

History in the Making

Documenting Your Days with the Lyme Art Colony

Grades: 9-12

Time: over the course of a week

Grouping: whole class, small groups, individual

Materials: 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. Many of the artists lived in New York where they maintained studios and worked with art dealers for exhibitions of their work. During the warmer months, they would venture out to Old Lyme, via train, and stay at the boardinghouse filled with fellow artists. Their days were filled with making paintings as well as other leisure activities available to them in the country. We know how they spent their days through historic letters and a few personal diaries.

This lesson introduces students to the personalities of the Lyme Art Colony by having them adopt the role of one of the artists and create a written account of that artist's experience during a summer visit to Old Lyme. Students use the Museum's on-line resources to gather information (both in words and pictures) about the daily life of artists at the boardinghouse as well as specific facts about their artist before creating diary/journal pages written (and perhaps illustrated) using a historic voice.

Objectives

- To learn about the personalities associated with the Lyme Art Colony
- To read excerpts from a diary of an artist in history
- To use the Museum's website as a source of information
- To work as a group to imagine the daily life of a boardinghouse for artists
- To view historic photographs and paintings of people
- To adopt a historic character, imagine what their life was like, and create a diary/journal using words and pictures about a visit to the art colony using a historic voice

Curriculum Connections

Social Studies educational experiences in Grades 9-12 will ensure that students:

- Formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources
- Gather, analyze and reconcile historical information, including contradictory data, from primary and secondary sources to support or reject hypotheses
- Use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives
- Initiate questions and hypotheses about historic events they are studying
- Be active learners at cultural institutions such as museums and historical exhibitions
- Describe relationships between historical subject matter and other subjects they study, current issues, and personal concerns
- Explain why places and regions are important to human and cultural identity and stand as symbols for unifying society

Visual Art educational experiences in Grades 9-12 will ensure that students:

- Analyze and interpret art works in terms of form, cultural and historical context, and purpose
- Analyze and compare characteristics of the visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues or themes of that period
- Compare the creative processes used in the visual arts with the creative processes used in the other arts and non-arts disciplines
- Create and solve interdisciplinary problems using multimedia
- Apply visual arts skills and understanding to solve problems relevant to a variety of careers
- Use subject matter, symbols, ideas and themes that demonstrate knowledge of contexts, and cultural and aesthetic values to communicate intended meaning
- Research and analyze historic meaning and purpose in varied works of art
- Reflect critically on various interpretations to better understand specific works of art
- Defend personal interpretations using reasoned argument

Language Arts educational experiences in Grades 9-12 will ensure that students:

- Will apply collaborative skills to elaborate on concepts being addressed and to describe processes used in achieving results
- Will select from the complete variety of text structures (essay, short story, poetry, academic essay, report, research paper, response to literature, documentary, etc.) the appropriate organizational pattern for addressing audience, purpose, and point of view
- Will identify and use effectively the salient features of all appropriate oral, visual, and written discourse

- Will determine which primary and secondary sources are appropriate to the task (research paper, fiction, school newspaper, video) and will integrate and elaborate upon information effectively in the final product
- Will identify and use the most effective process for them to create and present a written, oral, or visual piece
- Will use the spoken and written syntax made standard by television announcers and newspaper editorialists and will use the diction of skilled writers and orators
- Will evaluate the language they use in written and oral tasks for its suitability for the audience being addressed

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 a Student Grouping Activity that places students into unique pairs or trios to discuss a question designed to stimulate their prior knowledge on a subject or idea related to the lesson. Several activities that will help organize students into unexpected groups are listed below. Of course, other methods of pairing up students may be substituted for these activities.

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

- Describe a souvenir you own. Explain how the souvenir relates to your memory of the place or time you acquired it.
- Describe a typical school day from waking up to going to bed. How does this routine change during the summer?
- How would your school day be different if you were born 100 years ago?

Instructions

1. Divide the class into working groups of five (one for each theme) and have them read *The Story of Miss Florence and the Lyme Art Colony* to introduce them to the Lyme Art Colony. A printable copy of the text is available from the *Educators' Toolbox* on the *Resources for Educators* menu. Have them formulate a series of questions they have about the Lyme Art Colony after reading the background information (i.e. what more do they want to know?).
2. Introduce the assignment of choosing one of the artists of the Lyme Art Colony and creating a diary/journal that documents their experiences at the Griswold boardinghouse. Tell the students that they explore the various ways the artists spent their time while in Old Lyme as well as “meet” their specific artist via their computer by going to *The Fox Chase* section of the Museum's on-line learning site. They should surf the pages looking for information they will want to include in their diary/journal for their artist.
3. Divide the class into working groups and give each one of the pages from the Willard Metcalf diary that you can print out below. Explain that although Willard Metcalf was one of the major artists associated with the Lyme Art Colony, these diary pages come from an earlier time when he was a young art student in Boston. Ask the groups to read and discuss the diary page. What questions do they have now? What more would they like to know? What did the diary entries make them think about? Do they have any pictures in their heads after reading the diary entries? Have the groups report out their discussion.
4. Gather the learning groups together and give the students their diary/journal time frame. Their entries should include a beginning with the artist leaving New York and arriving at the boardinghouse, staying for at least a week to make paintings, and conclude with the artist arriving back home in New York (or arriving at another painting destination). Have the groups brainstorm about the kinds of things an artist might write about in their diary/journal. This is to give the students inspiration for how they will approach the entry for their artist. You might prompt the learning groups with a series of questions like: what room did your artists stay in?; did they rent a studio?; how far away from the boardinghouse did they have to travel to find their subject matter?; what is their painting style?; did your artists paint a panel or door in the house? (go to *In Situ* to find out); what did they do for fun?, etc. Let your students know that the learning groups are to help them in imagining what life as a Lyme Art Colony artists would be like.
5. Teachers may want to decide if more than one student can work on a particular artist. In preparation for the students to write their artist's diary/journal entry

about the Lyme Art Colony, have them use a computer to learn about the activities associated with the boardinghouse as well as “meet” their artist by interacting with *The Fox Chase* and *In Situ: The Painted Panels* sections of the website.

6. There are 24 different artists presented in *The Fox Chase*. These artists can be assigned at random (students drawing the artist names out of a basket) or selected by the students after some initial surfing of the site.

The list of artists in *The Fox Chase* includes:

Willard Metcalf	Allen Butler Talcott
Edward Rook	Clark Voorhees
Henry Ward Ranger	Lewis Cohen
Carleton Wiggins	Henry C. White
William Henry Howe	Will Howe Foote
Louis Paul Dessar	Harry Hoffman
Alphonse Jongers	Walter Griffin
George Bogert	William Robinson
Jules Turcas	Arthur Heming
Henry Rankin Poore	Frank Bicknell
Frank Vincent DuMond	Matilda Browne
Cullen Yates	Childe Hassam

Note: Each artist has a **Fast Facts** section on their page in *The Fox Chase* that might be useful in helping the students select their artists.

7. During the draft stage, have students get together to compare ideas and approaches. Encourage students to make suggestions to enhance each other’s writing.

8. For the final presentation, encourage students to prepare a creative final draft of their diary/journal. Let the students share their final products with their learning group. Ask groups to report out what they learned as a group. Arrange the final projects around the room and let the students explore the other diary/journals individually.

A Time for Reflection

Have students reflect on the following questions in their own journals.

Content/Thinking:

- Do you think your diary/journal is something the real artist might have created?
- How did you decide which facts to include in your diary/journal?

Social:

- How did your group help you to think about writing your diary/journal?
- How did your group help you to think about what life was like a hundred years ago?

Personal:

- Do you think you would like your artist if you could meet him/her today?
- Do you like biographies? 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:

- I liked it when ... (describe the situation)
- I was amazed when . . .

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.