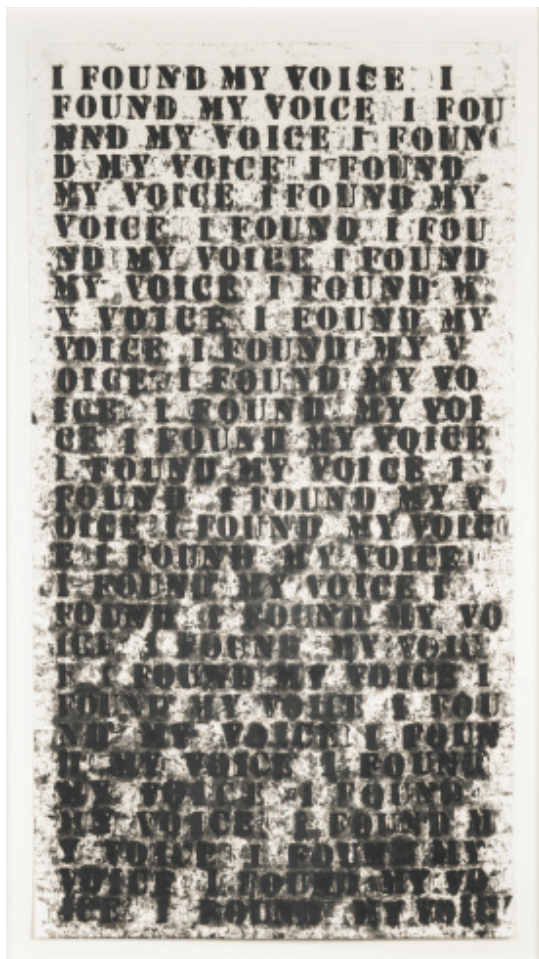


Legible and Illegible

Lesson Plan
Legible and Illegible



Glenn Ligon
I Found My Voice, 1990
Oil stick on paper, 30 × 16 in.
The Studio Museum in Harlem;
gift of Martin and Rebecca
Eisenberg, in memory of Jack
Tilton 2011.11.3
Photo: Adam Reich

Glenn Ligon's compositions explore race, sexual identity, language, and history, often through the incorporation of text and the writings of twentieth-century African-American literary figures such as Zora Neale Hurston and James Baldwin.

Created with stencils, *I Found My Voice* (1990) features lines of repeating text on a white paper background. As the text transforms into a nearly unrecognizable blur of black oils, viewers are invited to reflect on their

relationship to the emotionally charged declaration. Here, Ligon may be commenting on the development of his own art practice, in addition to both the continuous resistance against and the frustrations around racial injustice.

This lesson plan gives students the opportunity to explore their own identities and create an artwork using text.

Objective

Students will use a text the class is currently reading to explore their own identity through art making.

Essential Question

How can art change the ways that we read and write?

Vocabulary

Identity

The distinguishing character or personality of an individual

Illegibility

The quality of a written or printed text is not being clear enough to read

Legibility

The quality of a written or printed text being clear enough to read

Quotation

A selected section from an existing body of text or speech

Representation

The description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way or as being of a certain nature

Symbol

A mark, character, or glyph representing an idea, concept, or object

Visual Language

A system of communication using visual elements and symbolism

Materials

Book or text you are reading in class

White paper

Tracing paper

Charcoal

Black markers

Black oil pastels or Oil paint sticks

Preparation

1. Use visual inquiry to explore Glenn Ligon's *I Found My Voice* and introduce the vocabulary words.
2. Have students select a quote from a text you are currently reading in class. Challenge them to find one that expresses something about their identity or something people misunderstand about them.
3. Organize art supplies. Provide each student with a piece of paper and variety of black drawing materials.

Methods

1. Ask students to choose one of the black drawing materials and write the quote they selected onto the white paper in all capital letters as many times as they can.
2. Have students put a layer of tracing paper on top of the first sheet and trace over the text below. Repeat with four or five layers of tracing paper.
4. As students add layers, prompt them to make intentional choices about what parts of the composition to keep legible and what parts to obscure or allow to become illegible.
6. Before completing the project give students the option to combine some of their layers of text covered tracing paper with a partner and see how both of their compositions change.

Reflection

1. Ask students if their understanding of the quote they chose changed during the process of creating their artwork.
2. Ask students to exchange artworks with a partner and read the other's text out loud. How did the visual choices your partner made influence the way you read or understood the text?
3. End with a writing activity by asking students: "What about your identity is clearly legible and what about it is illegible?"



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