

Lesson Plan

Ekphrasis/Writing from Art

Summary

1. Subject: English
2. Topic or Unit of Study: Poetry, Short Fiction, Literary Devices
3. Grade/Level: 6-9
4. Objective: Through George Seurat's *A Sunday On La Grande Jatte*, students will learn to create poetic devices, character, and narrative from a visual representation.
5. Time Allotment: 45-50 minutes.

Implementation

Learning Context

Begin lesson reviewing previous classes on writing poetry and fiction on written concepts. Touch upon the devices of metaphor, simile, alliteration, hyperbole, and personification.

Procedure

- a. Show visual aid of the Shield of Achilles. Ask students how they would describe it. What description words would they use? Any metaphors or similes?
- b. Introduce the concept of ekphrasis. Show provided examples (Homer describing Achilles' shield in *Iliad*, if time, Honor Moormen's *Staring At the Night*)
- c. Present to the class George Seurat's *A Sunday On La Grande Jatte*. Without telling them historical context, instruct students to write on their outline sheets in the following order: setting, first impressions/observations, metaphors/similes, alliterative descriptions, personification, one prediction.
- d. Discuss the history and context of the painting. Instruct students to create their own ekphrastic poem derived from Seurat's work. Encourage them to draw from their outline notes for content (create the title from their first impression, for example).
- e. After 15 minutes, take 5 minutes to go around the room and have volunteering students present their examples. Discuss with the group any similarities and differences. What

were some details cited? Common ideas? Story context that may not be in the original painting?

- f. Independent time and homework: Instruct students to choose **one** person depicted in the painting. Write a short story based on this character. What did they do before they came to the park this day? What is their history? Use literary devices and elements of your class poem if you would like.

Differentiated Instruction

Encourage students to think about the Five Senses (hear, taste, touch, smell, see) as they craft their poems. Use discussion time to bring out description ideas from other students for the whole group to hear. Work with individual students on which sense drives their vision of the poem most.

Advanced Instruction: If in-class work is completed, ask students to consider a visual landscape in their community. What does it look like? What are prominent features of the setting? Compose a poem in the same template for this location.

Materials & Resources

- a. Handouts: Poem Outline
- b. Resources: *The Shield of Achilles*, *A Sunday On La Grande Jatte*
- c. Projector if possible
- d. Lined paper