



An Artist's Journey: Transform a Painting into Poetry

Grade Level: 1–3, 4–7 with modifications

Essential Understandings: All art forms help us express, interpret, and understand the world. Sometimes paintings tell stories, and sometimes poems paint pictures.

Activity Description: Students will examine several Russell paintings using their five senses, before choosing a painting to use as inspiration to write a poem.

Time: 1–2 class periods

Objectives: Students will

- Practice close reading by analyzing paintings.
- Use art to stimulate creative writing.
- Create a poem and share poetic thoughts with others.
- Recognize common emotions, experiences, and expressions.
- Learn and understand the five senses.

Standards

Art Content Standards

1—Students create, perform/exhibit, and respond in the Arts.

6—Students make connections among the Arts, other subject areas, life, and work.

Common Core Standards

CCRA.R.1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence

when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCRA.R.3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCRA.R.4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCRA.R.6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCRA.R.7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

CCRA.W.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCRA.SL.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

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Montana's Charlie Russell: Art in the Collection of the Montana Historical Society

An Artist's Journey: Transform a Painting into Poetry (continued)

Social Studies Standards

SS.K12.4. Use sources to gather evidence to develop and refine claims.

SS.K12.5. Communicate conclusions.

SS.H.1.1. Distinguish between past, present, and future time.

SS.H.1.2. Understand how events might be described differently depending on historical contexts and perspectives, including those of tribes in Montana.

SS.H.2.1. Identify how people lived differently in the past than they do today.

SS.H.2.3. Identify different kinds of historical sources, including oral histories of American Indians.

SS.H.3.2. Explain how perspective impacts the telling of historical events.

Materials

Images from the *Montana's Charlie Russell* packet or printed from the [Russell Images PowerPoint](#)

Projection equipment

Sensory Exploration Worksheet (below)

Poetry Template Worksheet (below)

[About Visual Thinking Strategies](#)

Pre-Lesson Preparation

- Review About Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS).
- Arrange to project *Indian Hunters Return*, *Bronc to Breakfast*, and any other images you choose from the [Russell Images PowerPoint](#).
- Copy Sensory Exploration and Poetry Template Worksheets (one per student)

Procedure

Step 1: Project *Indian Hunters Return* and use VTS to lead students in a discussion. You should plan on spending about 10–15 minutes for this discussion.

Step 2: Talk about how the painting transports us to a different place and time. Ask: “If you could enter a time machine and go to this scene, what would it be like?” Explain that our five senses allow us to explore and enjoy the world around us. Have students “step” into the painting. As a class, use the Sensory Exploration Worksheet to delve deeper into the painting, writing the students’ answers on the board.

Step 3: As time allows, project the other Russell images and have students step into the paintings to touch, see, hear, taste, and smell their surroundings.

Step 4: Set up stations, each with a different Russell print (from the packet or that you have printed from the PowerPoint). Allow students to circulate and then choose the image that fascinates them the most to work with. (Note: Students will have to share images.) Using the Sensory Exploration Worksheet, have students work individually or in groups, looking at the image and recording, with words or drawings, what each of their five senses would be experiencing if they were in this picture.

Option: Instead of allowing students to choose their own image, project *Bronc to Breakfast* for the class. Using the Sensory Exploration Worksheet, have students work individually, in pairs, or as a group, looking at the image and recording, with words or drawings, what each of their five senses would be experiencing if they were in this picture. What would they be hearing (clattering of pans), feeling (hot sun on their faces), smelling (burnt biscuits), tasting (smoke from the fire), and seeing (lots of dust in the air)?

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An Artist's Journey: Transform a Painting into Poetry (continued)

Step 5: Have students share answers from their Sensory Exploration Worksheets with the class. Discuss the fact that even though they have looked at the paintings with their eyes, they also experienced them with their other senses by using their imaginations. In the same way, when we hear a story or read a poem, we hear it with our ears. But a good story or poem also paints a picture for us in our minds.

Step 6: Tell students that, using *Bronc to Breakfast* (or their personal choice from the images) as inspiration, they are going to create their own piece of art through poetry, using their completed Sensory Exploration Worksheet as a tool.

The Poetry Template comes in two parts:

Part One: Ask each student to work individually to find a person or animal within the painting that catches his or her attention. Have students complete each question on the first page of the Poetry Template, referring to their Sensory Exploration Worksheet for help and/or guidance. Remind students that they will use their answers to paint a picture with words. Their goal is to be as descriptive as possible.

Option: Have students “step back into the painting” and write from their own point of view.






Part Two: Have the students use the patterns on page 1 of the worksheet to transfer their chosen words or phrases into the Poetry Template. Let them know that they do not have to transfer the words exactly as they have them written on the worksheet—but the ideas should be the same. Once all the poems are completed, have the students read them (with the picture projected behind them), or display them with the Russell prints in the classroom.

Modification for Upper Grades: After students have completed the first page of the Artist's Journey Worksheet, have them use a thesaurus to “bump up” their vocabulary and find the most accurate and descriptive words they can to use in their poems.

Have students write a three-stanza poem, using the same format for each stanza but with each stanza written from a different point of view (for example, using *Bronc to Breakfast*, students could write from the point of view of the cook, the horse, the rider, an onlooker....)

Sensory Exploration I

Look at the image and record, with words or drawings, what each of your five senses would be experiencing if you were in this picture.



An Artist's Journey: Transform a Painting into Poetry Worksheet

Sometimes artists paint pictures of real people, places, and things. Sometimes they paint what they “see” only in their minds. Using the C. M. Russell painting for inspiration, let your own “mind’s eye” create a new piece of art through poetry.

1. Find a person or animal in the painting that captures your attention. Choose two words that **DESCRIBE** what you see.

A. _____

B. _____

2. Look closely at the painting again, studying the same person or animal that intrigues you. What do you think they are **WONDERING** about?



3. What sounds do you suppose he or she **HEARS**:



4. What do you think he or she is **SEEING** beyond the borders of the painting?



5. Now look at the face and study it closely. What do you think he or she **WISHES** for?



To turn your answers into a poem, fill in the blanks by matching the numbers on this page to the numbers on the Poetry Template. (Put your answer to 1A on the line labeled 1A, etc.). Feel free to add or change some of the words to make your poem read the way you want it to.

I Am

By _____

I am _____ and _____
1A 1B

I wonder _____
2

I hear _____
3

I see _____
4

I want _____
5

I am _____ and _____
1A 1B