



LESSON PLAN

A Tapestry of Multicultural Diversity



RELATED PHOTO ESSAY

Belief

BY CALEB FERGUSON



A Tapestry of Multicultural Diversity



Class: 60 minutes

Key Idea

With a long history of immigration, New York City contains one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world, representing a wide variety of religious and faith communities.

Background

New York City, according to the United States Census Bureau, is the largest city in the United States with a population of over 19 million. It has a long history of immigration. Between 1892 and 1924, more than 12 million people immigrated to the United States through the gateway of New York City.* Immigrants came seeking political and religious exile, new opportunities, and adventure, to name a few reasons. Today, it is said that over 800 languages are spoken among the five boroughs and a great number of churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and places for private prayer represent the diverse religious and faith communities.

This photo essay captures moments of faith and connection in one of the most culturally and religiously diverse populations in the world. Photos include the following: a Chinese Lunar New Year dance troupe, Christians crossing the Brooklyn Bridge during the Way of the Cross procession on Good Friday, Muslim men praying next to a taxi stand, a choir performing in Harlem, the Hindu celebration of Phagwah or Holi, preparations for the Palm Sunday procession of Episcopalians, and a reverend leading a congregation of homeless individuals in Harlem.

*National Park Service, "[Ellis Island—History and Culture](#)."

Connections to National Standards

Common Core English Language Arts. SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 [or 11-12] topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SUBJECT AREAS

HIGH SCHOOL

- English Language Arts
- Modern World Studies
- Philosophy

COLLEGE

- Anthropology
- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Religion
- Sociology

THEMES

- Effects of cultural diversity
- Power of tradition
- City life

MATERIALS

- Access to the photo essay online (or printed copies of it)

PREPARATION

- (Optional) Make copies of the photo essay



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Common Core English Language Arts. SL.11-12.1.c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. D2.Geo.5.9-12. Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions.

Lesson

SETTING THE STAGE

Introduce the photo essay by asking students what comes to mind when they think of multiculturalism. Point out that students will be viewing a photo essay that highlights various religious and cultural celebrations in diverse New York City. Ask students: In what ways do you celebrate diversity? What is diversity to you? Does diversity matter? What happens when you have it? What happens when you don't?

ENGAGING WITH THE STORY

Direct students to view the photo essay in pairs or groups of three. Invite them to look for examples of diversity in the photo essay as well as the commonalities that people highlighted in the photos share. How would you define the characteristics of your culture? Ask students to think about writing a journal entry from the point of view of one of the people in the photographs.

Delving Deeper

1. Ask students what they noticed from the photo essay. What characteristics did the individuals in the photographs share?
2. Lead a discussion about the photo essay, asking such questions as:
 - Does diversity matter? What would happen without diversity?
 - What are some ways diversity can be respected?



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- What can we all learn from observing other cultures' celebrations?
- How far does your sense of identity extend? To your family? Ethnic group? Team? School? Country? World?
- What can diversity teach us about our own cultural identity?
- If you could document your own cultural heritage, how would you do so? What story would you tell?
- Religious beliefs, ethnicity, place, gender, and history are some examples that define cultural diversity and identity. Can cultural diversity and faith make us stronger? Weaker?
- If you were asked to rename this photo essay, what title would you give it?

Reflecting and Projecting

Give students one of the following reflective writing prompts to demonstrate their understanding of the story. (Note for teachers: Just as quotes from a book or text are used to prove an analytical thought, students use the photo essay to justify their reasoning.)

1. Photographer Caleb Ferguson describes his work by saying, "Filled with difference, the world is a constant source of wonder and allows my own curiosity to lead me through life engaged and concerned." Explain how your curiosity has prompted an action or concern about something. (CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1)
2. Write a journal entry from the point of view of one of the people in the photographs. (CCSS.ELA.SL.11-12.1.c)
3. If you were a judge for a photo contest that celebrates diversity, which of these images do you think would be the winning photograph? Why? (CCSS.ELA.SL.11-12.1.c)
4. Imagine that the photographer created a fund to give \$10,000 to a young emerging photographer emphasizing diversity and multiculturalism. Write a proposal for this project. How do you think this could benefit your community? (C3.D2.Geo.5.9-12)



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Resources

(News video) "[NYC Houses of Worship.](#)" PBS Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, February 22, 2013.

(Web magazine) [A Journey Through NYC Religions.](#)

The Pluralism Project, Harvard University, "[A New Religious Landscape—New York, NY.](#)"