



Carrie Mae Weems

Experimental Activities for Boys and Girls of All Ages, Shapes, Sizes, and Colors

By Carrie Mae Weems

Keep all the activities and exercises below in a book that you make with your own hands. After you complete all of the tasks, place them in the book, and tie a red or yellow ribbon around the book. With a camera, or pencil, or pen, make a small portrait of yourself; it should be no larger than 5 x 7 inches.

Take two dolls—one black and one white. Describe each, saying what you like and dislike about both.

On a plain white piece of paper write, "I love myself when I'm laughing, and then again, when I'm looking mean and impressive."

In the library find a book about Roy De Carava. Tell someone else about your experience of looking at these pictures or write your thoughts on a piece of paper.

Take a picture of your family, then write the names of each person beneath the picture along with other thoughts that come to mind, even if it makes you uncomfortable.

Look in a mirror, then write down what you like best and least about what you see or feel.

Write a short poem about the music you like best and put it in a bottle and throw it in the sea or post it in a public space.

Take four pieces of paper: one black, one white, one yellow, and one red. Make each square the same size and paste each one on a brown piece of paper. With a black crayon or marker write the word "equivalence."

Activity Summary

Topic: 16 experiments

Suitable for

- Beginning level
- Intermediate level
- Advanced level

Suggested media

- Book arts
- Drawing
- Mixed media
- Photography
- Text

Ask an adult—not your teacher—what three things are most important to them. Listen closely, write down what you've heard and give it to them as a gift.

Look at the sky and make a wish—if you like, make a photo or drawing of the sky; write the wish across the picture.

Take a globe and spin it three times. Each time, stop the globe with the tip of your finger and write down the name of each country you land on.

Take a walk along the shore or beach. When you return home, write down your strongest thoughts and feelings.

Take a long look at yourself in a mirror, then write down:
the color of your eyes
the shape of your face
the color and texture of your hair
your height
your weight
your clothing size
your shoe size

Make a peace sign and mail it to President Obama.

With your parents' permission, call the White House, and state your opposition to the war. Write down what you felt by taking this action.

On a sunny day, buy or borrow a globe or beach ball. Between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m., go to a beach or park or your own backyard. Toss the globe into the air multiple times, being careful to catch it each time. While doing this exercise, think about the world you live in and your responsibility to the earth.

About Carrie Mae Weems

Artist's Work



Burnt Orange Girl from Colored People Series, Carrie Mae Weems, 1990. Photo courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York



Moody Blue Girl from Colored People Series, Carrie Mae Weems, 1990. Photo courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Artist Biography

Born 1953 in Portland, Oregon

Currently lives in Syracuse, New York

Carrie Mae Weems challenges the narrative of "official" history. In her photographic images, texts, videos, and installations, she gives voice to stories seldom captured in textbooks. Stemming from her interest in folklore and a desire to understand her and her family's experiences, Weems' work explores broader issues of class, gender, and African American heritage through the lens of individual experience.

Weems was first drawn to photography in the 1970s when she used a camera to document grassroots political activism in the Bay Area. Her work has since expanded to include various styles of photographic images—by reconstructing or appropriating old images or by pairing photographic images with text in the form of songs, rhymes, racist jokes, and idioms. In her photographic series and video installation *May Days Long Forgotten*, Weems enlisted young women from unemployed, working-class families and posed them in fictional tableaux that evoke late-19th-century French paintings. The results are provocative musings about the politics embedded in images and language.

Education