



Matter That Matters

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In this collaborative Humanities and Chemistry project, students worked in partnerships to comprehensively research a “problematic” element, compound, or material and its effect on society, both historically and currently. For example, one pair investigated chocolate and its connections to child labor; another explored carbon and conflict diamonds. In Chemistry class, students created an image that represented the conflict and used electrochemistry to etch it into a copper plate. Photographs of the copper plates and the research paper from each group were compiled into a book, which was displayed at Exhibition and is available on Amazon. Our goal was for students to understand how resources in our natural world acquire value and the positive and negative effects of the pursuit of ownership of those resources.

Teacher Reflection

What we really enjoyed about this project was that the interdisciplinary collaboration felt really natural and authentic; students were able to synthesize their knowledge from both classes at a higher level, and it was rewarding to see. There was also lots of room for student choice and we ended up with a beautiful and rigorous final product. Seeing students at Exhibition fluently switch between talking about the electrochemistry of copper etching and historical conflicts over resources was inspiring.

Student Reflections

The importance of a material is influenced by its chemistry a lot, because its chemistry gives it the properties that make it important.
—Roan

I learned that you always should look into a conflict. Always see the full story and never just blindly accept the media’s version of it.
—Eden

To learn more visit <http://nicolehthma.weebly.com/> or sophieoller.wordpress.com. Amazon book link: https://www.amazon.com/dp/1541076818/ref=cm_sw_r_sms_c_api_adHVybKR5ZD25