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Design It: Selecting a Subject



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INTRODUCTION TO LESSON 2

Essential Questions

Who determines the selection of stamp designs? What subjects are acceptable in stamps? Are there rules for selecting a subject?

Desired Outcomes

Students will know that ideas for stamps come from the public and that the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee (CSAC) determines stamp subject selections. Students will learn some rules of stamp selections. Students will understand that U.S. stamps only portray images that are of national identity and significance. Students' national pride will increase as they learn what subjects are selected.

In This Lesson

By examining stamps, students will learn that stamp subjects reflect American History and Culture and that there are specific rules in what subjects can be included in a stamp.

National Standards of Learning

- *NSS-C.5-8.5* Roles of the Citizen
- *NSS-USH.5-12.3 through 12.10* Era 3 through 10: from the Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s) to Contemporary United States (1968 to the Present)

Note: For National Standards of Learning for Eras 3-10, those standards serve as a potential discussion of subject selection from that historical timeframe. You can make this activity unit topic-specific from a historical standpoint. (e.g. If you are studying the Civil War and Reconstruction, you can ask students what topics/themes from this unit are good stamp subjects.)



LESSON 2: INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

Lesson 2 will lead into the discussion of who determines stamp subjects and whether there are criteria for subject selection. This lesson unit serves as an excellent hands-on stamp activity for students. Through the stamps used in class, students will be able to see the various types of American-related subjects found on stamps. This unit will lead into selecting subjects as a part of their stamp design activity.

Materials and Resources

- **Thinking Routines**
- **Claim/Support/Question Reasoning Routine**
- Supporting Materials for Teachers
- **Handout:** Acceptable and Unacceptable Subjects
- **Worksheet:** Stamp Selection
- **Materials:** Stamps (1-3 per student) acquired from one of the following sources:
 - Request a collection of U.S. stamps from your local stamp club, often available by donation or minimal cost (list of clubs can be accessed at www.stamps.org),
 - Purchase mint stamps at face value from the post office or from USPS.com,
 - Soak stamps off your and students' mail. You can look at http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/stamp/5a_introduction.html for detailed instructions on how to soak stamps.
- **Resource:** <http://www.usps.com/communications/organization/csac.htm> for more information about the Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee
- **Resource:** *Revise to* http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2010/pr10_125.htm for 2011 stamps
- **Resource:** Digital images of stamps can be downloaded from USPS.com for educational purposes at <http://www.usps.com/rightsandpermissions/fair-use-exceptions.htm> if you can't access stamps

SUGGESTED THINKING ROUTINES AND ACTIVITIES³:

#1: Before discussing CSAC, ask students to look at their stamps.

Potential questions to ask:

- Who or what are on the stamps?
- Why are they there?
- Who or what are not on stamps?
- How do the subjects represent American History and Culture?
- Could stamps include cultural heritage?
- How does cultural heritage represent American Culture?
- How do stamps represent pride for American identity?
- How would you reflect your pride for or identity with America through stamps?

#2: Have several images that students can group into stamp or no-stamp categories. Have students identify which subjects fit the CSAC criteria and which do not. Clip Art can easily provide visuals, but you may want to add images specific to your school or region that your students can identify as not-stamp appropriate (like your school's principal or the local mall). A handout of Acceptable and Unacceptable Subjects can be used as an example.

#3: Claim/Support/Question thinking routine can be used to explore subjects in stamps more intensively.

#4: Have your students do a group activity where they discuss the potential selection of their subjects. This helps to prepare students for the stamp design activity lesson 4.

Lesson Extension:

Have students soak off stamps from their mail. This serves as a great activity for understanding stamp collecting.

3. "Thinking Routines." *Visible Thinking*. Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education. 13 October 2009. http://www.pz.harvard.edu/vt/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03a_ThinkingRoutines.html.



CLAIM / SUPPORT / QUESTION⁴ A REASONING ROUTINE

1. Make a **claim** about the artwork or topic.
2. Identify **support** for your claim.
3. Ask a **question** related to your claim.

Why ?

To help students develop thoughtful interpretations of an artwork or topic by encouraging them to reason with evidence.

When ?

Use *Claim / Support / Question* with works of art and with topics in the curriculum that invite explanation or are open to interpretation.

How ?

Model the routine for the whole class, then work in small groups or individually. Take turns using the routine so that each member of the group makes a claim, identifies support and asks a question. Following each person's report, take a moment as a group to discuss the artwork or topic in relation to the claim before moving on to the next person. After everyone has had a turn, reflect on the activity. Ask students to discuss what new thoughts they have about the artwork or topic.

LESSON 2: SUPPORTING MATERIAL FOR TEACHERS

The subject of stamps covers every topic you can imagine, many of which relate to your Social Studies curriculum: significant battles, presidents, contributions of artists and scientists, natural landmarks and resources, social revolutions, popular culture, and constitutional rights, to name a few. The wealth of subjects on U.S. stamps provides endless access points of discussion about American History and culture.

Each stamp subject idea starts as a suggestion from the public. People write in suggestions to the Postal Service by the thousands. Each suggestion is reviewed to see if it matches a list of requirements: does this subject have national significance or, if it's a person, have they been deceased for 5 years? The suggestions are then given to the Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee. This group of 15 individuals with diverse areas of knowledge review all the suggestions and make recommendations to the Postmaster General on what stamp subjects to print in the coming years. Special attention is given to events, people, places that are approaching a significant anniversary.

Five out of the twelve CSAC Rules/Criteria are listed below. In order to become a stamp, a subject must feature one of the following:

1. American/American-related themes, including national symbols, holidays, and nature
2. Characters, but not living people
3. People only five years after the individual's death unless it is a U.S. president (they are traditionally honored on their first birthday in the year after their death)
4. Events, persons, themes of national importance only (regional themes are not allowed)
5. American States

Popular culture characters, materials, and media and heritage subjects are acceptable in stamp selections. When preparing samples for students by securing stamps or printing images from the web, take note of the diverse categories in history, culture, science, geography, biography, fun, and games. The greater diversity of examples you can provide your students, the more inspiration they will have in selecting their subjects.

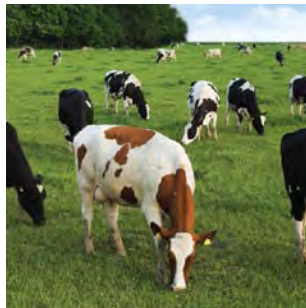
For more information about the requirements for stamps, the people who make up the CSAC group, and all twelve rules, follow this link: <http://www.usps.com/communications/organization/csac.htm>

4. "Claim/Support/Question." *Artful Thinking*. Traverse City Area Public Schools and Project Zero at Harvard Graduate School of Education. 13 October 2009. http://pzweb.harvard.edu/tc/claim_support_question.cfm
© Harvard Project Zero



Lesson 2

Acceptable Subjects

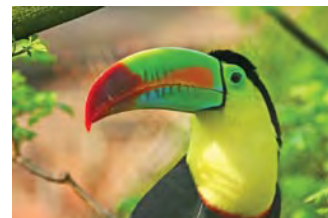


Printable Versions are available on-line at http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/educators/4b_DesignIt_Materials.html



Lesson 2

Unacceptable Subjects



Printable Versions are available on-line at http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/educators/4b_DesignIt_Materials.html

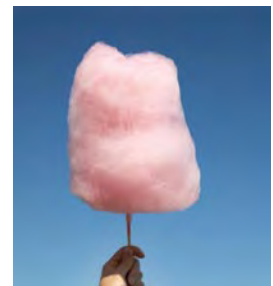
Lesson 2 Worksheet

Selecting a Subject

Name: _____

Date: _____

Circle the images that are acceptable subjects in a U.S. postage stamp.



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