

Elementary Lesson Plan: Using Visual Thinking Strategies to Cultivate Empathy

Check In

Ask students what color they're feeling today and why.

Opening Activity

Play a short getting to know you game, like two truths and a lie.

Pre-discussion

Ask students to think about the quote: "We are more alike my friends, than we are different." by Maya Angelou. Make a list on the board of things we have in common with each other.

Model Works

Show students each of the following images and ask the discussion questions while viewing.

["Working Women" by Faith Ringgold](#), ["Migrant Mother" by Dorothea Lange](#), and ["Hurricane Katrina Aftermath" by Mario Tama](#)

Discussion

Use visual thinking strategies:

- What do you see?
- Why do you say that?
- What else is there?

What caught your attention about this image?

How does this image make you feel?

What do you think is happening in this image?

After showing the images, give a brief explanation of the Dust Bowl and Hurricane Katrina. (Consider including a poem from Patricia Smith's book *Blood Dazzler*.)

Pre-writing/Pre-activity

Have students make a list of what stood out to them the most about the images, either individually or as a class.

Writing Prompt

Write an ekphrastic poem inspired by one of the images you've seen today. Use imagery to describe what you see. Write about what's happening in the picture or write from the perspective of a person or object depicted in it.

Share

Ask for 3-5 students to share their work with the class and thank them for sharing their thoughts and feelings with us. Alternatively, sort students into small groups and ask them to share their work with each other.

Reflect

What image did you feel the most connection with? How easy or difficult was it to imagine what the people in that image were feeling? How did it feel to share your work? How did it feel to hear your classmates' work?