Pre-Show Lesson #2: Emoji and Representation

Framework: In this lesson, students will explore the concept of representation as it pertains to both the creation of art for underrepresented groups and the importance of having those groups represented both in the process and the performance of the art. Note: This is lesson is adapted from the Anti-Defamation League's website.
https://www.adl.org/education/educator-resources/lesson-plans/emojis-and-me

Objectives: Students will be able to...
- Identify what representation means.
- Reflect on representing one's culture and identity is important.
- Create a set of emoji that are specific to them and their own identity.

Materials:
- Projector to show images of West African Emojis:
  https://www.adl.org/media/13927/download
- Markers, crayons, pens/pencils, paper

Vocabulary:
- Representation
- Identity
- Culture
- Emoticon/Emoji

Step 1:
- Start the lesson by asking students to define what an emoji is and what emoji they most frequently use. An emoji is a small digital image used to convey an object, emotion, idea or symbol.
- Divide the students into small groups of 3-4 students and have the students brainstorm on a piece of paper as many facts or ideas they know about emojis. Allow the students only five mins to make lists. After the time is up, have each group share one idea at a time (not sharing any overlapping ideas) until all new ideas are listed. Keep track of the list on the white board.
- Share some or all of the following background information about the history of emojis:
  o The origin of emojis were "emoticons," which emerged in the 1990's.
  o These were gestures using punctuation to convey messages such as
    :)[happy], ;)[sarcasm] and : ([sad].

- The first "emojis" were created in 1999 by Japanese artist Shigetaka Kurita. He wanted to design an attractive interface to convey information in a simple, succinct way. Emojis quickly became popular in Japan.
- In 2009, a pair of Apple engineers, Yasuo Kida and Peter Edberg, submitted an official proposal to adopt 625 new emoji characters into the Unicode Standard. In 2010, Unicode officially adopted emojis, adding hundreds more. The Unicode Consortium oversees the official set of emojis that come on most smartphones.
- In 2012, the emoji trend caught on so rapidly that it was added as a word by Oxford Dictionaries in August 2013.
- In 2015, Unicode diversified the emojis by introducing the option to change the skin tone on people emojis. They also added same-sex couples and additions to include more types of people doing more types of things.
- Recently Unicode has taken steps toward creating gender-neutral emojis, emojis that represent people with disabilities and other symbols to represent the full spectrum of emoji user
- Ask students the following questions:
  - What do you like about using emojis?
  - How do you use emojis?
  - What is beneficial about using emojis?
  - What is limiting about emojis? What emojis do you use the most and why?

Step 2:

- Introduce the students to the work of West African Emoji Designer O'Plérou Grebet, a 22-year old digital artist from the Ivory Coast who learned to make emojis on YouTube. Explain that Grebet created more than 365emojis that portray contemporary West African life.
- Show the students the examples of O'Plerou's Emojis linked here (https://www.adl.org/media/13927/download).
- Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:
  - What are some of your favorite emojis?
  - What emojis would you like to learn more about?
  - What did you learn about life in West Africa by looking at these emojis?
  - How does Grebet, through the emojis, convey information about himself, his culture and his identity?
- Explain to students that they are now going to create their own emojis and they will each create at least five or more.

- o Ask students to name some of the categories that emojis are sorted into such as: food and drink, activities, people and emotions, animals and nature, objects, activiemojis.
- o Explain that the emojis must reflect something about their identity, which could include:
  - their social identity groups (race, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, etc.)
  - their hobbies or interests'
  - topics that are important to them'emotions or moods that are part of who they are'important relationships
  - some other aspect of identity
- Students can use markers/crayons etc to create a collection of five or more emojis that represent themselves and their identity.
- Have each student share their collection in a small group, and post emojis around the the room to demonstrate a representation of their backgrounds.