

Lesson 2: The Power of Perception

Learning Outcomes

- Foster a sense of appreciation and understanding of the art and cultures of the greater Himalayan region.
- Cultivate a greater awareness of the surrounding environment and inner self.
- Create a work of art that reflects a heightened sense of self-awareness

Primary Core Components

Attention and self-awareness, interpersonal awareness

Recommended Materials

Agamograph templates (two per student), pencils, colored pencils, markers, scissors, and glue sticks

Length:
50 minutes

Grade Levels: Upper elementary
school through high school

1. Check-In Activity

Explain to students that today we will be reflecting on how pride shows up in our lives. We will start by focusing on the positive aspects of pride, such as feeling a sense of accomplishment when we meet a goal. Instruct the students to turn to page 23 of the SEE Learning® Playbook and complete the exercises on Self-Compassion. Once students have finished writing, invite them to share with the class examples of times when they overcame an obstacle and felt a sense of achievement. While it's important to celebrate these accomplishments, there is a tricky underside to pride. Sometimes, if we are not careful, we can fall into boasting or thinking of ourselves as better than other people. Alternatively, we can hyperfocus on our shortcomings and think of ourselves as worse than other people. That's why pride is considered one of the afflictive emotions.

2. Presentation/Discussion

About Buddha Ratnasambhava

Today we are going to learn more about Ratnasambhava. He is one of the Buddhas of the Five Families. Each buddha is associated with a cardinal direction. You can learn more about the Buddhas of the Five Families as you explore the Mandala Lab.

Project an image of Buddha Ratnasambhava.



Buddha Ratnasambhava; Central Tibet; 13th century; brass with traces of pigment; Rubin Museum of Art; C2010.19

Ratnasambhava presides over the southern direction. He is associated with overcoming pride and developing equanimity. His identifying characteristics include his luminous golden color. This work dating from the 13th century is an example of an early Tibetan sculpture.

It is taught that Ratnasambhava embodies the quality of love. His right hand is in the mudra of supreme generosity, transcending ego-centered giving and leading to the Wisdom of Equality grounded in love.

Ratnasambhava is richly adorned. The word Ratna means “jewel” and Ratnasambhava is affiliated with the jewel family. Tibetan Buddhist practitioners display Ratnasambhava and meditate on him as a visual reminder to open the heart to more fully embody love.

3. Insight Activity

Today we will discover the power of perception by creating our own optical illusions. We will create agamographs, also known as lenticulars, to reflect on how we often have a distorted sense of ourselves and the surrounding world.

4. Reflective Practice

Show students examples of agamographs and ask if they are familiar with optical illusions. Ask students, what happens when we tilt the agamograph towards the left? What happens when we tilt it towards the right?

Distribute two agamograph templates to each student. The first agamograph template has two sections, labeled Drawing #1 and Drawing #2. Instruct students to recall a time when they had a distorted sense of self. In the section labeled Drawing #1, they will draw an image of a time when their sense of pride caused them to loom larger in their minds than they actually are. In the section labeled Drawing #2, they will draw an image of a time when their sense of pride led to perceiving oneself as small and insignificant.

Encourage students to finish their drawings before cutting their first agamograph template into strips along the dotted lines. Place the strips associated with each drawing in two separate piles.

Then, direct the students to cut the borders off of the second agamograph template. Once the borders have been removed, fold the second agamograph into an accordion shape along the lines. The students will glue the strips of paper with their drawings to the agamograph template that is shaped like an accordion. Remind the students that their finished piece should remain displayed like an accordion to properly display the agamograph.

5. Debrief

Explain to the students that their works of art serve as a visual reminder that we often have a myopic view of reality. We can overcome our often skewed view of existence by developing a sense of equanimity. Define equanimity as a sense of calmness and composure.

6. Follow-Up and Extension Activity

Project an image of Buddha Ratnasambhava with Wealth Deities.

About Buddha Ratnasambhava with Wealth Deities



Buddha Ratnasambhava with Wealth Deities; Tibet; early to mid-14th century; pigments on cloth; Rubin Museum of Himalyan Art; C2005.16.39

This thangka, dating from the early to mid-14th century, is an example of an early Tibetan painting. Works from this time period are hierarchical in nature. Each figure is portrayed in a size that reflects its relative importance. Since Ratnasambhava is the subject of this painting, he is the most prominently featured. An identifying characteristic of Ratnasambhava is his horse vehicle, which is shown peeking out from either side of his lotus throne. Five forms of the wealth deity Jambhala are shown along the bottom of the painting.

Ratnasambhava is associated with wealth and abundance. Becoming more aware of the present moment leads to a greater sense of appreciation and gratitude for the simple treasures of life that we often take for granted. This helps us to overcome afflictive emotions such as pride.

The Rubin Museum of Himalayan Art Core Values of Teaching

Social and Emotional Learning	Social, Emotional, and Ethical (SEE) Learning® values and skills play an integral role in our educational offerings.
Dynamic / Differentiated	We aim to meet our program participants at every education, knowledge, language, and creative skill level by dynamically differentiating our program lessons and activities for a variety of levels of learners.
Inquiry-Based	We follow an inquiry-based learning methodology that employs question posing and problem solving as primary ways to engage students in active and empowered learning.
Relevant / Relatable	As a global museum dedicated to the arts and cultures of the Himalayas, we strive to make our unique content relevant and relatable to the contemporary lives of our visitors and program participants.
Exploration-Focused	We challenge students to find their creative voices and visions through process-based art making that allows them to explore new types of material techniques, artistic processes, and creative ways of thinking and making.
Culturally Attuned	We actively collaborate with members of the Himalayan and Himalayan-American communities to ensure the most accurate and just representations of the Himalayan people, arts, cultures, religions, and histories in our programs.
Teamwork	We strive to create programs, activities, and a supportive learning environment that cultivates creative collaboration between peers and across all generations of visitors.

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