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Historical Perspectives through Analysis of Art and Poetry

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Objectives:

"A poem should capture a moment, not explain it." *-Ralph Fletcher*

My unit's objective is to provide my third grade students with the skills needed to understand and create a "captured moment," whether it is a moment captured in words or in images. This unit of study will be integrated with our third grade social studies curriculum, Chicago History. By the end of this unit, students will be able to describe the ways in which artists tell a story about history through the use of art elements. Students will interpret how a poet creates perceptions, images, and moods through the use of devices. The student will compare and contrast history through art and history through poetry to analyze what information we can learn from both forms. Finally, students will create an ekphrastic poem based on art or an artifact in the free verse format, employing three or more of the studied poetic devices. Ekphrastic poetry is a poem about an art object – according to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "a literary description of or commentary on a visual work of art." Free verse is a format which has no rules for word count or syllables. For students just beginning to explore poetry writing, I recommend using the free verse format. Free verse allows the student to express his or her emotions, images, and ideas clearly and freely without being bound by rhyming or rules. Third grade students tend to become overwhelmed with structure and rhyming to the point that they lose their creativity and ideas in focusing on the format.

Overview:

For this unit, I have chosen the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 as the subject. From experience, this is a topic in Chicago's history that absolutely rivets third graders. I've found that children are fascinated by death and destruction, for whatever reason, plus there are many resources available about the Great Chicago Fire. Another reason that I've chosen the Great Fire for this unit is that it is generally taught mid-year, when students are becoming better writers and more inferential thinkers. My lesson plans can be used for any topic in history, and alternative works will be listed in the teacher resource section at the end.

A series of mini-lessons on revising with poetic devices will be taught before and after the unit. Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi have created *Teaching the Qualities of Writing*, a user-friendly packet of mini-lessons for third through sixth grade students. The curriculum includes lesson plans, writing examples, and titles of books which can be used as more good examples of each "quality of writing." To provide examples I will use poetry mainly by Carl Sandburg, along with lesser known poets who have written poems related to Chicago history. I chose not to use juvenile poetry after reading *Rose, Where Did You Get That Red?* by Kenneth Koch. Koch's premise is that children learn to write good poetry through reading examples of good poetry. Reading and writing poetry is taught by Koch as one single subject in which the poetry is first read and discussed. Koch would then give his students a "poetry idea," a kind of writing prompt which clarified the essence of the poem. Finally the students wrote their poems based on the "poetry idea" with fabulous results. In my opinion, the success of the children's writing is a result of being shown examples of good "adult" poetry rather than using poems written for children.

Concurrently with these activities, the "language" of art (the language we use to talk about art, together with its own ways of expressing its meaning) will be studied through guided group analysis and discussion of works of art. If your school has an art teacher, this would be a great unit to teach together; if not, it is still a great way to expose your students to some art instruction.

Throughout the year, students will analyze art, artifacts, and poetry (of various forms) to understand perceptions and compare the types of knowledge we can learn from these different sources of communication. What aspects do poems, art, and artifacts based on the same event have in common? How is the historic event depicted differently by the different forms of communication? How are style and devices used in art and poetry to create perception?

After the ability to analyze elements of art and poetry has been mastered, students will apply this knowledge by composing a free-verse ekphrastic poem about an artifact, photograph, or work of art. Students will use poetic devices to clearly express the setting, action, and mood of the event to the audience.

Rationale:

Third grade students are creative thinkers highly motivated to discover hidden meanings in words and pictures. They love to solve puzzles and problems, and are fascinated by unsolved mysteries. From my experience, third grade is the perfect age at which to foster critical thinking skills and introduce new concepts. With constant practice and modeling by teacher and peers, most students learn to think critically very quickly. "Critical thinking is thinking that has a purpose (proving a point, interpreting what something means, solving a problem)... Critical thinking is about how you approach problems, questions, issues. It is the best way we know of to get to the truth." ¹ Critical thinking includes the "cognitive skills of interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation." ²

Cognitive development research continues to uncover the secrets of how children learn. At the early intermediate level, children learn by starting with a concrete example before moving into abstract thought. Connecting art (a concrete example) to poetry (disembodied words that are hard to visualize even though for more experienced readers they suggest images), will help students interpret the author's and artist's purpose, while teaching them to create images from words and use words to create images. Studies continue to

support the idea of integrating disciplines with a common theme. Integrating the three subjects of art, language arts, and history allows more time to be spent on deeper understanding of the topics. Integrating subjects makes information more easily accessible to the individual by developing more connections in the brain, called "dendrites." We also know that children learn by constructing "... understanding and develop[ing] theories about the world on the basis of their experience." ³ In this unit, children will be building new information about poetry from what they already can see in the art. Through the integration of three subjects, there will always be new learning being constructed from prior learning.

Third graders are natural poets. They love to read and write poetry, and are capable of creating very sophisticated poems with the right guidance. Free from the restriction of grammar, students can let their ideas flow. Free-verse poetry results in especially sophisticated and creative works from the students, since their ideas are not bound by rules of meter and rhyming in addition to rules of grammar.

Writing poetry based on an art object or artifact requires acute observation. Students must pay close attention to details before writing about an artifact or work of art. What emotions, colors, textures, actions, and images are depicted? What moment has been captured and how do the participants feel about it? Although students at this level have the ability to think abstractly, instruction needs to begin with concrete examples. For this reason, using a visual depiction - whether a work of art, photograph, landmark, or artifact - serves as a great method to focus student writing on just one moment. In the past, I have asked students to visualize the moment to be captured in their poems, then sketch the moment. Sketching the moment helped students maintain focus in their poetry. They understood that the poem would only describe the action, emotion, and images included in the sketch. This technique also improved the student's attention to detail, as they felt the need to add either to the sketch or poem to illustrate the moment.

Examining and analyzing works of poetry and art will enhance student writing of all types, making it more lively and interesting with vivid word choice, sensory details, and use of figurative language. Students will use a thesaurus to find words which best describe images or actions, building their own working vocabulary. Reading poetry improves fluency and sight vocabulary, which in turn improves comprehension. Fluent readers process text as meaningful chunks of information. Poetry provides opportunities for oral language development for all students, and is especially helpful for English language learners. Human beings learn through repeated practice. Poems are short enough so students don't mind doing repeated readings. Children enjoy reading poetry aloud, especially with a partner, because of the rhythm and interesting format. Usually at this level, students are not so self-conscious yet, so it is a good time to give them practice with oral presentations before an audience.

This unit of study will support instruction in reading comprehension. Studies have shown that there is a "significant correlation between critical thinking and reading comprehension. Improvements in the one are paralleled by improvements in the other." ⁴ Students learn and practice the strategies of creating sensory images (which includes sensory words and figurative language), making inferences, asking questions about text, and connecting text to prior knowledge. These are a few of the comprehension strategies outlined in *Mosaic of Thought*, by Keene and Zimmermann. Keene and Zimmerman's research has shown that there are comprehension strategies used by good readers that differ from the ones used by poor readers, and that the modeling and practice of comprehension strategies should be the basis of reading instruction. I have used the principles outlined by *Mosaic of Thought* as the foundation for my reading instruction for the last 12 years, and have witnessed student's success. Teaching comprehension strategies from think-aloud to independent use actually teaches students how their brains should be thinking as they read.

Poetry can be used as a preview, or anticipatory set before introducing students to a new concept. Students will connect poetry and art to the history of their community. Beginning a lesson with a poem or work of art prepares the student's mind for learning. Students ask questions about the work, form opinions, and draw conclusions that can only be confirmed by further investigation into the subject. Students at this level relish the victory of confirming predictions and inferences. To confirm their ideas as correct, the student must learn more through further research.

Students will learn that there are a variety of methods to communicate ideas; verbal, written, and visual. They will analyze and identify which types of communication best serve different purposes. Additionally, we can learn many things about history from poetry, photographs, paintings, drawings, and sculpture through close attention to detail. I want my students to critically observe these details in order to gather their own knowledge, form opinions, and make judgments.

Demographics and Standards:

There are about 500 students enrolled at my school, and the class size for third grade is between 30 and 35. Of our total enrollment, 28.6% are low income students, 12.0% are Special Education students, and 10.1% are Limited English Learners. My school's demographics are divided mainly among White (52%), Hispanic (26%), and Asian (18%). This demographic breakdown is misleading because a large portion of the "White" population is Middle-Eastern - non-native English speakers who receive no help outside of school. My classroom of 31 last year consisted of 39% low income (having free or reduced lunch), and 13% Limited English Learners. Special education students were assigned to another third grade classroom. Students in my classroom were White (56%, including Arabic), Hispanic (31%, some of mixed race, White and Hispanic), Asian (10%), African-American (3%).

This unit aligns with the Illinois Learning Standards for Reading State Goal 1A: Apply word analysis and vocabulary skills to comprehend selections, State Goal 1B: Apply reading strategies to improve understanding and fluency, and State Goal 1C: Comprehend a broad range of reading materials. Literature Goal 2A: Understand how literary elements and techniques are used to convey meaning, State Goal 2B: Read and interpret a variety of literary works, and Listening and Speaking State Goal 4B: Speak effectively using language appropriate to the situation and audience.

Students benefit from more Art instruction. Frequently Fine Arts programs are cut during times of budget crises, leaving students without this valuable form of communication and cultural knowledge. How can a culture or society be studied without looking at its art? Especially in the cases where art was the main form of communication, such as Native American or Egyptian cultures.

Fine Arts goals are met throughout this unit, including, **25.A.2d Visual Arts:** Identify and describe the elements of 2- and 3-dimensional space, figure ground, value and form; the principles of rhythm, size, proportion and composition; and the expressive qualities of symbol and story. **25.B.2** Understand how elements and principles combine within an art form to express ideas. **27.B.2** Identify and describe how the arts communicate the similarities and differences among various people, places and times.

Teaching Strategies:

In my classroom, I have found integrated, thematic instruction, cooperative grouping, and inquiry-based learning to be the most effective teaching strategies.

Thematic Teaching has two or more subjects based on the same theme, using similar vocabulary and allowing the student to make connections between subjects. I have found that integrating two or more subjects allows students more practice in subject specific vocabulary, and deeper immersion into the topics. Students become authorities on the subjects. It is also helpful for children to see that their academic subjects aren't isolated – each subject is a part of the whole we call life.

Cooperative Learning requires students to work together in order to complete a task. Each student has a predetermined role that has been practiced and has been chosen based on student strength. This is a useful strategy since it increases the participation of the students and allows them to feel supported by being part of a small group. Cooperative grouping helps keep the students actively participating, since they have more opportunity to share and express themselves. *Active Participation* means that student plays a consistent, active role in the lesson. Students learn better because they are engaged and focused on the material. Allowing the students to choose their own role in completing the task gives them ownership of their work and increases their level of concern.

To begin a lesson, I would ask the student groups to discuss critical thinking questions about the art or poem. In *Guided Inquiry* small group discussions are guided by teacher questioning. This increases the frequency of student participation and gives students authentic reasons for further learning by activating their curiosity. Research has found that "questioning is a far more powerful way to encourage neural branching than is explication or narration." ⁵ Questioning is a part of active processing "which allows learners to take charge of consolidation and internalization of learning in a way that is personally meaningful." ⁶

Sometimes I choose to start a lesson with a brainstorming session, in which students share their ideas freely and without judgment. Brainstorming can serve as a motivating introduction in a number of ways. It sparks discussion, students build ideas from the thoughts of others, students feel secure in that their responses will not be evaluated as correct or incorrect, and it prepares the brain for the information to come. Personally, I find it difficult *not* to evaluate the students' responses. My concern is that some students will commit to memory an incorrect idea because they have seen it in writing. For this reason I use brainstorming sparingly, and when I do use it I wait until the end of the session before making some corrective remarks so that students won't feel that they have been singled out on the spot. Regardless, if brainstorming is used I always make sure to revisit the brainstorming list at the end of the lesson and verify or revise each item.

Another activity I might assign small cooperative groups is to complete a graphic organizer. *Graphic Organizers* are visual displays for organizing information into meaningful categories. Since research has shown that the human brain seeks meaning and organization, this visual organization improves comprehension of the new concepts. In the case of comparing and contrasting a poem with art, the students would either use a T-chart labeled with titles at the top, or a Venn Diagram which is two or more overlapping circles. Where the circles overlap the similarities are written, differences are listed in the non-overlapping area of the circle. I have found that the Venn Diagram is often difficult for students to use. They have difficulty writing without lines to guide the size and alignment of the words. For this reason, I usually prefer to use a two-columned chart for comparing or contrasting.

To demonstrate my expectations to the students for any type of classroom activity including cooperative group behavior, I use the strategy of modeling. *Modeling* provides students with a model, or example of the new concept, method, strategy, behavior, or output expected from the students. Students then mimic the task in their own work, thinking, or behavior. Modeling can be effective for visual and auditory learners, as long as the teacher thinks aloud as she demonstrates visually.

At the close of the lesson, the small groups come together for a whole-group share. If the students completed a project or organizer they will show and explain it, answering any questions that come up. One of the tasks in the cooperative group work is to rehearse and prepare for presentation and possible questions. However, the students need to see an appropriate model of this several times before they begin to prepare correctly. If there was no written assignment, the group's reporter shares the ideas generated during small group discussion. In this manner, any misconceptions can be clarified and good ideas can be shared and validated.

Background Information:

Guiding students through this unit of study requires the teacher to be familiar with the languages of art and poetry. As an artist uses certain elements to convey a mood, so does a poet. Through a series of mini-lessons (short direct lessons followed by guided practice and application), modeling, and critical questioning, students will be able to identify the elements in art and poetry. Students will respond to questions in small group and whole group discussions. Students must give evidence from the work being examined or from their own prior knowledge for any inferences they make.

For art, the discussion would probably begin with questions about *color*. My students by third grade are aware of the ideas of warm and cool colors and can understand how colors can create a mood. Color can be used to communicate meaning and emotion to the viewer since it is attached to the background experience of humans (i.e. blue can be a calm lake or clear sky). Have the students brainstorm how color is used to convey meaning in the work. How do the colors make us feel?

Next, the discussion might center around movement. I would ask the students to draw conclusions about the events taking place in the work, and how the characters feel about the events. Movement includes the arrangement of art elements to move the eye around the piece, create the perception of action, or suggest motion. How does the artist use movement to create a mood? What type of mood or rhythm is conveyed by the movement?

The element of *shape* is the outside boundaries of a form, an enclosed space. It can be two-dimensional or three-dimensional, organic, or geometric. Are the forms natural or abstract? How does the form change the mood of the piece? Why do you think the artist chose this form? Does the viewer's eye move around the piece smoothly, bouncily, insanely? How does the eye's movement effect the mood? *Space* is the area between, around, or within shapes. Has the artist used space to create a feeling? Does the use of space make you feel lonely, crowded, safe, confused, or angry?

Balance may have been used by the artist to create a mood. Balance is the state of distribution where elements of shape, weight, color, and location are evenly distributed. Does the artist use a balanced composition or unbalanced? How does balance affect the overall perception of the work? Does the balance create a feeling of tension, anxiety, excitement, or calm?

Whether in painting, sketching, or photography, *lighting* is used to create a mood, or to highlight an aspect of the work. How is lighting used to create a mood or to highlight a part of the work? Why might the artist have

used lighting in this way?

The *style* (sometimes also called a "movement") chosen for the work plays a part in the mood of the piece. I believe my students can grasp the basic differences between some art movements. For example, students will be able to see that abstract art looks very primitive, and can infer why the artist chooses to use this style. It would give the viewer a very different feeling than would *impressionism*. Impressionism has an airy, light, happy feel to it. With practice students will be able to identify why an artist would paint in a light, happy, free style versus a primitive style, or even a realistic style. Ask students how the style of art affects the mood of the subject matter. Would the art be perceived differently if a different style had been used?

Because it is similar to solving a puzzle, students are interested in symbolism, and can identify it to some extent with guidance and repetition. *Symbolism* is an art movement in which images represent ideas rather than a realistic setting. Are the images actual representations or do they hold secret meaning? What meaning might the artist have intended by use of images?

In teaching poetic devices I have found mini-lessons to be very effective. The mini-lesson includes introducing the vocabulary, identifying the device in sample poetry, discussing its effect, modeling use of the device, followed by practice. For example, if I were teaching a mini-lesson on simile, I would start the lesson by telling the students that a simile is a phrase in which two ideas are compared using the words like or as. Next I would give an example, "*Her eyes were as green as emeralds,*" and discuss how it helps the reader create a mental image and the feelings or mood it might evoke. For practice in identifying a simile, we would read "Picnic Boat" by Carl Sandburg. Small student groups would analyze the poem to find the simile, "... it is dark as a stack of black cats on Lake Michigan." First, in small groups they would discuss the images, moods, and feelings evoked by the simile, then we would discuss as a class. We analyze the steps in writing a simile as we write one together. Then the students write their own simile, sharing and discussing in small groups. Last, students volunteer to share their writing with the whole class and discuss it.

Other poetic devices appropriate for third grade writing are sensory details (describing words which speak to the five senses and emotion, creating sensory images for the reader), onomatopoeia (words that imitate sounds, like buzz, hiss, and pop), alliteration (the repetition of words having the same beginning sounds, "silent as they scampered across the smoky room"). Alliteration gives poetry a rhythmic, musical sound. My students love using personification (a figure of speech where ideas or things are given human attributes, "The fire roared"). Metaphors (a figure of speech in which two things are compared simply by stating that one thing IS another, "Her eyes were sparkling emeralds") are a bit more difficult for the students to write. They tend toward writing similes, but with guidance are able to write a metaphor successfully.

Later in the unit students will learn about rhythm, meter, symbols, and other poetic devices. These elements help to create a mood, but are usually above the capabilities of third grade writing. *Rhythm* is the musical quality created by repetition of stressed and unstressed syllables. *Meter* is the arrangement of a line of poetry by the number of syllables and the rhythm of accented syllables. For example in Haiku, the meter mimics the rhythm of human breathing. The human heartbeat is reflected by the rhythm of the iambic pentameter which uses ten syllables in each line with five pairs of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables (i.e.. ba-BUM, ba-BUM, ba-BUM, ba-BUM, ba-BUM!). A *line* of words in a poem should suggest a single image. Line length can also give a feeling to poetry. Ralph Fletcher refers to a line as a "unit of thought" in a poem, much like a sentence in a story or report. "Poems with longer lines build up momentum and velocity... [whereas] "poems with shorter lines ... tend to be read slowly." ⁷ As in art, a *symbol* is a thing or object which stands for something else. To keep important lines from getting buried in the poem, the poet will use *white space* before

and after the line to highlight it. Students should identify these important lines and explain why the poet might have highlighted them.

Classroom Activities

This unit is not meant to be an introduction to poetry, but to be used after the students have read and discussed several examples of good poetry. Before beginning this unit, students should have studied some of the techniques used to make writing come alive, techniques like sensory details, onomatopoeia, alliteration, or figurative language.

Lesson One

The first lesson will focus on guiding students in an analysis of the ways in which an artist tells a story and sets a mood. Students will practice critical thinking skills to draw conclusions and make inferences about the art work, while also developing their art vocabulary.

Students should already be seated in small, cooperative groups of three or five students. Keeping an odd number of students per group helps to keep the group functioning as a whole, rather than splitting off into pairs. Each student should understand his or her role in the group before beginning the lesson. For this lesson, I would assign general group roles. These are the roles that I teach the students from the beginning of the year. There is a Director who gives instructions to the group, watches the time, and makes sure all group members are heard and participate. Next is the Writer, who records the group's ideas after orally revising with the group. Last is the Reporter who shares the group's work orally with the rest of the class. The Reporter is also responsible for rehearsing with the group what he or she will say to the class.

Before group work, the students receive a checklist or rubric of my expectations for the work, which I explain. Student groups are responsible for completing the checklist together before work time has ended. For this particular lesson, I would be looking for appropriate group behaviors such as participation, mutual respect, cooperation, staying on task, and finishing the work on time.

Each group will receive one color copy of an oil painting by Julia Lemos, titled *Memories of the Chicago Fire*, to be analyzed, with an enlarged version projected for the entire class. The enlarged version will help students see small detail that they may not see in the smaller works, and will also be used for the whole class discussion later. The group's writer will receive a sheet of the prompts for analyzing the art. Generally, I guide the whole class through the prompts, followed by time for them to discuss in small groups. During small group discussion time, I walk the room and check that each group is understanding and having a meaningful discussion.

Every lesson begins with sharing the objective with the class, so students know exactly what my expectations are for their group work. The first prompt will ask students to observe the art as a whole, noting the event taking place, and what details they see to support this inference. Next students will look closely at all of the action taking place. What is happening, and how do the participants feel about it. They will share their evidence for drawing this conclusion. Evidence should be both details from the art along with the student's prior knowledge. Then students will discuss what they think the subject, or main idea of the art is, and explain their rationale. For what reason did the artist choose this moment to "freeze in time?" Last, students will draw

a conclusion about the artist's purpose in creating the work. What kind of response did the artist hope to elicit from the viewer? Students will explain why they believe this.

The small group work stops for a whole class discussion led by the teacher. Starting with the first prompt, Reporters from groups share orally on a voluntary basis. The teacher helps draw out the discussion of each prompt, guiding students toward logical responses and subject-specific vocabulary from art and history as needed. At the final prompt, the teacher guides the students toward a discussion of the techniques used by the artist to create a mood. What feeling do we get from looking at the painting, and what techniques make us feel this way? Is it the colors, the lines, the style, the balance of space?

To conclude this lesson, the small groups reconvene to reflect, respond, and sum up the lesson. Students will think about, discuss, and record what they believe the artist wanted us to know, think, and feel. Students will include at least one sentence of support for each inference, as well as recording which of the artist's techniques the group found to be most effective in creating mood. Student groups should share these conclusions orally, or reports can be passed and read from group to group "Round-Robin" style.

Lesson Two

The objective of the second lesson is to make a prediction about the subject of Edgar Allen Poe's "The Bells" based on learning of key vocabulary. Students will make connections between this selection and the artwork from the previous lesson. Although Poe did not write "The Bells" for the Great Fire, a few stanzas of it were published in *October 9, 1871: The Burning of Chicago, Poems of the Great Chicago Fire*.

Before reading any text, my students must "prepare their brains" for the information. To prepare our brains for this selection, we will define some key vocabulary in small groups, then make a prediction about the poem. I would read through the list of words first, then have the students divide up the work in small groups for about 20 - 30 minutes before I stop them to discuss what they have found. The vocabulary that I have chosen from "The Bells" includes eight words. All definitions are according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary.

Brazen meaning "sounding harsh and loud like struck brass, of the color of polished brass, marked by boldness." **Turbulent** (since turbulency may not be included in students dictionaries) meaning "causing or being in a state of unrest, violence, or disturbance." **Startled** is "to move or jump suddenly (as in surprise or fright), to frighten suddenly and usually not seriously." **Clamorous** meaning "a noisy shouting, a loud continuous noise, strong and active protest or demand." **Expostulation** meaning to present and urge reasons in opposition. **Frantic** meaning to be "wildly excited, marked by wild and hurried activity." **Resolute** to be "marked by firm determination." **Endeavor** meaning to make an effort: try, to work for a particular goal or result."

Next, whether every group is finished or not, we would stop for a whole class discussion of the words and their meanings, and if there are multiple meanings, we predict which meaning we think will make sense with the other words. Before finally making a prediction about the topic of "The Bells," I would ask students to discuss whether these words could be used to describe the artwork from the previous lesson, and to explain how the words could be used. Last, each group will write a prediction about the topic of "The Bells" and provide evidence to support their prediction.

Lesson 3

The objective is for students to analyze a selection from Edgar Allen Poe's "The Bells" for topic, imagery, and mood. Students will make connections between this selection and the artwork from the previous lesson.

To start the lesson, I will share the objective and review the students' predictions and rationale. As the students provide their rationale, the key vocabulary is also being reviewed.

Next, I would distribute copies of the poem to students, while also having a large version available to refer to. As students follow along, I read the poem aloud, followed by the students doing a choral reading of the poem. The first read is to model the rhythm, vocabulary, and phrasing. The second reading is to ensure that students are focused on the poem and for oral reading practice.

Then students gather into their small, cooperative groups for discussion of the poem. I guide their discussions with the following prompts: Which words or phrases create strong images? Which words have more than one meaning, and which meanings make sense in the poem? What poetic devices are used and to which senses do they appeal? There may be need to review poetic devices with the students before discussing the last prompt. My students learn about sensory details early in the year, so that would be one poetic device they would recognize. Other devices that we use during the year are onomatopoeia, alliteration, simile, metaphor, and personification.

Discussing what the small groups identified with the whole group is the next step. Again, at this point I will guide the discussion in the right direction if it goes askew. As part of this discussion, I will ask students how they think the poem connects to the art (or photo).

To conclude this lesson, small groups discuss and write a reflection together on one sheet of paper. Student groups record their conclusions about what the poet wanted us to know, think, and feel, including of course, evidence to support the response. To build their vocabulary, students will decide and record which word they feel best represented an image from the art, and explain why they think so. Last, students will discuss the elements of the poem that were most effective, and explain why it was effective. Having the Reporters share the group's ideas is always a valuable part of the lesson. This helps spread knowledge, clears misconceptions, and provides discussions that can lead to understanding on a deeper level.

Lesson 4

In the fourth lesson, students will make a judgement as to whether the art or the poem more effectively depicted the event by comparing and contrasting the elements.

As always, the lesson begins by sharing and discussing the objective with the students. There are a variety of graphic organizers that can be used for comparing and contrasting, depending on the ability of your students. The Venn Diagram is the most commonly used, however I have found that beginning third grade students have difficulty writing inside the circles. If using a Venn Diagram, I draw ruled lines through it before copying it for the students. Another organizer is a simple T-Chart, two columns with the title of the art on one side and the poem on the other for contrasting. For comparing, no columns are needed. An organizer I really like is the Comparison Analysis Organizer, which has four columns labeled as "Technique, Art, Both, and Poem," in this order left to right. For this assignment, I might include "techniques" of "strong feeling, vivid imagery, accurate details, describes an event, includes action," plus additional items that I brainstorm with my class beforehand (they often come up with better ideas than I do).

Next, I model the desired behavior for completing the organizer and for cooperative group work. Students work together in their small groups, as defined in lesson one. Once the graphic organizer is complete, students use this information to judge which medium is more effective at telling a story. poetry or art. All arguments are discussed and evaluated. Once a judgement is made, students record it with three reasons to

support.

After the predetermined work time has ended, students will share the judgements the group has made, and provide evidence from their graphic organizer as support.

Lesson 5

The objective for the final lesson is for students to draft an ekphrastic poem based on an artistic interpretation of an historical event. Students will apply previous learning about the techniques used by artists and writers to tell a story and create a mood.

Each student will choose one of about five works as a basis for their writing. For the Great Fire, the art options will be chosen from *The Great Chicago Fire of 1871, A Book of Postcards*, which is listed in the Materials for Classroom Use at the end of the unit. Students should choose a work where they can imagine the story and feel an emotion.

Next, I would guide the students in filling out a plan for their first draft of the poem. Again, I model what I want the students to do, give assistance when needed, and encourage appropriate peer discussion in the small groups to help refine ideas. The planning will ask the student to describe elements in the art such as the setting and the characters. Students will choose and describe the plot taking place in the art, and describe how the main characters feel about it. Character, setting, and plot are all elements of determining importance in fiction integrating this activity with reading comprehension as well as writing. Students will determine the mood they will give their poem. From poetry previously studied, or other sources, students can record some "sparkle" words they would like to use in their poem. "Sparkle" words are lively, descriptive, clear words that replace dull, unclear words. The planning stage will most likely take a full session.

To teach students to draft the poem, I would start with an example of ekphrasis, perhaps one that we have previously studied for a poetic device. Because the poem is similar in style to what I want the students to write, I will use "Big French Bread" by Marvin Bell, which is based on the mixed media art called *French Bread* by Red Grooms. The poem tells the story of the painting and that is what my students will be doing.

With both the art and poem visible, I read through without stopping first. Then I guide my students into trying to think like the poet as he looked at the painting. On a class chart, I would list out the poet's process for us to follow in writing our own ekphrasis. The guiding questions I would ask about this piece are:

Which part of the art does the poet lead with, and why do you think he chose this as the lead? The poet begins with one line about the setting, then describes in detail, the central figure. Since the poet is recreating the art in words, he needs to have a setting in which to place the man, otherwise the man would be floating in space. The writer uses sensory details and a simile to help our brains create mental images.

What does the poet do next? In the second stanza, the poet describes the loaf of bread with sensory details of sight, touch, and smell. He also uses a simile at the end of the stanza. Students might say that the bread is the second most noticeable object in the art.

At this point, our class chart would show the following steps:

Describe the setting. Choose the most noticeable figure and describe him or her. Choose the second most noticeable person or object in the art and describe it using multiple senses.

Since this is about all the attention third graders can maintain, I would begin a class draft with them now. With older students, you might continue to the end of the poem in this same manner – thinking like the poet and recording his processes on a chart.

Using the painting from lesson one, *Memories of the Chicago Fire*, (which is not one of the student choices), we will follow the steps on the chart to begin a class draft of our ekphrastic poem. I would go through one step at a time, then allow the students to write, helping as needed. For example, "What is the setting? It is a dark night in a crowded city. What is the person or object our eye is drawn to first? First, we notice the orange, smoky clouds. Probably I would guide the entire process this way, allowing students to work at their own pace if they appear to understand well. Holding students back who are ready will only stifle their ideas. If a student finishes early, a struggling student can always use a writing partner to guide him or her. In many instances, students can understand their peers better than they understand me!

The drafting process will probably take at least two sessions, depending on the level of the students. The subsequent lessons would be mini-lessons on identifying and applying poetic devices of alliteration, onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, personification, sensory details, line length, line breaks, or use of white space. For my mini-lessons, I follow the same procedure of providing and discussing examples, writing together, and writing independently.

Bibliography for Teachers

Boushey, Gail, and Joan Moser. *The Daily Five: Fostering Literacy Independence in the Elementary Grades*. 1ST ed. York: Stenhouse Publishers, 2006.

The Daily Five is a useful structure for planning a well-rounded Language Arts program which would include daily writing.

Fletcher, Ralph, and Joann Portalupi. *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*. Chicago: Heinemann, 2001.

Writing workshop lessons on improving student writing from planning to publishing.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Poetry Matters: Writing a Poem from the Inside Out*. Harpertrophy ed. New York: HarperTrophy, 2002.

This is a book written for students on how to write poetry. It is easy to understand, describes the writing process and poetic devices.

Fletcher, Ralph, and Joann Portalupi. *Teaching the Qualities of Writing: Firsthand (Teacher's Guide)*. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2004.

Easy to use mini-lessons for teaching all types of writing. Includes examples and teaching instructions.

Kagan, Spencer. *Cooperative Learning*. [1993 ed.] ed. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1997.

A resource for using different types of cooperative grouping in your classroom, along with rationale for using cooperative grouping.

Keene, Ellin Oliver, and Susan Zimmermann. *Mosaic of Thought, Second Edition: The Power of Comprehension Strategy Instruction*. Chicago: Heinemann, 2007.

Each chapter is devoted to a comprehension strategy taught in reading workshop. These same principles are used in integrating this

unit.

Koch, Kenneth. *ROSE, WHERE DID YOU GET THAT RED? Teaching Great Poetry to Children*. New York: Random House, New York, 1973.

Koch shares his successes in using adult poetry to teach children to write good poetry. The book includes the poems, and the procedures that Koch used for the lessons.

Nummela Caine, Renata, and Geoffrey Caine. "Understanding a Brain-Based Approach to Learning and Teaching." *Educational Leadership*, October 1990. www.library.yale.edu (accessed July 12, 2010).

The article gives information on brain research and illustrates how it should be applied in teaching.

Rose, Mike. *Lives on the Boundary: A Moving Account of the Struggles and Achievements of America's Educationally Underprepared*. Reissue ed. Boston: Penguin (Non-Classics), 2005.

I read this book before teaching my first class and it has stayed with me ever since. It is a great narrative about earning respect from "difficult" students. Although the author writes about college students, the same applies to any age child from any social background.

Willis, Judy. *Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning: Insights from a Neurologist and Classroom Teacher*. Alexandria, VA: Association For Supervision & Curriculum Development, 2006.

Judy Willis explains how children learn in an easily understandable way, and offers creative ideas for incorporating brain research into your instruction.

Chicago formatting by BibMe.org.

Fletcher, Ralph. *Poetry Matters: Writing a Poem from the Inside Out*. Harpertrophy ed. New York: HarperTrophy, 2002.

This is a book written for students on how to write poetry. It is easy to understand, describes the writing process and poetic devices.

Reading List for Students

Angelou, Maya, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. *Life Doesn't Frighten Me*. unknown: Stewart, Tabori And Chang, 1993.

Maya Angelou's poem appeals to children, along with art which illustrates it.

Eye's Delight: Poems of Art and Architecture. 1st ed. New York City: William Morrow & Co, 1983.

A collection of ekphrastic poems divided into four sections; Pictures, Sculptures, Dwelling Places, and Public Architecture. No photos are included.

Greenberg, Jan. *Heart to Heart : New Poems Inspired by Twentieth-Century American Art*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001.

A collection of ekphrastic poems and corresponding art work for children.

Panzer, Nora. *Celebrate America: In Poetry and Art*. New York: Hyperion, 1999.

This seems to be out of print, but you can get it used or from your library. It is a collection of ekphrastic poems with their art counterparts. It is appropriate for children and the art is from the Smithsonian collection.

Poetry Speaks to Children (Book & CD) (Read & Hear). Har/Com ed. Naperville: Sourcebooks Mediafusion, 2005.

A variety of poetry both in text and a cd so students can listen to proper phrasing and expression on their own. Helps build sight vocabulary also.

Poetry for Young People: Carl Sandburg (Poetry For Young People). New York: Sterling, 2008.

Contains poems appropriate for children which can be used to demonstrate poetic devices and structure. This doesn't contain the Chicago Poems, but at least you won't have to worry about students reading of prostitutes and alcohol.

Side by Side: New Poems Inspired by Art from Around the World. New York: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2008.

More ekphrastic poems collected by Greenberg, but this time includes poems and art from all over the world.

Siebert, Diane. *Tour America: A Journey Through Poems and Art*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2006.

I just ordered this book, because I read that it is a collection of poems about American sites, including the El trains in Chicago.

Sullivan, Charles. *Here is My Kingdom*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994.

All types of art alongside poems written by Hispanic-Americans with a Hispanic theme.

Chicago formatting by BibMe.org.

List of Materials for Classroom Use

This unit can be applied to any historic theme you may be studying with your students. What follows is a list of resources available for finding alternate images and poetry, including the materials for this unit.

"A Depression Art Gallery." Welcome to English " Department of English, College of LAS, University of Illinois.
<http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/artgallery.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

Several images of art from the Great Depression Era, including topics of strike, homelessness, riots, and unemployment.

"American Poetry of the 1930s." American Studies The University of Virginia.
<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA05/dulis/poetry/index.html> (accessed July 29, 2010).

This site includes many poems of the 1930s, with an introduction to each American poet.

DLC, Shapiro Bruce Rogers Collection, and Richard Watson Gilder. *The poems of Richard Watson Gilder*. Toronto: Nabu Press, 2010.

Includes two of Gilder's poems about the White City (can also be found online).

Dickinson, Emily. *Poems (Classic Reprint)*. asdbjsadjkas: Forgotten Books, 2010.

Choose a stanza of "The Railway Train" to couple with art in discussing railroad transportation.

"Full text of "October 9, 1871 : the burning of Chicago : poems of the Great Chicago Fire"." Internet Archive: Free Movies, Music, Books & Wayback Machine. http://www.archive.org/stream/october91871burn00gert/october91871burn00gert_djvu.txt (accessed July 29, 2010).

Includes the selection from Edgar Allen Poe's "The Bells" used in this unit.

Hass, Robert. "washingtonpost.com: Style Live: Books & Reading." washingtonpost.com – nation, world, technology and Washington area news and headlines. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/books/features/19980920.htm> (accessed July 29, 2010).

A poem about life during the Great Depression, written by Donald Justice.

"Immigrant City Chicago." Welcome to UIC. <http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/immigrantcitychicago/poems.html> (accessed July 29, 2010).

An extensive list of links to poems about immigration.

"Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem: Columbian Ode." Read book online: Literature books, novels, short stories, fiction, non-fiction, poems, essays, plays, Pulitzer prize, Nobel prize. <http://www.readbookonline.net/readOnline/12719/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem inspired by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

"Picturing America Home Page." Picturing America Home Page. <http://picturingamerica.neh.gov/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

Picturing America is a site dedicated to teaching history through art. Included in the lessons is Charles Sheeler's American Landscape, which can be coupled with Carl Sandburg's "Chicago." This is one of the best sites for finding art by historic theme.

Powell, Richard J.. "African American Art: Great Depression and World War II Years." ArtLex Art Dictionary. http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/a/african_american_5.html (accessed July 29, 2010).

This is depression era art by African-American artists and include scenes from the Harlem Renaissance.

Sandburg, Carl. *Chicago Poems*. New York: Kessinger Publishing, Llc, 2010.

Many applicable poems about Chicago, and some which are inappropriate for children.

Service, Robert W.. "Pullman Porter by Robert W. Service : The Poetry Foundation [poem] : Find Poems and Poets. Discover Poetry.." The Poetry Foundation : Find Poems and Poets. Discover Poetry.. <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=175996> (accessed July 29, 2010).

There are many Pullman photographs and advertisements available on line that could be used along with this poem. Check the Ludlam Library at <http://www.pullman-museum.org/search/>

"The Art Institute of Chicago: Education: Online Resources." The Art Institute of Chicago. <http://www.artic.edu/aic/education/onlinelearning/index.html> (accessed July 29, 2010).

Online resources provided by The Art Institute of Chicago, includes search tools for images and resources for teachers.

"The Columbian Ode." Internet Archive: Free Movies, Music, Books & Wayback Machine.
<http://www.archive.org/stream/columbianode00monr#page/18/mode/2up> (accessed July 29, 2010).

The official poem of the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

The Great Chicago Fire of 1871, A Book of Postcards. Petaluma: Pomegranate, 2006.

This is a book of color postcards of paintings and engravings of the fire from the Chicago History Museum collection.

The Great Migration: An American Story. New York: HarperTrophy, 1995.

Paintings of the Great Migration by Jacob Lawrence, along with text (not poetry).

"Themed Resources – For Teachers (Library of Congress)." Library of Congress Home.
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/themes/> (accessed July 29, 2010).

The Library of Congress offers web-based materials by theme at their site.

Woodside, John W., and National Commissioner From Pennsylvania. "New Spirits Worlds Columbian Exposition, Chicago 1893 State Poetry at the Columbian Exposition." Rebecca Edwards New Spirits Rethinking the Gilded Age in US History.
<http://rebeccaedwards.org/statepoems.html> (accessed July 29, 2010).

Very ekphrastic – poetry inspired by two state buildings at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

trod, the path the Saviour. "The Vanishing Fair: Paul V. Galvin Digital History Collection." World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 .
<http://columbus.iit.edu/vanfair/poem.html> (accessed July 29, 2010).

poetry inspired by the fire which destroyed buildings at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

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Notes

1. Facione, Peter A. *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts : a resource paper*. 2007 Update ed. Los Angeles: California Academic Press Insightassessment.Com, 2007.
2. Facione, Peter A. *Critical thinking: What it is and why it counts : a resource paper*. 2007 Update ed. Los Angeles: California Academic Press Insightassessment.Com, 2007.
3. Cardellichio, Thomas , and Wendy Field. "Seven Strategies That Encourage Neural Branching." *California Journal of Science Education* 2, no. 2 (2002): 33 – 44. >www.library.yale.edu (accessed July 12, 2010).
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5. Cardellichio, Thomas , and Wendy Field. "Seven Strategies That Encourage Neural Branching." *California Journal of Science Education* 2, no. 2 (2002): 33 – 44. www.library.yale.edu (accessed July 12, 2010).
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