

# Digital Citizenship: Arts Integrated Lessons

## Lesson Title: Selfies

### Grade Level: High School



#### Essential Question:

Why do we take selfies?

#### Materials

- Lyrics to and soundtrack of “Selfies” by Nina Nesbitt
- Copies of the article “Why Selfies Matter” by Alexandra Sifferlin for TIME
- Student cell phones for taking a selfie

#### Discussion Guidelines

1. Ask students about their “selfies” habits.
  - Do you take a lot of selfies or a few? Why?
  - How much do you share your selfies? On what social media sites or platforms (such as email or text message)? Why?
  - What do you think are the best and the worst kind of selfies? Why?
  - What is the difference between taking a selfie to express a thought or an idea and using words via text or talking? Why?
  - What is your main purpose for taking selfies?
2. Distribute lyrics and listen to the recording of “Selfies” by Nina Nesbitt.
3. Based on the song, how would the singer answer the questions from step 1?
4. Review the concept of **social commentary**: a form of communication that seeks to express an opinion or deliver a message regarding a social issue, usually with the intent of creating change by appealing to the audience’s sense of justice. The music and lyrics of Nina Nesbitt’s song addresses a perceived issue in society. What is the message delivered by the social commentary of this song? Do you agree or disagree with the message? Why?
5. Distribute copies of the article “Why Selfies Matter” by Alexandra Sifferlin for TIME. Have students read the article with a partner and look for ways the people in the article interpret selfies. How does this article relate to the song?
6. Discuss their findings as a group and challenge students to think about why they take selfies.

#### Conclusion

Ask students to take out their phones and take a selfie. How do they choose to take that selfie? Is it a solo or group selfie? What does that say? How might they use that selfie? Why do we take selfies?

# "Selfies"

by Nina Nesbitt

Sitting in my bedroom tonight  
Thinking of how to change your mind  
Since you walked out my life again  
Yeah  
So I strike a pose and tilt my chin  
And hold the light to suit my skin  
Your favorite t-shirt on again  
Counting hours  
Counting lies  
3, 2, 1  
And I smile  
Taking pictures of myself, self, self  
Taking pictures of myself, self self  
Guess I'm reaching out to be assured  
All I wanted was to be adored  
Now you're telling me I'm vain, vain, vain yeah  
But you don't feel my pain, pain, pain  
Facing life upon the shelf, shelf, shelf  
Taking pictures of myself, self, self  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself oh oh  
I'll post it up in black and white  
With a depressing quote on my life  
So that you see what I'm going through  
Yeah  
This is desperation at it's best  
A conversation to be left  
But all my pride was burned by you  
Counting days  
Counting takes  
3, 2, 1  
I'm awake  
Taking pictures of myself, self, self  
Taking pictures of myself, self self  
Guess I'm reaching out to be assured  
All I wanted was to be adored

Now you're telling me I'm vain, vain, vain yeah  
But you don't feel my pain, pain, pain  
Facing life upon the shelf, shelf, shelf  
Taking pictures of myself, self, self  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself oh oh  
Taking pictures of myself, self, self  
Taking pictures of myself, self self  
Guess I'm reaching out to be assured  
All I wanted was to be adored  
Now you're telling me I'm vain, vain, vain yeah  
But you don't feel my pain, pain, pain  
Facing life upon the shelf, shelf, shelf  
Taking pictures of myself, self, self  
Hey, what you looking at?  
Hey, what you looking at?  
Hey, what do you looking at?  
Hey, what do you looking at? (Taking pictures  
of myself)  
Hey, what you looking at? (Taking pictures  
of myself)  
Hey, what you looking at? (Taking pictures  
of myself)  
Hey, what you looking at? (Taking pictures  
of myself)  
Hey, what you looking at? (Taking pictures  
of myself)  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself  
Taking pictures of myself oh  
Songwriters  
NINA LINDBERG NESBITT, THOM KIRKPATRICK

# Article: Why Selfies Matter

By Alexandra Sifferlin, [TIME](#) Sept. 06, 2013

**Whether it's the duckface smirk or the coyly suggestive close-up, selfies are a mainstay of Twitter and Instagram and have parents and psychologists wringing their hands over what they "mean."**

Some social scientists lump the selfie trend — which is most popular among younger social media users — into the larger narcissism that they say is more prevalent among today's preteens and adolescents, arguing that the self-portraits are an extension of their self-absorption, while others view it as nothing more than an outlet for self-expression, which just happen to be shared more publicly via the communication mode of our times — social media.

But how aware are young children, or even teens, about the impression that their selfies leave? Do they appreciate that with their likenesses, they are often sending strong visual messages — some even suggestive — that they might not want conveyed?

Dr. Pamela Rutledge, director of the Media Psychology Research Center, believes that parents and experts are over-analyzing the selfie. First, she says, they aren't really that new. As she points out in her column for *Psychology Today*, the term selfie was defined in *UrbanDictionary.com* in 2005. But now that more people have cell phones with cameras, they're just more prevalent.

"The way kids think about technology, media and communication is much different than people even 10 years their senior," she says. "Technology is changing so fast that even small generational gaps are meaningful in how we view 'normal.'"

Developmentally, selfies make sense for children and teens. And for the most part, they are simply reflections of their self-exploration and nothing more. "Self captured images allow young adults and teens to express their mood states and share important experiences," says Dr. Andrea Letamendi, a clinical psychologist and research fellow at UCLA. As tweens and teens try to form their identity, selfies serve as a way to test how they look, and therefore feel, in certain outfits, make-up, poses and places. And because they live in a digital world, self-portraits provide a way of participating and affiliating with that world.

But even though taking selfies is a part of growing up digital, that doesn't mean all self-portraits are okay. Like all behaviors that children and teens test out, parents should help them to learn the limits and guidelines for which types of pictures are acceptable and which are not. It's not likely that pre-teens and even adolescents think beyond seeing the images as a type of developmental skin that they try on and shed, for example, but they do need to be aware that their actions may have consequences. "Kids only have awareness within the context of their experience. Expecting teens to understand what something "means" to an adult is about as reasonable as expecting an adult to understand what it means to the teen," says Rutledge.

That includes whether others will perceive the pictures as suggestive or too indulgent. Rutledge says that it's important for mom and dad to remember that finding and establishing this threshold of appropriateness may be particularly challenging since it could be different for each adolescent. But such discussions are likely the most positive way to solve the issue — explaining to a child what "questionable" selfies are — why it's not acceptable to send out a sexually suggestive picture — is more constructive than blocking their Facebook account or taking away their phone, she says.

But increasingly, other experts say that selfies can also be a window into deeper adolescent issues. With Facebook becoming a prominent resource in young people's therapy sessions, they could provide a useful jumping off point for addressing a teen's or young adult's self-perceptions. In cases where the patients find it hard to open up about issues, selfies could be a way for therapists to break the ice and start a dialogue about what the teen was feeling when the self-portrait was taken, or why he snapped the picture in the first place. "Scientific studies are gathering more information about the use of social media to help professionals recognize these as avenues to identify, support, and help young folks who may otherwise not receive this kind of attention," says Letamendi. "Psychologically speaking, there may be some benefit to participating in sharing selfies because this practice is interwoven in our social culture and is a way to interact socially with others."

Even apart from situations where selfies can inform emotional or behavioral problems, for example, the material that children and adolescents view online — selfies included — can be influential in molding their sense of self. Research has shown that adults make emotional connections to what they see posted online, and that their behaviors and decisions are influenced by how peers in their social network are interacting. People often feel envy, loneliness and generally worse about themselves after perusing their friends' party pictures, for instance, and the latest research, published this week in the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, suggests that teens are more likely to engage in risky activities like smoking and drinking if they see their friends doing it in photos.

That's not surprising, given the ubiquity of social media influences in our lives. But it's worth studying, those in adolescent development say, to better understand how these social contributors are shaping the next generation, for better or worse.

Read the entire article, ['Why Selfies Matter' by Alexandra Sifferlin at TIME 2013](#)