

the warhol: resources & lessons

Art & Activities / Diversity of Voice: Focus on Guns in America - Handout

	Point of View	Additional Information & Discussion Questions
I	<p>"What country can preserve its liberties if its rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, 1787</p>	<p>In 1787, the 13 new American states sent delegates to create the Constitution for the united nation. At the height of the debate Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison emphasizing the need for statements in the Constitution clarifying individual rights. These ideas were popular and the first ten amendments to the Constitution, now known as the Bill of Rights were drafted by 1791. This document placed primary value on the individual rather than on any government in America. This radical idea included the concept that individuals in a free society must be able to overthrow any government if it does not represent them. The second amendment to the United States Constitution Article [II.] reads:</p> <p>A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.</p> <p>Identify and discuss what the second amendment to the Constitution means. What is a militia? A free state?</p> <p>Do all countries give their citizens the right to "keep and bear arms"? Why not?</p>
II	<p>There's a saying in the theater that if a play opens with a gun over the mantle, the gun must go off before the final curtain. Warhol suggests that lethal potential: with no one gripping it, this gun seems to be firing itself, its double image suggesting the "kick" of recoil.</p> <p>But the viewer stands just to the side of where it's aimed. You can appreciate its lethal allure without being threatened directly by it. And you can understand how the pro-gun and anti-gun lobbies both fetishize the object of their disagreement. The former treat guns as totems to ward off danger or totalitarianisms, the latter regard them as taboo objects whose mere presence invites evil.</p> <p>Chris Potter, managing editor, The Pittsburgh City Paper</p>	<p>There is a fierce debate over guns in America. As Chris Potter identifies in his writing, both sides of this debate frame their arguments in both simplistic and extremist ways.</p> <p>Examine the definition of fetish. If a gun can be a fetish object, what are some other examples?</p> <p>Are guns the solution to ward off danger and bad government? Is the presence of guns always an invitation to "evil"?</p> <p>Discuss the arguments for and against gun ownership. Try to identify your own values; clarify when and why people should be able to own and use guns and when and why they should not.</p>

continued

the warhol: resources & lessons

Art & Activities / Diversity of Voice: Focus on Guns in America - Handout

	Point of View	Additional Information & Discussion Questions
III	<p>I stood up in a social studies class – the teacher wanted a discussion – and said I could never kill anyone or condone anyone who did kill anyone. But that I could on some level, understand these kids in Colorado, the killers [reference to school shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado where 12 students were shot by two classmates]. Because day after day, slight after slight, exclusion after exclusion, you can learn how to hate . . . After class I was called to the principal’s office and told that I had to agree to undergo five sessions of counseling or be expelled from school, as I had expressed ‘sympathy’ with the killers in Colorado and the school had to be able to explain itself if I ‘acted out.’ In other words, for speaking freely, and to cover their ass, I was not only branded a weird geek, but a potential killer, that will sure help deal with violence in America.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jay in the Southeast, Slashdot.org</p>	<p>Jay was cast under suspicion after expressing an understanding of the hard social conditions the two Columbine killers may have been enduring. Research some of the stories around this high school shooting in Littleton, Colorado. Not disputing the fact that the two killers had an arsenal of guns available to them, what other factors led to this tragedy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some of the reasons kids get angry? • What are the biggest problems you see in youth culture affecting kids ability to cope with their emotions? • Discuss oppressive social circumstances: teasing, bullying, discrimination, etc. • What is the best way to diminish violence in a culture? • What responsibility do artists (including musicians, writers, movie directors, etc.) and artworks have in such moral issues?
IV	<p>When you hurt another person, you never know how much it pains. Since I was shot, everything is such a dream to me. I don’t know what anything is about. Like, I don’t know whether I’m alive or whether I died. I wasn’t afraid before. And having been dead once, I shouldn’t feel fear. But I am afraid. I don’t understand why.</p> <p>Andy Warhol after he was shot and seriously wounded in 1968.</p>	<p>Andy Warhol claimed not to wear the title of social critic in his paintings, but he simultaneously expressed his fears after being shot with a gun.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you read the artist’s emotions or thoughts in this piece? Why or why not? • Look again at Warhol’s painting in light of all of these points of view. Does his gun painting have a message? What do you think it is?