

Title: Looking @ Black Art - *Luminary: Mary Ann Shadd* by Adeyemi Adegbesan

Subtitle:

Duration: Part 1 & 2-2 lessons Part 3-4-one week+

Best Courses fit: The Arts, English (Can be adapted to ESL)

Facilitator Reflection

As part of this project participants are being asked to view a piece of work based on a historic black Canadian figure. participants will have to research more historic Black Canadian figures therefore facilitators should generate a list for participants to choose from. That list can be derived from other lessons in this resource.

When investigating the history of these Black Canadian figures, this will require engagement with the Critical Consciousness Questions as you make sure participants engage with authentic sources of information.

Overview

This activity is an Arts based activity based on the art piece *Luminary: Mary Ann Shadd* by Adeyemi Adegbesan. Students are being asked to engage with representations and portrayals of Black identity through the medium of the Arts. This art piece is an Afrofuturist portrait of Mary Ann Shadd and is of very contemporary take on the depiction of this historic figure. The lesson begins with an art analysis then moves towards identifying specific symbolism and finally asks for students to create an art piece. Part one and part two of the lesson are modelling for how participants will engage with part 3, their own personal art work. Part 4 for asks for participants to write a metacognitive piece where they reflect on their work through guided questions.

When viewing the work, provide a larger copy for participants to view. The one provided at the bottom of the lesson can be put into a slideshow for participants.

Looking at Black Art - *Luminary: Mary Ann Shadd*- Adeyemi Adegbesan



The art work you will be reflecting on is created by Toronto artist Adeyemi Adegbesan (aka Yung Yemi) and is titled *Luminary: Mary Ann Shadd*. Adegbesan is a multi-disciplinary artist known for his [Afrofuturistic](#) portraits. In an interview, Adegbesan states: “Afrofuturism...allows black identity to take on forms that are free from historically established perceptions.”

On his website, he speaks to how his “...practice aims to examine the intersectionality of Black identity.” Adegbesan combines his unique style with the history of visionary Mary Ann Shadd to create the piece *Luminary*, as a tribute to her. The image to the left is the portrait mounted on the exterior of Mackenzie House. In **Part 1**, you will LOOK at the artwork and complete an art analysis. **Part 2**, you will listen to his [interview](#) about this piece for the Awakenings virtual series of artworks project and respond to some specific questions. In **Part 3**, you will create your own art piece.

Your Task:

Part 1

You will begin by simply looking at the art piece. Take note of anything that you may find of interest but use an art lens. Each box represents a way of looking at the artwork and is divided by: **Initial Reaction, Analysis, Interpretation, and Personal Connection**. Respond in the boxes below.

Initial Reaction

What is your first impression of this artwork?
What stands out to you?
What does it remind you of? Is there anything that you recognize?
What is your initial emotional reaction to this artwork?
What confuses you? What are your questions?
What would you ask the artist?

Analysis

Describe what you see. Be specific and give examples
EX. the symbols in the middle of the earrings, the intricate headpiece
What is the focal point of the painting?
How has colour been used in this portrait?
What aspects of this portrait represent Afrofuturism?
1. How are the Elements and Principles of art incorporated into this artwork? Name 2 dominant elements and 2 dominant principles and explain how they are used.

Interpretation

What thoughts does the painting provoke in you?
Who is this a painting of? What is her story?
How does the portrait tell that story?
Does the title of this painting add to the meaning?
Does this painting represent a particular period of time?
 What do you think is the meaning behind how Adegbesan portrays Shad's gaze?
Why do you think this painting was created? What is the lesson in this painting?

Personal Connection /10

Have you heard of Mary Ann Shadd Prior to viewing this piece?
What aspects of the past should people understand from viewing this artwork?
What was Shad's contribution to Canadian history that makes her a worthy candidate to be chosen for this piece?
What does this story mean to your understanding of Black peoples today?
How does this artwork show the resilience of Black peoples?
What connection does this painting have with our present society?
The picture of this artwork that accompanies this lesson is mounted on the wall of a Toronto building. Where else can you see this artwork displayed?
Imagine you are a curator for an art gallery displaying historic Black Canadian people. Write a few words for a plaque that would be displayed with this portrait of Shad.

Part 2

Watch the [Awakenings Interview](#) with Adegbesa. After listening, look at the portrait with fresh eyes and discover more about Mary Ann Shad and look at the symbolism in the artwork.

Explain the symbolism of:

Flowers

Trillium

Floral motifs

Adinkra symbols

The headpiece

What other symbolism is present in this portrait? Be specific and explain.

Part 3

This assignment will culminate in your own creation of an art piece commemorating a historic Black Canadian. Your work can be interpretive, abstract or realistic but must embody the spirit and essence of the individual you have chosen. In order to get a sense of this person, fill out the chart below.

Person	
Their story	
Original portrait for reference	
What message you want your portrait to convey	
Characteristics of strength	
Symbols you will use and what they will represent (minimum 3)	
Colours and their intended meaning	
Your chosen media	
Conference with you teacher and prepare a sketch of your work to show	

Part 4

Write a reflection on your final art submission using the following template as a guide:

“Insert Title of Work”

by – Your Name

Medium

Size

Date Submitted

This will be followed by your artist’s statement which will be broken down into four (4) distinct paragraphs:

- a) First: Deal with your aims and intentions.
 - Why did you choose this person?
 - What message did you want to communicate through your art piece and why is this important?
 - What did your research and the process of completing the final piece teach you?
 - Why did you title the work the way you did?

- b) Second: Look at the reasons behind your visual organization.
 - Discuss your use of the elements and principles of art and your reasons for doing so.
 - What is the significance of the symbolism to your art piece
 - Explain how you unified the work.

- c) Third: Deal with artistic problems you faced.
 - What artistic challenges did you face on your artistic journey with this assignment?
 - Were they related to communication? To aesthetics? To technical considerations?
 - Explain how you solved them.

- d) Fourth: Assess your specific AND overall success, noting the steps you would like to take to improve the work if you were to do it again.
- What individual parts worked especially well?
 - What individual parts could be improved? How?
 - Was your overall message conveyed?
 - Overall, how would you rank the success of this work? On what do you base this ranking?
 - Were you to attempt this theme again, what would you do differently?
 - How would this improve the quality of the work



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