

Picturing Early America: People, Places, and Events, 1770-1870

Lisa Ashley
Institute Closure

Sample Student 8th Grade Language Arts Writing Activities
Using Works of Art

Activity One

The following picture is telling a story.

Use your imagination and describe everything that might have happened before the picture was captured.



Next, describe everything that is happening during the picture.

Finally, describe everything that will happen after the picture.

Volunteers can read their sequences.

Activity Two

Use your imagination and describe everything you would smell, see, taste, feel, and hear if you were in the following picture.



Volunteers can read their
descriptions.

Both images taken from the N.E.H. “Picturing America” collection:

1. John Singer Sargent, “Portrait of a Boy”, 1890
2. Winslow Homer, “The Veteran in a New Field”, 1865

Activity Review

Participants practiced writing logical sequences and sensory descriptions based on works of art as visual references.

NCTE / IRA Standards for the English Language Arts

2. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

3. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

- Lisa Ashley
- N.E.H. Summer Institute Sample Lesson
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- Lesson:
- Using an art piece as a prompt for sequence writing in the English/Language Arts classroom

- Grades: 5-12

- Time: One sixty minute class period

- Objectives:
- By the end of this lesson, students will have:
 1. Reviewed the definition of a sequence
 2. Studied an art picture
 3. Practiced creative writing in response to a picture
 4. Practiced writing a logical sequence which includes a beginning, middle and end

- Warm up:
 1. Students are asked to recall what the definition of a sequence is and what types of sequences can exist (beginning, middle, end; first, second, third; before, during, after; a, b, c, etc.)

- Materials:
 1. An art picture (or a photograph) for each student to study
 2. Pencils and paper

- Activities:
 1. Class discussion of sequences
 2. Students determine the order and sequence of pictures taken out of order by the teacher
 3. Students then study individual pictures
 4. Students are asked to write three creative paragraphs describing
 - * what happened BEFORE their picture
 - * what is happening DURING their picture
 - * what will happen AFTER their picture
 5. When finished, students can share their pictures and descriptions with the class or with partners

- Closure: Teacher asks students to discuss and summarize what they learned, reviewed and practiced

- Meeting State, I.R.A., N.C.T.E. Standards: Writing, viewing, analyzing, listening, speaking

- Comments: One of the things that I like about this lesson is that you can adapt it to any grade level (including E.L.L. students) and change the prompt and the practice. For example, instead of writing a creative sequence, students could practice descriptive writing. By describing all the things they would experience with their senses if they were in the picture themselves, they can use their imaginations to describe various sights, smells, sounds, tastes, etc.