



LESSON PLAN

Addressing Trauma Using Affective and Cognitive Skills

Significant trauma, including witnessing or experiencing violence, is a fact of life for many students. Left unaddressed, that trauma can be an obstacle to learning. Teachers, who are typically asked to focus on cognitive rather than affective learning, sometimes feel ill-equipped to help students process their experiences. This lesson provides a curriculum-connected place to start.

In the lesson students gain an intuitive sense of the difference between affective and cognitive brain functions. They are asked to use both art and expository writing to respond to clips from the documentary film *QUEST*. The family shown in the film uses community connections, politics and art to cope when their youngest daughter, PJ, is shot—caught in crossfire on the streets of North Philadelphia. As students compare and contrast responses, they understand the role that affective pursuits, like artistic expression, can play in the healing process.

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- Use the art forms of their choice to express their feelings about events and write factual accounts of the same events in order to learn the definitions of “affective” and “cognitive”
- Consider how art helps people heal from trauma

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12

SUBJECT AREAS

Arts/Music

English/Language Arts

Media Literacy

Psychology

Sociology

MATERIALS

- Film clips and equipment to project them

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED

2 class periods with homework in between

FILM CLIPS

Film clips provided in this lesson are from *QUEST*. Access the streaming clips for free on POV’s website by visiting www.pbs.org/pov/educators. Borrow the full film from our DVD Lending Library by joining the POV Community Network: communitynetwork.amdoc.org.

Clip 1: *QUEST* trailer (2:13 min.)

The clip is available at: pbs.org/pov/quest.

Clip 2: *The Studio* (1:05 min.)

Quest explains that he offers this free studio time to give young men something to do besides killing each other. Note: Young Swagger’s freestyle rap includes the “n-

word.” The clip begins at 27:55 with Quest Rainey in his studio and ends at 29:00 as soon as Young Swagger finishes his initial freestyle.

Clip 3: She’s Been Shot (2:05 min.)

Over hospital scenes, we hear what it was like for PJ’s mother to find out her daughter had been shot. The clip starts at 32:55 with a shot of an empty basketball court and ends at 35:00 with Quest on the phone explaining that PJ lost her eye.

Clip 4: The News (2:45 min.)

Christine’a relates PJ’s recollection of being shot. They watch police cars responding to another incident. Quest talks about guilt and about hearing gunshots every day and not ever thinking that one of the victims would be his daughter. The clip begins at 40:00 with a news crew prepping for an interview outside the Rainey home. It ends at 42:45 with a shot of Christine’a and Quest contemplating what might have happened had the bullet been an inch to one side.

Clip 5: Block Party (6:15 min.)

The community welcomes PJ home and celebrates her recovery with a block party, including a performance by Price (one of the artists Quest produces) and dancing. The scene ends with Christine’a describing her response to the trauma. The clip begins at 49:00 with PJ talking to the police officer who helped save her. It ends at 55:15 with Christine’a saying, “She didn’t deserve it.”

Clip 6: Stop the Violence March (3:25 min.)

Quest and Christine’a talk about another shooting in the neighborhood. This one took the life of a boy. The community responds to the shooting with a protest march. The clip starts at 1:07:15 with Quest saying, “It was just a random shooting.” It ends at 1:10:40 after the speaker says, “Our first role models should be us.”

Clip 7: Stop and Frisk (2:35 min.)

Quest is pulled over by police because, they say, he “fits the description.” Christine’a pulls out her camera to video what’s happening because she is worried about how aggressive the officer is. Quest responds by heading to the studio and creating a track on his keyboard. One of his artists freestyles (using a couple of words that might offend). The clip starts at 1:19:40 with Quest being patted down by a police officer. It ends at 1:22:15 with Quest looking through a fence.

ACTIVITY

Step 1: Defining Terms

Display the words “cognitive” and “affective” and ask students if anyone knows what they mean. Fill in the gaps as needed, making sure that students understand that:

- Cognitive = mental processes of perception, memory, judgment and reasoning
- Affective = processes relating to, arising from or influencing emotions

The human brain processes the world both cognitively and affectively. Sometimes we think of cognitive as being related to the head (thoughts) and affective as being related to the heart (feelings). One isn’t superior to the other. To navigate the world successfully, we need to use both. Be sure that students don’t confuse the word “affective” with the word “effective.”

Step 2: The Music Studio

Ask students to give a few concrete examples of things they process cognitively and things they process affectively (e.g., doing math calculations or memorizing things

for an exam uses cognitive skills; a horror movie or a poetry slam competitor's recitation produces affective reactions).

Show Clip 2 of Quest Rainey's music studio. Explain that in the clip, he opens the studio as a free drop-in place for teens in North Philadelphia. Ask students if they think this attempt to address a community need is focused on people's affective or cognitive processing. Accept all evidence-based answers. Be sure that one of the answers is that providing an outlet for artistic expression is an affective-based community intervention strategy.

Step 3: The Assignment

Tell students that they're going to learn a bit more about Quest and his family in a minute by watching clips from a documentary about them called *QUEST*.

When the clips are over, each student will be asked to do two things:

1. Write a factual paragraph (or two) describing the events in the film.
2. Create an artistic expression conveying how they feel about what happened. The art can be in any form the student chooses (a rap, a drawing, a poem, a song, a video, a poster, a dance, a meme and so on).

Step 4: The Rainey's Story

To give an overview, play the trailer for the film (Clip 1). If you need to save time, instead of playing the trailer, fill in needed background by explaining that Chris "Quest" Rainey and Christine's "Ma Quest" Rainey are a couple living and working in North Philadelphia. She works in a women's shelter and he delivers newspapers. He is also a music producer and they run a small recording studio that they open to young people in the community for free. They are politically engaged and worked to help elect President Obama. They have several grown children from previous relationships and are raising their daughter, PJ, who is a talented musician and athlete. They also care for an adult son who was diagnosed with cancer just before the birth of his first baby, and they help with his son (their grandchild). In many ways a typical American family, they struggle economically while living full and exhausting lives.

Fill in the details of the Rainey's story by playing the remaining video clips, Clip 3 through Clip 7. It is these clips that students will summarize in writing and respond to with art.

As time allows, pause after each clip to let students react. Guide them to noticing how art (including less obvious forms of art, like posters for the march or dancing at the block party) is used to aid healing. Also guide them to notice how the filmmaker communicates both cognitive and affective messages.

Note: If your students have experienced events similar to those shown in the film, it will be important for you to plan extra time for this lesson so that students have a chance to share and process their own stories.

As homework, assign students to write brief, factual accounts of PJ's shooting and the aftermath. Also ask them to express their feelings about the shooting, using any art forms they choose. On the day that the assignments are due, spend a bit of class time inviting students to compare what it was like for them to create each type of communication.

If your students have been prepped on productively, responsibly and safely engaging with social media, consider inviting them to share what they've made on social media using the hashtag #QUESTFilmPBS.

Alternative: If there has been a recent, compelling traumatic event in your students' lives, you may want to use the film as in-class practice, just briefly imagining what they would write and the art they would create. Then assign them to write and create art about the real-life event. Be sure to create space/opportunities for those who want to share their art with classmates and/or the broader community.

EXTENSIONS/ADAPTATIONS

Pick an event that students have studied (e.g., World War II or Hurricane Katrina) and have them research art/music/literature that was created to express survivors' emotional reactions. Invite them to compare what they learned from looking at the art to what they learned from their textbook.

Assign students to research the science behind the use of art to help people heal from trauma.

Look at or listen to examples of art/music that are about trauma. This could include anything from fine art (e.g., Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*, a statue in front of city hall or a Langston Hughes poem) to pop culture (e.g., a dance routine from *So You Think You Can Dance*). Ask students to think about what these art forms are able to communicate that a news report or history book cannot.

Examine media forms that combine affective and cognitive elements (e.g., propaganda, some news reporting, some advertising, documentaries, late night talk show host monologues). Have students differentiate between the emotional and information-based appeals.

Have students research examples of music or art that are or were used to help a community heal (e.g., "Amazing Grace" being sung at a funeral, or the construction of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.).

RESOURCES

This is a list of organizations, websites, articles and other materials that may be helpful to teachers in developing the lesson, or for students as they are researching.

POV: *QUEST*

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/quest>

The film's official POV site includes a discussion guide with additional activity ideas, steps to borrow the DVD from the POV Lending Library and other resources.

POV: Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php> - This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice

<http://drexel.edu/cnvsj/> - The Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice at Drexel University works to promote health, nonviolence and social justice through trauma-informed practice, research, professional development and advocacy for policy change.

Common Responses to Trauma—and Coping Strategies

www.traumacenter.org/resources/pdf_files/Common_responses.pdf - This pamphlet offers helpful guidance on recognizing the signs of trauma, plus general interventions.

The Foundation for Art & Healing

www.artandhealing.org - The foundation's website features personal stories about how art was combined with medicine/psychological care to help people heal.

International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies

www.istss.org - This organization's website provides research reports and research-based recommendations for healing trauma. For example, https://www.istss.org/ISTSS_Main/media/Documents/ISTSS_g17.pdf offers recommendations that deal specifically with use of creative art.

Psychology Today: "Trauma-Informed Expressive Arts Therapy"

www.psychologytoday.com/blog/arts-and-health/201203/trauma-informed-expressive-arts-therapy - An easy-to-read, short *Psychology Today* article by Cathy Malchiodi describes the use of art to help people heal from trauma.

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects
(http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

[W.9-10.2d](#) Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

[W11-12.2d](#) Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary and techniques such as metaphor, simile and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

[W.9-10.4](#), [11-12.4](#) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

[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 11-12 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

[SL.11-12.2](#) Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Content Knowledge: (<http://www2.mcrel.org/compendium/>) a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

Language Arts, Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

Language Arts, Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
Language Arts, Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.

Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Faith Rogow, Ph.D., is the co-author of *The Teacher's Guide to Media Literacy: Critical Thinking in a Multimedia World* (Corwin, 2012) and past president of the National Association for Media Literacy Education. She has written discussion guides and lesson plans for more than 250 independent films.