



Dorothea Lange: Politics of Seeing

February 14 - May 10, 2020

Exhibit Lesson Plan: Grades 6 – 12

14th Amendment and Civil Rights



Dorothea Lange in Texas on the Plains. 1935. Courtesy of the Collection of the Oakland Museum of California. © *The Dorothea Lange Collection, the Oakland Museum of California. Gift of Paul S. Taylor.*

“The camera is a great teacher, and the more people use it the more aware they become of the possibilities of the visual world.” —Dorothea Lange

During her long career, Dorothea Lange’s belief in the transformative and motivating power of seeing guided her work. She was certain that seeing the effects of injustice could provoke reform and—just maybe—change the world. Her photographs are more than simply beautiful. They are charged with a quiet outrage. They speak of a deep empathy for people, encouraging us to imagine ourselves in such circumstances.

Beauty was secondary to Lange. “The good photograph is not the object,” she said. “The consequences of the photograph are the object.” Lange wanted her audience to see and be affected by the truth of a photograph rather than its artistry.

The Oakland Museum of California received Lange’s personal collection as a gift in 1966, a year after her death. The archive contains more than 25,000 negatives and 6,000 prints. Though the events she recorded are now history, her photographs continue to inspire new generations of artist–activists.

Most of Lange’s photos were published anonymously, and when she died in 1965, few people truly recognized her talent and contributions. As a result, most people today recognize *Migrant Mother*, but not Lange’s name. Lange often said a single image was an idea, two grouped together were a phrase and five or more became a sentence. People might recognize *Migrant Mother* but by Lange’s determination, it is just one word. This exhibition will provide sentences.

Drawing upon vintage prints, unedited proof sheets, personal memorabilia and historic objects, this exhibition takes a unique approach and will be the first to examine the extraordinary emotional power of Lange’s work through the lens of social and political activism. Visitors will read Lange’s words and hear her voice. They will learn about her process and approach; the difference between looking at something and truly seeing it; and leave the exhibition with a better appreciation of her artistry and advocacy, as well as an increased awareness of the ways photography can be used to sway minds and prompt change. In an age of cell phone cameras and social media, a critical and informed awareness of the power of photographs has become an obligation of citizenship.

Note to the teacher: This lesson utilizes the photograph of Dorothea Lange and is aligned to U.S. History standards, however, the scope and span of Lange’s work allows this lesson to be used in many other history curricula. Teachers should consider how these topics might apply to other curriculum topics.

Essential Question: What does it mean to have “equal protection” under the law?

U.S. History

8th Grade US History: 8.12.4: Assess the impact of the presidential election of 1876 as an end to reconstruction in the South, including the decline of black leadership, loss of enforcement of the 14th and 15th amendments, and the development of segregated societies.

U.S. History (High School) USH.5.1: Describe the transformations in American society and government policy as the nation mobilized for entry into World War II

Examine President Franklin Roosevelt’s *Day Which Will Live in Infamy* speech and America’s conduct of the war, including the role of women and minorities in the war effort, rationing, the internment of Americans of Japanese descent, and the treatment of Americans of German, and Italian descent, including the *Korematsu V United States* decision.

USH.7.1 Analyze the major events, personalities, tactics and effects of the Civil Rights Movement.

B. Evaluate the events arising from separate but equal, policies, such as poll taxes and literacy tests, violent responses such as the Birmingham church bombing and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and conflicts over segregation including:

1. *Brown v. Board of Education*, Topeka, Kansas decision
2. Montgomery Bus Boycott
3. Desegregation of Little Rock Central High School
4. Oklahoma City lunch counter sit-ins led by Clara Luper
5. Freedom Rides
6. Marches on Washington and Selma to Montgomery
7. Adoption of the 24th Amendment
8. Passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965

Pre-Visit Activity

- Share the text of Section 1 of the 14th Amendment with your students and ask them to discuss what it means. Specifically ask students to discuss in groups, and then as a whole class, what the concepts of “privileges or immunities”, “due process of law” and “equal protection of the laws” means. You might choose to print the text of the 14th Amendment for each student and ask them to highlight main ideas and/or circle terms that they need more clarification on.

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

*This may be a good time to review the history of the 14th Amendment as it relates to Reconstruction. It is also an important time to share with students the importance of the 14th Amendment in many civil rights court cases in the 19th and 20th centuries. More information can be found [here](#).

- During the discussion, be sure to clarify the meanings of these three aspects of the 14th Amendment as needed. Ask students if they know of any specific time periods in American History when the rights of due process or equal protection of the law were violated. Generate a class list and explain that in their upcoming visit to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum they will be exploring the photography of Dorothea Lange and that her work focused, in part, on civil rights.
- Show students Dorothea Lange’s [Japanese Children with Tags, Hayward, CA](#) and an image of the “Instructions to People of Japanese Ancestry” that notified people they had to relocate. The poster can be found online and a transcript of the poster can be found [here](#).
- Ask students what aspects of the 14th Amendment might be violated in these photos.
- Discuss what the Japanese Internment Camps were and why Japanese Americans were incarcerated and put into internment camps. In order to prepare students for the museum visit, be sure to use existing classroom resources to explain what an internment camp is and [Executive Order 9066](#).
- Before coming to the museum, share information about the career of Dorothea Lange and her work that focuses on civil rights. A good resource about her life and work can be found [here](#).

During Museum Visit

- Remind students about the discussion on the 14th Amendment and ask them to document examples from Lange’s work in which 14th Amendment rights are violated. If mobile devices are permitted by your school, allow students to snap pictures of the photos that they feel best capture violations of the 14th Amendment. Using the worksheet provided, direct students to write down the title, year and caption information for the photographs that they choose.
- Before leaving the museum, discuss in small or large groups about the photographs that students selected. Ask learners to specify which part(s) of the 14th Amendment was violated in the photograph.

Post-Visit Activities

- Ask students to share about the photograph they selected from the exhibit and have them share with their group why they chose a particular photograph.
 - If possible, ask students to print their pictures and in small groups, have the students create a collage (this can be done digitally if printing is not available). Ask students to create:
 - A title for their collage
 - A written summary explaining the 14th Amendment and how their collage captures the violation of rights embedded within the 14th Amendment.
- Other potential activities:
 - Hang student collages for viewing.
 - Ask students to brainstorm about the 14th amendment rights that may still be violated today. Is there a contemporary equivalent of Dorothea Lange? How do we “witness” civil rights violation in the 21st Century?

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Lange: The Politics of Seeing
Student Notes for Exhibit

As you walk through the Lange exhibit, take notes on at least three images that reveal a violation of the 14th Amendment. For each image you select, write a description of what is shown in the picture, the date and location of the picture, and the title. Write your thoughts about how the photo reveals a violation of the 14th Amendment. If your teacher allows you, you may also want to snap a photo with a mobile device of the images you have selected.

Photograph 1

Description:

Date and Location:

Title:

How does this photo reveal a violation of the 14th Amendment?

Photograph 2

Description:

Date and Location:

Title:

How does this photo reveal a violation of the 14th Amendment?

Photograph 3

Description:

Date and Location:

Title:

How does this photo reveal a violation of the 14th Amendment?