



Classroom Extension Activities

Ekphrastic Poetry

In the classroom, students will prepare for and build on their museum experience by analyzing ekphrastic poetry, revising poetry written during the program, and continuing to experiment with ekphrasis.

Intro to Ekphrastic Poetry

REQUIRED before museum program

Whole class, 15-30 minutes

Learning Target: Students will understand the concept of ekphrastic poetry in preparation for writing their own.

Standards:

6th-8th grade:

- RL 1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RL 9: Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

9th-10th grade

- RL 7: Analyze the representation of a subject or key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.
- RL 9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

11th-12th grade

- RL 1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Materials:

Example of ekphrastic poetry and its relevant artwork

- Possible options:
 - *Groundhog Day* by Andrew Wyeth with “Anna Kuerner” by Catherine Staples (provided)
 - *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder with “Musee des Beaux Arts” by WH Auden or “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” by William Carlos Williams
 - *Starry Night* by Vincent van Gogh with “The Starry Night” by Anne Sexton
 - *Saint George and the Dragon* by Paulo Uccello with “Not My Best Side” by Ursula Askham Fanthorpe
- One copy of the poem per student
- Either a digital copy of the artwork that can be projected where all students can see, or a printed copy of the artwork for each student

Writing implement(s) for annotating

Lesson Procedure:

Begin with a discussion of ekphrastic poetry. Ekphrastic poetry is poetry that responds to a work of art. Sometimes ekphrastic poetry describes what is shown in the artwork; sometimes it talks more about the poet’s feelings while looking at the art.

Distribute copies of the poem to students, along with images of the related artwork (or project the artwork where everyone can see it). Allow a few minutes for students to read the poem silently, then read it aloud.

Have students annotate the poem independently or in pairs, using these or similar marks:

- Underline details in the poem that also appear in the painting

- Circle details in the poem that the poet inferred from a detail in the painting, but is not directly in the original artwork (if students have a copy of the artwork, they can also circle the details in the original painting that led to this inference)

Have students share out some of the details they underlined, and discuss the inferences the poet made. What emotions does the poem evoke? What emotions does the artwork evoke? How are these emotions similar or different?

Extensions:

Option 1:

Repeat with additional examples of ekphrastic poetry.

Option 2:

Examine poetry inspired by other types of art or artifacts, such as:

- “Middle Passage” by Robert Hayden viewed alongside artifacts from the Transatlantic slave trade like the Shackles and Wage Book from the Smithsonian: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/collection/>
- “Aubade with Burning City” by Ocean Vuong alongside the song “White Christmas” by Irving Berlin
- “Got Jesus?” by Aziza Barnes
- “Dinosaurs in the Hood” by Danez Smith alongside clips from *Jurassic Park*

Anna Kuerner

Catherine Staples, 2013

After Andrew Wyeth's "Groundhog Day"

The painter who wanders your house night and day,
sketches his way in and out your back door,
kitchen, barn, and milking room, he's erased all trace
of you. Look, your favorite tea cup, the one
that's snug to the curl of your forefinger, even that's gone
bleached white as moths, something a dream tossed back.
The print has disappeared from the china rim – no more
apple bloom or trumpet vine vining a smooth weave.
No gray green, salt blue, faint as any wave
glimpsed from distance. Day after day
he paints you and the dog sleeping – shut eye, wolfish
set to his jaw – then the bunchbacked skitter quick.
But in the end, the dog disappears as you do.
Cup, knife, plate. His fangs menace from the rough-cut
log beyond the open window. And you? Are you the strip
of light glancing the wall, obstinate refusal to quit
or give in? It was your hands set the table, raked the grate,
chopped firewood far side of the pines. Is it your quiet
the painter caught? The long slow place before the scrape
of a gate lifts from its hinges and your husband strides in
fresh from New Holland, rushed talk of horses, calves, and tractor
gusts the room like an unseen wind, settles to the porcelain
chink and domestic sing of knife on a dinner plate.



Revisions

After museum program

Whole class, 30+ minutes

Learning Target: Students use peer feedback to revise poems written during the program.

Standards:

CCSS ELA:

6th-8th Grade:

- W5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

9th-12th Grade:

- W5 Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose or audience.

Materials:

Poetry written during the program

Familiar peer-editing worksheet/framework (optional)

Lesson Procedure:

Begin with a review of some techniques poets use for impact: vivid imagery, alliteration and assonance, repetition, metaphor and simile.

Have students choose one of the poems they wrote during the museum program and trade poems with a classmate. If desired, you can have students use a familiar peer-editing framework. Students should provide suggestions on things like:

- Vague imagery or word choice
- Lines or phrases that could be repeated for emphasis
- Rhythm and/or meter

After peer feedback, allow time for students to revise their poems. If desired, you could have them publish their poetry in some form: written or printed and posted around the room, on a class website, film themselves reading it and upload to Padlet or a similar platform, etc.

Ekphrastic Art

After museum program

Whole class, 60+ minutes

Learning Target: Students create a work of art based on a character from literature.

Standards:

CCSS ELA:

6th-8th Grade:

- RL3 (6) Describe how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.
- RL3 (7) Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g. how setting shapes the characters or plot).
- RL3 (8) Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

9th-12th Grade:

- RL3 (9-10) Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- RL 1 (11-12) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

WA State Visual Arts:

6th-8th Grade:

- Cr2.1.6 Demonstrate openness in trying new ideas, methods, materials, and approaches in making works of art and design.
- Re8.1.6 Interpret art by distinguishing between relevant and non-relevant contextual information and analyzing subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.
- Cr2.3.7 Apply visual organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art, design, or media that clearly communicates information or ideas.
- Re8.1.7 Interpret art by analyzing art-making approaches, the characteristics of form and structure, relevant contextual information, subject matter, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.
- Cr2.3.8 Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.
- Re8.1.8 Interpret art by analyzing how the interaction of subject matter, characteristics of form and structure, use of media, art-making approaches, and relevant contextual information contributes to understanding messages or ideas and mood conveyed.

9th-12th Grade:

- Cr1.1.I Use multiple approaches to begin creative endeavors.
- Re8.1.I Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.
- Cr1.2.II Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

Materials:

Portrait examples (see Teacher Resource [here](#))

Planning worksheet (provided, separate document)

Paper (thicker paper like cardstock or mixed media paper is best, but if you're not using paints you could use regular printer paper)

Art materials, such as some or all of:

- Coloring implements (crayons, markers, colored pencils, pastels, etc.)
- Drawing pens
- Paints (watercolor, acrylic, tempera, etc.)
- Collage supplies (paper scraps, fabric scraps, glue sticks)
- Sculpture supplies (clay, cardboard, straws, wire, tape, etc.)

Note: this project is very successful with black paper and oil or chalk pastels, but any combination of art materials will work.

Lesson Procedure:

Introduction: Portraits

Project a portrait example where all students can see it. First, allow students to quietly look at the image for at least 30 seconds. After 15 seconds or so, you may prompt them with instructions such as:

- Have your eyes start at the top of the picture and slowly work their way down to the bottom
- Have your eyes start at the left side of the picture and slowly work their way across
- Look carefully at what is in the corners of the picture
- Look carefully at what is in the center of the picture

Then, use Visual Thinking Strategies questions to help students analyze the image.

- Ask, "What do you notice?"
 - o Call on one student to point out something they notice in the art.
- Ask, "What do you see that makes you say that?"
 - o Ask that same student to describe why they said what they did. (For example, "It looks like clouds because the shapes are fluffy and layered.")
 - o Paraphrase what the student said – this is a good opportunity to incorporate target vocabulary, make connections with other learning or what other students said, and check for understanding.
- Ask, "What else can we find?"
 - o Call on another student to point out something they notice, and repeat the process, asking them to describe their reason.
- Repeat until at least 5 students have had the chance to share something they noticed.

If the conversation does not organically move there, after a few minutes focus students' attention to what we can learn about the character portrayed. You might use questions like:

- What is this person feeling?
- What is important to this person?
- What emotions are evoked by the [colors, symbols, background, etc.]? What does that tell us about the person?

For each question, ensure that students support their answer with evidence from the portrait by asking "What do you see that makes you say that?"

Repeat this process with at least one other portrait.

NOTE: This lesson is most successful looking at three works of art, spending at least 10 minutes on each work. Begin with a traditional portrait, such as *Dr Mary Evelyn Jiron Belgarde* by Matika Wilbur or *Imagines and Inverts* by Mary C Josephson. Then move to a portrait that still shows a figure but is less realistic, such as *Old Time Picture I* by Rick Bartow, *El Guarachero* by Juan Alonso, or *Squatting Melissa Blindfolded* by Christine Bourdette. Finally, show a work that is entirely abstract, such as *Georgia O'Keefe* by Nathan Oliviera or *(Untitled) Self Portrait* by Ken Cory. This allows students to see a range of different ways to express portraiture, and feel less constrained by a need to realistically represent the character's face. Also, try to select at least one artwork to show that uses media similar to what students will be using in their own art-making.

Conclude by summarizing some techniques that artists use to tell us about the character in a portrait, referring back to the example portraits:

- Setting and/or activity
- Items in the picture
- Symbols and/or colors
- Facial expression and/or body language
- Fashion choices: clothing, hairstyle, etc.

Portrait-making

Students will select a character from a work of literature. You might have them select a character from a book or play that the whole class is reading, or allow them to choose any character they wish.

Distribute the planning sheets. In the center of the worksheet, students write the character's name. In each of the four surrounding boxes, students write one significant fact about the character. This could be an identity, such as "daughter" or "Black"; a physical or emotional description, such as "curly-haired" or "always sad"; a notable event, such as "faked her death to be with Romeo"; or anything else of importance. At least two of these should be facts not related to physical appearance.

After students have their four facts, have them make notes or sketches on the planning sheet about how they will visually represent those facts. Remind students of the various techniques discussed earlier in the lesson.

Once students have an idea about how to portray all four significant facts about their character, they will begin their portrait. They may choose to portray the character in the midst of a scene from the story, or as a traditional "bust" portrait, or in a more abstract fashion. Allow at least 30 minutes; if students finish earlier, encourage them to return to their four facts and add more detail to reinforce those important parts of the character, or add another important feature.

Extension:

Have students write an artist's statement (one to three paragraphs long) explaining how they portrayed the four significant facts about the character. Have students provide evidence from the text to support their four significant facts, with quotes as appropriate.

Poetry From Song

Before or after museum program

Whole class, 30+ minutes

Learning Target: Students create a poem in response to a piece of music.

Standards:

CCSS ELA:

- W 4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Materials:

Several songs from different genres, such as:

- “Young Dumb and Broke” by Khalid
- “Willow, Weep for Me” by Billie Holiday
- Selection from *Four Seasons Suite* by Antonio Vivaldi
- Selection from *Planets Suite* by Gustav Holst
- “So Afraid” by Janelle Monae
- “Blinding Lights” by The Weeknd
- “Midnight Sky” by Miley Cyrus
- “Freedom” by Beyonce and Kendrick Lamar

Paper (or notebooks) and pencils/pens

Lesson Procedure:

Just as poetry can be inspired by visual art, it can also be inspired by other forms of art, such as music. Students will use a piece of music as the inspiration for a poem. To begin, for older students, you may wish to read “Audabe with Burning City” by Ocean Vuong as a class, and listen to “White Christmas” by Irving Berlin. Discuss how Vuong incorporates parts of the song into the poem.

Have students divide their page in half (one page for each song you will play). On one half, write “Reaction”; on the other half, write “Scene.” While listening to a song, students will write their reactions in the first half of the paper -- things like a mood it evokes, something it reminds them of, a memory of a time they’ve heard this song before, etc. On the second half of the paper, students will create a scene or a story based on the song -- describing the characters in the song, what they’re doing, etc. Students can move back and forth between the two sections while listening to the song, as needed. Perhaps writing the narrative will remind them of something else, which they can add to the “reaction” section, etc.

Play at least two songs, having students write as they are listening.

Have students share a little bit of their writing in pairs or small groups, giving opportunity for them to voice and develop their ideas.

Finally, have students select one of the songs to write a poem about. They should choose a few images from their initial writing to develop into a poem, focusing on descriptive and figurative language. If desired, allow a few students to share out their completed poems.