NORTH STAR CLASSROOM MATERIALS

HARRY SHEPHERD: PORTRAIT OF PROGRESS

OVERVIEW
In this lesson, students study Shepherd’s photographs and an account of his “Unsung Heroes” poster to begin identifying his role as a portrait photographer and early activist, and to question the complexities of his work. In the final project, students create their own interpretation of what Shepherd’s “Unsung Heroes” piece looked like.

BACKGROUND
By the 1880s, photographs and photography studios were common fixtures of American culture. The invention of dry plate processing had made it easier to develop photos, allowing photographers to focus more energy on framing and artistry, and less energy on the mechanics of the development process (though it was certainly very difficult when compared to modern processes).

The low price of photographs meant that photographic portraits were well within the reach of middle and even lower class people. Soon, people were choosing to capture the significant moments in their lives – the birth of a child, graduations, weddings, or funerals. Photographers like Harry Shepherd made their money by photographing such moments, as well as photographing and selling images of famous persons, scenic locations, and commercial events. In some cases, creative photographers carefully staged recreations of historic, comic, or mythical moments and sold the resulting photos.

At the turn of the century, photographers were also photographing images for political reasons such as capturing war scenes and major events for use in newspapers (made into etchings), projected lantern shows, and individual photos sold for money. Emotional images of American Indians, child immigrants, and foreign locations also exposed people to people and places they would never see in their regular lives. Such images marked the beginnings of the highly political photojournalism that developed in the 20th century.

For more information about events during this time period, see the North Star website’s timeline at http://www.tpt.org/northstar/Timeline.html
For suggested resources on Harry Shepherd and this era, see the North Star website’s Resources section at http://www.tpt.org/northstar/Resources.html
For background on Harry Shepherd, visit the Harry Shepherd section of the North Star website at http://www.tpt.org/northstar/MakingChange.html?quick_link=harry_shepherd
OBJECTIVES

- To analyze examples of Shepherd’s existing work to identify who his clientele were.
- To read about Shepherd’s “Unsung Heroes” poster and compare it to his normal pieces.
- To hypothesize what Shepherd’s “Unsung Heroes” looked like and how effective it would have been as a political piece.

A NOTE ON DIVERSITY

At first look, Shepherd’s photographs capture a nostalgic image of the late 1800s and the turn of the century. Photographs of the time were mostly taken inside, where the important factor of light could be best controlled. The formal and posed nature of these photos often reinforce our assumptions about Victorian life. Help students look beyond these assumptions and identify the diversity of Shepherd's clientele. Help them theorize what the hidden stories of these people might be.

CONTENT CONNECTIONS

This lesson connects well with a discussion of activism in black culture and the civil right movement. Ask students to think about what ways activists protested for black suffrage, women's suffrage, new child-labor laws, the Civil Rights Era, the women’s movement, and accessibility for those with disabilities. How have different movements used different methods of getting their message heard? How were those movements affected by what technologies existed at the time. What methods would be available to someone at the turn of the century?

CONNECTIONS TO MINNESOTA ACADEMIC STANDARDS IN HISTORY AND SOCIAL STUDIES

U.S. History, grades 9-12; I. U.S. History, J. Reshaping the Nation and the Emergence of Modern America, 1877-1916, “The students will understand the origins of racial segregation;”; J. Reshaping the Nation and the Emergence of Modern America, 1877-1916, “The student will analyze the wide range of reform efforts known as Progressivism between 1890 and the first World War;”; IV. Historical Skills, grades 9-12; C. Historical Inquiry, “The student will analyze historical evidence and draw conclusions.”
INTRODUCTION

Connecting to Art History

This lesson connects well with a discussion of activism and the arts. Ask students if they have ever seen a piece of art that has challenged the way they think. (Consider showing some of Aaron McGruder’s “Boondocks” cartoon strips, Picasso’s _Guernica_, Andy Warhol’s Marilyn Monroe series, or any topical photojournalism piece as examples.) How do artists (musicians, directors, painters) continue to challenge political or social issues? Ask students to brainstorm examples of modern artists who challenge society. Students will likely focus on media they are most familiar with, such as popular songs or TV. Ask them to identify how different media appeals to different viewers. What makes a piece effective at changing people’s minds?

Connecting to Students’ Experiences

Ask students to spend 60 seconds writing about a moment of injustice that they have experienced. Then, ask them to spend 60 seconds creating a sketch of that moment. Ask students to post their two creations on the walls, and lead the class in a discussion of the differences between these two different versions of a moment. What does art show that writing can’t and vice versa? Which was more “fun” or “comfortable” for the students to create? If they were to choose one medium over the other, which would it be? As viewers, which ones were easier to understand? How would they feel if they were told they could no longer write or draw because of their race or gender, and that they would receive no further education in those subjects? As they learn about Harry Shepherd, ask them to keep these questions in mind. Introduce the documentary segment and show it.

PROCEDURE

This lesson works best if taught after viewing the film segment. Divide the class into small groups, and give each group a set of the photographs and _The Appeal_ article. Ask the students to use their student worksheets to help guide their analysis (each student will need only one copy of the worksheet). As you move about the room, use the following questions to help guide each group’s analysis, or after the groups are done, use the questions below to guide a class discussion of their findings.

PRIMARY SOURCE 1 ANALYSIS:

**PHOTOGRAPHS OF (1a) BLACK MAN, (1b) SNANA AND MARY SCHWANDT, (1c) DUAL WEDDING, (1d) UNIDENTIFIED MAN WEARING MEDALS, AND (1e) EISENMENGER MARKET**

These photographs represent a sample of the photos that Harry Shepherd took. Many of them are posed studio shots, and one of them was taken outside. Ask students to analyze these photos individually and as a group. Discuss the following questions with your students:

- When was this photograph taken? Where was it taken? Who took it? Why might he have taken it? What does it show?
- Who were Harry Shepherd’s regular clientele? What was their race, gender ethnicity and class?
- What assumptions can we make about Harry Shepherd’s success as a photographer, based on his clientele?
PRIMARY SOURCE 2 ANALYSIS:
THE APPEAL ARTICLE
In 1899, Harry Shepherd created an “Unsung Heroes” poster made of a montage of images showing significant events involving African Americans. There are no existing copies of this piece that have been found, but this article offers a good description of what it looked like. Discuss the following questions with your students:

• What is this document? When was it created? Who created it? Why was it created? What is it about?
• What did “Shepherd’s Unsung Heroes” piece look like?
• What was Shepherd’s purpose in creating this piece?
• How was Shepherd going to promote his piece?
• Do you think the piece drew much interest?
• How was this piece different from what Shepherd usually did?
• Do you think this piece effectively met Shepherd’s purpose at the time?

FINAL ACTIVITY AND EVALUATION
Ask students to consider the multiple sources they have studied, including the documentary, and to think about what Shepherd’s goals were as an activist. Ask students to create two different posters. The first poster should be their best interpretation of what Shepherd’s piece must have looked like. The second poster should represent their own “Unsung Heroes.” Ask students to present their posters and explain to the class what their purpose was and who their unsung heroes are. Students can also create their “Unsung Hero” poster online at http://www.tpt.org/northstar and click on “My Unsung Heroes.”
PRIMARY SOURCE 1a:
PHOTOGRAPH OF BLACK MAN

Black man, ca. 1890
Photographer: Harry Shepherd
PRIMARY SOURCE 1b:
PHOTOGRAPH OF SNANA AND MARY SCHWANDT
Mary E. Schwandt Schmidt (Mrs. William) and Snana Good Thunder (Maggie Brass), 1899
Photographer: Shepherd Photo Studio
PRIMARY SOURCE 1c: PHOTOGRAPH OF DUAL WEDDING

Wedding couples.
Photographer: Harry Shepherd
PRIMARY SOURCE 1d:
PHOTOGRAPH OF UNIDENTIFIED MAN WEARING MEDALS

Unidentified man wearing medals, ca. 1905
Photographer: Harry Shepherd
PRIMARY SOURCE 1c:
PHOTOGRAPH OF EISENMEGER MARKET

Eisenmenger Market, 455 Wabasha Street, St. Paul, 1887.
Photographer: Harry Shepherd
PRIMARY SOURCE 2: 

THE APPEAL ARTICLE

“OUR UNSUNG HEROES.”

A Reform Crusade Undertaken by a St. Paul Man.

One of the best examples of progressiveness, ability and business capacity found among us is that of Mr. Harry Shepherd, the photographer. Within the last decade he has arisen from almost obscurity to the position of the leading and most popular photographer of the city, and he holds a number of medals which substantiate this statement. He is a genius; and, like most geniuses, he is somewhat erratic and is not fully understood even by his best friends and when an idea takes possession of him he follows it with a rapidity that absolutely takes away the breath of his plodding contemporaries. He has inaugurated a number of new things in the line of his profession. He is a thorough race man and has made a very thorough study of the history of the Afro-American in this country. He saw how their heroes, who have been present in every event of historic interest in this country were doomed to go down in history “unhonored, unwept and unsung” and he set about to do something to bring about a better state of affairs. He has been evolving his plans in his mind for years, but only last week did it burst forth when there appeared as the result of his labor a large half-tone picture, comprising five different events in which Afro-Americans have made a name for themselves: viz., De-claring the early settlers against the Indians in 1690; as naval heroes in the war of 1812; during the Civil War; as Indian scouts and fighters; and for a center-piece, “the charge at San Juan Hill.” In each corner appears a life-like portrait of the four leading benefactors of the Afro-American; Abraham Lincoln, Charles Sumner, Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington. The lower margin is filled with short paragraphs incident to the subjects in the picture, including the third clause of the peace commissioners’ proclamation to the people of the Philippines, and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the constitution of the United States. The picture as a whole is entitled: “Our Unsung Heroes or The Men Whose Names Have Been Forgotten.” It is the artist’s intention to make a tour of the United States and Europe in an endeavor to place the Afro-American in a true light before the world, and he has already arranged for an illustrated lecture on an elaborate scale, in which he proposes to portray the injustices to which those of his race, especially

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In the South, are still subjected. In anticipation of this tour, he has had an agent traveling through the South for the past five years, collecting facts and accumulating evidence upon the subject in question.

One slide, reproduced from life, depicts an old man protesting against being robbed of his cotton, and the companion picture shows the same man being burned at the stake for an alleged rape. Another slide, taken by the author himself, gives a life-like portrait of Gen. Pittswee Lee, standing in the yard of his Southern home.

For the present it will be the endeavor of Mr. Shepherd to get his great historical picture in the homes of as many of the people as possible and for this purpose has secured the services of Hon. J. Frank Wheaton, Minnesota’s first Afro-American legislator, who is to make a tour of the several states and deliver lectures and secure the co-operation of the ministers and others to that end. The picture is large and very handsome, besides being of such historic interest, and it should adorn the walls of every Afro-American in the country. Several thousands of the picture have already been ordered by firms who desire to handle them. It must be seen to be fully appreciated.
HARRY SHEPHERD
PORTRAIT OF PROGRESS
Student Worksheet

Name: ____________________
Date: ____________________

STEP 1: ANALYZE THE SOURCES

1. Photographs: What is the source? What do these sources tell you about Harry Shepherd’s clientele? What kinds of people does he photograph? What do you notice about their gender, race, ethnicity, jobs, and class?

2. The Appeal article: How was Shepherd’s “Unsung Heroes” piece unique for him? Was it similar to his regular photographs? What does his “Unsung Heroes” project tell us about his character and values?

STEP 2: CREATE THE “UNSUNG HEROES” POSTER

Consider the multiple sources that you have studied, including the documentary, and think about what Shepherd’s goals were as an activist. Using two sheets of paper or poster board, create two different posters. The first poster should be what you think Shepherd’s piece must have looked like (you may want to look up who the people were in his photographs). The second poster should represent your own “Unsung Heroes.”