

Journaling the Journey

Writing a Travel Article About the Lyme Art Colony

Grades: 5-8

Time: over the course of a week

Grouping: whole class, small groups, individual

Materials: copies of travel excerpt from website, access to Museum's website, writing paper, craft supplies

Description

The Lyme Art Colony was a group of artists who were drawn to Old Lyme, Connecticut, as early as 1900. They stayed at the Griswold boardinghouse that was owned and operated by Florence Griswold. These artists spent their days painting *en plein air*, or out-of-doors, to capture the natural beauty of the area. From the very beginning, these artists began to physically transform the boardinghouse by painting scenes on the doors and wall panels of the house – a tradition that was common in the country inns the artists had visited in Europe. Soon, the news of the boardinghouse for artists spread and Old Lyme became known as a place to visit, even for non-boarding tourists on vacation.

This lesson introduces students to the Lyme Art Colony by having them write a travel article in the voice of a travel writer in 1910. Students use the Museum's on-line resources to have a virtual "visit" to the Lyme Art Colony before writing about their experiences. This assignment mirrors the many articles that were written about the art colony by writers who visited. The Lyme Art Colony was often featured in articles in newspapers and magazines as well as popular travel guides of the times.

Objectives

- To learn the history of the Lyme Art Colony
- To read an excerpt from a historic travel writer
- To use the Museum's website as a source of information
- To imagine visiting the 1910 artist colony
- To view historic photographs and paintings
- To write an informative, persuasive, and descriptive well-crafted essay

Curriculum Connections

Social Studies educational experiences in Grades 5-8 will ensure that students:

- Be active learners at cultural institutions such as museums and historical exhibitions
- Display empathy for people who have lived in the past
- Describe relationships between historical subject matter and other subjects they study, current issues, and personal concerns

Visual Art educational experiences in Grades 5-8 will ensure that students:

- Know and compare the characteristics and purposes of works of art representing various cultures, historical periods and artists
- Describe and place a variety of specific significant art objects by artist, style and historical and cultural context
- Analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, natural resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

Language Arts educational experiences in Grades 5-8 will ensure that students:

- Determine purpose, point of view and audience, then use the appropriate features of persuasive, narrative, expository, and poetic writing to achieve desired results
- Plan, organize, create and revise visual, written and oral pieces at a level of elaboration appropriate for middle school
- Identify and use primary and secondary sources to paraphrase, elaborate on, and integrate information into a final product, e.g., I-Search paper, historical fiction, newsarticle, research paper, documentary
- Use and examine the effectiveness of multiple ways of generating ideas (brainstorming, listing, writing, talking, webbing, drawing), then compose, revise, edit, and present a variety of products
- Analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, natural resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art

The above goals align with this lesson and were selected from *The Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards* (adopted in March 1998, published by the Connecticut State Department of Education, Division of Teaching and Learning). Go to: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/site/default.asp> to download a copy of the entire publication *The Connecticut Framework: K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards*.

Inclusion Activity (Engaging Prior Knowledge)

Begin the lesson with an inclusion event that gets the students into unexpected pairs. See *Enjoying a Little Tete-A-Tete* Have the pairs discuss one of the following questions read aloud by the teacher. After a minute of discussion passes, have the students change partners and continue with next question. Repeat until all questions have been discussed

Student Grouping Activities

Musical Pairs

Use a portable CD player or simple instrument to play music/sound. Explain to the students that when the music/sound starts they are to walk around the room silently in a safe but random pattern (nodding friendly hellos to their fellow students). When the music stops, the students should pair up with the nearest person to discuss the question read aloud. After each question is discussed, start the music again. Repeat until all three questions have been discussed.

A Circle of Friends

Ask your students to get into a circle facing the center. Ask every other student to step into the circle facing out. Have the inner circle rotate to the right until they are face to face with a partner. Ask the first question. After the question is discussed, have the outer circle move three or four people to the right to line up with a new partner. After the question is discussed, have both the inner circle and outer circle move three to four people to the right to line up with a final partner.

Enjoying a Little Tete-A-Tete

The term “tete-a-tete” refers to a private conversation between two people (as well as a short sofa intended to accommodate two persons). Ask your students to put their chairs into pairs (side by side, but facing in opposite directions) and take a seat. After each question is discussed, have students move to another seat and partner up with a new person.

Find Two Like You

Ask your students to find two other students who match a certain criterion like: *Find two other students with your hair color*; or *Find two other students with birthdays close to yours*; or *Find two other students who have same kinds of pets*; or *Find two other students who like your favorite ice cream flavor*. Students usually begin to call out their answers and cluster with those whose answers match. Once they have three people, their group is complete. Teachers may have to make a cluster of non-matching students.

Once the students are in their pairs or trios, have them discuss one of the following questions read aloud by the teacher. After a minute of discussion passes, remix the groups and continue with next question. Repeat until all questions have been discussed.

Discussion Questions

- What is your favorite indoor rainy day activity or game?
- What is the difference between a drawing and a cartoon?
- What did people do for fun before television was invented?

Instructions

1. Introduce the assignment of writing a short description of an imaginary visit to the Lyme Art Colony as a travel writer in 1910. Tell the students that they will “visit” the art colony via their computer by going to *The Fox Chase* section of the Museum’s on-line learning site. After their virtual visit, they will compose an article about the Lyme Art Colony to be published in a 1910 travel book, magazine, or newspaper (their decision). Their description should make the reader want to visit the Lyme Art Colony.
2. Divide the class into working groups of three or four and distribute a copy of the following excerpt from a travel guide published in 1926. Ask the groups to read and discuss the excerpt. What questions do they have now? What more would they like to know? What did the writer make them think about? Do they have any pictures in their heads after reading the piece? How would they finish the piece? Have the groups report out their discussion.

3. In preparation for the students to write their own version of a travel article about the Lyme Art Colony, have them use a computer to “visit” the boardinghouse for artists by interacting with *The Fox Chase*. Review with the students of the 5 W’s of journalism (what, where, who, why, and when) to keep them on track.

The following suggestions of where to look on-line might help speed up their discovery process.

THE WHAT: The Lyme Art Colony

Where on *The Fox Chase* to find information:
School of Lyme Icon

THE WHERE: Old Lyme, Connecticut

Where on *The Fox Chase* to find information:
The Griswold House Icon
The Village of Old Lyme Icon
The Lyme Landscape Icon

THE WHO: Miss Florence and the Artists of Old Lyme

Where on *The Fox Chase* to find information:
Who’s Who in the Boardinghouse from
The Griswold House Icon
Henry Ward Ranger
Childe Hassam

THE WHY: To create landscape paintings en plein air

Where on *The Fox Chase* to find information:
The Cow Icon (subject matter)
Painting Tools Icon (painting en plein air)
Tonalism from the *Henry Ward Ranger* Icon (painting style)
American Impressionism from the *Childe Hassam* Icon (painting style)

THE WHEN: 1910 (the height of the art colony)

Where on *The Fox Chase* to find information:
Timeline from *Educators’ Toolbox* in
Resources for Educators

4. The author of the excerpt visited the Lyme Art Colony while traveling from Greenwich, Connecticut to Ogunquit, Maine. Encourage your students to imagine their route. Where did they come from and where are they going. Their travel article should both be enjoyable and informative.

5. During the draft stage, have students occasionally gather in their groups to share their research, ideas, and writing. Encourage students to make suggestions to enhance each other's writing.

6. For the final presentation, encourage students to mock up a travel book, magazine or newspaper and illustrate their article by printing out an image from the Museum's website or drawing their own. Post the final projects in a place where other students can read their travel articles.

A Time for Reflection

Have students reflect on the following questions in their journals.

Content/Thinking:

- What part of your travel essay would convince a person to visit the Lyme Art Colony?
- Which on-line image did you find more interesting than the others? What made that image have such an impact?

Social:

- How did you decide what to write about in your travel essay?
- Was your group helpful in making your travel essay better?

Personal:

- If you could time travel, would you want to visit the real Lyme Art Colony? Why or why not?
- Do you think you would like to be a travel writer when you grow up? Why or why not?

Appreciations

Before concluding the lesson, be sure to invite appreciations from the group (i.e. thank group partners for good brainstorming or suggestions for better writing). To help students begin making statements of appreciation, use such sentence starters as these:

Follow-Up Activity

Consider planning a field trip to the Museum in Old Lyme with your students. Information about a visit can be found on the [Planning A Visit](#) page.

Feedback

Please share your suggestions for making the lesson better. Let the Museum know how this lesson worked for you and your students by sending your comments and suggestions to david@flogris.org. Educators are encouraged to submit copies of final products and/or digital images to be shared on our website.