

Topic: Deaf Culture

General purpose: To Inform

Specific purpose: To educate audience on the Deaf Arts.

Organizational Pattern: Topical

Thesis: Looking at the arts, today Deaf Art, Deaf Theater, and Deaf Poetry will be focused on.

Length: 8 minutes 05 seconds (8:05)

Deaf Culture

I. Introduction

- A. Attention Getter: What is culture exactly? It is the way of life of a group of people. Culture is everything from food, religion, language, socialites, and even the arts.
- B. Today I will be speaking about Deaf Culture and focusing on the arts. This will include Deaf Art, Deaf Theater, and Deaf Poetry.
- C. As American Sign Language Students, or students learning a new language in general, we must immerse ourselves in the culture of the people of that language. Immersion will further our understanding of the language, as well as make communication between all us more fluid.
- D. Because culture is such a broad topic, and time restricts us here today, I will focus on three areas of Deaf Culture: Deaf Art, Deaf Theater, and Deaf Poetry.

II. Body

- A. Deaf Art, just like art to hearing people, offers a visual way to express feelings, emotions, and inspirations.
 1. A specific style of art, founded by eight deaf artists, is the De'VIA art movement. This is a shortened term for Deaf View/Image Art. ("What is deaf art," n.d.).
 2. De'VIA art can be created by those that are hearing or deaf, as long as it is born out of the deaf experience. The De'VIA manifesto actually states that the art "creates an outlet for the deaf community to express ambivalent feelings and experiences" ("What is deaf art," n.d.).
 3. One of the founders, Chuck Baird, is very famous in the deaf world for his artwork with the De'VIA movement. By incorporating American Sign Language into his artwork, he captures the beauty of signing along with it.
 1. By looking at [figure 1](#), a person is signing the word "Color," with each finger being a different color. Many who view this piece believe that the sign is almost coming to life in the painting. [Figure 2](#) features a cat with the sign for cat on either side of its head. This

is because the sign for cat is outlining whiskers on the face with your fingers. Again, this demonstrates how Chuck Baird creates visual sign language in his art.

Transition: I have just discussed De'VIA, providing two examples from its founder Chuck Baird. Now I would like to talk about Deaf Theater.

- B. Deaf Theater is the most known out of all the Deaf Arts. This is due to its spike in popularity in recent years. *Spring Awakening*, a musical that features sign as well as deaf actors, has made it to Broadway. This created an audience mixed with hearing and deaf.
 - 1. This oldest known Deaf Theater is the National Theater of the Deaf (NAD) that was established in 1967 (“National theater of the deaf-history,” 2014). They are a travelling theater company that is still around today. This famous theater is known for the signed adaptations of classical literature, especially William Shakespeare and other authors of the classics.
 - 2. Although the NAD is the oldest deaf theater company, they share the same goals as all deaf theater’s do. This means to give opportunities to the hearing community to immerse themselves in Deaf Culture, as well as a chance at being fascinated by deaf artistry. Deaf Theater also creates culture and social complexes for the deaf (“National theater of the deaf-history,” 2014), giving the deaf an area to safely communicate with each other and even share their experiences. Deaf Theater, lastly, promotes deaf pride. It shows that theater is not just for the hearing, and that deaf people can participate in visual artistry.

Transition: In fact, all deaf people can participate in visual art, even poetry. I will therefore discuss deaf poetry next.

- C. Deaf poetry, or commonly called ASL poetry, uses ASL to convey meaning produced by the author. When performed, it is commonly done without interpretation or paper at first, and then a second time with commentary. This is due to the author wanting their audience to capture the emotion and story visually at first, and then hear it afterward.
 - 1. Inspirations for ASL poetry ranges depending on the author. A majority, however, does stem from the oppression of the deaf. A lot of poetry features stories of deaf children growing up in a hearing world, and experiences of pressure to learn lip-reading and even be vocal. However, there are happy inspirations as well. Many deaf poets sign about the beauty of the world through their eyes, and others tell funny stories of their past. All is captured by using their hands and bodies.
 - 2. Hearing people wonder how you can see emotion and feelings without words; others assume that the stories are all signed in ASL format. Actually, much of Deaf Poetry barely uses sign language. There may be a

couple subject signs, but the main point is to show their audiences the emotions. The authors' bodies move in rhythms and different forms, mainly relying on facial expressions and the beat of their body movement ("What is ASL poetry," n.d).

3. A very famous Deaf Poet is Peter Cook, who toured with his Dead Poetry show called "The Flying Words Project" ("Flying words project," 2016). He did this with his hearing co-author Kenny Lerner. Peter Cook believed that American Sign Language naturally had beauty in it, and wanted to promote that beauty through poetry. He toured the world with this idea, and promoted the deaf community by doing so.

Transition: All of the arts are not limited to the hearing, and with Deaf Culture, comes a group of people that would like to make it known that the deaf can do anything the hearing can, except hear.

III. Conclusion

- A. By focusing on Deaf Arts, we learned a small amount of Deaf Culture, but also learned of the goals and backgrounds of these arts as well.
- B. Deaf Art, Deaf Theater, and Deaf Poetry are all arts that many hearing people did not think the deaf could participate in, but with examples, showed us that they do partake in these artistries.
- C. This is very important to understand as American Sign Language students, and we and everybody else must move forward as to not only appreciate Deaf Culture, but not fear to immerse ourselves in it as well.
- D. The deaf utilize art the same way as the hearing do. This is to express creativity, emotions, feelings, and to share their stories with the world. The Deaf Arts create an environment that is expressive, making the deaf proud to be deaf, as well as welcoming any hearing people in to teach them more about who they are, which is deaf family.

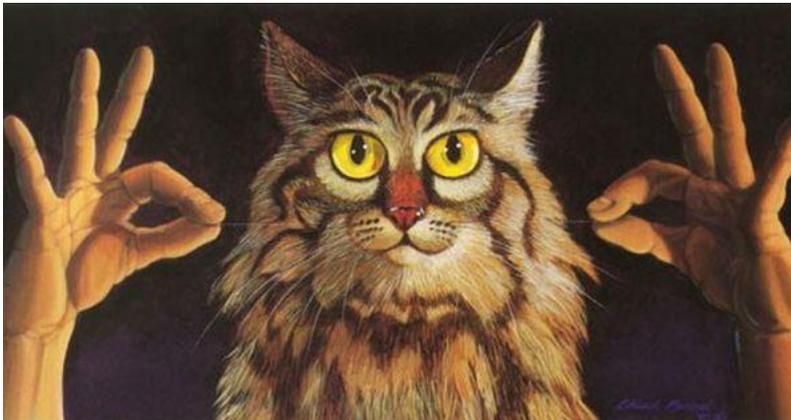
Figures

Figure 1. *Colors*



[\[back to outline\]](#)

Figure 2. *Double Nine Lives*



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References

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