph in silence. Cover up the text on the image so that the students can only see the photograph. After one minute, ask your students the following questions, using the Visual Thinking Strategy:

What's going on in the picture?

What do you see that makes you say that?

What more can you find?

5. Reveal the text that accompanies the image. Read it aloud to the students:

Certain Words Must Be Said

Things had become impossible between them and nothing could be salvaged. Certain words must be said. And although each one had said those words silently to herself a hundred times, neither had the courage to say them out loud to one another. So they began to hope someone else might say the necessary words for them. Perhaps a letter might arrive or a telegram



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delivered that would say what they could not. Now they spent their days waiting. What else could they do?

Ask the students to reexamine the image with the text. What more do we know now?

Discuss the point of view of the text:

Is it first-person or third-person?

Ask students to identify the words that indicate a third-person voice.

6. Discuss how first- and third-person points of view give us different insights into the characters/plot of a story. Use the two images/stories by Duane Michals to illustrate these ideas. Write the ideas on the board in two columns.

First-Person	Third-Person
-Only the true feelings of the narrator are known and expressed. Other characters' feelings are elusive.	-Feelings of others are known. Sometimes only the feelings of one character (third-person limited). Other times, all the feelings of all the characters are known (third-person omniscient).
-The plot is revealed to the reader at the same time that the narrator experiences it.	-The reader may know what will happen in the plot before the character(s) do(es).

7. Explain to students that they will be asked to write two short stories based on images—one in first-person and one in third-person.

8. Ask students to select a photo that they already have and make a copy of it. It could be a photo on their phone or one brought in from home. The photo should not be a posed photo (like a school or family portrait). It should be casual and include one or more persons in it (though it should be sensitive and not make fun of anyone).

9. Ask students to write a short story of three paragraphs to accompany their copied photo, using the first-person voice to describe what came before the image was taken and what is happening in it. It should include descriptions of the feelings of narrator while also leaving room for unanswered questions (as Michals' text does). Instruct your students to use devices such as metaphors and similes to add richness to their text.



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10. Have students exchange their short stories with another student for editing purposes. Once returned, students should revise their texts and handwrite the final version.

Session Two

1. Ask the students to give their photos to a partner. Every student should now have a photo that is not their own.

2. Ask the students to write a short story of three paragraphs about the image in front of them, using the third-person voice to create a short narrative that describes what came before the image was taken and what is happening in it. Be sure to include descriptions of the feelings of one or more characters. Explain that their stories will be fictional, but should be built on what they see in the image.

3. Have students exchange their short stories with another student for peer editing purposes. Once returned, student should revise their texts and handwrite the final version.

4. Tell each student to give the photo and their third-person stories to the owner of the photograph. Each student should now have their own photo, their first-person story, and a third-person story written by another student.

5. Ask each student to adhere the copied photo to a large piece of construction paper and then adhere the two handwritten stories.

6. Invite each student to present his/her photo-story-assemblage to the class and read aloud each short story. Facilitate responses and discussions from the students about each photo-story-assemblage focusing on the points of view and the relationship between the text and image.

CA Content Standards

Sixth Grade Visual Arts

4.1 Construct and describe plausible interpretations of what they perceive in works of art.

4.3 Develop specific criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art.

Sixth Grade English-Language Arts

Reading

1.1 Read aloud narrative and expository text fluently and accurately and with appropriate pacing, intonation, and expression.

3.5 Identify the speaker and recognize the difference between first- and third-person narration (e.g., autobiography compared with biography).

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3.6 Identify and analyze features of themes conveyed through characters, actions, and images.

3.8 Critique the credibility of characterization and the degree to which a plot is contrived or realistic (e.g., compare use of fact and fantasy in historical fiction).

Writing

2.1 Write narratives:

- a. Establish and develop a plot and setting and present a point of view that is appropriate to the stories.
- b. Include sensory details and concrete language to develop plot and character.
- c. Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, suspense).

2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:

- a. Establish a context, plot, and point of view.
- b. Include sensory details and concrete language to develop the plot and character.
- c. Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, tension, or suspense).

Seventh Grade Visual Arts

4.2 Analyze the form (how a work of art looks) and content (what a work of art communicates) of works of art.

4.3 Take an active part in a small-group discussion about the artistic value of specific works of art, with a wide range of the viewpoints of peers being considered.

4.4 Develop and apply specific and appropriate criteria individually or in groups to assess and critique works of art.

Seventh Grade English-Language Arts

Reading

1.1 Identify idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes in prose and poetry.

2.4 Identify and trace the development of an author's argument, point of view, or perspective in text.

3.2 Identify events that advance the plot and determine how each event explains past or present action(s) or foreshadows future action(s).

3.3 Analyze characterization as delineated through a character's thoughts, words, speech patterns, and actions; the narrator's description; and the thoughts, words, and actions of other characters.

3.5 Contrast points of view (e.g., first and third person, limited and omniscient,



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subjective and objective) in narrative text and explain how they affect the overall theme of the work.

Writing

1.7 Revise writing to improve organization and word choice after checking the logic of the ideas and the precision of the vocabulary.

2.1 Write fictional or autobiographical narratives:

- a. Develop a standard plot line (having a beginning, conflict, rising action, climax, and denouement) and point of view.
- b. Develop complex major and minor characters and a definite setting.
- c. Use a range of appropriate strategies (e.g., dialogue; suspense; naming of specific narrative action, including movement, gestures, and expressions).

Eighth Grade Visual Arts

4.2 Develop a theory about the artist's intent in a series of works of art, using reasoned statements to support personal opinions.

4.3 Construct an interpretation of a work of art based on the form and content of the work.

4.4 Develop and apply a set of criteria as individuals or in groups to assess and critique works of art

4.5 Present a reasoned argument about the artistic value of a work of art and respond to the arguments put forward by others within a classroom setting.

Eighth Grade English-Language Arts

Reading

1.1 Analyze idioms, analogies, metaphors, and similes to infer the literal and figurative meanings of phrases.

2.3 Find similarities and differences between texts in the treatment, scope, or organization of ideas.

Writing

1.6 Revise writing for word choice; appropriate organization; consistent point of view; and transitions between paragraphs, passages, and ideas.



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2.1 Write biographies, autobiographies, short stories, or narratives:

- a. Relate a clear, coherent incident, event, or situation by using well-chosen details.
- b. Reveal the significance of, or the writer's attitude about, the subject.
- c. Employ narrative and descriptive strategies (e.g., relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description, background description, comparison or contrast of characters).

Bibliography

Michals, Duane. *Real Dreams: Photostories*. Adison House, Danbury, NH, c. 1976.

Bailey, Ronald H. *The Photographic Illusion, Duane Michals*. Crowell, New York, 1975.

[Vue: A Solution to Education's Challenges](#)

Visual Understanding in Education (VUE) conducts educational research focused on aesthetic and cognitive development that results from interaction with art. Based on its findings, VUE develops programs for schools and museums, principally Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS).