

Social Justice

USING YOUR VOICE

A collaboration between the Anti-Defamation League, Austin ISD, and the Blanton Museum of Art



Esther before Ahasuerus

Luca Cambiaso

***Esther before Ahasuerus*, circa 1569**

Oil on canvas, 38 3/4 in. x 34 13/16 in.
Blanton Museum of Art, The University
of Texas at Austin, The Suida-Manning
Collection, 2017

The Bible tells the story of Esther, the heroine who risked her life to save her entire community. Esther's husband, the Persian king Ahasuerus, had consented to the genocide of the Jewish people in his land. He did not know that Esther, the wife whom he had chosen for her beauty, was Jewish. Though Esther was terrified, she put her own life at risk twice: first, by visiting the king without being summoned, a crime punishable by execution; and second, by revealing to him her Jewish faith.

Here, Cambiaso pictured the dramatic moment when Esther addressed the king, not knowing whether she would live or die. In fact, Esther's bravery was rewarded, as the king touched her with his scepter and listened to her appeal. Though the king could not stop the genocide, Esther negotiated that the Jews gain the right to defend their lives. Each year the holiday Purim commemorates the day the Jewish people fiercely battled their persecutors and prevented the genocide. It also celebrates Queen Esther, who risked everything for the sake of her community.





LOOK

Look at the painting for a full minute.
Notice your first thoughts and feelings.
Turn to a friend, and discuss what you see.

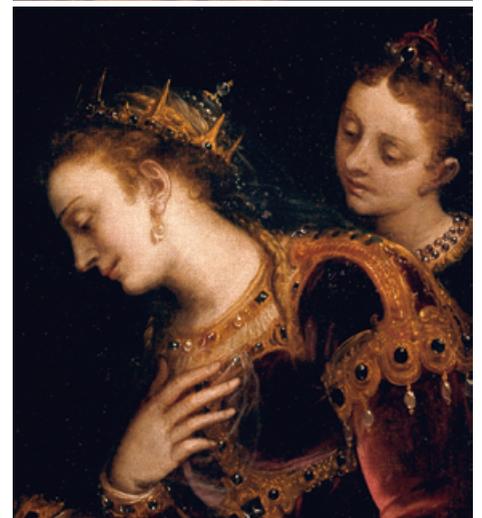
TALK

- What's going on in this picture? (There seems to be a story here.)
- What can you say about the characters in the story, based on clues you can find?
- How does the artist give a sense of emotion?
- How do you understand the body language?...the facial expressions?

READ

The painting is based on a story from the Bible. Esther, a young Jewish girl, was married to the Persian king, Ahasuerus. When a proud and hateful court official sent out a royal decree that Persia's Jews could be attacked, Esther bravely decided to share the secret of her own Jewish heritage with the King. Risking her own life, breaking the rules of the court, Esther used her voice to advocate for her people. Ahasuerus, who had been unaware of the decree, issued a second decree allowing the Jews to defend themselves.

Esther's voice helped create a safer situation for the Jews in Persia. Her courage is celebrated — and her story is told — each year in the Jewish holiday known as Purim.



LOOK & TALK

- Did Luca Cambiaso do a good job in showing the moment when Esther first approached the King? Why or why not?
- What other moments in the story might inspire a picture? List some possibilities.

MAKE

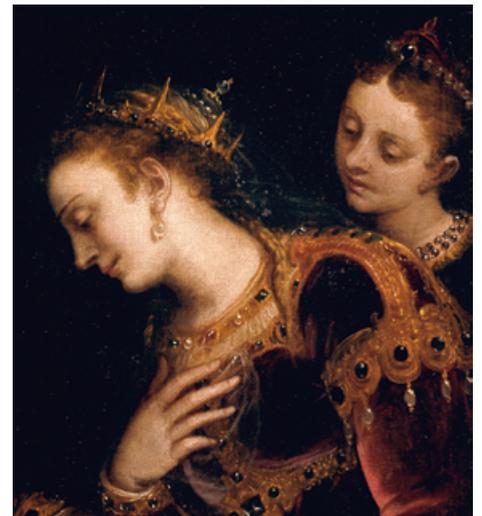
Learn more details about the story of Esther with some research and reading.

Write down a list of scenes. Choose one scene to illustrate. Your picture can show actions and feelings to help tell the story.

USE YOUR VOICE

- Can you think of a modern-day equivalent to this story?
- Make a list of modern-day people who are bravely using their voice to stand up against injustice. Who are they, what issues are they making us aware of?
- What happens when you don't use your voice?
- How will you use your voice to create a safer, more inclusive learning environment for yourself and your peers who are different from you?

Explore the story of Esther through performance! You can download a Reader's Theatre script written by the Blanton Education Department here: bit.ly/BlantonEstherScript.



Resource Guide

ADL's No Place for Hate®, the Blanton Museum of Art, and AISD have teamed up to bring anti-bias education and object based learning to our schools. This resource is one in a series featuring a work of art from the Blanton selected to foster important conversations and inspire students to act! The theme for this series is **Using Your Voice**, and considering this work of art should inspire students to use their voices to confront injustice in our world.

This guide has everything you need to create successful discussions and a No Place for Hate Action Project.

Here you will find:

- No Place for Hate guidelines for Action Projects
- Information about the artist and artwork
- Guiding questions for initial discussion and making
- Suggested community action projects



As this guide reaches multiple schools, we hope it will inspire students to work together to create action projects that can be shared and celebrated.

Please share your projects to Austin@adl.org, Education@blantonmuseum.org and Cultural.Proficiency@austinisd.org

No Place For Hate®

No Place for Hate® is a self-directed framework helping educators and students take the lead on improving and maintaining a school climate where all students thrive. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) offers resources to ensure that anti-bias and diversity education are an integral part of the school curriculum. No Place for Hate® also helps create and sustain inclusive school environments where all students feel valued and have the opportunity to succeed by promoting respect for individual difference while challenging bigotry and prejudice. Launched in Austin schools in the fall of 2004, the popular campaign has been embraced by hundreds of campuses throughout the Central Texas region. Austin ISD is the largest No Place for Hate® school district in the United States.

The Need for Discussion

The success of No Place for Hate® relies on the assurance that all members of school communities have a central voice in creating a plan that will lead to lasting change. The foundation for creating that change is a strong coalition of school leaders — students, educators, and family members — who have a stake in the outcomes of that plan.

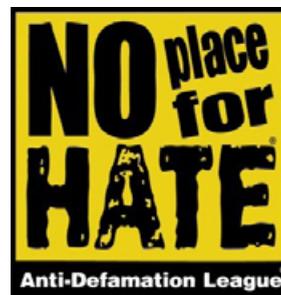
There is no more obvious stakeholder than a student. Too often, adults assume they know what is needed to support youth, but without engaging students in the process, change can be elusive. No Place for Hate® Committees create activities that amplify students' voices and give them opportunities to be active participants.

All qualifying activities must be consistent with the No Place for Hate® mission by challenging bigotry, bias and bullying; exposing young people to diverse identity groups, backgrounds and points of view; promoting respect for individual and group differences; and providing opportunities for community-building within the school. Projects should challenge students to think critically, instill a sense of empathy, and empower students to become allies for one another.

No Place For Hate® Activities Should:

- Involve all students in active learning
- Involve all students in discussion and debriefing of activities
- Address school-based issues
- Have a school-wide impact
- Take place throughout the school year, with three or more activities spread out over time
- Focus on inclusivity and community

For more information visit austin.adl.org/noplacementforhate.



Blanton School Programs

During the temporary pause in the Blanton Museum of Art's gallery teaching program, the education team has designed a robust program of digital content for the semester, outlined below. We will be rolling out the content on a staggered basis. All digital resources can be accessed at bit.ly/BlantonEducation.

Each lesson will feature works of art from the museum's permanent collection. All lessons are designed both for asynchronous learning and to stimulate classroom conversation; many lessons can be broken down into smaller units for greater flexibility.

- **Social Justice [Grades 3–5, 6–8, 9–12]:** Downloadable art images with discussion prompts to engage issues of equity and inclusion.
- **#ArtWhereYouAre Studio [all ages]:** Video series led by a museum educator featuring easy, make-at-home art activities inspired by works in the museum collection.
- **SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) [Grades 4–7]:** Short video-based lessons that lead students through a close-looking activity, followed by journaling prompts.
- **STEAM [Grades 3–5]:** Longer video-based lessons that can be broken down into shorter lessons. All lessons include an art-making activity and connections to science and/or math TEKS.
- **Early Literacy [Grades PK–2]:** Short video-based lessons that give younger students the opportunity to engage with a picture book and works of art from the museum collection. Lessons include a video of a museum educator reading the selected book, as well as related activities.

Gallery educators are temporarily not available for online or in-person teaching. The galleries are open for individual visitors and families, but not for group tours. Please check our website for policies and updates regarding visits at blantonmuseum.org.

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