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### INTEGRATING ART AND LANGUAGE ARTS

#### Interdisciplinary Connections between Art and Language Arts

Because of the many parallels between art and language arts, learning becomes connected and cumulative when the two disciplines are correlated in the classroom. Just as students can find meaning in literature through reading and writing stories and poems, they can also find meaning in works of art through reading about art, carefully looking at works of art, and writing about paintings, sculptures, and other art objects.

Natural parallels between art and language arts include main idea/meaning, artist/author, people/characters, portrait/biography, self-portrait/autobiography, and drawing/writing. Certain characteristics applicable to both art and language arts even share the same terms: generalizations, details, elements, setting, sequence, composition, balance, unity, symmetry, conclusions, emotions, vocabulary, and research.



The correlation of language arts with the four disciplines of comprehensive art education--art production, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics--provides meaningful approaches for classroom activities.

#### Art Criticism and Language Arts

Numerous people associate negative connotations with the term "art criticism", yet art criticism, in practice, generally is positive. When students respond to, interpret meaning, and make critical judgments about specific works of art, they are involved in the practice of art criticism. It is important that students learn to interpret and evaluate artworks of others and learn to write critically about their own artistic efforts.

Terry Barrett, author of *Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary*, suggests that the best art criticism is "good, lively, interpretive writing about art." This focus on writing is reiterated by Edmund Feldman, author of *Practical Art Criticism*. In his book, he states that words are virtually indispensable for communicating the critic's perspectives and that "words enable us to build bridges between sensory impressions, prior experience, logical inference, and the tasks of interpretation and explanation." Since most art criticism appears in written form, writing about art in the classroom provides many opportunities for students to serve as art critics.

Student art criticism may take a variety of forms of writing.

When students research and write about artists' lives or art movements, create time lines or chronologies, or write interpretive gallery cards or poetry based on historic artworks, they are integrating art history and language arts.

## **Aesthetics and Language Arts**

Aesthetics is the branch of philosophy that is concerned with concepts of value and beauty as they relate to the arts. Unlike art critics, who primarily focus on specific, contemporary works of art, people who study aesthetics are usually more concerned with "big questions" about art in general. Through aesthetic inquiry, students learn to understand art in a broad and fundamental way by investigating possible answers to basic questions people ask about art.

Aesthetic issues are meaningful topics for both written and oral responses in the classroom. Puzzling questions about art offer opportunities for critical thinking as both written and oral responses should be supported by reasoned judgments. A helpful text for developing aesthetics-based language arts activities is *Puzzles about Art: An Aesthetics Casebook* by Margaret Battin, Johan Fisher, Ronald Moore, and Anita Silvers.

## **Art Production and Language Arts**

The processes involved in creating artworks offer topics for writing, especially for "how to" explanations, sequencing of events, and point of view. Students can also write different forms of literature or poetry based on their own artworks.

## **The Art of Storytelling and Narrative Art**

Telling stories is one way we recognize meaning in our lives and our relationship with the world around us. Storytellers are revered in many cultures and serve a number of functions in societies. They pass on their culture's traditions through narratives—telling stories of the past, preserving tales of heroes, myths, legends, and fables. Storytellers may entertain, inform, or educate their audiences through oral dramatic interpretations, written texts, or visual images; but they all fulfill the basic human need to believe that life has meaning and purpose.

Bill Johnson, author of *Understanding What a Story Is*, suggests that a good story is one that "carries us on an engaging, dramatic journey to a destination of resolution we find satisfying and fulfilling." Stories, whether written, oral, or visual, have characters, events, action, plot, sequence, dramatic, and purpose. For students, writing about artworks that tell stories and illustrating their own stories promotes imaginative and creative thinking.

## **Computers, Art, and Language Arts**

Computers provide another tool to use for composing and publishing texts and graphic images in the classroom. Access to the Internet also allows students to reach worldwide audiences for their visual and literary work. In addition, the very nature of the World Wide Web, with its competitive emphasis on meaningful content and exemplary graphic design, requires that students develop both language and visual literacy.

## **Working Collaboratively**

Small group or entire class discussions and collaborations are beneficial to help students understand the necessity of working well together and to feel proud of their contributions to the group. Many of these suggested activities are adaptable for use with different size groups. Pairs of students can write narratives or poems together. Small groups of 3-4 participants can successfully collaborate to write narratives, descriptions, interpretations, or persuasive statements in response to works of art.

*Note: The above article is excerpted from **Interdisciplinary Connections between Art and Language Arts: The Artist as Storyteller**, a **Take 5** study print set written by Nancy Walkup and published by **Crystal Productions**, call 1-800-255-8629 for a free catalog.*

### **The Standards for the English Language Arts**

The Standards, published by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association in 1996, provide support for integrating art and language art. The following statements from the commentary offer guidance for the development of correlated art and language art activities:

- One of the most important functions of English language arts education is to help students learn to interpret and evaluate texts [in art, students learn to interpret and evaluate visual images].
- Students need frequent opportunities to write about different topics and for different audiences and purposes [in art, students can write about a variety of topics related to the works of art studied and can produce works that address different audiences and purposes].
- Students develop their knowledge of form and convention in spoken, written, and visual language as they create their own compositions and critique those of others [in art, students develop knowledge of visual language, create their own works, and critique their work and the work of others].
- Students who explore cross-disciplinary connections develop a working terminology to describe language structure as they become more thorough readers and more effective writers [as students explore cross-disciplinary connections in art they become more visually literate, more thoughtful thinkers, and more effective writers].
- It is essential that students acquire a wide range of abilities and for raising questions, investigating concerns, and solving problems [while writing about art, students acquire a wider range of skills for expression, both verbally and visually].

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### DECIPHERING FACT AND OPINION

Works of art unlock many educational doors that sometimes are difficult for certain learners to open. Placing art images at the center of learning helps both mainstream and challenged students translate abstract language arts concepts into concrete understanding. The success that results from this enriched learning experience is reflected in students' improved oral and written discourse.

One language arts problem that often confuses students is differentiating between fact and opinion. Works of art assist with visualization of the rules that govern these two contrasting notions. This lesson demonstrates how finding meaning in artworks helps young learners discriminate between fact and opinion.

#### Materials

- 3" x 5" paper for writing
- pencils
- a poster size art reproduction
- masking tape
- one large sign that reads "Fact" and one large sign that reads "Opinion"

#### Motivation

Display an art image so all students may see it. Allow a few moments for careful, silent observation of the work. Briefly discuss the difference between a fact and an opinion. A *fact* is properly defined as something that is true or real, actually exists, or has occurred. An *opinion* falls short of absolute knowledge and is a conclusion or judgment that cannot be proven to be true.

#### Procedure

1. Tape the "Fact" sign to one side of the reproduction and the "Opinion" sign to the other.
2. Distribute writing paper and ask each student to write one complete sentence about the image.
3. Ask each student to read aloud the sentence that has been written then classify the sentence as a fact or opinion.
4. Tape the sentence under either the Fact or Opinion sign, depending on the category that has been chosen by the writer.
5. In collaborative groups, students decide if the sentence has been correctly classified. Require justified reasons for placement in either category.
6. When most students agree and have given valid reasons for the placement of the statement, continue until all other sentences have been read, sorted, and justified as fact or opinion.
7. Ask students to re-evaluate individual sentences. Determine if each sentence is a fact or an opinion or if any sentences should be moved to the opposing category.
8. Divide students into two collaborative groups, a Fact Group and an Opinion Group. Students whose sentences comprise the Fact Group compile their work to create a descriptive paragraph about the image. Typical information in this group could include the title and date of the work of art, the name of the artist, materials used, where the image is now located, its country of origin, or other fact-based critical chronicles. Students whose sentences make up the Opinion Group combine their work to write a

paragraph indicating judgments about the image such as the artist's craftsmanship, effective use of the elements of art and principles of design, or if the image is liked or disliked. Characteristic information should lead the reader towards interpretation, the artist's intent, or viewer perception of the work of art.

### **Conclusion**

Observing works of art, discussing them, and writing about them offer many varied opportunities for learning. This fact and opinion activity should expand beyond the initial objective and encompass additional research that bolsters the students' first statements.

Questions and extensions are numerous and rich with any art object that is thoughtfully investigated. Bridging the curriculum with meaningful activities centered upon finding meaning in art images and objects prepares students for future learning by building a strong foundation that broadens as knowledge continues to grow.

Pam Geiger Stephens and Susan Dilleshaw Green  
Adapted from an article that first appeared in *SchoolArts*, November 1997

## **Summer Semester 1998 Vol. 9, No. 2**

### **A FOND FAREWELL**

When we first went up three flights of stairs in early April of 1990, and looked at the rooms in the historical, basically-abandoned building on the UNT campus, I had that sinking "Oh, No!" feeling. The rooms were filled with assorted odd chairs and broken desks, the remainders of the oldest building on the North Texas campus. Would we ever get new equipment, funding, and the support of the school districts and museums to make the North Texas Institute for Educators on the Visual Arts a reality?

There was a bright voice on that day which belonged to Harriet Laney. Her first words were, "We can do it - it will be fun! Harriet knew everyone on campus because she had worked in several offices on campus (where she was known for baking lots of cookies in appreciation for staff support). I thought, "Maybe she is right!"

Harriet showed me how we should put the office together, work the computer, and juggle many different tasks at the same time. She kept up all of our spirits, including those of Nancy Cason and Cassandra Broadus, the project coordinator and graduate research assistant for that first year. It quickly became evident to me that the job of co-director, even with the super support of co-director Jack Davis, was going to be a huge task. Harriet held us all together.

It is fortunate that Harriet has her share of optimistic traits because she has needed them in a personal battle with her health. For the last year, Harriet has engaged in a struggle with carpal tunnel syndrome and reflex sympathetic dystrophy, maladies all too common in our computer age. These afflictions are aggravated by repeated motions such as those involved in computer keyboard and mouse manipulations. As a result, she has been away from the NTIEVA office since September, undergoing a series of tests, treatments, a hand operation, and physical therapy.

On advice from her doctors, Harriet was forced to file for disability retirement from our office and the University. This is a loss because she had been the focal point of the office since April 11, 1990. The current NTIEVA staff, Dr. Davis, and myself are very upset that her health has removed Harriet from the office she helped establish eight years ago. We know many of you have worked with Harriet since our first institute and will want to join us in wishing her the very best as she adjusts to a new life.

You may write her at:  
Harriet Laney  
2417 Foxcroft Cir.  
Denton, Texas 76201

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### WRITING IN RESPONSE TO AESTHETIC ISSUES

#### Some Big Questions

*Why do we value certain objects?  
Why do we call some works "masterpieces"?  
Why do we find it important to protect  
and preserve them?*

When we explore questions about the broad subject of art rather than one specific work of art, we are participating in the continuing discussion of philosophical issues and the possible answers to these complex questions. When we wonder about issues that have concerned people through the ages, we find ourselves engaged in aesthetic, or philosophical, inquiry.



Recently one of the most prized works of art at the [Dallas Museum of Art](#), *The Icebergs* by Frederic Church, was damaged, and articles in the [Dallas Morning News](#) and the [Fort Worth Star Telegram](#) reported the incident.

*Star-Telegram* Dallas Bureau reporter Justin Bachman stated that the vandalism saddened, but did not stun, the art world. Janet Kutner's article in the *Arts* section of the Sunday, March 22, 1998, *Dallas Morning News* gives some explanation about the art community's response to the attack that resulted in a scratch about 40 inches long made with what appears to have been a key. In her report, Ms. Kutner gives examples of how other works of art have been harmed in the past and the types of people who have been guilty of purposefully causing the damage. Attacks on works of art are, unfortunately, not that uncommon today.

Reading reports such as these and thinking about the issues involved in this incident leads us to ask important questions about the value we place on works of art. Just what characteristics must an object have for us to value it as a "masterpiece"? Once that object is damaged, and possibly repaired, does it still have the same value for us? What kinds of value, other than monetary, do some objects have for us? Why do we protect and preserve art objects in museums? Is protecting and preserving works of art the primary responsibility of art museums?

These and other questions arise because of events in the world around us. Current events as presented in newspaper and magazine articles and television news reports give us opportunities to familiarize students with issues concerning art that exist in our communities. Perhaps small group discussions that explore the various aspects of a complicated question would be an appropriate way to prepare students for writing about their ideas. Through carefully considered and articulated responses, students are able to contribute possible answers to the questions that have concerned people in many times and place.

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**Art-O-Gram**

**Writing "W" Poems**

Write a "W" poem about an artwork, beginning by answering "W" questions about it.

Title of Artwork: \_\_\_\_\_

Artist: \_\_\_\_\_

Look carefully at the artwork, then answer the following questions about the artwork. Write your answers as individual words or phrases.

Line 1: Who (is the subject?)

Line 2: What (happened?)

Line 3: Where (did it happen?)

Line 4: When (did it happen?)

Line 5: Why (did it happen?)

Copy your responses to another piece of paper. Rewrite and edit your work, then recopy your final poem. Display your writing next to the artwork.

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### Student reproducible page

### FREDERIC CHURCH AND *THE ICEBERGS* The Artlinks Inquirer

#### The Artist

Frederic Edwin Church, an American artist, was born in Hartford, Connecticut in 1826. He was the only son of wealthy parents. As a young man, Church became interested in drawing. When he was 18 years old, instead of going to a traditional school, Church became the art student of Thomas Cole. Cole was a successful American painter. Both Cole and Church are known for their love of nature and their highly detailed landscape paintings.

Church became a famous artist during his lifetime. His work was popular in both the United States and Europe. At the time Church painted *The Icebergs* many people thought he was America's greatest artist.

Church's career as a painter was brought to an end in about 1877 when his right hand was crippled by arthritis. He spent the last years of his life at a home he built high above the Hudson River where he had a view of the landscape that was very similar to many of his paintings. Church died in 1900 in New York.

#### The Art

Often Church painted realistic pictures of places he visited, such as South America or Jamaica. When viewers saw his large paintings Church wanted them to feel as if they had also visited the place he had been.

*The Icebergs* was painted after Church visited real icebergs in the Arctic. Critics and the public agreed that *The Icebergs* was a great success when it was first shown in 1861 in New York City. Like many of Church's other landscapes, this large painting shows the power of nature and makes viewers feel as if they are actually in the scene.

After being shown in a variety of places in the more than 135 years since it was painted, *The Icebergs* became a part of the permanent collection of the Dallas Museum of Art in 1979. In March, 1998, an unknown person intentionally damaged the painting with a 40-inch scratch across its surface. Although the painting can be restored, art experts say it will never be quite the same.

#### Vocabulary

Landscape – a picture of an outdoor scene

Permanent collection – artwork that belongs to a museum

Realistic – showing the natural world as it actually appears

Restoration expert – someone who repairs artwork

## Activities

1. Make an art story map about *The Icebergs*. Write a story using your art story map.
2. Write a short story as if you were a newspaper reporter traveling with Church in the Arctic. Include as many details as possible so that your readers will feel as if they are also traveling with the artist.
3. Look carefully at *The Icebergs* and at *The Hunter's Return*, a painting by Thomas Cole.
4. What do you think Church learned from his art teacher Cole?

Why do you think that art experts say that *The Icebergs* will never be quite the same after it is repaired?

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### NTIEVA'S TEXAS ARTIST SERIES BEGINS WITH ANNETTE LAWRENCE

On April 18, NTIEVA sponsored the first in a series of teacher seminars that feature Texas artists. University of North Texas assistant professor Annette Lawrence presented a slide lecture and hands-on workshop at Texas Christian University. Annette's work was recently included in the prestigious Whitney Biennial in New York. Under her directions a great group of teachers made handmade books from paper bags.

The next artist to be featured will be Dallas artist Lee Smith, familiar to many institute participants through his *ArtLinks* painting *China or the Devil*. This presentation, scheduled for December 12 at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, will follow the same format. Lee will present a slide lecture in the morning and a hands-on workshop for participants in the afternoon. The morning session is still available for all, but the afternoon session is already full, as it is limited to only 25 participants. Please call Nancy Walkup at 940-565-3986 or E-mail [walkup@unt.edu](mailto:walkup@unt.edu) for reservations for the morning session.

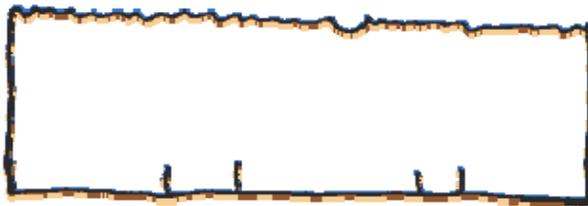
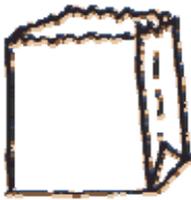


### ANNETTE LAWRENCE'S DIRECTIONS FOR A PAPER BAG BOOK

#### Materials:

- Paper Bags
- Glue
- Scissors (optional)

1. Look at the bag carefully. Notice the way it was constructed.
2. Deconstruct the bag by pulling it apart in the places where it is glued



3. Lay the bag out flat.

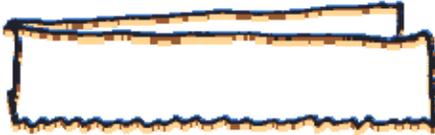
3a. (optional step) One large grocery bag will make a book of 4 pages. If you would like a book with more pages use two or three bags. Glue the bags together side by side.



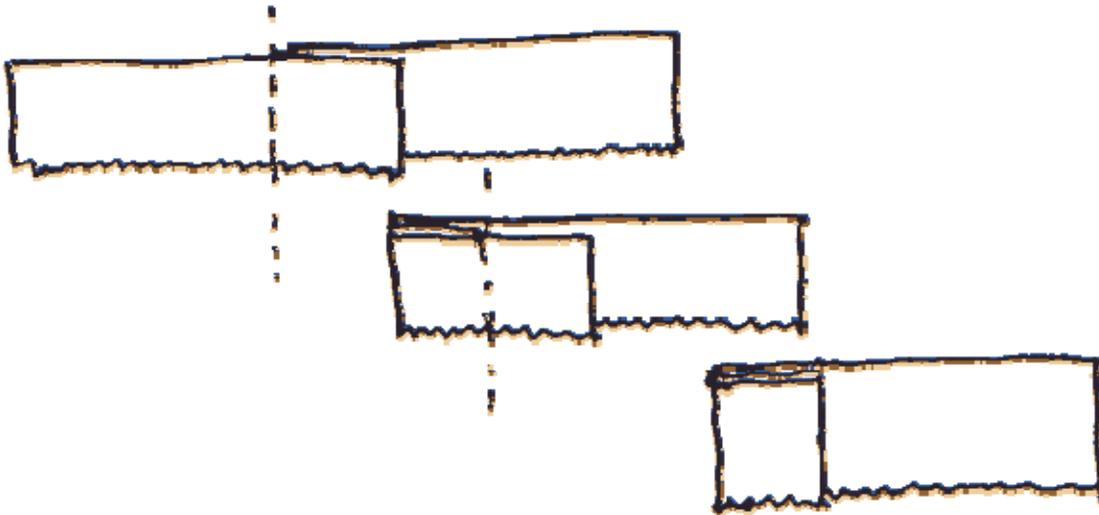
4. Fold the Bag(s) in half, top to bottom.



5. Then fold in half left to right. This is to mark the center.



6. Working from the middle of the bag, begin to fold it, accordion-style.
7. Do the same thing to the other side.
8. Glue the insides of the pages together to firm up the body of the book.
9. Use a strip of paper as a binder on the edge.
10. Trim as needed.
11. Admire your paper bag book.



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### PLANNING FOR QUALITY ART WRITING

Good writing begins with a plan. Such a plan is a story map. A story map, often used in language arts classes, is a written outline that helps students develop clear and focused written expression. After developing a story map about a topic, students then elaborate upon the outline to write more interesting narratives.



Similarly, when writing about works of art, a story map can be an effective tool. While contributing to better writing, art story maps prompt careful art observation and analysis, meaningful interpretation, and justified responses. Art story maps require students to thoughtfully explore a work of art, to identify the characters and the setting, and then to determine what problem is shown in the image. After deciding the problem, two or more details are required that describes the problem more thoroughly or explains why the problem exists. Next, students must offer a logical solution based upon clues found in the artwork about how the problem is solved. Finally, an ending or closure to the story is written.

Art story maps include the same information as language arts story maps, although often art story maps contain more details. An art story map should include these parts:

- Title of the work of art, name of the artist, and date of the work
- A list of characters
- The setting (when and where)
- What's the problem?
- Two or more details or events that tell about the problem
- A solution to the problem
- A logical ending

When planning to write about a work of art, students should first read about the art and artist, and then carefully examine the artwork to develop an art story map. For example, an art story map about *The Icebergs* by Frederic Church might look something like this outline created by third grade students at Shady Brook Elementary:

- Title, artist, date: *The Icebergs* by Frederic Church, 1861, a painting
- Characters: Sir John Franklin and his crew
- Setting: Late evening or dawn, an iceberg in the North Atlantic
- Statement of the problem: There's a shipwreck where everybody disappeared
- One detail or event that tells about the problem: The broken crow's nest is on the ice
- Another detail: The iceberg looked like snowy mountains
- Another detail: Some reddish rock shows in the ice
- Solution: The crew should have turned because they thought the iceberg was a snowy mountain
- Ending: Sir John Franklin's ship sank but others learned from his mistake

Art story maps can be developed by individual students or in small collaborative groups. When possible, collaborative groups are advisable so that students can discuss ideas with one another. It should be emphasized to students that an art story map is not a finished product. Rather, it is an outline. It is a "map" that points the writer in the right direction much like a road map helps a driver to find a certain destination. After completing an art story map, it should be used as a guide or outline that keeps writing on track as the writer elaborates upon each topic and creates an interesting story (critical interpretation), such as this one:

### ***The Icebergs***

By Kelli and Kerri

In 1861, Frederic Church painted *The Icebergs*. Now we will tell the story of *The Icebergs*.

It was right before dawn when we heard, "Alert! Alert! Icebergs ahead!"

Sir John Franklin ignored the warnings that the crew sent him. Sir John ignored the warnings because he thought the icebergs were just snowy mountains. It sort of seemed like Sir John was taking a catnap.

Later in the evening at the North Atlantic we smelled a bad odor, the water was all green, maybe from pollution. An hour later we reached some glossy icebergs, snowy mountains as Sir John Franklin and his crew would say. Then, somebody heard a piece of the boat chip away.

"Help! Help!"

There was a stampede of people running everywhere. After that we heard a loud crack. Another immense piece of ship had cracked off. "The ship is sinking!"

Two years later, nobody had survived the shipwreck on the iceberg. Then a shipping crew from a different ship found the old ship's broken crow's nest on the ice. Then these people started studying about Sir John's ship and his crew. Luckily, this shipping crew knew not to go close to the icebergs.

### **Samples of Student Art Story Maps And Stories**

By: Sean, Scott, John Michael, and Christine

**Title of the work of art**– *The Icebergs* **Date** – 1861

**Artist** – Frederic Edwin Church **Country** - United States

**Who are the characters?** Sir John Franklin, his crew, and the icebergs

**What is the setting?** The Arctic in the evening

**What is the problem?** Sir John Franklin didn't finish his voyage

**One detail or event that shows evidence of the problem** A part of the crow's nest is detached from the ship

**Another detail of event that shows evidence of the problem** The icebergs

**How is the problem solved?** We only see the broken mast of the ship and the ship probably sank

**Ending** This is a sad story

### ***The Icebergs***

Have you heard about the tragedy of Sir John Franklin? It happened in 1861. He was on the verge of who knows where when he crashed into an iceberg and left many, many calamities.

Frederic Church was the artist who introduced to us this terrible disaster. He painted the beautiful but dangerous scene. In this picture, the fractured mast of the ship lays on the frigid ice. There are no people left alive that we can see. There are no other parts of the ship left.

The gloomy brown sky in Frederic Church's, *The Icebergs*, shows how the people on the ship must have felt when the ship sank.

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### TEKS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND READING

Listed below is the section of the recently adopted [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills](#) (TEKS) that describes some of the expectations for fourth grade students in the state of Texas in the area of English Language Arts and Reading. Each of these purposes for writing can be addressed with writing activities related to works of art.



Using works of art as a focus for writing activities, students are able to integrate art and writing and can become engaged in critical thinking, the development of visual literacy skills, and in exploring meaning. Writing activities focused upon works of art are suggested after the objective for each of the categories.

We hope that these examples, though focused on Texas state educational objectives, will provide examples for use with similar objectives from other states.

**110.6 English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 4** (Following each statement of a student expectation is a parenthetical notation that indicates the additional grades at which these expectations are demonstrated at increasingly sophisticated levels.

**(4.15) Writing/purposes. The student writes for a variety of audiences and purposes, and in a variety of forms.**

**The student is expected to:**

**A. Write to express, discover, record, develop, reflect on ideas, and to problem solve (4-8).**

Write a poem that expresses a response to a work of art. (descriptive, main idea)

Write a paragraph that describes important details in the work of art and explore how those details relate to the meaning of the work. (descriptive, main idea)

Write a paragraph or essay that explores the meaning of a work of art and the relationship that meaning has to the student's own experiences. (main idea, compare/contrast)

**B. Write to influence such as to persuade, argue, and request (4-8).**

Write a letter to someone to persuade them to go see a particular work of art. (persuasive, descriptive)

Write a letter to request that a museum purchase a particular work of art to add to their permanent collection. Give persuasive reasons why you think they should. (persuasive, descriptive)

Write a newspaper article to convince citizens that they should ask the city council to build a sculpture garden instead of a new parking lot. (persuasive)

From a group of artworks, choose one that you like, and write to give reasons for your choice. (persuasive, descriptive)

**C. Write to inform such as to explain, describe, report and narrate (4-8).**

Write the story expressed in the work of art. (narrative, main idea)

Write what you think happened before the action shown in the work of art. (narrative, descriptive, fact and opinion sequencing of events)

Write what you think will happen next. (narrative, descriptive, fact and opinion, prediction)

Write a conversation between two of the characters in a work of art. (point of view, narrative)

Choose two works of art. Write about how they are similar and how they are different. (compare/contrast)

**D. Write to entertain such as to compose humorous poems or short stories (4-8).**

Write a poem or play that expresses the main idea of a work of art. Read what you wrote to the class while they carefully look at a reproduction of the work of art. (main idea)

Pretend you are one of the objects in a reproduction of a still life or a landscape. Write a humorous poem or paragraph that expresses what that object might say if it could talk. (point of view)

**E. Exhibit an identifiable voice in personal narratives and in stories (4-5).**

Pretend you are inside a painting, then write a letter to someone telling them about that place. (point of view, descriptive)

Pretend you are one of the characters in a painting and write about what is happening. (point of view, descriptive)

**F. Choose the appropriate form for his/her own purpose for writing, including journals, letters, reviews, poems, narratives, and instruction (4-5).**

Write a column for the local newspaper informing the public about an exhibition of art work produced by the students in your class. (persuasive, descriptive)

Choose a work of art. Pretend you are the artist and write about your thoughts while making that work of art. (point of view, descriptive, main idea)

Write the step-by-step directions for making something so that someone else can follow your directions and make something similar to what you made. (descriptive, sequencing)

***THE ICEBERGS***



Frederic Edwin Church  
1861, oil on canvas, 64 3/8" x 112 1/2"  
Dallas Museum of Art, anonymous gift

**About the Artist**

Frederic Edwin Church was the only son of an affluent Hartford, Connecticut, family. Though he was independently wealthy, he wanted to be an artist rather than pursue the traditional education expected for rich young men of his time. When he was eighteen he began to draw from nature and was sent to study with Thomas Cole, a successful and important American painter. After three years as a student living in Cole's home, Church went to New York in 1848. Although he was wealthy enough to go to Europe to study, as was expected of artists of his day, Church had no interest in going. He was interested in light and color and the glories of natures he found around him.

However, in 1853, Cyrus W. Field, who would later lay the Atlantic cable, urged Church to accompany him to South America in search of a brother who had vanished. Because of his interest in dramatic landscapes, nature, science, and the spectacular wonders he expected to find in the Andes and the primitive forests near the Amazon, Church decided to go. While in South America, he spent a few months in Colombia and Ecuador, went six hundred miles up the Magdalena River, and traveled on a mule to see volcanoes in the Andes. His South American paintings were well received after his return. His painting of Niagara Falls exhibited in 1857 was so popular that it was exhibited to crowds as the only work in the dealer's gallery. Church's next painting to stun audiences was *The Heart of the Andes* in which he tried to show in a single, large canvas all of the wonders of a second trip to South America.

In 1859, Church was at the height of his career. He enjoyed great reputation and celebrity. His painting *Niagara* was in its third year of attracting viewers, and *The Heart of the Andes* had attracted large crowds first London and then in New York and Boston. Exploration in the Arctic was important during this time, and Church traveled to see icebergs off the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland. His public anxiously awaited the unveiling of his newest painting, which was displayed for the public in New York April 24, 1861.

In December 1867, at the age of forty-one, Church visited Europe for the first time. He stayed there less than two years, and after his return, put into large canvases what he had seen. At the age of 51, inflammatory rheumatism permanently crippled Church's right hand, and he tried, with little success, to work only using his left hand.

### **About the Art**

Frederic Church was inspired by the dramatic landscapes in his own country, and by those he visited in South America, Europe, and the Arctic. In *The Icebergs*, he shows his viewers the power and grandeur of icebergs he saw off the coast of Newfoundland.

Church, and other artists of this period, saw a manifestation of the power of God in the awesome and powerful glories of nature. Church was fascinated by the dramatic icy scenery and by the adventurous explorers who braved the dangerous waters. The broken mast in the foreground of *The Icebergs* honors the English explorer Sir John Franklin who had gone down with his three ships in the northern seas. Representing the fragility of man in contrast to the power of nature, the mast was not in the painting when it was first on exhibition, but was added in late 1862 or early 1863 before *The Icebergs* was taken to London.

### **Additional Information**

Reviewers agreed that *The Icebergs* was a triumph. One writer said it was "the most splendid work of art that has yet been produced in this country...an absolutely wonderful picture, a work of genius which illustrates the time and the country producing it."

By the time that *The Icebergs* was ready for public exhibition, the United States Civil War had begun, and the nation was in turmoil. The title of the painting was originally *The North-Church's Picture of Icebergs*, a title that revealed Church's loyalties. He allocated all exhibition fees to a fund established to support soldiers' dependents. Each viewer paid 25 cents to see the painting.

### **About the Time and Place**

The year that *The Icebergs* was completed, 1861, saw the United States disunited. Kansas entered the Union as a free state in January, but Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Tennessee, Arkansas, and North Carolina seceded between January and May. South Carolina had seceded late in 1860. Jefferson Davis was named provisional president of the Confederate States of America on February 4. The Civil War began on April 12 when Fort Sumter was bombarded by General Beauregard, the commander of the Confederate Army. President Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers to serve for three years in the U.S. Army, and by July, 30,000 recruits were under the command of Winfield Scott. In 1861, Charles Dickens completed *Great Expectations*, and *Silas Marner* was completed by George Eliot.

Kay Wilson