Shadows and Historical Narratives | Kara Walker

Research and sources · 3–5 · 45–55 minutes × 2–4 sessions

Context for this inquiry

For young grades use nonviolent silhouette studies; older grades study context carefully

Teach with relevant originals

Use primary artworks, museum biographies, documentary sources or student-conducted observation. The collection cover is an original editorial graphic, not a reproduction of the artist’s work.

Starting sources

Research museum collections

https://americanart.si.edu/art/highlights/african-american

Search for the artist and original works

https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?search=Kara%20Walker&title=Special%3ASearch&ns0=1

Smithsonian K–12 African American art resources

https://americanart.si.edu/education/k-12/resources/african-american

Looking questions

What do you literally observe? Which design decisions are evident? What is uncertain or missing from this source? What does a second source change?

Source critique

For an artist study, identify the artist, date and medium of each original work before discussing influence. For arts integration, record the data or primary text behind the artwork and test its accuracy.

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Connection back to the studio

Return to What can a silhouette hide as well as show? Use source evidence to justify a new artistic response: Silhouette vignette asking who is missing from a story.