

Education Resources for the Ovation Special *War Art with Eddie Redmayne*

Grade Level – High School

Discipline

- Visual Arts

Materials for teacher

- Ovation’s Arts Ed Toolkit educational resources
<http://www.theovationfoundation.org/arts-ed-toolkit/>
- Programming clips for the Ovation special
War Art with Eddie Redmayne
- Visual arts activities

Note: It is recommended that teachers view all program clips, art images, and discussion points contained in these activities prior to using the resources in class.

Standards

National Core Arts Standards – Visual Arts High School

Activities and resources contained in this document support the areas of:

- Responding
- Connecting

Note: For additional information about these Standards, we encourage you to visit the National Art Education Association website.

Overview of Resources

In this Ovation special, Oscar®-winning actor Eddie Redmayne takes an intensely emotional journey, visiting artists’ studios, museums and travelling to battlefield locations to discover how artists have shone a powerful light into the abyss of warfare, leaving a unique legacy. Redmayne, who studied Art History at Cambridge University, explores the iconic canvasses of the Great War – Paul Nash, Stanley Spencer, John Singer Sargent and Henry Tonks – as well as the modernists C.R.W. Nevinson and David Bomberg.

War Art with Eddie Redmayne

Students will gain understanding of significant war artists, their inspirations, and creations. They will view selected footage from a program and engage in discussions associated with themes and topics contained in program segments.

Activities

2 days, 45 minute classes

Students will explore the artworks of a group of significant war artists of the First World War and during contemporary war. They will assess inspirations, themes, artistic styles, and compositions in addition to exploring techniques, materials and colors used in creations of a variety of artworks used to depict war experiences, soldiers in battle and more. Students will view select footage from a program, and will discuss and make notes about various aspects of the programming segments.

Supplies for use in Activities

- computers with Internet access
- White Board, or laptop computer, screen and speakers
- journals in binder format
- Program clips from Ovation documentary,
War Art with Eddie Redmayne

Activity – Day 1

Class work

The teacher will show students selected program clips of the Ovation special, *War Art with Eddie Redmayne*. Each clip is approximately three minutes in length. The teacher may decide to stream some or all the program clips. After viewing each clip it is suggested that the teacher engage the students in a discussion, utilizing some or all of the discussion points listed below. The teacher will ask students to make notes in their binders about ideas, styles, artworks and techniques, in addition to other related issues highlighted in the program clips.

War Art with Eddie Redmayne

CLIP 1

DISCUSSION POINTS

- As you learn about the background of the Artists Rifles, and the significant artists in this group, take special notice of the propaganda poster created by Alfred Leete, that sold the British nation on going to war.
- Discuss the overall composition and image in the poster and relate your ideas about how this poster might have served its purpose well.
- In singular words, describe the feelings and energy of this poster and what it evokes in you. More importantly discuss what it likely evoked in a nation during critical war time in the early 20th century.
- Here we learn about war artist Paul Nash, and how he was drawn to the front line and the darkest subject matter. In this segment is his painting “We Are Making a New World.” It is noted here that it has become one of the most iconic World War I war paintings.
- Take time to discuss this particular painting, the overall scale, composition, palette and images. Relate your thoughts to the meaning of the painting’s title. In your opinion, what was the likely interpretation of the “new world”?

CLIP 2

DISCUSSION POINTS

- In this segment, Redmayne ventures into the Sanctuary Wood, where one of the bloodiest battles took place. Describe in single words the feelings and emotions this evokes in you as you view the tombs and graves.
- In the artwork depicted in this segment, it is noted that these artists were obsessed with the notion of industry. It is also noted that artist Christopher Nevinson embraced dynamism of warfare by transforming all these soldiers into a single war machine like form.
- Assess and discuss the comments above, paying particular attention to the “notion of industry” and soldiers as “war like machine like form.” Do you agree or disagree that the images in the artwork relate those concepts. Be specific in the ways you analyze the elements of the art, the energy, colors, and subjects contained in the artwork.
- Here Redmayne reads a portion of a letter by Paul Nash as Nash relates his feelings and observations of the nature of war. As you listen to the words by Nash, and view the paintings in the background, discuss the variety of feelings they evoke in you.

War Art with Eddie Redmayne

- Attempt to imagine and discuss what characteristics and skills the war artists likely possessed as they observed, participated in and ultimately created images depicting these dark experiences of war.

CLIP 3

DISCUSSION POINTS

- As Redmayne ventures through the equipment and minutiae of day to day life, encountering cutlery, spoons, forks, and various other items, discuss this aspect of what you perceive was the soldiers' life in war.
- Pay particular attention to the painting on glass by war artist Eric Kennington which is described as possessing a sort of vibrancy. Observe and discuss the colors in this painting. Do you agree or disagree that when conveying images of war, we're used to seeing in monochrome or black and white, as stated here? Expand on your opinions.
- Continue to analyze this painting, what you perceive were the specifics of the individual soldier's experiences, and the emotions and expressions of these individuals depicted in the artwork.

CLIP 4

DISCUSSION POINTS

- The painting here, "The Mule Track" by Paul Nash, is described as depicting the chaos and noise of battle. Redmayne further states that you can actually sense the chaos. Assess and discuss these statements, relating particular elements of the artwork, the colors, brush marks, and textures that you believe convey chaos and noise. Do you agree or disagree that you can sense the chaos? Expand on your opinions.
- In this segment we view several drawings by artist Erwin Aichele, described here as "stolen" moments. Note the wooden trees and crosses immersed in the composition. Discuss phrases or singular words to describe the environment portrayed in this image.
- The segment ends on a revelation about Adolf Hitler, and his aspiration to making money from selling his paintings, entering art school, and continues by saying, perhaps history may have played out differently had he been accepted. Imagine you were asked to write an essay about Hitler's aspirations as an artist, and relate phrases you might consider using to begin your written work.

War Art with Eddie Redmayne

Activity – Day 2

Class work

The teacher will show students selected program clips of the Ovation special, *War Art with Eddie Redmayne*. Each clip is approximately three minutes in length. The teacher may decide to stream some or all the program clips. After viewing each clip it is suggested that the teacher engage the students in a discussion, utilizing some or all of the discussion points listed below. The teacher will ask students to make notes in their binders about ideas, styles, artworks and techniques, in addition to other related issues highlighted in the program clips.

CLIP 5

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Listen and observe as Redmayne provides an overview of the Imperial War Museum and of his special access to the vaults. He relates that he also came to visit to investigate the relationship between the war artists and the authorities in charge of commissioning them. As you continue to view this segment make notes and discuss this particular aspect of the war artists' experiences.
- It is noted here that Christopher Nevinson had championed the machine age earlier in the war, but that his work became more naturalistic and caused controversy with the senses. It is also noted that the paintings he was producing were being used for propaganda purposes.
- Observe the painting titled "A Group of Soldiers," and discuss the note that Nevinson's painting was subject to censorship, and the censor took a dislike to the painting, feeling it betrayed the British soldiers in a bad way. Assess and discuss the painting, the scale of the work, the composition, soldiers' emotions or attitudes being conveyed. Might you agree or disagree with the censor, that it portrayed the British soldiers in a bad way? As it applied to this particular period in history, how might you interpret the term "bad way"?
- Here Redmayne visits the battlefield and war trenches and describes it as a moment trapped in time. Using that observation as inspiration, continue to view, listen and discuss what phrases you would consider using to describe paintings depicting the reality of war.

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CLIP 6

DISCUSSION POINTS

- In this segment, observe and discuss the overall scale and subjects depicted in this painting created by Percy-Wyndam Lewis in 1918. Do you agree or disagree that this image represents a grandiose statement? If so or if not, expand on your assessments.
- Here, we also learn that a 25 year old artist Stanley Spenser was commissioned to paint artwork. As Spenser had a background in biblical subjects, the commissioner suggested he paint a scene from a church service. Listen and observe about Spenser's reaction, that he wanted to show God in sort of rough tracks.
- Observe and assess the painting ultimately created by Spenser depicting a constant flow of soldiers into a field hospital. Do you agree or disagree that it was a scene of redemption? Expand on your opinion.
- Discuss the artistic elements of the artwork, the subjects, theme, mood, feel and colors of this piece.

CLIP 7

DISCUSSION POINTS

- In this segment Redmayne is viewing and discussing the painting by John Singer Sargent. He states that he doesn't think he ever saw a canvas that forces you into a mood of a battle quite as much as this does. As you view the painting, do you agree with his assessment? Do you feel forced into the mood of a battle? If so, discuss the artistic elements of the artwork which contribute to this feeling.
- Redmayne takes time to read aloud writing by Sargent about the nearness to danger, the men in hiding, and other observations of the field of battle.
- The ministry of information expected an epic, and Sargent indicates....how can one do an epic without masses of men. He further indicates that Sargent went behind the fine line where all these men were, who were suffering to find the pile of bodies of men. As you listen and absorb the interpretation of Sargent's approach to understanding the bravery and tragedy of battle, discuss what you believe must have been characteristics of this artist to have ventured onto the battlefield to fully comprehend and ultimately convey this experience of soldiers in battle.
- We learn here that the great commission included work by Paul Nash's younger brother John, also a member of the Artists Rifles. As you view these paintings do you agree that they very much depict the desolation and tragedy of the whole experience? Expand on your opinion.

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- In this segment we learn that perhaps the most famous moment that the Artists Rifles produced was in 1917, in John Nash's painting "Over the Top." Observe and discuss the energy, artistic elements, palette, brushstrokes and overall emotion of this painting. In your assessment, does this artwork fittingly deserve the attribution of "perhaps the most famous moment that the Artists Rifles produced"? If so, or if not, expand on your opinion.

CLIP 8

DISCUSSION POINTS

- It is stated here by a contemporary war artist that artists want to observe, capture reality and capture the truth.
- As you view the action in these scenes of contemporary war environment, what do you perceive is the reality and the truth of this experience? What do you imagine it is like to be in this patrol?
- What emotions do you expect these soldiers are experiencing? What skills are they likely to possess at this critical time?
- It is also stated here by a contemporary war artist that they are in the field to bear witness but may not carry guns. They are there to convey their experiences viewed in the field.
- Observe and discuss this artist's choice of refugees as subjects in his artwork. In your opinion, what does their body language and facial expressions convey?
- Here we also observe postcard art. What does the image in this post card relate to you, as their family is portrayed coming out of Syria into Turkey. Expand on the elements in this artwork that you believe contribute to your assessments.
- Observe the artistic styles of these contemporary war artists in this segment. Discuss and make notes of some key differences in their styles, mediums and overall feelings of their art versus those of the Artists Rifles of the First World War.

Assessment for these activities, to be determined by the teacher