Women in Art Teacher Resource Guide
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Red Canna by Georgia O’Keeffe
About the Linda Lee Alter Collection of Art by Women

In 2010, Philadelphia art collector and artist Linda Lee Alter designated PAFA as the recipient of her 500-work Art by Women Collection. Alter had been assembling the collection since the 1980s after realizing that work by women artists was severely underrepresented in most art museums, and had intended from the start that the collection would one day go to a museum.

PAFA’s Linda Lee Alter Collection of Art by Women spans the 1910s to the first decade of the 21st century. All media are represented, including ceramics, photography, painting, sculpture, assemblage, as well as works on paper. More than 150 artists are represented – from the well-known to the underappreciated – including works by artists not previously in PAFA’s collection such as Louise Bourgeois, Kiki Smith, Joan Brown, Viola Frey, Ana Mendieta, Christina Ramberg, and Beatrice Wood (among others), as well as complementary works by artists already in PAFA’s collection such as Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson, Gertrude Abercrombie, Edna Andrade, Sue Coe, Janet Fish, Sarah McEneaney, Gladys Nilsson, Elizabeth Osborne, Betye Saar, and Nancy Spero.

As Alter wrote in 2010, “My hope was to find a museum emphasizing inclusion and diversity, one working toward greater representation of art by women and artists of color in its permanent collection, exhibitions and outreach programs; where the art by women would be fully accessible to students, teachers, scholars and the general public; and where my collection would be enthusiastically welcomed because it embodied the institution’s vision.”

Alter believes that her goal was accomplished: “The Academy has warmly welcomed my collection. It is the home for the art by women I’d always hoped to find.”

For PAFA, Alter’s gift of her Art by Women collection was unprecedented (in scope, theme, and size) in PAFA’s history. PAFA celebrated the gift with an exhibition composed entirely of works from the Alter Collection: The Female Gaze: Women Artists Making Their World became PAFA’s principal 2012-13 exhibition, presented from
November to April in both the Fisher Brooks and Annenberg Galleries of PAFA’s Samuel M.V. Hamilton Building. Despite requiring twice the square footage of most temporary exhibitions, Female Gaze featured only 200 of the 500 works comprising the Art by Women Collection. A 272-page catalog with 12 scholarly essays, edited by PAFA’s Curator of Modern Art, Robert T. Cozzolino, Ph.D. (who also served as Female Gaze’s curator, and had worked alongside PAFA President David R. Brigham in making the case that PAFA should be the recipient of Alter’s gift) is available through PAFA and at Amazon.com.

Works from the Linda Lee Alter Collection of Art by Women are on display at PAFA at all times.
WOMEN IN ART TOUR

‘Beyond Boundaries’ Discussion Prompts

General

- What stereotypes and/or misconceptions do female artists face? Why?
- What types of obstacles would female artists have faced during the 19th century?
- What are some common themes or topics that the women chose to visually represent in this gallery?
- How do these female artists portray the human condition/humanity? With compassion, reverence, truth, etc. Why?

Printmaking and Techniques of Works on Paper

- How are these pieces different than an oil painting? (texture, production, etc)
- What types of materials are used and why (various papers, silk, etc)? Are these materials feminine? Why or why not?
- Why might an artist want to create a print rather than a painting?

Landscapes

- Why do artists create landscapes?
- What evidence of the human world exists in this landscape? What conclusions can you draw about the relationship between the human and natural world?
- Why might women be attracted to this subject matter?

“Edward James Drifton Cox” by Cecelia Beaux

- At first glance, does the child appear to be a girl or a boy? Why?
- What can we learn about gender norms during this time from this image?

“The Veil” by Lilian Westcott Hale

- Why is she veiled? What might she be getting ready for?
- What is her mood? How does she feel about her present situation?
- What techniques does the artist use to convey her mood? (ex. Wispy/hazy effect, lack of people/isolation, close up portrait, etc.)

“Women’s Life Class” by Alice Barber Stephens

- What do you notice about the women’s life class? (sketchers, models, teachers, other details)
- Why are there no men?
Beyond Boundaries Discussion Prompts

**General Questions**
- When you first look at the works in this room, do they appear to be feminine to you? Can you immediately tell that they are done by women? Why or why not?
- At first glance, how are these pieces different than the pieces in the ‘Graphic Women’ show?
- Are similar themes and techniques used in both shows? (point to embroidery, prints, feminine figures, etc)

**(un)earthing questions**
- Does “Earth” have feminine connotations? (i.e. mother earth) Why is the natural world often considered feminine?
- How do these works represent the connection between the natural world and femininity?

**(un)veiling questions**
- How do these female artists utilize embroidery and sewing techniques in their work?
- What statement are they making through their uses of these materials?

**(w)riting questions**
- Why do you think the artist uses image and text in her work? What effect does it have on your ability to interpret the work? (i.e. is she telling you what to think about her work by using words? Is it less open to interpretation?)
- What role does language play in our society? For women specifically?

**Musing questions**
- Why might this section be called ‘musing’? What does musing mean and how is it represented in these pieces?

**(not) at home questions**
- This section contains many pieces reminiscent of household objects. What do these objects symbolize or represent in terms of womanhood and femininity?
- Why are there so many sculptures in this section?

**(de)forming questions**
- How is the female form traditionally represented in art? How have these artists changed or manipulated the female form?

**(r)evolving questions**
- How do these pieces visually capture the idea of progress?
Comparing and Contrasting the two exhibits

- How do these two exhibits deal with the theme of women’s work (materials, physical labor associated with women, etc)? How do the contemporary women repurpose the traditional female materials and use them in different ways?
- At first glance, which exhibit felt more feminine? Why?
- Which pieces stuck out to you or affected you most and why?
INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, artists have used various printmaking techniques to create unique pieces of art and to spread their ideas far and wide. Since most printmaking techniques allow the artist to create multiple impressions of each image, artists could distribute the prints to many people. Also, prints were cheap, quick and easy to reproduce in large quantities. Some prints were even used as souvenirs!

In the image below, Anna Lea Merritt has used the techniques of etching and drypoint to create an image of “Ophelia,” a tragic female character from William Shakespeare’s play ‘Hamlet.” Merritt creates a portrait of the young woman holding flowers and gazing off in thought towards her left. Ophelia passed out flowers to many people throughout the play, so the flowers symbolize her kindness and generosity. For this lesson, students will use a simple printmaking technique to create portraits of powerful and influential female figures that have inspired them.


OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS

- To understand and comprehend the process of printmaking.
- To create a portrait print based on the work of Anna Lea Merritt.
- To explain and justify their choice of important female figures.
- To create and explain symbols that represent their choice of female.
MATERIALS:

- Small pieces of thin styrofoam
- Ink
- Brayer
- Paper
- Pencils
- Scratch paper
- Newspaper or something to cover the surface of the table

DIRECTIONS:

Day 1:

1. Watch and discuss the following clip entitled “Rembrandt and Printmaking”, which shows the process of etching from start to finish. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RM0qlQ0lyBc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RM0qlQ0lyBc))

2. Students will be given a piece of scrap paper in which to draw a sketch and make their own print. Students will sketch portraits of an important woman of their choosing (from a photograph, image or live person) as well as a symbol that represents the woman. This individual could be someone they have recently studied in class, an author, political figure, artist, etc. Use this as an opportunity to connect the lesson to your own curriculum. Remind students that the image will be reversed in the printing process.

3. When students are finished, they will transfer their sketch onto a piece of styrofoam. Students will use a pencil to incise their image into the styrofoam. Students need to use
medium pressure when carving their image. Too strong of an incision will break through the styrofoam, and too light of an incision won’t hold up through the printing process.

Day 2:

4. Students will go to the printing station and cover the carved side of their styrofoam in ink using a brayer. Make sure that the ink does not get into the carved lines, but instead only stays on the uncarved raised parts of the styrofoam.

5. Students will place the inked side face down on a sheet of paper and apply pressure overtop of the image using their hands. Next, they will peel the styrofoam off the paper and place both pieces in a safe place to dry.

6. Students take turns presenting their work (to the whole class or in small groups). Students should state who they chose and why their individual is important. Next, they should explain their symbol and how it represents the woman.

   a. Example: I chose ___________________________ because...
   b. ___________________ accomplished many things, such as...
   c. I drew ____________________ in this way because...
   d. _______________________ symbolizes ______________________(woman’s name) because...

EVALUATION:

- Students discover the art of printmaking.
- Students create an original piece of art.
- Students justify why their symbol and individual is important.
- Students present and discuss their completed works of art.

Common Core Standards, English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style, are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities 9.1.3.B:** Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.

**EXAMPLES:**

I chose to make a print of Georgia O’Keeffe because she is a strong and independent female artist. I admire her because she saw the beauty in everyday objects and wanted her lifestyle to reflect this idea. I added flowers as a symbol because they represent how beauty can be found is everyday objects and simple things. Also, O’Keeffe is well known for her flower paintings.
INTRODUCTION

In her mixed media collage *I am innocent I am pierced I am unsure*, Leslie Dill mixes language and image to create a complex artistic statement on femininity. As a former English teacher, Dill uses her practice to combine imagery and snippets of poetic text written by the likes of Emily Dickinson and Franz Kafka, blurring boundaries of what constitutes fine art. Exploring themes such as communication, intellect, and emotion lies at the center of her work. For Dill, language is “the touchstone, the pivotal point of all my work.” For this lesson, students will analyze Leslie’s art as well as the words of famous female writers and create mixed media collages that address the power of language in our society.


OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS

- To discuss and analyze the art of female artists and writers.
- To consider how language and image can combine to make a statement.
- To create a unique and personal piece of art.
MATERIALS:

- Magazines, photographs, printed images
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paper
- Computer access
- Phones
- Markers

DIRECTIONS:

Day 1:

1. Discuss the art of Leslie Dill and her artistic goals with the class. Show the students all of the Leslie Dill pieces that are on display at PAFA (images located at the bottom of this lesson plan). How does Dill portray femininity? What role does language play in her work?
2. Students will begin to create Dill inspired mixed media collages using the text of female poets and writers. First, students will find a poem that they connect with. The poem can use themes such as the feminine spirit, emotion, intellect, gender roles, etc. Use poets and writers that will work within your own curriculum. Suggestions include Maya Angelou, Sylvia Plath, Emily Dickinson, and Audre Lorde. Contemporary female musical lyrics can also be used. On a computer or using books, have students begin researching poems that they can use in their own collage.
3. Once students have chosen a piece of text, they can find an image that will accompany the text. They can use magazines, Google image searches, or take their own photos for this step. They will print or cut out their image.

Day 2:

1. Students will place a section of the text onto the image. They can cut out letters from magazines, write directly onto the image, or type and print the words. If they are working on a computer, they can use the “Paint” application and write their text directly onto the image.
2. In small groups or as a whole class, students will present their work. They will explain why they chose their poem, what it means to them, and what themes are present in the piece. Next, they will explain the image that they chose to accompany the text and why the image and text pair well together.

Sentence Starters:
I chose the poem ____________________ by ____________________ because...
It contains the themes such as...
I connect with this poem because...
I chose this image because...
The text and images I chose work together well because...

3. Classmates will discuss and critique each mixed media collage after it is presented.
Discussion Prompts:
What story does their collage create?
Does the poem and image connect? Why or why not?
How does this collage make you feel?
What are the strengths of this collage?
What do you like about this collage? What emotions does it elicit in you?

EVALUATION:
Students discovered the art of mixed media collages.
Students combine relevant text and image to tell a visual story.
Students presented and discussed their completed works of art.

Common Core Standards, English Language Arts
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style, are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities
9.1.3.B: Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.
For my mixed media collage, I chose to combine a line from Sylvia Plath’s poem “Love Letter” with a photograph of a woman flying by Natumi Hayashi. I like the poem because it contains themes of hope shows the power of femininity and potential that lies in me as a female to rise above any struggles that I may have and achieve my goals. I chose the photograph because it illustrates the feeling of literally rising above. I also like that they line I chose discusses stone and cloud, and the girl is literally leaving the ground and stone around her and rising up towards the clouds.
I think that intensity of reading altered my life somehow.
Faith a Long Line of Silence.

It is a ritual of transparency.
sense of silence

sense of space

Radiance
She carries the silk threads.
INTRODUCTION

Many modern and contemporary female artists, like Linda Lee Alter, create pieces that are open to interpretation. When looking at Alter’s piece, *Burning Up*, the subject and theme is not immediately evident, and audiences are welcome to use their own minds and experiences to interpret the piece for themselves. Is the person in pain and on fire, or have they been struck with inspiration? It is up to us to decide.

In this lesson, students will use a piece of art by a contemporary female artist and create a narrative that fits their interpretation of the piece.

OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS

● To discuss and analyze the art of contemporary female artists.
● To consider how artists leave art open to interpretation.
● To create a poem based on a piece of art.

MATERIALS:

● print outs of images by female artists (see examples at end of lesson plan)
● paper
● pens, pencils, markers
● thesaurus

DIRECTIONS:

Day 1:

1. Begin by discussing the following question: Is art open to interpretation? Why or why not?
2. Use Linda Lee Alter’s *Burning Up* as an example. Discuss the various interpretations that can be drawn from this piece. (ex. anger, literal burning, release of emotions and energy, etc).
3. Give each student a piece of art by a contemporary artist and have them create a poem or short narrative based upon their own interpretation of the piece. Use the pieces at the end of the lesson plan for this activity. Students can write out their narratives or type them if desired. *Utilize these images or have students locate their own pieces of art based on the needs within your curriculum.
4. Have students share their work with the class if they feel comfortable.

EVALUATION:

● Students discovered the art of contemporary female artists.
● Students composed an original piece of poetry.
● Students presented and discussed their completed works of art.

Common Core Standards, English Language Arts

**CSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well structured even sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7:** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1**: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4**: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style, are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities 9.1.3.B**: Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.
cerebration, cogitation

shattering notion

my thoughts pierce

my musings crush

shooting and stabbing

until

a breathtaking and all-powering liberation

as I realize

I have sublime power.
CONTEMPORARY ART EXAMPLES:


Eileen Neff, *This Flat World*, 2003, Giclee print.

Elizabeth Catlett, *In Sojourner Truth I fought for the right of women as well as Negroes*, 1947, linocut on paper.


Barbara Takenaga, *Yellow Roses #2*, 2005, acrylic on dried rose petals on wood panel.


INTRODUCTION

Alice Barber Stephen’s paintings, illustrations, and prints often feature 19th century Victorian era women working in various settings. Whether at home or in an office, these women are portrayed as intense, dedicated workers who have mastered their craft. During the late 19th century, more women were beginning to leave the house to take on paying jobs. These women often worked in factories, farms, schools, and shops.

Stephens was a modern woman herself -- by not relying on her husband to earn the family income, she contributed to the family’s income herself. She created engravings and illustrations that were featured in publications across the country. She was also an early feminist and entrepreneur -- she co-founded The Plastic Club of Philadelphia and taught at The Philadelphia School of Design for Women (both arts organizations are exclusively for females).

Stephen’s ability to make a name for herself as an artist made her a true inspiration to many. In this lesson, students will analyze the works of Stephens and think about the role of women in society then versus now.

Alice Barber Stephens,
*Discussing the Stitch*, 1881, pen and black ink over pencil on bristol board, 6 x 6 7/16 inches, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
OBJECTIVES/LEARNING GOALS

● To discuss and analyze the art of Stephens.
● To create collages that represent women in society.
● To compare and contrast the role of women in society during the 19th century versus today.

MATERIALS:

● Printouts of works by Alice Barber Stephens
● Pencils
● Magazines
● Glue sticks
● Scissors
● Paper
● Markers
● Stamps, stickers, yarn, etc.

DIRECTIONS:

Day 1:

1. As a class, discuss the question: What do you think women’s lives were like during the 19th century? Make a list of student responses on the board.
2. Have students get into small groups. Give each group a printout of a work by Alice Barber Stephens. Have them answer the following questions on a sheet of paper:
   ● What is happening in this image? Describe what you see.
   ● What sort of “work” do the women appear to be doing? Why do you think they are doing this work?
   ● What can we learn about women’s role in society from this image?
3. Have each group share out their image and responses.
   Example: In the print “Discussing the Stitch” by Alice Barber Stephens, I see two women seated on a bench and working on a sewing project. They are both wearing long dresses and have their hair up. They seem to be concentrating hard on their work. One woman is looking down at her stitching, while the other woman is looking at what her friend is doing. They are doing some sort of embroidery or sewing project, and they are doing this because this is the sort of work that women did around the house because their job is to stay at home and be a homemaker. I can learn that women in society at this time were expected to stay at home, complete chores around the house and take care of their families.
Day 2-3:

1. As a large group, discuss ways in which women’s roles have changed over the years. Make a list on the board.
2. Individually, or in pairs, students will create a collage that visually represents the evolution of the roles of women. You can narrow the timeline to fit your own curriculum. Have students use magazines, printed images from the internet, photographs, etc. for this project. Encourage them to personalize and make their collage personal and representative of their own views of femininity.
3. Have each student share out and explain the images they chose and why their collage is representative of the role of women in society.

EVALUATION:

- Students analyzed the art of Alice Barber Stephens.
- Students compared and contrasted the role of women in the 19th century versus today.
- Students created a collage that represents the changing role of women in society.
- Students presented and discussed their completed works of art.

Common Core Standards, English Language Arts

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on other’s ideas and expressing their own clearly.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style, are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for the Arts and Humanities

9.1.3.B: Recognize, know, use and demonstrate a variety of appropriate arts elements and principles to produce, review and revise original works in the arts.
In the images on the left of my collage, the women are quiet, reserved and emotionless. I chose these because in the 19th century, women were expected to stay at home, work on traditional female projects, such as sewing, and be very prim and proper. On the right, I have put pictures of women having fun and being themselves. These pictures feature women in leadership roles and in powerful poses. I chose these images because they show empowered women of different races who are unique and independent.
Alice Barber Stephens, *Women's Life Class*, 1879, oil on cardboard (grisaille), 12 x 14 inches, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.
Alice Barber Stephens, *Their Perfume Flooded the House*, 1892, ink on board.
RELEVANT RESOURCE MATERIALS

Books


Movies

‘!Women Art Revolution’ by Lynn Hershmann Leeson: Through intimate interviews, art, and rarely seen archival film and video footage, !Women Art Revolution reveals how the Feminist Art Movement fused free speech and politics into an art that radically transformed the art and culture of our times.

*Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, The Mistress and the Tangerine*: Two years before her death in 2010, at the age of 98, the film talks about the artist’s extraordinary oeuvre and the intriguing story of her childhood, which influenced much of her artwork. By revealing details about her life, Louise Bourgeois sheds some light on her creative process, spanning over six decades.

*Our City Dreams: Five Female Artists in in NY*: Filmed over the course of two years in New York, Our City Dreams is one of the most interesting artist documentaries out there. It focuses on the lives of five prominent female artists who call NY home: Swoon, Ghana Amer, Kiki Smith, Marina Abramovic and Nancy Spero, telling the tale of the city through the artists’ many artistic creations – from Swoon’s street art and Abramovic’s performance pieces, to Amer’s naked women, Spero’s bloody phalluses and Kiki Smith’s extraordinary drawings and sculptures. Director Chiara Clemente superbly captures the talents of each woman individually, while painting a single picture of a city of art.

*Marina Abramovic: The Artist is Present*: The documentary follows the renowned performance artist Marina Abramovic as she prepares for her retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The film explores how the Serbian national redefined the understanding of what art is.
**Websites and Other Online Resources**

A Brief History of Women in Art [https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history-basics/tools-understanding-art/a/a-brief-history-of-women-in-art](https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history-basics/tools-understanding-art/a/a-brief-history-of-women-in-art)


Feminist Art [http://www.theartstory.org/movement-feminist-art.htm](http://www.theartstory.org/movement-feminist-art.htm)

‘Through the Eyes of the Artist: Mary Cassatt’ video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWMQIMQm0K4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KWMQIMQm0K4)


‘Fierce Women of Art’ by PBS’ The Art Assignment (Parts 1 and 2) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHair5dvG0s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zHair5dvG0s) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZNltkCi0wA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZNltkCi0wA)

‘Why have there been no great female artists?’ by Linda Nochlin (1971) [http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/30/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists/](http://www.artnews.com/2015/05/30/why-have-there-been-no-great-women-artists/)