Kameelah Janan Rasheed

Born
1985 (East Palo Alto, California)

Education
Pomona College, BA
Stanford University, MA

Lives and Works
Brooklyn, New York

About the Artist
A self-described learner, Rasheed examines the appearance and legibility of text in a range of creative forms, including wall collages, large-scale public installations, publications, and lecture-performances. Poetic and political, these works explore the complications, slippages, and possibilities of language in relation to Black subjectivity, and create new ecosystems of meaning.

Rasheed's process draws upon the tools typically used in the self-publication and distribution of radical writings. She excerpts, combines, photocopies, and annotates fragments of letters, words, and images from her archive of books and printed matter in order to “talk back” to a text.

Media and Materials
Collage, installation, publication, performance

Key Words and Ideas
Annotation
Collaboration
Communication
Identity
Language
Learner
Literature
Poetry
Reading
Text

Related Artists
El Anasut
Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg
Ann Hamilton
Trenton Doyle Hancock
Tim Hawkinson
Jenny Holzer
Margaret Killgallen
Barbara Kruger
Glenn Lignon
Azikiwe Mohammed
Elizabeth Murray
Paul Pfeiffer
Rose Salane
Chris Ware
Xu Bing
How to Use This Guide
Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Kameelah Janan Rasheed into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

Before Viewing
Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

1. What does it mean to understand a text or piece of literature? How do you know you actually understand it?
2. How do artists and viewers, like authors and readers, interact through their art?
3. When has your family influenced the way you go about making or doing something?

While Viewing
Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

1. What does Rasheed say about the relationship between writer and reader?
2. As you watch, note which words or phrases stand out to you.
3. How does Rasheed’s family influence her process and her choice of materials?

After Viewing
Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

1. Why does Rasheed invite people to “go slow”? What does she hope the viewer will do?
2. Where was Rasheed’s final work displayed? Does the placement of a text or artwork influence the viewer’s interpretation?
3. Why might Rasheed have adapted her father’s study method as her artistic process? How does Rasheed take her father’s study method to a new place? How are their processes both similar and different?

Related Activities
Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

✔ Choose a member of your household and consider their process for a typical task, like organizing, cooking, cleaning, studying, etc. Adapt their process for a new artwork. Use their materials or choose your own.

✔ Choose one of the words or phrases you wrote while watching Rasheed’s film. Use this word or phrase as the starting point for a small drawing or video you create. Feature the word or phrase at least once, or many times, to allow viewers to engage with the idea you’re sharing.

Did you use this guide, Art21 films, or Art21-featured artists in your classroom? If so, tag Art21 on social media or email us at education@art21.org.