

Lesson 3: Art as a Pathway to Consciousness

Compelling Question:

How does recognizing and celebrating the complexities of identity contribute to a deeper community consciousness?

Content Objectives

I can:

- Analyze the concept of race as a social construct.
- Define anti-racism and allyship.
- Consider the role of art in advancing racial equity and healing.

Purpose

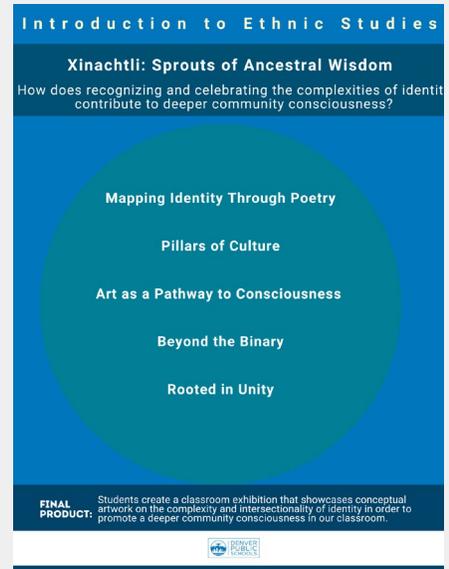
In this lesson, you will critically examine the concept of race by analyzing evidence from the U.S. government and watching a short video. Then, you will explore the origins of the term anti-racism through a quote by Angela Davis and an interview by Ibram Kendi. Next, you will consider how art can be a form of anti-racism and begin creating an art piece that explores and celebrates identity, builds consciousness, and fosters individual and collective healing.

Lesson Steps

1. **Analyze the concept of race:** Using the [Origins of Race as a Social Construct](#) handout, analyze U.S. [Racial Prerequisite Cases](#) from *White By Law* by Ian Haney Lopez and watch the short film "[The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes](#)" by Vox to reflect on the invention of race and why the concept of race matters, even if it has no biological basis.
2. **Define anti-racism:** Analyze a [Quote](#) by Angela Davis and an [Interview](#) with Ibram Kendi to define anti-racism and the strategic purpose for making a distinction between anti-racism and "not racist" and introduce allyship.
3. **Consider the role of art in healing the wounds of racial bias:** Browse a selection of artwork, then choose one to analyze more closely, using the [Art Analysis](#) handout.
4. **Create a conceptual artwork exploring your own identity, building consciousness, and fostering healing:** You will take inspiration from artists and sketch an idea and create an [Artistic Proposal](#) for an artistic piece that either explores your own racial identity or advocates for racial healing.
5. **Reflect on the compelling question:** You will begin to answer the compelling question, using the learnings from the lessons thus far to support your thinking.

Explore More

- [The Origins of Race in the USA](#): PBS video



Teacher Guide

Lesson 3: Art as a Pathway to Consciousness Xinachtli: Sprouts of Ancestral Wisdom



Lesson Overview

Pacing

Lesson Timing: 80 minutes

Summary

In this lesson, students will critically examine the concept of race by analyzing evidence from the U.S. government and watching a short video. Then, students will explore the origins of the term anti-racism through a quote by Angela Davis and an interview with Ibram Kendi. Next, students will consider how art can be a form of anti-racism and begin creating an art piece that explores and celebrates identity, builds consciousness of racial bias, and fosters individual and collective healing.

Colorado Standards: [Social Studies](#) & Interdisciplinary

E1.C7.PI1SL.1a: Prepare for discussion by evaluating and collecting information on material under study.

Language Objectives: [9th Grade DPS English Language Competencies](#)

Informational Text Analysis

- Comprehend and analyze key ideas and details in informational texts.

Assessment

Formative

- Analyze the origins of race as a social construct

Performance Task

- Craft an artistic proposal

Lesson Resources

For Students	For Teachers	Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Origins of Race as a Social ConstructArt AnalysisArtistic Proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lesson 3 Slide DeckOrigins of Race as a Social Construct Teacher KeyArt Analysis Teacher KeyArtistic Proposal Teacher Key	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Equipment to present visual and audio contentLaptops or devices for student research

Teacher Preparation

- **Foster an inclusive and respectful classroom environment for open classroom discussions:** Establish clear guidelines for respectful communication, emphasizing the importance of active listening and valuing diverse viewpoints.
- **Provide supplementary resources for further exploration.** Gather a collection of relevant books, articles, videos, or websites that students can explore beyond the lesson. Create a centralized location, such as a physical resource corner or a shared online folder, where students can access the supplementary resources.
- **Consider inviting guest speakers to share their insights on the role of art in combating racial bias.** Research and identify potential guest speakers who have expertise in the field of racial bias, healing, or art. Reach out to the selected individuals or organizations in advance to discuss the possibility of them joining the lesson as guest speakers.
- **Support students in creating their artistic proposal, offering guidance and necessary resources.** Familiarize yourself with different artistic mediums, techniques, and resources that students may utilize for their conceptual artwork. Prepare art supplies or ensure access to necessary digital tools, allowing students to bring their ideas to life.

Lesson Steps in Detail

Step 1: Analyze the concept of race

(15 min)

Purpose: Students will explore the invention of race and the history of racial categorizations in the United States to better understand how race is a social construct that has been used to create inequality in society.

You might say: Today, we'll delve into the concept of race - its definition, origin, and its power dynamics in society. By understanding how race operates, we can demystify it and gain a more clear perspective. We'll also explore how artists have tackled race and identity in their work, fostering awareness and healing.

[Slide 2] Source exploration

- Distribute [Origins of Race as a Social Construct](#) handout and have students complete **Part 1** using the table on [Racial Prerequisite Cases](#) from *White By Law* by Ian Haney Lopez.
- Then, invite students to Think-Pair-Share on the question: *What is race?*
- Support students in coming to a class definition of race. Type it into slide 2.
 - **Possible response:** Race is a category you are put into based on the color of your skin and physical characteristics.

[Slides 3] Watch video on the social construction of race

- Tell students to turn the handout over to **Part 2** and be prepared to answer the questions as they watch the video
- **Play video:** [The myth of race, debunked in 3 minutes \(3:07\)](#)
- Facilitate a discussion on how race is a social construct and what that means
 - Is race real? Why or why not?

- If we acknowledge that race is an invention, that it is a social construct, then what power does race have in society today?
- How does the history of racism, the use of race to empower certain groups and disempower other groups, impact U.S. society today?

Possible response: Race is not a biologically determined concept; it is a social construct created to categorize and differentiate people based on physical characteristics and ancestry. Despite being a social construct, race holds significant power in society today. It influences various aspects of life, including social interactions, access to resources, opportunities, and treatment within institutions. The history of racism and the use of race to empower certain groups while disempowering others has deeply impacted U.S. society. It has perpetuated systematic inequalities, leading to disparities in areas such as education, employment, housing, and healthcare. For example, historical discriminatory policies like redlining have resulted in segregated neighborhoods with limited resources and opportunities for marginalized racial groups.

Teacher Tip: Support a Historical Understanding of Race as a Social Construct

The definition of *racial consciousness* as “the awareness that people in power give or deny privileges and benefits to other people based on their race” comes from ["Talking About Race,"](#) an extensive online article produced by the National Museum of African American History & Culture. To ensure students understand how the meaning and implications of race have evolved over time, use the article’s text and its extensive links, videos, images, and quotations to ground class conversations and develop extension opportunities for students.

Step 2: Define anti-racism

(20 min)

Purpose: Students explore the distinction between being “not racist” and anti-racist and the purpose of using “anti-racism” to counter racist ideology and racist policies that persist from the past.

You might say: *We have explored the origins of race as a social construct and how it has been used in history to empower some people and disempower others. We are now going to learn about what it means to be “anti-racist” and how the concept is a strategy for critical thinking about the world and acting in the world to counter racial bias.*

[Slide 4] Present quote on anti-racism

- Think-Pair-Share on the [Quote](#) by Angela Davis
- Have students share out responses
 - *To Angela Davis, why is it not enough to not be racist?*
 - **Possible response:** Because the society is racist and it is a problem that will not get resolved without addressing how it functions beyond the individual.

[Slides 5] Watch video on the purpose of anti-racism

- **Play video:** [Interview](#) (5:47)
- Facilitate a discussion on the purpose of shaping anti-racism to counter racist ideology and racist policies

Lesson 3: Art as a Pathway to Consciousness Xinachtli: Sprouts of Ancestral Wisdom



- To Ibram Kendi, why is it not enough to not be racist?
- What is the end goal of anti-racism?
- Does anti-racism as a counter narrative effectively reveal how race is a social construct and in so doing demystify it?
 - **Possible response:**

[Slide 6] Introduce the term “Allyship”

- Facilitate discussion on allyship and passive and active engagement to address social injustice
- **Ask:** What does it mean to be an active ally to individuals or groups that face societal injustice based on social biases?

Teacher Tip: Creating a safe space for students to discuss sensitive topics or events

Entering into conversations that highlight one group's privileges over another is challenging for adults and students of any age. For more resources on how to support this conversation, check out Edutopia's article "[Creating a Safe Space for Students to Discuss Sensitive Current Events](#)" and the Learning for Justice lesson "[Talking About Race and Racism](#)."

Step 3: Consider the role of art in healing the wounds of racial bias

(15 min)

Purpose: Students explore different artistic forms that build understandings of how racial bias functions in society and provide creative ways to remedy their harm.

You might say: *We have explored the origins of race as a social construct and discussed the concept of being anti-racist and an ally as a counter narrative and action against racial bias. Now, let's shift our focus to the role that artistic expression plays in building consciousness around racial bias and fostering both individual and collective healing.*

[Slide 7] Source exploration

- Organize students into groups of four
- Distribute the [Art Analysis](#) handout
- Make sure that each student is assigned one resource to explore
 - [Untitled from “Equal Employment Opportunity is the Law”](#) by Ed McGowin
 - [“Justice For Our Lives”](#) by Oree Origonol
 - [“Portrait of Mnonja”](#) by Mickalene Thomas
 - [“Synecdoche”](#) by Byron Kim

[Slide 8] Facilitate student reflection

- Use the guided questions to have one student from each group report to the whole class:
 - What did your group discover about the role of art in building consciousness of racial bias?
 - Can you share one example of how art can heal the wounds of racial bias?

Step 4: Create a conceptual artwork exploring your own identity, building consciousness, and fostering healing (15 min)

Purpose: Students complete an artistic proposal for an artistic piece that explores their racial identity or promotes racial healing using the examples reviewed as inspiration.

You might say: *Now that we have explored the powerful way art has the power to raise awareness about the various ways racial bias impacts individuals and communities, we are now going to tap into our own creativity and develop artistic proposals that express our unique identities and experiences with race. Through these proposals, we aim to build consciousness and foster healing.*

[Slide 9] Introduce creative project

- Distribute [Artistic Proposal](#) handout
- Present a teacher sample of an artistic proposal based on your racial identity or building consciousness about racial bias
- Have students share out

[Slides 10] Facilitate discussion

- Encourage students to reflect on their creative process and answer the following question:
 - How does your artistic piece contribute to building consciousness of racial bias?

Step 5: Reflect on the compelling question (10 min)

Purpose: Students will synthesize the analytical tools explored in the unit thus far and work together to begin to answer the compelling question.

You might say: *In the previous lesson we began to break down the different parts of the compelling question to better understand what it is asking. Today we will use the analytical tools we have explored in the lesson and the unit this far to begin answering the compelling questions.*

[Slide 11] Share the compelling question

- Invite students to work with a partner to:
 - Review what we have reviewed in the unit and select three concepts or content examples that help us answer the compelling question
 - Work with a partner to develop a one-sentence answer to the compelling question
- **Student share out**
 - Facilitate discussion on the similarities and differences in the answers to the compelling question generated by the class.