

Visual Lyrics

Based on the exhibition *Contact High: Hip Hop's Iconic Photographs and Visual Culture* presented at Photoville 2017 by Contact High

Students will use historic and archival images to engage in topics of identity, relationships and friendships. They will analyze the role of photography in creating a historical perspective of individuals and events and discuss how technology has changed this dynamic. They will translate visual information in text and vice versa.

Students will be able to:

- Create personal narratives from visual images
- Understand the importance of archives and historical narratives
- Collaborate in a group discussion
- by discussing the details in the text and images.

Part 1: Intro

1. Provide information about the photographic process and technology before digital photography.
 - Editorial Photographic Process: Traditionally, a magazine would hire a photographer for an assignment to take a portrait of a celebrity. The magazine would discuss the vision and creative direction with the photographer and the celebrity. Photographers only had 25-36 shots per roll of film, so they needed to be thoughtful about each shot. At the end of the shoot, they would process their contact sheets, and mark their favorite selection of images. The magazine would pick the final image to be published.
 - Contact Sheet: A proof of all the frames shot on one roll of film. "Getting access to the original and unedited contact sheets, shows the 'big picture' being created, looking directly through the photographer's lens. Photographers typically don't show their contact sheets. They're a visual diary. Film negatives on a roll of analog film allowed these photographers (and now us) to see the full range of images in order to develop the "money shot."

Authors: Educators Janine Lai, Lola Flash, Carla Rice with curator Vikki Tobak

Featuring photography by Barron Clairborne, Ray Lego, Stephen Shames and more

Grade Level: 9th - 12th grade

Subjects: Social Studies

Time Required: 90 minutes

Materials Needed:

- [Contact High Image Bank](#)
- [Contact High Project website](#)
- Photoville Passport
- Cameras, or phones
- Photoshop, Lightroom, or a computer

Standards Addressed:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.7
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3

Additional Resources:

photoville.com/edu/

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2. Using case studies from the *Contact High Project* website, discuss how image selection affects the perspective and narrative of the subject. Start by comparing and contrasting a few images from each photo shoot.
 - The Day Biggie Smalls was crowned King of New York:
 - Image A: http://www.contacthighproject.com/#gallery_2-12
 - Image B: http://www.contacthighproject.com/#gallery_2-8
 - Visualizing Kanye West with photographer Ray Lego:
 - Image A: time stamp at 2:10
 - Image B: time stamp at 1:35
 - Power to the People: Visualizing the Black Panthers with photographer Stephen Shames
 - Image A: time stamp at 0:15
 - Image B: time stamp at 1:18
 - Image C: time stamp 0:37
3. For each image, ask your students:
 - How does each image make you feel?
 - Identify a few photo techniques that may be working to make you feel this way. (reference the Photoville Passport for technique vocabulary list)
4. Reveal the full background of each of each photo shoot by showing the blog post or video interview from the *Contact High Project*. (links above)
5. Discuss how technology has changed the way we tell stories. Ask your students:
 - Besides print magazines, where else do you see images of celebrities and events nowadays? (blogs, Instagram, snapchat etc.)
 - How does seeing photos from different platforms change the historical perspective of this subject?

Part 2: Activity

1. Have your students select one image from the case studies presented above.
2. Ask them to jot down a list of adjectives that describe the subject in the photograph.
3. Have students find lyrics to illustrate the image they have chosen.



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Part 3: Reflection

1. Pair students off and ask them to discuss why they chose the lyrics to represent their chosen image.
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Part 4: Extension

1. Assign students to go out and capture an image that represents their chosen lyric. Ask them to take 10 to 20 images, trying out different approaches for representing the lyric.
2. Display their images as contact sheets using Photoshop or Lightroom. If you do not have those programs, a simple alternative is displaying large thumbnails on your computer.
3. Ask students to talk through their contact sheet, explaining their creative process.
4. Ask students to select their final image and explain why they chose it.