



Collaborative Arts Resources for Education



Timken Museum of Art Lesson Plan

Grades/Level: Middle School (6–8)

Subjects: English–Language Arts

Time Required: 2-4 sessions

Author: Timken Museum of Art

Lesson Overview

Students will examine the details in Eastman Johnson's painting *The Cranberry Harvest, Island of Nantucket* (1880) and write a ten-line dialogue between two figures in the composition. Students will learn how to use dialogue tags and include sensory details to create a compelling dialogue.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- closely examine a painting and point out what they see
- define and identify dialogue in a book
- give examples of dialogue tags
- write a descriptive ten-line dialogue
- include sensory details in dialogue

Materials

- Image of Eastman Johnson's *The Cranberry Harvest, Island of Nantucket* (contact education@timkenmuseum.org to obtain a PowerPoint presentation with the image)
- Map of America that shows the island of Nantucket (also included in the PowerPoint)
- Books to look up dialogues
- Dialogue Tags handout (provided at the end of this lesson plan)
- Notepad and pencils

Lesson Steps

1. Display Eastman Johnson's *The Cranberry Harvest, Island of Nantucket* and allow students to take the time to look closely at the work of art. After allowing 30 seconds of silent viewing, ask students the following questions: What's going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can you find? After each student provides a response, acknowledge his/her response by pointing to the image and paraphrasing what he/she said. Continue this questioning for 5-10 minutes.

2. Tell students that the painting was painted by the American artist Eastman Johnson more than one hundred years ago. Eastman Johnson is probably best known for his genre paintings, a type of picture that shows scenes from everyday life. Focusing on distinctly American subject matter, the artist painted subjects relating to the Civil War as well as scenes from the life of Native and African Americans. Following his marriage in 1869, Johnson spent his summers on Nantucket Island, an island thirty miles south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in the United States (show students on a map of America where the island of Nantucket is located). Here, he created the Timken composition which depicts a group of ordinary people who are spending their afternoon picking cranberries. The painting is considered one of the artists' greatest masterpieces because it portrays real individuals - rather than stereotypes - in complex relationship to each other and their environment. The painting was preceded by numerous oil sketches and studies that show Johnson's interest in the naturalistic depiction of outdoor light.

3. Discuss the painting further by asking students to identify sensory details: "If you were in the composition, what would you hear, smell, and taste? Write each response on the board under the categories of "sounds," "smells," "tastes". Have students write the list of sensory details in their notebooks.

4. Ask students what the people depicted in the composition might be talking about. Invite students to share their ideas.

5. Tell students to pick a pair of people in the composition who appear to be talking to each other. Have each students describe to their classmates which figures they chose. Tell students that they cannot point at the figures. Instead, they will have to explain who they chose by describing the figures' location in the composition, their clothing and activity.

6. Tell students that they will be writing a dialogue between these two people. Ask students for the definition of a dialogue. Invite students to share their ideas. After this discussion, tell students the following definition and write it on the board: "Dialogue is what happens when two or more characters talk to one another." Explain that dialogue is essential to fiction writing. It brings characters to life and adds interest. Dialogue consists of the most exciting, most emotional, and most dramatic words.
7. Explain to students that in a dialogue the exact words that characters speak are put between quotation marks. Quotation marks show when a character starts and stops talking. Write the following example sentence on the board using quotations marks: He said "How are you today?"
8. Pass out books to your students that you have read as a class. Invite students to find dialogue in the books by looking for quotation marks. When students find dialogue, they can raise their hand and read it to the class.
9. Explain to students that when writing dialogue, we use dialogue tags - *she said, he asked* - to let readers know who is speaking. The most obvious and most used dialogue tags are "said" and "asked" but there are many other dialogue tags that can be used. Distribute copies of the *Dialogue Tags* handout (see last page of the lesson plan) and have one student read it aloud. Afterwards, invite students to share additional tags. Have students write these tags on their copies of the handout.
10. Direct students' attention back to Eastman Johnson's painting and the list of sensory details that they have written in their notebooks earlier. Tell students that when writing the dialogues between the two figures they chose they should include at least three sensory details. Explain to them that sensory details are important as they help set a scene and bring the reader into the story. An easy way to work sensory details into stories is through dialog tags. Write the following example on the board: *Running his hand through the warm, moist grass the old man said: "I am so tired I don't think I can pick another cranberry."* Pair students together and ask them to come up with one more example. Have each pair write down their sentence on a separate piece of paper. When finished, have students share their sentences and write them on the board.
11. Have students begin writing their dialogues. While students are writing, go around the classroom and encourage them to use different dialogue tags from the handout. When everyone is finished, invite a few students to read their dialogue aloud to the class.

Assessment

Assess students' writings based on whether they followed instructions for the topic, included sensory details and used different dialogue tags.

Standards Addressed

English—Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools

Grade 6

Writing

1.0 Writing Strategies

- 1.1 Choose the form of writing (e.g., personal letter, letter to the editor, review, poem, report, narrative) that best suits the intended purpose.
- 1.2 Create multiple-paragraph expository compositions:
 - a. Engage the interest of the reader and state a clear purpose.
 - b. Develop the topic with supporting details and precise verbs, nouns, and adjectives to paint a visual image in the mind of the reader.
 - c. Conclude with a detailed summary linked to the purpose of the composition.

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

2.1 Write Narratives

- a. Establish and develop a plot and setting and present a point of view that is appropriate to the stories.
- b. Include sensory details and concrete language to develop plot and character.
- c. Use a range of narrative devices (e.g., dialogue, suspense).

Listening and Speaking

1.0 Listening and Speaking Strategies

- 1.2 Identify the tone, mood, and emotion conveyed in the oral communication.
- 1.4 Select a focus, an organizational structure, and a point of view, matching the purpose, message, occasion, and vocal modulation to the audience.
- 1.5 Emphasize salient points to assist the listener in following the main ideas and concepts.
- 1.7 Use effective rate, volume, pitch, and tone and align nonverbal elements to sustain audience interest and attention.

Speaking Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)

2.1 Deliver narrative presentations:

- a. Establish a situation, plot, point of view, and setting with descriptive words and phrases.
- b. Show, rather than tell, the listener what happens.

Handout: Dialogue Tags

acknowledged

admitted

agreed

answered

argued

asked

barked

begged

bellowed

blustered

bragged

complained

confessed

cried

demanded

denied

giggled

hinted

hissed

howled

inquired

interrupted

laughed

lied

mumbled

muttered

nagged

pleaded

promised

questioned

remembered

replied

requested

retorted

roared

sang

screamed

screeched

shouted

sighed

snarled

sobbed

threatened

wailed

warned

whimpered

whined

whispered

wondered

yelled