



The Story Project: A Lesson Plan for the Combining Voices Literary Competition

Adaptable for all Grade Levels

This lesson plan is provided to teachers who wish to prepare their students to participate in the Combining Voices literary competition. The painting *Simple Answer* is not one of the paintings selected for this year's competition, but the lesson serves as a model that can be used with other works of art.

Focus

Students will analyze *Simple Answer*, by John Cleaveland, and will use this image to inspire a short story. They will use both verbal and visual language to help them create the characters and the plot. The lesson plan contains steps that will help the students generate ideas and structure their stories.

Objectives

Students will:

- express themselves both verbally and visually;
- further develop their interpretation, oral language, writing, and interpersonal skills;
- understand that both writing and artwork communicate ideas.

Vocabulary

narrative: writing that tells a story

Materials

- Digital image of *Simple Answer*
- Audio-visual projector
- Writing materials
- “The Story Project” worksheet
- Colored pencils or other drawing media
- Drawing paper

Teacher Preparation

- Collect art materials.
- Photocopy “The Story Project” worksheet.
- Make sure students have writing materials.
- Project digital image using your classroom computer

Procedures

- Tell students that they will write a story based on their responses to a painting by artist John Cleaveland. Do not tell them the name of the painting at this time.
- Show them the digital image of the painting using an audio-visual projector and have them do the first step on the worksheet (Brainstorming). Ask them to write all their ideas. Caution students not to edit their ideas at this point. Lead them through the first and second pages of the worksheet.
- On the third page of the worksheet students will not only write but will draw, using colored pencils. After they draw, let them go back and add to their writing. Their visual images should enrich their writing.
- Tell students to draw their stories on a storyboard. Encourage them to work as much detail as possible into the drawings. This will affect their writing.
- After they have written their stories, give them the name of the painting and tell them the story of how John Cleaveland came to create this painting. (The story is found on the artist's biography worksheet)
- Have each student read his or her story to a partner who will then provide feedback for the story. The summary sheet will help keep the student conversations on target.
- After you respond to the stories, have students do a rewrite, after which they will read the stories to the class.
- Stories may be copied and bound into a book so that each student has a copy of all the stories.

Assessment

Students will:

- read their stories to the class (informal assessment);
- demonstrate an understanding of writing skills and of art observation skills by writing a short story based on the painting Simple Answer. (The summary sheet provides a guide for grading.)

Extensions

- Schedule a Combining Voices student tour at the Morris Museum of Art.
- Encourage students to enter the Combining Voices literary competition.