Title: Self Portrait through Word and Image.

GRADE LEVELS
What grade level(s) is this lesson most appropriate for?
3rd/4th (may be adapted for other grade levels including students with special needs)

NUMBER OF INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES
How many instructional minutes will it take to complete this lesson?: 90/120

CONTENT FOCUS
Students will read a piece of fiction or non-fiction text that shows the development of a character. Here we specify Delivering Justice: W.W. Law and the Fight for Civil Rights by James Haskins (2005), but teachers could adapt with their choice of text. Students will consider the techniques used by the author to develop character.

They will then analyze the work of Nikki S. Lee who joins and transforms herself to fit into various subcultures such as a Hispanic, Yuppie, and Skate Punk community. This work highlights the fluid nature of identity and community and illustrates that what we see on the outside impacts our impressions of a person. Students will analyze how character is revealed in a visual image.

Students will create a list of character traits of how they want others to perceive them and join that list with a self-portrait that they created with intention. Finally, they will discuss their experiences and what they learned about perception and character. They will learn that artists and authors intentionally use words, actions, and image to evoke the traits of a character.

Enduring Understandings: Ideas that are at the core of the subject and require inquiry.

- Authors use words and actions to develop and display the traits of a character in a piece of text.
- Artists make intentional use of things like facial expression, body language, clothing, hairstyle, setting, etc to display the traits of a character in their photographs.

Questions for Exploration

- How do authors and artists reveal the traits of a character in their work?
- What would you like to communicate about yourself in a written and visual portrait?
Learning Standards: Third Grade

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.3
Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

Fourth Grade
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.4.3
Describe in depth a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

CCSS.ELA LITERACY.
RL.6.6
Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

Process: What will students do?


1. Students will discuss the character traits of young Wesley Wallace Law, and his grandmother and will cite evidence within the text to show how the author chose to develop character.
   - What do we learn about Wesley (as a boy) and his Grandmother?
   - What did they value and care about?
   - How did the author show us that? As you read write down the words and passages that stand out to you.

2. How were Wesley and his grandmother treated by the staff and customers within Levy’s Department store? Write down the words and phrases that communicate this and that stand out to you.
   - On what basis were they judged?

3. In *Delivering Justice* we learn about Wesley Law and his grandmother through their thoughts and action as described by the books author. Photographer Nikki S. Lee creates photographs where we learn about people and communities she photographs through what we see and notice—including their personal appearance, the setting we find them in and the people they surround themselves with. Look at 3 images by Nikki S. Lee (provided). Respond to and discuss the following questions then read about Nikki Lee and how she works.
   - What do these images have in common?
• How do they differ?
• What do you learn about the people in each picture?
• How do you learn that?
• What can you tell about how the artist made this work?
• What do you know to be true?
• What assumptions might you have made?
  • What is similar and different in how photographers and writers describe character?

4. After discussing Ms. Lee’s work, you will create a self-portrait with words and images.

   A. Make a list of character traits and descriptive words about you that you would like to convey through your portrait.

   B. Next, pose yourself in a manner and in a location that you think will help display those traits. Partner with a classmate or your teacher who will act as the photographer. Together plan where and how (setting, point of view, body language, facial expression etc.) to make that picture.
   C. To complete your portrait, your teacher will make two prints of one of the best photographs they created. Carefully cut out the image of your body in the first print leaving only the background and the outline of their form. Then paste the written or typed character traits that you generated behind the cut out portrait so that it acts as a frame for the words. If you do not have enough works to fill the frame, you can repeat the list. Then paste the untouched print to the back side.

The front side of the work will highlight your written character trait list, while the back side of the work will feature the portrait that physically depicts what you wanted to communicate about yourself. The finished work will show two sides: the outside perception and the inside feelings and intentions.

Next, reflect in writing about what you wanted others to perceive of you and the choices you made to portray the character traits you listed. Share and discuss your portraits. Can you tell who is described in each picture without being about to see their face?

ARTWORKS

About the Work

After observing particular subcultures and ethnic groups, Nikki S. Lee adopts their general style and attitude through dress, gesture, and posture, and then approaches the group in her new guise. She introduces herself as an artist (though not everyone believes her or takes it seriously), and then spends several weeks participating in the group’s routine activities and social events while a friend or member of the group photographs her with an ordinary automatic “snapshot” camera. Lee maintains control of the final image, however, insofar as she chooses when to ask for a picture and edits what photographs will eventually become a part of each body of work.
Born Lee Seung-Hee in Korea in 1970, Nikki S. Lee came to New York in 1994 to attend the Fashion Institute of Technology and to work as a fashion photographer’s assistant after she graduated from the University of Korea. When she moved, Lee chose a more American-sounding name with the help of a friend who compiled a list of names from those that appeared in that month’s Vogue. Thus Lee inadvertently named herself after another much-photographed and image-changing woman, model Niki Taylor. As a child growing up in the small South Korean village of Kye-Chang, in spite of her isolation, Lee was exposed to a variety of foreign cultures through the mediating vehicles of television, popular periodicals, and music. Her move to New York and her work in the fashion industry heightened her awareness of the shifting nature of identity and the multiple communities to which we belong. Lee’s images are environmental portraits—images that help to describe and define the subject through the environments and contexts we find them in.

Nikki S. Lee Image Titles:
The Hispanic Project #18, 1998
The Skateboarders Project #7, 2000
The Yuppie Project #4, 1998