

Documentation as Remembrance: A Classroom Activity

by Paddy Bowman

La Teacher 1 print; color ink jet; sheets 61 x 46 cm. (poster format) | Poster shows the smiling face of a teacher on a laptop computer screen. Behind her is a red globe of the world. Contributor: Ponce, Alfredo - Amplifier
Date: 2020



Devastating events of the past few years, from the Covid-19 pandemic to racism, war, and environmental crises, have been universally shared by people around the world, yet individually experienced. Reflecting on responses to these challenges can include documentation of personal and local markers of remembrance. Paying attention to such responses through writing, photography, mapping, recording, and artmaking helps us to situate ourselves and our communities in a time of global and local challenges in ways that can be healing and leave a record for others to witness.

The Library of Congress is archiving how people are expressing remembrance of current events. [Posters produced through the Amplifier Art Project are one example.](#) Based in Seattle, [Amplifier](#) is a nonprofit design studio that “builds art and media experiments to amplify the most important movements of our times.”

The Library of Congress archives many types of primary sources, including these posters. Archivists preserve materials for posterity and make them accessible by cataloging information such as the creator, date, location, size, materials, and keywords to make the archive searchable. They also digitize resources to make them available widely.

A Classroom Activity

Using this poster collection as a model, invite students to reflect on their experiences of recent events and people who they are grateful to for helping and healing.

Show the example of “La Teacher.” The image is a commentary on ways teachers were forced into two-dimensional roles on screens during the pandemic. It also is a play on the vibrantly colored cards used to play Lotería, often called Mexican bingo. The text illustrates how the Library of Congress catalogued this poster, providing information about the maker, materials, dimensions, date, and so on.

Ask students to unpack what they observe about this poster.

- How did teachers’ roles change during the pandemic?
- What does this image communicate about "La Teacher"?
- What details in the image are clues to how current events affected the roles and identities of teachers?
- What is not being said in the image and how does what is missing serve as another form of communication?
- Why do you think the Library of Congress choose to archive this image?

Extension: Ask students to consider how events of 2020-2022 affected their roles and identities. What changed? What stayed the same? What details would they include in a self-portrait to illustrate this time in their lives?

As a way of documenting the struggles of 2020-2022, ask students to make posters depicting events or people important to them during this time. Classmates can share their posters with one another and the school community. They can also create an archive for the classroom or the school library. Designing a template for recording information about their posters will make archiving easy and uniform.

Urls

Library of Congress Amplifier Posters <https://www.loc.gov/photos/?fa=contributor:amplifier&q=amplifier>
Amplifier Studios <https://amplifier.org>