

## Yale 2016 PIER Summer Institute: Ancient Cities, Modern Inquiries Developing Narrative Description through Art

Author(s): Heather Sobek

School: Legg Middle School, Coldwater, MI

Subject Area(s): English Language Arts

Grade Level(s): 6th

Time Allotment: 3 class periods (or more, depending on formality of summative assessment)

**Lesson Description:** *Include- why is this important for students to know?*

In this lesson, students will closely analyze a narrative painting, *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* by Benjamin West, identifying the details of experiences, events, and/or characters as they are presented by the artist. Then, students will write a version of the story told in the painting, with emphasis on the narrative technique of description. When producing narrative writing, it is important for students to be able to effectively describe these elements of the story.

**Learning Context:** *How does this lesson/unit fit within the context of the the larger unit or other units?*

Throughout 6th grade English (and beyond), students work on their narrative writing skills in a variety of ways. This lesson emphasizes description in narrative writing by using narrative art as a basis for the story. While this lesson could be presented with any piece of narrative art, I have chosen to use a piece that includes content related to ancient history, which is an emphasis in middle school social studies.

**Compelling Question(s):** *What question(s) will guide student inquiry during the lesson/unit?*

How does art tell a story? How does this compare to the way literature tells a story?

**Content Standards:** *What standards are addressed through the teaching of this lesson/unit?*

CCSS.ELA.W.6.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- CCSS.ELA.W.6.3B: Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

**Lesson Objectives/Learning Intentions:**

- I can analyze a narrative painting, identifying the details of setting, characters, and/or plot.
- I can write a narrative based on a piece of narrative art.
- I can use narrative techniques, such as description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

### Lesson Vocabulary:

Content Vocabulary	Skill/Process Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Narrative</li> <li>- Setting</li> <li>- Characters</li> <li>- Plot</li> <li>- Description</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze</li> </ul>

**Supporting Questions:** *These questions are intended to contribute knowledge and insights to the inquiry behind the compelling question. These questions should provide students with the opportunity to explore content essential to advance the inquiry. Supporting questions should also serve to support development of formative assessment tasks (progress monitoring) and teacher or student selection of resources/teaching materials.*

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What are elements of a story?	What elements of a story are present in this painting?	How can I use what I see in a painting to improve the description in my own narrative?
Formative Assessment	Formative Assessment	Formative Assessment
Students will verbally describe the elements of a story.	Students will use the see, think, wonder technique to verbally analyze the painting.	Students will first verbally tell the story of the painting to a partner.
Materials/Resources	Materials/Resources	Materials/Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Previous lessons &amp; experiences with short stories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus</i> by Benjamin West</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus</i> by Benjamin West</li> </ul>

### Summative Assessment/Performance Task:

Students will write a short narrative retelling the story of the painting, *Agrippina Landing at*

*Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* by Benjamin West. This narrative will effectively use description to develop the experiences, events, and/or characters.

### Lesson Activities:

#### Day 1

1. Engage students in a discussion of the elements of a story.
  - a. Based on previous lessons, students may recall that stories should include elements such as setting, characters, plot, etc.
  - b. If students cannot recall the elements of a story, spend time developing the idea that narratives must include certain elements.
2. Place the compelling questions on the board or overhead: How does art tell a story? How does this compare to the way literature tells a story?
  - a. Have the students think-pair-share about these questions at this point.
3. Tell students that they will be analyzing a narrative painting to determine how the author is telling a story through this art.
4. Show the students the painting *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* by Benjamin West.
  - a. Lead the students through analytic discussion using the see, think, wonder technique:
    - i. What do you see?
    - ii. What do you think about that?
    - iii. What does that make you wonder?
  - b. Note: You may wish to prepare a graphic organizer to help guide students through this work.
  - c. Have students relate this analysis back to the elements of the story.
    - i. What parts of a story can we see in this painting?
    - ii. How does the author tell a story?

#### Day 2

1. Project the painting *Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* by Benjamin West as students enter the classroom.
2. Ask the students to work with a shoulder partner to tell the story of what is happening in the painting. As they work with their partner, they should focus on using descriptive detail to tell the story using the elements of a story discussed the day before.
  - a. If students choose, they may wish to jot notes while talking through the story.
3. Give the students time to write their version of the short story.

#### Day 3

1. Allow students to share their short stories with a partner or small group (but this should not include their shoulder partner from the day before.). Ask students to focus on the descriptions that their group members included in their work.
2. When students have finished sharing, engage the whole class in a discussion about their observances. What have they noticed about description? Even though all students viewed the same painting, they may have written very different descriptions.



## Resources:

*Agrippina Landing at Brundisium with the Ashes of Germanicus* by Benjamin West  
<http://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/46131>

See, Think, Wonder activity from Harvard Project Zero  
[http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking\\_html\\_files/03\\_ThinkingRoutines/03c\\_Core\\_routines/Core\\_pdfs/VT\\_SeeThinkWonder.pdf](http://www.visiblethinkingpz.org/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03c_Core_routines/Core_pdfs/VT_SeeThinkWonder.pdf)