

Unit Two: Art and Craft

Lesson 1

What is Beauty?

A. Warm up activity

- Close your eyes and picture something beautiful. What did you see? Share with your friends.
- Think of a work of art you have seen (e.g., a painting, a sculpture, a photograph, an embroidered quilt) that you considered beautiful. Describe it to your group.

Beauty is easy to appreciate but difficult to define. As we look around, we discover beauty in pleasurable objects and sights- in nature, in the laughter of children, in the kindness of strangers. But when asked to define it, we run into difficulties. Does beauty have an independent, objective identity? Is it universal, or is it shaped by individual perceptions? Does it truly lie in the eye of the beholder? -we ask ourselves.

Throughout history, poets and artists have described beauty in different ways. Poets make use of words to paint images of beauty, while artists create representations of beauty using their creative faculties.

Here are two poems that explore the theme of beauty. While Lord Byron (1788-1824) finds perfect beauty in a woman he idealizes, Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) asserts that beauty is inseparable from truth. Read the poems and complete the activities that follow.

'She Walks in Beauty' by Lord Byron

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.



One shade the more, one ray the less,
 Had half impaired the nameless grace
 Which waves in every raven tress,
 Or softly lightens o'er her face;
 Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
 How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
 So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
 The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
 But tell of days in goodness spent,
 A mind at peace with all below,
 A heart whose love is innocent!

‘I Died For Beauty’ by Emily Dickinson

I died for beauty, but was scarce
 Adjusted in the tomb,
 When one who died for truth was lain
 In an adjoining room.

He questioned softly why I failed?
 "For beauty," I replied.
 "And I for truth - the two are one;
 We brethren are," he said.

And so, as kinsmen met a-night,
 We talked between the rooms,
 Until the moss had reached our lips,
 And covered up our names.

B. Match the words on the left column with their meanings on the right column in the context of the two poems.

<i>Column A</i>	<i>Column B</i>
aspect	plural form of brother
gaudy	next to one another
impair scarce adjoining	tiny flowerless plants that grow in tufts or mats
brethren moss	in damp places facial expression; countenance
	to make or cause to become worse;
	damage or weaken cheap and showy,
	flashy
	barely, hardly
climes	a glossy black color
raven	climates

C. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- The poem “She Walks in Beauty” by Byron centres around a woman. What do you learn about her through the speaker’s descriptions?
- The speaker in Byron’s poem praises the fine features of the woman he admires — her face, eyes, hair, cheek, brow, smile, and skin. Find the lines in the poem that mention these features and describe what the speaker says about them.
- In the last stanza, the speaker in Byron’s poem suggests that his muse’s outer beauty is a testament to her inner goodness and innocence. Do you agree with this view? Explain your reasoning.
- “The glorification of physical beauty in “She Walks in Beauty” reflects the unrealistic beauty standards that society often places on women.” Do you agree? Justify your opinion.
- The poem “I Died for Beauty” by Dickinson presents a conversation between two individuals. Who are the speakers, and where are they?
- In “I Died for Beauty”, Dickinson creates a scene that is both frightening and comforting. Explain how she achieves this effect through the imagery in the poem.

- g. In Dickinson's poem, the man who died for truth suggests that truth and beauty are the same. Do you agree with this idea? Explain your reasoning.
- h. While Byron's poem primarily focuses on physical beauty, Dickinson offers a more philosophical perspective on what beauty is. Compare the depiction of beauty in the two poems and discuss which view of beauty you agree with.

D. Complete the story below in 200 words. Once finished, read your story to your friends.

Once there was a young artist in a remote village in Bangladesh. His name was Rabbi. He was asked by his mentor to draw the most beautiful object in the world. But Rabbi was confused about what that most beautiful thing could be. Every morning, he would rise early, go out, and roam the streets, shops, playgrounds, schools, and the nearby orchards and river, searching for something truly beautiful. Then one day...