

Europeana Learning Scenario

Title

The Never-ending Search for the Perfect Body

Author

Emma Abbate

Abstract

This cross-curricular learning scenario introduces students to the concept of idealized body in the past (ancient Greek and Roman societies) and in modern times through the popular Victorian showman Eugen Sandow (1867-1925), a fin de siècle German bodybuilder obsessed with physical development after seeing the statues and pictures of classical heroes and gladiators in the European art galleries. Students are encouraged to reflect on the popularity of the physical culture in terms of its wider social implications.

Keywords

Ideal body, Greek Art, Roman Art, Ancient History, Physical culture

Table of summary

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Subject	English, History, Art, PE (Physical Education).
Topic	Search for body perfection and beauty' representation
Age of students	15-16 years old
Preparation time	English, History; Art, PE: 2, 3 hours
Teaching time	English: 2 hours History: 3 hours Art: 1 hour PE: the PE social research project lasts 1 week (time needed for questionnaire's design, responses' gathering and infographic's creation). For all subjects: 2 additional hours for the cross-curricular wrap-up activity (Blog Article).
Online teaching material	answergarden google forms issuu use in a sentence typeform venngage Wix wordclouds Eugen Sandow flexing his muscles and striking different poses for the camera



Offline teaching material	-
Europeana resources used	<p>Eugen Sandow: Life of the Author as told in Photographs at 21 Eugen Sandow: Life of the Author as told in Photographs about 19 Eugen Sandow: Life of the Author as told in Photographs Eugene Sandow, a product of physical culture, c. 1906 Eugen Sandow: Life of the Author as told in Photographs. age of 10 "A New Sandow Pose (VII)", Eugen Sandow "A New Sandow Pose (VIII)", Eugen Sandow Eugen Sandow Sandow instructing a boy's institute, Adelaide Eugen Sandow: Life of the Author as told in Photographs. Sandow as Gladiator. Aged 23 Eugen Sandow, a strongman. Process print, 1900 Academische figuurstudie van Eugen Sandow Academische figuurstudie van Eugen Sandow Academische figuurstudie van Eugen Sandow</p> <p>STATUES OF CLASSICAL ATHLETES: Statuette of two athletes fighting Sculpture. Statue Athlet mit Strigilis (Schabeisen)</p>

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Integration into the curriculum

Topics encompassed in the LS from the National Indications for curricula in the first two years (biennial) of high schools (Licei), Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research (MIUR):

- Art history - Greek and Roman art, classical statues.
- History - The ancient civilizations (Greek and Roman).
- English - Linear and cohesive oral and written texts to report facts and describe and personal experiences.
- PE - Health and wellness.

The LS can easily be adapted for a cross-curricular unit on Civic Education, as indicated by the ministerial new guidelines (2019).

Aim of the lesson

This learning scenario is designed to help students to think critically about the myths and stereotypes stemmed from the search for the body's perfection throughout the centuries.

Outcome of the lesson

Students will create digital artefacts (infographic, questionnaire, presentation, blog article) and will be engaged in discussions and e-debates in L2 (English).

Trends

Collaborative learning, Peer Learning, BYOD: Search & Learning

21st century skills

This Learning scenario contains specific tasks designed to increase 21-century skills:

- Communication: A discussion task that stimulates students to communicate in L2 (English) their existing opinion
- information Literacy: An online research task that encourages students to check the credibility of online information
- Media literacy: A social research task that allows the students to design an online questionnaire to share on social media platforms
- ICT skills: convert data in a digital infographic

Activities

Name of activity	Procedure	Time
Warming up Activity (English). Brainstorming task.	<p>The English teacher shows students two images from Europeana as initial input: an ancient Roman gladiator and Eugen Sandow, the German bodybuilder, in an athletic pose, then asks the whole class to add terms associated with the two pictures using a collective survey tool, answergarden to collect and share responses.</p> <p>This activity can be extended by asking students to create a word cloud with tag cloud generator or to make sentences about the pictures using pairs of words. They can take inspiration and check through the correct use of the words in the sentence on the website. The words cloud will cover lexis that the teacher wants students to practice.</p>	1 hour
Discussion task (English)	<p>Students, put into small groups, are asked to describe (in L2 or L1) the photos and interview each other, discussing if they like or dislike the images and why trying to agree on their final decision as a group. The teacher gives some guiding questions as stimuli for the discussion:</p> <p><i>Who was this man?</i></p> <p><i>What is the purpose of the photos?</i></p> <p><i>What was he thinking while he was posing for this photo?</i></p>	30 min for group discussions + min for the whole class session

	<p><i>Which of these pictures would you most/least like and why?</i></p> <p><i>Do you like a body like that?</i></p> <p><i>Do you think it represents a perfect male body?</i></p> <p><i>Do you find it artistically beautiful?</i></p> <p><i>Do you consider the man's body shape harmonious or attractive?</i></p> <p>The teacher instructs a short plenary session to outline the different perspectives issued during the discussion.</p>	
Online research activity (History)	<p>Students explore Europeana to collect Sandow's photographs that show how he modelled his body on the gladiators and ancient athletes' ones, emulating their poses and musculature.</p> <p>The history teacher guides this activity to give all the information needed to understand Greek passion for athletics, sports competitions and training in public gymnasiums.</p>	2 hours
	<p>Students are requested to use search engines to find some additional facts and information on Sandow's mania for the chiselled statues of ancient Greek and Roman athletes.</p>	
	<p>Students also should investigate how Sandow encouraged the fitness craze that continues today by making exercise fashionable. Students can also compare Sandow's diet with Milo of Croton's one: Milo was a 6th-century BC wrestler from the Magna Graecia city of Croton.</p>	
Presentation (History and English)	<p>To test their knowledge of ancient Greek and Roman societies, students are asked to highlight Sandow's resemblance to the physiques of classic Greek and Roman sculptures through an oral presentation.</p>	1 hour
The Greek aesthetic canon (Art)	<p>The art teacher introduces the class to this theme with images of Polycleitan Kouros and Doryphoros, then ask students to compare and contrast the sculptures with Sandow's photos mimicking the pose of the statues. Students are introduced to sculptor Polycleitus of Argos and his set of rules and measurements for constructing what he considered the ideal human figure, the so-called Polycleitus' canon that influenced also Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man.</p>	1 hour
Social Research Project	<p>Students are told to develop an online questionnaire to investigate how important young people think body perfection is and which sports are most</p>	1 hour

(PE)	<p>popular among teenagers for staying in shape. PE teacher may wish students to carry out the task in groups or pairs rather than working alone.</p> <p>learners have to search on Europeana for images of people doing sports or suggesting human body perfection’s search and use these to design open and /or multiple-choice questions to understand recipients’ attitude towards physical culture.</p> <p>To create questionnaire students can use google forms or Typeform.</p> <p>They should share it online through their social network contacts, friends and classmates and let it circulate for at least one week.</p> <p>With the collected responses and data, they are asked to realize an infographic using Venngage to show the results of their research. Once they have finished their infographics, they can share them either in the classroom (follow up) or online.</p>	
<p>Wrap up writing task (English, History, Art, PE)</p>	<p>Students are requested to write an article in English for a fitness blog, the title of the article is: “From Polyclitus to Sandow: searching for human body perfection from past to nowadays”.</p> <p>The article can be published on a blogging platform (a very intuitive and user-friendly one is Wix in HTML format) or shared as PDF on an online publishing platform such as Issuu.</p>	2 hours

Assessment

A progress portfolio assessment is strongly recommended for this LS: students’ works produced for tasks’ completion, can be collected and added to the personal portfolio to exhibit their performances. For the final assignment, a peer evaluation approach is adopted (see Annexes).

***** AFTER IMPLEMENTATION *****

Student feedback

A noticeable number of students expressed positive comments about the atmosphere in class during tasks completion. Generally, students had a positive attitude towards the LS. The total student-to-student interaction time's quantity observed was high thanks to the collaborative learning approach. Students had enough time to adequately share their ideas in teams and they appreciated this. Overall participation was good and students were comfortable with the activities setups.

Teacher’s remarks

A good way for a teacher to evaluate the implementation of this LS is by adopting a self-assessment rubric at the end of each lesson: you can find the basic grid I used in the annexes section. I experimented with the lessons in hybrid modality (part online, part in presence) and they worked in both formats.

Working in groups allowed students to interact, make mistakes, and receive feedback from their peers and this helped them to overcome their weaknesses. Collaboration played a pivotal role in terms of motivation: especially during the discussion assignment, students put high effort into supporting their point, excelling in on-task attention and concentration.

The variety of learning activities included in this LS and the fact that the students were stimulated to relate them to their own life (see the social research project), allowed learners to choose how to demonstrate their knowledge. They also had the opportunity to acquire further skills beyond the content and language knowledge: they benefited from the digital tools used for creative tasks' completion (procedural knowledge).

About the Europeana DSI-4 project

[Europeana](#) is Europe's digital platform for cultural heritage, providing free online access to over 53 million digitised items drawn from Europe's museums, archives, libraries and galleries. The Europeana DSI-4 project continues the work of the previous three Europeana Digital Service Infrastructures (DSIs). It is the fourth iteration with a proven record of accomplishment in creating access, interoperability, visibility and use of European cultural heritage in the five target markets outlined: European Citizens, Education, Research, Creative Industries and Cultural Heritage Institutions.

[European Schoolnet](#) (EUN) is the network of 34 European Ministries of Education, based in Brussels. As a not-for-profit organisation, EUN aims to bring innovation in teaching and learning to its key stakeholders: Ministries of Education, schools, teachers, researchers, and industry partners. European Schoolnet's task in the Europeana DSI-4 project is to continue and expand the Europeana Education Community.

Annex

Questions to inspire survey's designing (Social research project)

- Have you ever thought about how important physical appearance is for young people? And how sport and diet can sometimes become an obsession rather than a healthy lifestyle habit to adopt? Have you ever wondered about physical culture and body beauty as advertised in the media?
- What are the stereotypes about body beauty that condition your expectations?
- How important is fitness for teenagers?
- Do young people exercise more for health or just for physical appearance?
- Is there such a thing as a perfect body as in the canon of the sculptor Polyclitus? Or is perfection an abstract concept that does not correspond to any precise body image?

Instructions for the article's assignment

Start with the ancient Greek ideal of beauty and include the birth of modern body culture with Eugen Sandow. The results of the questionnaire may be inserted into the script.

The article must be structured in three parts:

- Introduction - saying what the article is about
- Facts - sharing some of the information learned
- Conclusion - explaining why it's important to care about body shape but without being obsessed by it.

Words limit: 500

Questions for peer checking (Article)

This is the checklist that the teacher could give the students for peer evaluation of the written assignment:

- Highlight what you liked about the text.
- Find and correct any spelling or grammatical errors.
- Find and edit anything you feel wasn't clear.
- Evaluate whether the tone of the text is coherent and proper for the reader.
- Has the writer avoided mixing formal and informal registers?
- Has the writer fulfilled the task with all three sections of the article?

Exit slips

Name one thing you improved on in class today.

Name one thing you didn't love or you didn't understand about the class today.

Describe one topic that we covered today that you would like to learn more about.

Write one suggestion for your teacher.

Teacher's self-assessment rubric

Did I listen to the students as they work in small groups, concentrating on what they were saying, and how they were saying it?	YES	NO	NOT ENOUGH
Did I look at students' written work, reading what they were writing, and spotting what the complications were?	YES	NO	NOT ENOUGH
As students worked, did I give them information about how they could improve? Or was I busy doing other things (e.g. preparing the materials for the next lesson, entering data in the electronic class register, marking homework, etc....)?	YES	NO	NOT ENOUGH