FREE TEACHING RESOURCE / 9–12 / 41

Ethics of the Archive

TEACHER GUIDE • lesson design & facilitation

Grade band: 9–12 | 6–8 sessions, 50–70 minutes

Media: drawing, print, collage or approved digital media

The artistic problem

Create an original visual essay that makes gaps in an archive visible.

Essential question: Who determines what gets preserved and who remains undocumented?

Place-based cultural lens: Examine Historic New Orleans Collection's collections and research tools.

Learning targets

- Investigate the question: Who determines what gets preserved and who remains undocumented?
- Apply visual sequencing, redaction as design, caption ethics, source hierarchy in a deliberate original composition.
- Use critique evidence to improve visual sequencing and name one next step.

Student-visible success criteria

- The final artwork solves this problem: Create an original visual essay that makes gaps in an archive visible.
- Artwork includes three attributable sources and a labeled absence/uncertainty.
- Process evidence shows three different options before selection.
- Visual decisions demonstrate visual sequencing and support the intended audience.
- Feedback results in at least one visible revision that the student can explain.

Standards & studio habits

Louisiana 9–12 cluster: VA-CE-H1, VA-CE-H2, VA-CE-H3, VA-CE-H7, VA-AP-H6

Studio Habits of Mind: Understand Art Worlds, Develop Craft, Express, Engage & Persist, Reflect. These habits are developed interactively, not in a fixed rank or sequence.

Instructional alignment: Louisiana benchmark codes are official broad grade-cluster benchmarks; specific expectations are developed locally. The ten instructional stages come from the supplied Artistic Investigations framework.

Preparation & materials

- Drawing paper or sketchbook for idea studies
- drawing, print, collage or approved digital media
- Samples and images from reliable sources, with attribution
- Tools appropriate to local safety rules and grade level
- Choice of visual, oral, or written reflection tools

10-stage teaching sequence

01 / Engage Present the artistic question: Who determines what gets preserved and who remains undocumented? Give students two contrasting examples that do not dictate a finished product.

02 / Investigate Examine Historic New Orleans Collection's collections and research tools. Gather visual evidence and note what is observed rather than assumed.

03 / Skill Studio Demonstrate visual sequencing, redaction as design, caption ethics, source hierarchy. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.

04 / Generate Develop three possibilities for the challenge: Create an original visual essay that makes gaps in an archive visible. Change the focal point, material, arrangement or viewer perspective between drafts.

05 / Plan Compare sketches to the success check (three attributable sources and a labeled absence/uncertainty); choose a direction and state why it better communicates the intention.

06 / Produce Produce an original visual response using visual sequencing, redaction as design, caption ethics, source hierarchy; conference on one technical choice and one contextual question.

07 / Critique Partners identify where the artwork communicates the intended idea and locate evidence of visual sequencing in the work.

08 / Revise Revisit the specific checkpoint: Three attributable sources and a labeled absence/uncertainty. Make one visible change after critique and preserve the initial view for comparison.

09 / Present Present with a title, medium, one key artistic decision and any needed credit or contextual limitation.

10 / Reflect Reflect: What evidence proves you improved visual sequencing? What will you try or investigate next?

Studio sessions & evidence checkpoints

Session	Teaching move	Capture evidence
Day 1	**Locate the problem** Who determines what gets preserved and who remains undocumented?; Examine Historic New Orleans Collection's collections and research tools.	Initial inquiry and positionality check.
Day 2	**Source and context audit** Evaluate evidence, stakeholders, permission or material constraints.	Source log with known/uncertain claims.
Day 3	**Investigate technical options** Demonstrate visual sequencing, redaction as design, caption ethics, source hierarchy. Make thinking visible by testing two alternate solutions and identifying what each communicates.	Material trials and design comparison.
Day 4	**Generate + plan** Three robust concepts with intended audience and criteria.	Annotated concepts and rationale.
Day 5–6	**Build and document** Develop work with dated process notes and ethical checks.	Progress photos, source credits, technique notes.
Day 7	**Critique + substantive revision** Test with peers for communication and context; revise visual sequencing.	Feedback and before/after comparison.
Day 8	**Present + evaluate** Curate for audience and acknowledge limitations.	Rubric, portfolio record, and next investigation.

Key technique to model

visual sequencing, redaction as design, caption ethics, source hierarchy

Access without lowering the artistic goal

Attend to voices absent from records without inventing testimony for them. Offer physical samples, captioned images, accessible demonstrations, flexible planning modes, and alternate materials while retaining the common visual learning target.

Teacher coaching questions

- What is the visual problem you are solving?
- Which decision communicates your intended meaning most clearly?
- What does your reference prove, and what are you still imagining?
- What could a viewer misunderstand?
- What visible revision will strengthen your next version?

Cultural care

Use only rights-cleared images; name archival absences instead of filling them with fiction as fact.

Stretch & explore

Produce a companion explanatory source note for exhibition.

Design provenance: Original Studio Fieldnotes investigation developed for the 50-lesson library; informed by the teacher-supplied ten-stage Artistic Investigations architecture and reflective Studio Habits framework.