

## **"American Art and American Literature: Insight into American Thinking, Style and Point of View"**

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**UNIT DESCRIPTION:** Through an inductive approach, this unit attempts to engage students in discovering stylistic and point of view similarities between artistic and literary periods of America for a high school American literature class. Generally, students first conduct visual thinking strategies to relate affectively to paintings and to become more observant. Thereafter, they are shown paintings from various periods in a mixed order and attempt to discover the development of American art. Then, they are given samples of various genre from the major literary periods and attempt to discover the development of American literature. These initial activities of the year provide a framework for thinking about American literature and art as the American literature program progresses throughout the year. The advantage of this "kick-off" unit for the teacher and the students is that they will be liberated from conducting a traditional study of American literature via a chronological approach. At the same time, they will have an understanding of its development and the parallel development of American painting. In addition, they will be able to detect the elements of various periods in American art and literature. Furthermore, these activities encourage students to become keener observers of images in both painting and literature.

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN TITLE:** "American Art and American Literature: Insight into American Thinking, Style and Point of View"

**KEYWORDS:** American art  
American art museums  
American painting (Google.com)

**CURRICULUM AREA:** English

**GRADE LEVEL:** Grade 10 (private school) --Public school - Grade 11

**APPROPRIATE GROUP SITES:** Whole group and small group teams

**TIME EXPECTED TO COMPLETE INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN:** Four days for initial steps to establish a framework of thinking about literature and art. This framework of understanding will be the basis for the course and referred to throughout the year.

### **INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

Students intuitively and emotionally relate to paintings.  
Students evaluate differences and similarities between paintings.  
Students evaluate difference and similarities between literary pieces from various literary periods  
Students determine the development of American painting via activities  
Students determine the development of American literature via activities  
Students determine the elements of various artistic and literary points of view in the imagery and text of what they read throughout the year. (Note: the activities will allow the study of American literature to vary according to theme and genre yet establish an understanding of its development.)

### **OVERALL OBJECTIVES:**

**STUDENTS BECOME MORE OBSERVANT OF WHAT THEY VIEW AND WHAT THEY READ**  
**STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN ARTISTIC EXPRESSION.**

#### INDIANA STATE STANDARDS:

Standard #3 of "Reading" (Grade 11)

Literary Criticism

Evaluate the aesthetic qualities of style, including the impact of ... figurative language [e.g. imagery] on tone, mood and theme.

Analyze the way in which a work of literature is related to the themes and issues of its historical period.

#### MATERIALS & RESOURCES:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanvisions/gallery/index.html>

This web site allows you to present ready-made programs for the various periods of American art, to organize the paintings chronologically and to download the ones you select. Other rich options are available at this website.

<http://www.artchive.com>

This web site lists the galleries by artists' last names and periods.

#### MUSEUM RESOURCES:

<http://www.nmaa.si.edu/> --- Smithsonian American Art Museum - Go to "Collections and Exhibitions"

<http://www.nga.gov/collection/srchart.htm> -- National Gallery of Art

Go to "Subject Search" - Go to the bottom of the page to "Expanded Search" - Then, you can do a very specific search according to actual subjects, periods, nationalities, etc.

#### PREPARATION:

Selection of paintings to elicit intuitive reactions from students.

Selection of paintings from various periods in American art

Selection of literary pieces from various periods in American literature

Summary of various periods of American art that focuses on style and point of view

Summary of various periods of American literature that focuses on style, point of view (and philosophy)

Determination of activities and their order.

#### STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES:

##### ACTIVITY DAY #1 - BUILDING SENSITIVITY TO IMAGES STRATEGIES

###### STRATEGY #1

Divide students into two groups.

Place 7 copies of paintings on the floor in a circle around which they can walk. Create two circles with the same

Give each student paper icons of a house, a heart, a dollar sign, hard working hands, light bulb and an unhappy face. They are to place one to two on paintings that merit these symbols.

Symbol Key: house = I would hang this in my house.

heart = I love it.

dollar sign = This is worth much money.

working hands = This took a great deal of work.

light bulb = This makes me think.

unhappy face = I hate this.

Explain the symbol key on the board.

4. Discuss their decisions in a large group. Ask them why they made the choices that they did.

###### STRATEGY #2

1. Select one of the paintings that the class seemed to think was one that made them think.
  2. Employ a visual thinking strategy approach:
    - A. Ask them to take some quiet moments to look at the painting.
    - B. What is going on in this picture.
- Paraphrase their answers without judging them.
- C. What do you see that makes you think this? (Call for evidence.)
  - D. Connect like ideas or state the theories that are discussed. Or, ask what this picture remind them of.
- The point is to get them to pay attention to images and details and to react to them.
- The thinking on this day will set the stage for the next activities.

#### **ACTIVITY DAY #2 - GAME - PRIZE - CANDY**

1. Put images of artwork that is representative of the major philosophical artistic and literary American periods across the wall.
2. Group students into three teams with the objective of determining the historical order of the art work. Suggest that they look at the differences between the paintings and determine the subjects, points of view, and to look for clues as to the time period.
3. Give students a summary of the various periods, and tell them that they are free to make any changes.
4. Ask each team to justify its order by making specific references to the clues in the paintings.
5. Give the winning team the candy.

#### **ACTIVITY DAY #3 - GAME - PRIZE - 5 POINTS ADDED TO THE DAILY GRADE AVERAGE OF THE WINNING TEAM**

1. Give each team selected excerpts of works from various genre and various literary periods.
2. Tell the teams that their objective is to determine the historical order of the excerpts of the works. Suggest that they consider what they learned about the development of American art yesterday. Again, they should think about the subjects, points of view and look for other clues, which they should now be able to brainstorm and which the teacher or student should list on the board.
3. Give students a summary of the various periods, and tell them that they are free to make any changes.
4. Ask each team to justify its order by making specific references to the clues in the paintings.
5. Give the winning team the 5 points. Give everyone candy today for a job well done.

#### **ACTIVITY DAY #4: READING APPLICATION**

1. Explain that now that they have an understanding of the development of artistic and literary periods they should now be able to apply them to what they read.
2. Give students a one page short story from a literary period, such as "Story of an Hour." Ask them to read it and to list the clues that suggest a particular literary period. In addition, put along the chalk tray of the board 5 paintings that come from a variety of periods including the realistic period of the story.
3. Tell them in addition to listing the clues in the story that suggest a literary period to write the period at the top of their story and to also write the number of the painting from the period.
4. Discuss their findings.

#### **STUDENT ASSESSMENT:**

1. Students can meet the objectives.
2. Accuracy in activities that demand historical and stylistic decisions.
3. Quiz and test questions, as well as oral discussions, that call for application of principles of literary and artistic periods
4. Semester exam questions that provide excerpts of literary works and paintings for students to identify

by style, point of view and period and that call for a personal response supported by evidence via written the visual thinking strategy approach.

**EXPANDED PLAN:**

Student teams will select one era of interest to investigate. They may investigate the art, philosophy, literature, dress, music, architecture, entertainment, economy, politics, etc. of the time. They must make a PowerPoint presentation and oral presentation. In addition, they will be instructed to conduct a documented writing of their area of interest in MLA style of their presentations. The aims are to understand the framework of the the development of American painting and literature first, to apply these understandings, to investigate an era, and to be able to present and write about their findings.