

## ***Art of the American Soldier: Comparing and Contrasting Photography and Painting in War Art***

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### **About this Lesson**

*This lesson encourages students to use photography to analyze artwork for details regarding the historical context of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century wars and conflicts. These analytical skills will help students to understand how different ways of documenting combat will give them different contextualization of the events depicted.*

**Grade(s) Level**

4-12

**Classroom Time**

45 minute class period

**Handouts**

Details in the Artwork

**Constitution Connections**

Preamble

“...provide for the common defence...”

Amendment I

Freedom of expression

**Photograph Resource Suggestions:**

The National Archives, <http://www.archives.gov/>  
Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>  
(type in the name of a war into the search box)

**Background**

What can art tell us about the experience of being a soldier? Since World War I, both soldier and civilian artists have been commissioned by the U.S. Army to create a visual and historical record of military conflicts around the world. The Center for Military History curates this collection of artwork; selections from the collection were included in the National Constitution Center's *Art of the American Soldier* exhibit, which appeared in autumn of 2010.

*Art of the American Soldier* explored how soldier-artists have portrayed moments of soldier life, duty, and sacrifice in military conflicts from the origins of the Army art program in World War I through its current incarnation in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Though the exhibit only displayed paintings, this lesson uses photography to show students how to analyze details in any form of artwork. It is best to keep this question in mind during your examination of war art: How is an artist able to tell a story of war differently in a painting than in a photograph?

**Objectives**

Students will:

- Examine how the artistic mode of photography was used to capture the experience of the U.S. Soldier in military conflicts dating back to World War I.
- Recognize how historical events, such as war, have been and continue to be depicted to the military and civilians throughout the generations.

**Activity**

What can art tell us about the experience of being a soldier? The *Art of the American Soldier* exhibition featured paintings that captured the true experience of a soldier's life, duty, and sacrifice while serving in the military. Other artists use photographs to capture the story of war. Have your students find photographs from at least two different wars or conflicts that were represented in the *Art of the American Soldier* exhibition (World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, and the conflicts in the Middle East) and search the details in the photographs for clues of the context in which each photograph was taken. Be sure to encourage your students to search for photographs that tell the stories of a soldier's life, duty, and/or sacrifice.

**Assessment Options**

You may choose to collect the handout from students.

You may ask students to respond to the question, “How do photographs differ from paintings, and how are they similar?” and submit their written responses.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Details in the Artwork

### Photograph 1

Title:

Artist:

War/Conflict:

Source:

### Photograph 2

Title:

Artist:

War/Conflict:

Source:

**Answer the following questions using the two photographs you have chosen from two different wars or conflicts.**

#### **Landscape:**

What details do you notice about the landscape in photograph 1?

What details do you notice about the landscape in photograph 2?

#### **Uniforms:**

What details do you notice about the uniforms in photograph 1?

What details do you notice about the uniforms in photograph 2?

#### **Capturing a story:**

What story is being told in photograph 1?

What story is being told in photograph 2?