2 Art, Lenses, and Visions

Writing the World We See

Writers see the world differently. We notice detail, relationships, juxtapositions, and patterns. We converse with what we see and look beyond the obvious limits of our human sight. The quick writes in this section force close observation of our everyday world and time, including objects and people we encounter, as well as events and places we experience. Several quick writes in this section use objects, artwork, or photography as a stimulus for writing. They promote

- Descriptive writing
- Poetry
- Letters
- Personal essays
- Persuasive essays

Seeing Things and Having New Eyes

Grades 4–12

Description, Poetry, Personal Essays

Seeing Common Objects in New Ways

- What do we see when we look and then look again?

Background for the Teacher

Writers see differently. We look with new eyes, noticing the big picture and the small, easily neglected details of everything we see. Often, with objects we encounter, we note their presence with curiosity and a keen intent to remember—sometimes to simply enjoy the image or to later render it in our work. We mentally register not only the obvious—color, size, and shape—but also the more subtle texture and complexity. We notice how the object is presented—the context—as well as comparisons and contrasts. Unbidden similes and metaphors begin to form. We begin to string words together in our writer's mind to give life to what we see. We consider actual uses and conjure new ones. We juggle words to describe and define the positions and relationships that others may fail to see, the juxtapositions and paradoxes that give us pause and set our minds to wondering.

One way to write about objects is to deliberately make surprising similes and metaphors. The attempt is to present the object in a new way. When the fourth and fifth graders in the Student Writing Project were asked for ordinary metaphors or similes about the sun, they initially made the obvious comparisons to golden or yellow balls. As we dug deeper and challenged each other, the sun became a "dab of butter in the sky" or a "glowing lamp lighting our day." At the time of this lesson we were preparing for the big fourth-fifth grade race, an annual tradition at our school. Recalling a fellow student's face after a particularly vigorous practice, one student described the evening sun as a "ball as red as Michael's face after training for the big race." We continued to generate unusual comparisons that helped us think about things in new ways.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Share the poems "The Pointe Shoe" and "The Salt Shaker of 1,000 Colors" with your students. Or read several poems from *All the Small Poems and Fourteen More* by Valerie Worth.

- Ask them to notice how small, specific details are included.
- How does this add to the image in their minds of the object described?
- To what does the writer compare the objects?
- Notice any unusual details that surprise them or make them look at the object in a new way.

The Pointe Shoe

The pale satin is smooth
and shiny on the sides and back,
with matching pink ribbons
painstakingly sewn on,
stitch by stitch
by hand.

The satin whispers
of rows
of ballerinas,
arms crossed in front of
pink leotarded chests,
holding hands
moving on toe points across
a stage.

The toe—the box—however,
speaks a different picture—
that of bleeding toes—
boxed in by hard glue—
screaming for relief,
wondering why the cushion existed—
a fuzzy, lamb's wool cup
hidden inside
the deceitful pretty pink satin.

The Salt Shaker of 1,000 Colors

15 holes up on top with ivory circles.
Bumpy like the Blue Streak*
Rusted on the bottom,
What has it been through?
Is it still alive?
Inside is as smooth as a baby's bottom.
Has it been through a stampede
Of bowls and survived?
It is still strong.

---

*A popular roller coaster at a nearby amusement park

Source: © Copyright 2006 by Michael Lipster, Student Writing Project.

2. Quick Write Possibilities

Provide students with a variety of objects to consider and see in a new way. I keep a bag of objects to use with young students, adult groups, and everybody in between. Periodically, I add new items to this bag. (The current contents of my bag are listed as a poem in Resources.) Invite them to sit with their chosen object and see past the obvious. They should describe their object in as much detail as possible, including the smallest, most specific information. Also ask them to include at least one surprising simile or metaphor or other unusual but apt descriptor. You may want to practice making similes and metaphors if these concepts are new to your students.

Or

Students may also try writing a list poem. This involves working with multiple items at once, creating a poem by simply listing the items. Ask them to consider what is on or in their desks, in a drawer, or on a shelf or in their bedroom. (See the list at the end of this quick write of the contents in my bag of objects as an example.)

Read students' excerpts from Albert Goldbarth's *Library,* in which he lists books on his library shelves. The Poetry Daily website has a page devoted to this poem, which includes the full text and allows readers to enter their own additions to Goldbarth's poem (see http://www.poetry-daily.org/special_features/library.php).

Sometimes lists are embedded in other pieces of writing. Nick Lantz includes a list in his poem "Fork With Two Tines Pushed Together" (Grades 9–12; see http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/22706).

The Mentor Texts

All the Small Poems and Fourteen More by Valerie Worth

These 99 short poems from the original first four volumes by Worth and 14 new poems each describe an object in unique and surprising ways. They are perfect models for writing about ordinary items.

Additional Resources

The following books all deal with one or more objects and encourage us to revise our concept of each object:

Seven Blind Mice by Ed Young

This illustrated fable shows how our perspective changes what we see and may encourage children to look at the objects about which they are writing from several points of view.

Flotsam: A Life in Debris by Denis Horgan

In these personal essays, Denis ponders events in his life allowing the objects on his desk and in his office to suggest the direction of his story.

My Bag of Objects Contains

A Tattered Bible with the Spine Missing
(A dried rose hides in the pages)
The Red Book (Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung)
McGuffey's Eclectic Primer (Revised Edition)
A blank CD and clear case
One frayed length of rope
One pink pointe shoe
An African thumb piano from Kenya
One gray work glove
A silver picture frame with no picture
A silver box with velvet purple lining
A wooden letter opener (my grandmother's)
A wire high heel shoe (decoration left
from a gift wrapping)
A truck made of Legos constructed at least
20 years earlier by one of my stepsons
A cameo in reverse—a black woman
on white background
A wooden cross made by Simok Indians in Argentina
A beaded African bracelet, either Maasai or Zulu
Four fortune cookies with the fortunes inside intact
A white china bowl trimmed in gold (my grandmother's)
A multicolored salt shaker (my grandmother's)
An old skeleton key to a door in my grandmother's house

Who Wore the Hat?

Grades 6–12 (adapts for 4–5)

Poetry

Questioning Object to Discover the Nature of Its Uses and Its Owner

- What do I see as I ask questions about an object?

Background for Teachers

When we look at objects, what do we see? Our first response to that question is probably color, size, and shape. As we continue to look, we also see texture and quality, intricacy or simplicity, solidity or frailty. We see the "what" of the object first. Once we have the initial image, we begin to compare this object to others, both present and absent. We consider the context in which it appears. And if we are thoroughly observing, we may even think about what it is *not.* These are simple, obvious observations.

Writers, however, automatically continue to look and ponder whatever they see even further. Writers will question things beyond the "what." Do I have this object in my house? Is it mine or someone else's? What connections does this object have for me? For others? What is the purpose of this object? How else can it be used? We dig into the emotions of the object. What do I remember, long for, or hide from as I see it?

Writers will converse with the object to learn its history, its essence. We may ask about its owner, as does Nancy Patz in *Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat?*

In this haunting book, the poet questions a lone woman's hat shown in a glass case in the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam. Unlike other items displayed nearby, the case contained no label or information about the hat. The hat, alone, remained to speak for the woman who wore it. With questions that contain what Ralph Fletcher in *A Writer's Notebook* (2003) and *What a Writer Needs* (1993) calls "writing small or concrete details," meaning very specific and particular minute details, we begin to gain understanding of the woman who might have owned this hat.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Read *Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat?* to your students. Examine and discuss how the author describes the hat through its association with its owner and her life. Ask them to notice how she uses only questions.

- What further descriptions of the hat do the presented images suggest?
- What else do you wonder about the woman who wore the hat?
- What questions would you add to those of the author?

The following two poems, written in the manner of Patz's book, may be shared with your students as additional models.

Whose Hands Wore the Gloves?

Whose hands wore the gloves?
Were they gnarled and sinewy
with veins that show
or plump and soft and pink?

Did those hands bathe well-loved babies at night
or beat a silent timid wife?

Whose hands wore the gloves?
Did the hands work with wood or steel or earth?
And when did the grease become permanently smudged
on the soft gray surface?

Was he gruff or sweet?
Did he treat his mother well?

Who wore the gloves?
Did he work for someone else
or in his own backyard?

Did he eagerly come home
to light and chatter?
Or did he face each night alone
Eating weariness with his supper?

Who wore the gloves?
Was he building up
or tearing down?

Is he alive
or is he dead?

Who wore the gloves?

The Rope

[Inspired by the movie *The Great Debaters*]
The rope is frayed
and grey and worn
just how much would it hold
or pull or bind
and for how long?

Was it at one time connected to a longer length of rope?

Did it hang someone
from a tree for being born
black and alive?

The rope is old now
and harmless
or is it?

It still conjures history
and memories
and tales told in the dark
of trees bearing strange fruit

and men intent on stunting
the growth
of my family tree.

The rope is frayed and grey and worn
but just how much
did it hold
or pull
or bind
and for how long?

2. Quick Write Possibilities

Provide a selection of various objects from which students may choose. (For the list of objects that I use, see “My Bag of Objects Contains” in the Additional Resources section of the previous quick write, “Seeing Things and Having New Eyes.” If you have done this quick write, you may invite the writers to use the same object again for this current quick write.) Ask them to question the object—writing a series of questions that go beyond the visible. The questions can be about the object, addressed to an unseen addressee or addressed directly to the object itself. Encourage them to ask questions about purpose and history, memories and connections, emotions and relationships. Suggest that they ponder the paradoxes presented by the object. How does this object affect their own lives?

The Mentor Text

Who Was the Woman Who Wore the Hat? by Nancy Patz

Additional Resources

Shoes on the Highway: Using Visual and Audio Cues to Inspire Student Playwrights by Maureen Brady Johnson (2005)

The appendix of *Shoes on the Highway* presents a series of photographic images of individual shoes in the street. These images are available for no cost online at http://books.heinemann.com/shoesonthehighway/default.aspx

Bring Life Into Learning: Create a Lasting Literacy by Donald H. Graves (1999)

Graves describes an approach to learning in which polarity, paradox, and particularity explain the wants and needs of people—literary characters, as well as historical and living characters. He suggests we question the characters to gain a better understanding of their motives and that we also question artifacts used by these people to discover more about the complex relationships of people and events.

Head Swivelers

Grades 4–12

Narrative, Personal Essay

Things We Have Said That Have Shocked Others

- What is appropriate to say or not say?

Background for the Teacher

Growing up, I was not allowed to say *butt* for that part of the body that we sit on. Everyone else I knew could—even their parents said it. As far as I could tell, it was not a bad word, but for some reason, I was not allowed to say it. I was not even allowed to say *behind*. It had to be *bottom*. We all have words that we could not say as children or words that still cause a raised eyebrow or head turn in certain circumstances.

As my students recently engaged in lively debate and penetrating third degree of our two candidates for class president, one candidate proclaimed a promise of video games for everyone and daily pencil leads for students' mechanical pencils. When pushed on this point and his unrealistic ability to keep these promises, he indicated he could indeed keep the lead promise "unless he was *pissed off* at someone." At this point 23 heads swiveled in unison in my direction to see my reaction. I rarely react visibly to shocking student

statements, notes, or other behaviors. He, noting the looks of the students, immediately protested that he had "not cussed," at which point we acknowledged this was true but questioned whether his word choice was truly presidential. Ultimately, he lost the election and graciously congratulated his opponent. Was it his wild promises or his language that defeated him?

In my classroom right now, I have a boy who describes himself as homeless. "It's embarrassing," he said as another teacher and I were asking questions trying to determine why his sister had not been in school for five days. It seems the grown people in his home created such a ruckus one evening that they were all put out of their apartment, as he told the story. He was actually staying with relatives. He knew his story was a head swiveler.

What makes your head swivel? What have you said that has made heads swivel?

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Choose one of the books below to read to your students. Select your text based on your classroom curriculum, students' interest or needs, and age. All are picture books or poetry that deal with serious issues in compact, yet complex texts suitable for all ages. All will lead to complex and higher level discussions of contemporary issues. The discussion may generate head swivelers.

For the younger children needing lighter fare, I recommend *The Pain and the Great One* or *Into the Forest*.

Discussing the ideas in the books in terms of the books' characters will in turn open the door to talk about the same issues related to them personally.

2. Writer's Notebook

For this activity, assure writers that these notes will not be seen by anyone but themselves, unless they choose to share. A technique I have used in the past with students is to fold and staple anything they do not want me to read when I collect their notebooks. This gives them a sense of security. Interestingly, even though it is offered, most students do not use this option. Most really want you to read everything.

> It is important for students to realize that you are a legally mandated reporter of any incidents that indicate abuse or neglect of any kind or criminal activity. They need to know that if anything they write indicates such issues, you would be obligated to share it beyond the two of you.

Use these activities as you are comfortable, considering your writers, school, and community culture.

- List words you are not allowed to say in your home that "everybody" else can say.
- Why are you not allowed to say the words listed?
- List secrets that you are not supposed to talk about (family, school, friends, neighborhood).
- List ideas you have that you think no one else shares.

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Ask your students to think about the last time they said something aloud or thought something that they knew other people would not agree with, approve of, or even believe. Have them think about the following:

- What happened?
- Why were people shocked or surprised?
- Have your ideas changed as a result of this reaction?

Or
Write about who decides the appropriateness of conversations or ideas.

The Mentor Texts

Been to Yesterdays: Poems of a Life by Lee Bennett Hopkins

Includes the poem "Clutching" in which a boy's mother uses the N-word.

Homelessness

December by Eve Bunting

Sibling Rivalry

The Pain and the Great One by Judy Blume

AIDS

Daddy and Me by Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe

Divorce and Separation

Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart by Vera B. Williams

Into the Forest by Anthony Brown

Race

Let's Talk About Race by Julius Lester

Family Secrets, Race

Mississippi Morning by Ruth Vander Zee

Death

Michael Rosen's Sad Book by Michael Rosen

Sweet, Sweet Memory by Jacqueline Woodson

Aging

The Hundred Penny Box by Sharon Bell Mathis

When I Am Old With You by Angela Johnson

Violence, Dangerous Neighborhoods

Life Doesn't Frighten Me by Maya Angelou

Something Beautiful by Sharon Dennis Wyeth

Horizons

Grades 4–12

Personal or Persuasive Essays or Letters

Limits and Horizons in Our Lives

- What are the limits of our experiences?
- What is at the edge of our life?

Background for the Teacher

On November 5, 2008, we woke up facing a new horizon. Barack Obama, an African American, had been elected president of the United States of America. This is beyond the experiences of Americans in this country. This is beyond what many considered historically, politically,

and socially possible in this country. The very complexion of this recent campaign was extraordinarily distinct and changed the world as we know it from that point forward. In record numbers, young people and those disenfranchised, or simply uninterested, became informed and actively involved in determining the future of our country and the world. This was an exhilarating time. We wondered: What will change? What will be accomplished? What will we learn? What will we be called upon to do? We, as a nation, stood at the edge of a new horizon.

The horizon is the line where the land or sea appears to meet the sky. Whether standing with our feet firmly planted on land or moving gently in our vessel on ocean waves, we can see no farther than that horizon line, making it easy for us to understand how our forebears believed the earth was flat and that they might fall off the edge. In visual art, the horizon line is manipulated to make us feel the vantage point the artist desires. Moving the line in a drawing or painting can make us feel we are higher up looking down or below the horizon looking up.

Horizon comes from a Greek root that means limit and is also the word we use to describe the range or limit of a person's knowledge, experience, or interest. Thus, we talk about expanding our horizons when we have new experiences.

Metaphorically and poetically, the horizon encompasses the unseen possibilities, the new day that is dawning, the new experiences beyond that horizon line, all that is waiting to be seen, all that will be accomplished, and the new worlds waiting to be created.

I recently discovered a beautiful book called *Horizons* by Jane Yolen. Jason Stemple, her photographer son, sent her photos of horizons as he traveled and encountered them. She, in turn, was inspired to write of her own expanding horizons. The result was a wonderful collaboration. Upon finding the book, I was moved to go through my own store of photographs to see how many horizons I had seen and captured. There were more than I expected, each calling up memories, and suggesting experiential and knowledge-related edges of my own. Photography is a new interest of mine, and simply having successfully taken landscape images is expanding a horizon for me. It was affirming to be able to replace the standard Windows screensaver on my computer with a meaningful landscape of my own—a seascape of St. John taken from St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Share several poems from Jane Yolen's *Horizons*. My favorites are "Sand, Sun, Stone," "Mirror," and "Horizon."

- Ask students to discuss how physical and metaphoric horizons are depicted in each poem.
- Ask them to think about how these poems might represent their own horizons.

Tell your students that meeting "new days" is often marked with writing. The horizon can be a personal event such as turning 10 (share Billy Collins's poem listed below) or having a child or beginning school or learning a new skill.

The horizon can also be a collective new day, changes for the world—such as selection of a new president (share Maya Angelou's poem listed below), the collapse of a cruel and unjust political regime, the death of a world leader, or a scientific innovation.

Or

You may want to share letters written to President Obama or another important figure as they faced new positions, responsibilities, or some other life change. (See sites below for letters written to President Obama by authors Alice Walker and Toni Morrison.)

2. Writer's Notebook

Invite your students to think about the limits or edge of their own experiences. Have them make a list in their notebook:

- What is beyond that edge?
- What do they expect to learn and do?
- Where do they expect to travel and what will they see?
- What new experiences are they looking forward to?

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Ask students to consider the horizons they have listed in their notebooks. You may want to have students share aloud the edges of experience and knowledge that they have listed. Have them select a particular area in which they are facing a new day or horizon.

- Where are they currently standing?
- What can they see from where they stand?
- What are they expecting beyond the horizon line?
- How will they get beyond the line?

They may choose to express their ideas in poetry as in the mentor texts that have been shared.

Or

They may write a letter to a person who is leading them to expand their horizons. Writers Alice Walker and Toni Morrison have both written letters to Barack Obama, celebrating the new day he represents and also giving advice. (See the sites below for copies.)

The Mentor Texts

Teaching With Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach edited by Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner

"On Turning Ten" by Billy Collins

"The Journey" by Mary Oliver

"On the Pulse of the Morning" by Maya Angelou
The inaugural poem read at the inauguration of Bill Clinton, 1993

Horizons: Poems as Far as the Eye Can See by Jane Yolen, photographs by Jason Stemple

Alice Walker's letter to Barack Obama (http://shiva2731.blogspot.com/2008/11/alice-walker-open-letter-to-barack.html)

Toni Morrison's letter to Barack Obama (http://www.observer.com/2008/toni-morrisons-letter-barack-obama)

Artful Reading and Writing

Grades 4–12

Descriptive or Reflective Essay

Using Paintings to Inspire Writing

- What does this painting mean?

Background for the Teacher

In *Pentimento*, Lillian Hellman describes how paint on old canvasses sometimes becomes transparent with age. When that happens, we are able to see through the newest layers of paint to the once hidden original

lines and sketches, and sometimes even to complete former paintings. We wonder how many times the artist covered up images and replaced them with new ones. We wonder if he was covering work with which he was less than pleased, found new interests, or simply had not recently sold enough paintings to afford new canvasses.

For those of us who do not paint, the process of covering a canvas with daubs of color to make an image emerge is mysterious and magical. Even though we may not paint or draw or even understand the principles by which we might begin to do these activities, we can all view the work with pleasure (or displeasure or perplexity)—and this experience can be an inspiration for writing.

Our fifth-grade classes took a field trip to the Columbus Museum of Art last year. Prior to our trip, we received several additional resources to introduce our students to the process of observing and describing art, including a PowerPoint that taught us how to "read art" and a CD of 12 paintings on which we could practice our new skills. Immediately before our excursion, a docent from the gallery came to our classes and shared additional works with us and encouraged a variety of ways to look at them. No student was unsuccessful with this activity, and the excitement was uncontainable.

As we look at visual art, no matter who we are, we can *describe* what we see—the colors, the lines, the images, and the textures. We can notice what is depicted and in what manner. We can identify the mood of the work and how it makes us feel.

After noticing and describing, we are encouraged to *interpret* what we are seeing. What does it mean? We can speculate about what the artist was trying to portray and why. Why would a particular color be used? Why was this medium, this subject chosen? We can ask many questions and infer much as we look.

The final step is to *support our interpretation* with details or elements from the painting or work—proving what we think. My students immediately likened this part of the process to using evidence to prove an inference or conclusion when reading a text, which we were learning to do at the time. We continued to use this analogy and the term *artful reading* for the remainder of the year whenever we looked at visual images and art. We also made direct links to the writing process as we realized that the artist chose the elements of his work in the same way we carefully choose a particular word instead of another one as we write.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Share with your students either the poem "Ringside" by Ron Koertge inspired by *Stag at Sharkey's*, the 1909 oil painting by George Bellow, or

"Early Sunday Morning" by Dan Masterson, inspired by an oil painting of the same title by Edward Hopper. These narrative poems are favorites of my students and can be found in *Heart to Heart* (listed under Additional Resources below), and the suggested paintings are available at http://www.artchive.com/artchive/B/bellows/sharkeys.jpg.html and http://www.artchive.com/artchive/h/hopper/earlysun.jpg.html.

Help your students to use the strategies described above to *artfully read* the paintings.

- Ask them to consider why the writer might have chosen a particular painting. Discuss their interpretations of the painting and the story behind it.
- Does it spark any memories or connections?
- Ask them what they might have written about the same painting.

Use any of the sites listed below in Additional Resources to locate other paintings and other visual works of art that you may prefer for your particular students.

2. Quick Write Possibilities

Choose a painting that is appropriate for your age-group. With both adults and children, I first use *La Debacle* by Theodore Robinson (available on the Columbus museum website listed below) because it lends itself easily to narrative like the model poems, but the sky is the limit on the choices of images or paintings and narrative is not required.

Ask the students to consider the painting in the ways suggested above. Ask them to write a story, poem, or reflection inspired by the painting. They should weave the details of the painting into their writing to construct a piece that stands alone, yet is obviously connected to the painting as well.

Here are two samples, written four months apart. Notice that each one is written from a different perspective and evokes a different mood. Yet each is in response to the same painting and quick write suggested above. You may want to encourage your students to write more than one piece about the same painting. This will provide invaluable practice in considering perspective and voice.

Artful Reading 1

She has waited here each day . . . hoping that
today would be the day. Each day she brings the book
that remains closed as she sits and watches, sits and waits.

She must remain here. The road remains empty—no footfalls,
no shadow of approaching, no finality to her wait.
How many days has she dressed in her frock
and limped slowly and painfully to this same
familiar seat at water's edge?
When will she turn her head and see me instead
of faithfully and foolishly waiting for him?
I can see her
He can not.

—Salem Teacher Writing Project, 2/7/08

Artful Reading 2

I sit here
everyday waiting
in my purple and pink frock
my straw bonnet perched (more uniform
than protection from the sun)
atop my tightly wound bun.

Each day I bring
the thick yellow
book, but
it sits on my lap.

I watch the water instead.
The few small fish jump
and the lapping waves
break my reflection.

No one comes.
No one passes.
Not today—
Not ever.

This road and
its untended flowers
is mine.

The bridge is mine
and these rocks.

I wait each day
for something

to be different
but . . .
take comfort
in the fact
that it is always
the same.

—CAWP Summer Institute, 6/17/08

Additional Resources

There are numerous books that pair art and writing. In the following books the poetry was inspired by the art.

Heart to Heart: New Poems Inspired by Twentieth Century American Art edited by Jan Greenberg

This book includes lithographs, sculpture, mixed media, and photographs ranging from pop art to familiar classic works.

Side by Side: New Poems Inspired by Art From Around the World edited by Jan Greenberg

This work by Greenberg continues the marvelous pairing in *Heart to Heart*, this time moving into the 21st century and including international work.

Words With Wings: A Treasury of African-American Poetry and Art selected by Belinda Rochelle

This beautiful collection pairs 20 poems by African American poets with 20 works of art by African American artists. The poems and pieces of art address the history, culture, and identity of African American people.

Columbus Museum of Art Resources

Artful Reading PowerPoint, by Barbara Zollinger Sweney, Melissa Keeley, and Kathleen Canalos

The paintings shared with my class prior to our field trip are available at http://www.columbusmuseum.org/monet_education/pdf/images.pdf.

For more information about the paintings mentioned above, go to http://www.columbusmuseum.org/monet_education/index.html. (Your own local gallery should also have educator additional resources.)

Online Resources for Visual Art

There are numerous sites where you may locate visual art to share with your students.

http://www.artcyclopedia.com/

Many paintings are available on this searchable site.

http://gardenofpraise.com/art.htm

This set of various safe paintings is appropriate for elementary students but useful for all ages. It is an excellent collection of art with a wide variety of work. Caution: The context of the art works is a religious home schooling site, so you may want to select the section you wish students to view.

Web Museum (http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/)

Books About Art

Your students may also enjoy these multilayered, multi-genre books which focus on art. These two were an instant hit with my students last year. Despite the fact that we may consider viewing art to be a sophisticated activity, they pored over the books each day as they waited for their buses. These provide additional sources for art that may inspire student writing.

Baby Einstein: The ABCs of Art by Julie Aigner-Clark

This ABC book features famous art and can be enjoyed by upper elementary grades despite the name.

Art Fraud Detective: Spot the Difference, Solve the Crime! by Anna Nilsen

Provides an opportunity to closely consider art details of famous pictures as students attempt to determine who has altered the paintings in the gallery. A magnifying glass is included for serious study of details.

Snapshots: Capture the Moment

Grades 4–12

Descriptive, Personal or Persuasive Essay, Poetry

Using Photographs to Inspire Writing

- Can I take a picture of this moment with my writing?

Background for the Teacher

It is summer and my cousins and I stand in a sweaty bunch while my uncle takes our picture. There we are, front teeth missing, arms laced

around each other, one cousin waving. Or it is Christmas of every year, any year, and we are framed, forever holding that sweater or necklace or tie that came from someone outside the frame. We are smiling, whether we like the gift or not, because the one taking the picture said, "Say cheese," or some such silly phrase designed to make us put on our best face for the camera.

Taking pictures is a way of daily life in our world, thanks to this century's digital conveniences (or nuisances, depending on your perspective). Our cameras have gotten smaller and our phones do double duty, visually recording our lives.

We use photography to capture and remember the moments, the events, and the people that matter. We use photography to share the same with others, to enjoy these captured memories in that particular moment and for years to come. With photographs we document our lives and our presence here in this world. And when we consider the photographs of others, our world is informed, enlarged, and mediated. We are lifted beyond ourselves and transported to other worlds and experiences. As we look at a photo, we flesh out the captured moment mentally and verbally, describing it, remembering its purpose, narrating its story, telling its context, interpreting the images, and noticing or recalling what is absent.

Photography is magic in that we can look at the same photos again and again with enjoyment each time but perhaps with a different focus and lens. *I didn't notice that she wasn't smiling last time I saw this one. . . . Why is he turned toward the left? What was he looking at? I can't remember.*

We can consider photographs from a variety of perspectives in order to foster storytelling and writing in various genres. I have used the following questions or ones similar for many years with my students anytime we analyzed not just photos, but illustrations in books, paintings, and other visual representations which depicted people:

- Who is in the photo or picture?
- What is happening in the photo?
- What happened right before the photo was taken?
- What happened right after the photo was taken?
- Why were these folks included? (or this object or this scene?)
- Who is not in the picture? Why?
- Who or what is just outside the frame of the picture?
- What was the photographer's (or artist's) thinking or purpose?
- What was the purpose or thinking of those in the picture?

As we consider these questions, we can begin to write from several different perspectives: the photographer, one of the people or objects in the photograph, one of those onlookers not included in the photograph, or someone who is completely absent at the actual taking of the photograph.

Working with photographs can be an excellent way to think about alternative perspectives, particularly when considering unfamiliar photos, those not having anything to do with our own family, friends, or local community—*Where are you in the photo? Who do you identify with and why?*

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Invite your students to talk about the many ways they use photography in their own lives and other possible uses of photography in which they may not currently be involved.

Share one of the selections below and consider how the author has used photography to make meaning. For those photos involving people, the questions above may be helpful. For those not involving people, speculative discussion can be fostered about people who may come to this place or have created objects or buildings that appear, or may have related in some way to other aspects of the environment. You may want to help students understand the concept that photos are edited, in that someone made a conscious decision to include or not include what shows up in the resulting frame. Linking this idea to writing may help some students grasp the idea of deliberate choices in writing to construct their own intended messages.

2. Quick Write Possibilities

Prior to this writing, students may be invited to bring in photographs. Invite students to write about a photo they have brought with them. Reminding them of the questions used to analyze and discuss the photos may be helpful. Encourage them to see the photo with new eyes—writing from a different perspective or writing about something unusual or something not noticed before in the images.

Or

Invite them to write about photos that are unfamiliar (see the sources below for files of images that can be used). You may want to tie in with a current unit of study in science or social studies or literature themes. Again, the above questions and suggested perspectives may be helpful to spark ideas for your students.

Additional Resources

Remember the Bridge: Poems of a People, by Carole Boston Wetherford

Includes photographs, as well as drawings depicting African American history.

Monumental Verses by J. Patrick Lewis

Features famous monuments around the world.

A Cool Drink of Water by Barbara Kerle

Depicts the sources and containers for water around the world.

Something Permanent, photographs by Walker Evans, poetry by Cynthia Rylant

Features photographs of the Great Depression.

Carver: A Life in Poems by Marilyn Nelson

Includes photographs throughout this biography in poems.

The Brothers' War: Civil War Voices in Verse by J. Patrick Lewis

Features the work of Civil War photographers.

In Short: A Brief Collections of Creative Nonfiction by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, editors

"My Mother in Two Photographs, Among Other Things" by Aleida Rodriguez, pp. 138–141

Additional Resources for Teachers

Reading Photographs to Write With Meaning and Purpose (Grades 4–12) by Leigh Van Horn

Write What You See: 99 Photos to Inspire Writing by Hank Kellner

In addition to this book, Kellner's website (http://www.creativity-portal.com/prompts/kellner/) includes many photography-related features, including additional quick writes and photos.

Sources for Files of Photographs

Shoes on the Highway: Using Visual and Audio Cues to Inspire Student Playwrights by Maureen Brady Johnson

Files of photos (a free download) for teachers to use as writing quick writes—two collections: one of shoes on the highway and the other of rocks in various locations (http://books.heinemann.com/shoesonthehighway/default.aspx)

Newseum is a source for ever-changing collections of photographs. Two such sets include

**The Pulitzer Prize Photographs: Capture the Moment*, edited by Gyma Rubin and Eric Newton

Both a book and an online collection (http://www.newseum.org/exhibits-and-theaters/permanent-exhibits/pulitzer/).

Images of Hate and Hope—Freedom Summer (http://www.newseum.org/mississippi/)

The Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog—searchable (http://www.loc.gov/pictures/)

Smithsonian Photography Initiative (http://click.si.edu/)

Click! Photography Changes Everything, is a collection of original essays, stories, and images—contributed by experts from a spectrum of professional worlds and members of the project's online audience—that explores the many ways photography shapes our culture and our lives. A project of the former Smithsonian Photography Initiative, texts and content for *Click!* were commissioned and compiled between 2007 and 2010.

This was my response to an unfamiliar photograph used in a writing class.

The Photo

The yellow lights, two of them,
soften the air and
the aura in the room.
A thin curtain separates this space
from a second room.

They sit close at the table.
Five people, shoulder to shoulder,
one at the head, the speaker and
two on each side.
An open hexagon.
Room for one more.

They listen to the speaker
hunched forward,
one leaning into the speaker
one with head tilted away
considering the words.

The food and conversation
glued them
together.

The thin curtain blurs
complete seeing and

complete hearing of
the conversation
But—it is interesting
and important.

The intent looks reveal
concentration.
Hands move through the air
cutting ideas
into visible points.

Looking into the light
bathing the room
I wait for
an invitation.

Here is my response to a familiar photo taken by my father of my sister and me when we were about 4 and 2.

The Photo

Here we sit
in church dresses
and Sunday hair
frozen forever
miniature imitations of ourselves
predictions of who we will become
in the uncomfortable crinolines
and prickly lace
of little girl loveliness.
Each face suffers only a hint of a smile.
We sat on an unseen piano bench.
My dad took this photo.
I remember this day.
My sister holds a hairbrush
—the only object that would keep
her still or quiet or looking
at the man with the camera.

Our different arm positions
bothers my eye and my heart.
Am I pulling away—refusing
to embrace
this plumper cuter version
of me?

Proverbially Speaking: Words to Live By

Grades 4–12

Proverbs, Essays, Information Reports

Examining Traditional Proverbs and Sayings

- What do the old folks say?
- What does traditional collected wisdom say?

Background for the Teacher

Whenever we kids—my sister or my cousins—would overstep our boundaries and dare to ask one of the grown-ups about a word, a name, a comment, or a situation we had overheard mentioned in grown-up conversation, my maternal grandmother would say, "*Lay-o for meddlers.*" I heard this often in my life but still cannot be certain that I have written the words correctly. I don't know where it originated or what it literally means. Yet there is not now, nor was there ever, a question about what this phrase meant when it was spoken by my grandmother. It was her way of saying, "Mind your own business. This is not for children's ears."

We have all grown up with words and phrases and pieces of lore that guide our thinking and our living. Families and friends, countries and cultures regulate lives and pass on precious knowledge, history, and reminders of who we are through clever, sometimes cryptic words, phrases, and sayings. Those words become part of the fabric weaving in and out of our lives as needed to provide us with wisdom, encouragement, and explanations of life. They become our maps—showing us the way to success and the land mines to avoid according to those who have come before us. Knowing the words by which a culture, a community, or an individual lives tells us much about how they think and view the world, how they act and what they value, what we may expect of them, and what they might expect of us.

The words that guide us come variously from our famous leaders and thinkers, holy books, Benjamin Franklin and William Shakespeare, ancient wisdom . . . and our grandmothers. Some proverbs we all know. *A stitch in time saves nine. Pride goes before the fall. The early bird gets the worm. A rose by any other name . . .* Others, like *Lay-o for meddlers,* have meaning only for our family or some other small select group. Proverbs and sayings last because they are true—not prove-it-with-reference-books true, but gut-level true. They last because they pack hundreds of lifetimes of wisdom and experience into just a few words. They last because they make us think—remind us of what we know and awaken in us what we have forgotten. They last because we *get* them—they turn on our proverbial lightbulb, shining the light of clarity, revealing essence and gestalt.

Some long-forgotten proverbs reenter our current political culture and become rallying cries for reform and justice and compassion. *It takes a whole village to raise a child.* Hillary Rodham Clinton caused us to remember and reconsider this Nigerian Igbo proverb when she used it as the title of her 1996 book, *It Takes a Village: And Other Lessons Children Teach Us.* Some proverbs enter our popular culture and get us through our "everyday": *Better late than never.* And some we question and wonder when they apply and to whom: *Curiosity killed the cat.*

We all remember movie lines—our favorites that strike a chord within, as well as the ones so corny that we groan as with a bad pun. My favorite from the big screen is when Shug tells Celie in *The Color Purple*, "I think it pisses God off when you walk by the color purple in a field and don't notice it."

Another personal favorite that guides my life and shapes my actions is, *Don't be surprised when people do what they always do.* And of course, because I talk so much, I love the Kikiyu proverb, *Talking to one another is loving one another.*

My sister has two proverbs framed on her walls. The *ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people*, a Ghanaian proverb, and *He who does not cultivate his field, will die of hunger*, a Guinean proverb. Each time I visit her home, I reconsider these ideas anew. Proverbs do not grow old and stale. They, like classic literature and scriptures, remain current and fresh, alive, and relevant.

Sometimes just the right word can lift our spirits, guide our entire lives, start us down a new, yet unclear path, and focus our work.

What words have sparked an epiphany, a revelation, a great insight for you? What words guide your life and inform your eyes and your heart on how to see the world? What words are taped to your refrigerator and framed on your walls?

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Share with your students one of the suggested picture books or another of your own choosing based on a proverb. Invite the students to discuss the particular proverb involved in the story, how the story illustrated that proverb, and how it impacted the characters. Invite them to think about how this proverb relates to their own lives.

Share a select list of proverbs with your writers based on their ages and interests. The websites listed in Additional Resources may be helpful with choosing appropriate selections. Invite them to discuss the meanings of those on your list and to share others that they know.

- Where do they hear proverbs?
- How do proverbs affect their lives?

If your students come from other countries, they may want to share native proverbs with which the group may not be familiar.

- Do their families have certain sayings that guide their lives?
- Do they as individuals live by a particular proverb or saying?

2. Writer's Notebook

Ask your students to collect proverbs over the next few days and to jot down two or three of their personal favorites. They may want to try their hand at creating their own by revising an actual proverb or creating original ones. Students will enjoy sharing these with the group.

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Invite students to write a piece based on a proverb.

They may want to write an essay or information report about the veracity, the impact, or the origin of a particular proverb.

Or

They may want to write a story in which a proverb plays an important role for the main character.

Additional Resources

The websites below are comprehensive resources for locating proverbs and sayings:

- http://www.great-quotes.com/
- http://www.quotesandsayings.com/proverbial.htm
- http://www.quotemountain.com/

It Takes a Village by Jane Cowen-Fletcher

Yemi is proud to Be watching her brother "all by herself." As the story unfolds, however, it becomes clear that so many more are also watching.

It Could Always Be Worse: A Yiddish Folktale by Margot Zemach

In this familiar tale, a wise rabbi gives strange advice to a man complaining of a noisy, overcrowded home. He shows the man that it could be much worse so that in the end he appreciates his home just as it is.

"Time Flies When You're Deconstructing Aphorisms"

This NPR story about Julian Baggini's book, *Should You Judge This Book by Its Cover? 100 Fresh Takes on Familiar Sayings and Quotations*, analyzing ways we use and misuse familiar sayings, can be read or heard at http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126807556.

Opportunity Costs

Grades 4–12

Poetry, Personal Essay

Effect of Decisions We Make

- If I do this, then what?

Background for the Teacher

We relish the idea of choices—we want to be able to decide—taking all issues into account, weighing the options, making our lists of benefits and downsides. The more choices there are, the happier we are, although the more choices there are makes our final decision all the more difficult. Not having a widely varied menu from which to select makes choosing easy and life simpler—but we are not always satisfied with easy.

While studying economics with my fifth graders, one of the concepts I had to introduce was *opportunity costs,* the notion that every business decision comes with a cost—the choices that were not made or given up

at the very moment you chose. For example, when you chose to buy this piece of land for your next building instead of that one, the one not purchased is the opportunity cost. In student language, when given a choice of the movies or skating, and you choose skating, then the movies are your opportunity cost.

This idea of having lost a choice forever is intriguing to me. What are all the things I have not chosen in life? What is the sum total of all the choices and the opportunity costs I have ever made in life? Will I ever get those opportunities back again? I think about jobs I chose and those I turned down. I think about purchases made and those items left in the store. I think . . . and the list goes on as I survey my past decisions and wonder what they cost me and what if I had chosen differently. Would the opportunity costs be significantly different? How would this affect my life then and now?

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Review and discuss the concept of opportunity costs with your students and help them develop several examples illustrating the concept from their own lives or classrooms. Then share with them Robert Frost's well-known poem, "The Road Not Taken," read by Robert Frost, available at http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15717. You may also want to share "There but for the Grace" by Wislawa Symborska, in *Teaching With Fire* or available at http://tylerpoems.blogspot.com/. Both poems deal with the "what-ifs" of taking various paths and making particular choices.

- What are the choices that the poets face?
- How do they make their decisions?
- How does this connect to their own decisions for and against particular paths?

2. Writer's Notebook

Ask your writers to list as many important decisions as they can that they have made in life. Suggest leaving a space after each one, and in that space, begin to list the opportunity costs or the rejected choices. For example, adult writers may have opted to move to another state at one point, at the same time rejecting their current job or another local job opportunity. Continue listing choices and their costs until each one has a substantial list.

3. Quick Writing Possibilities

Ask each writer to choose a life-changing decision made in life. Suggest writing a poem in which they speculate about the road actually chosen and the other roads not taken. Consider all the what-ifs, the emotions of choosing, and the costs.

Additional Resources

Teaching With Fire: Poetry That Sustains the Courage to Teach, Sam M. Intrator and Megan Scribner, editors

The Things They Carried

Grades 6–12 (Adapts for 4–5)

Personal or Persuasive Essay

Essentials in Our Lives and the Lives of Others

- What things are essential for us personally? For soldiers?

Background for the Teacher

What is necessary to carry with us as we leave home, whether we go around the corner, to school, to work, or to a friend's house or venture far beyond our usual stomping ground? There are certainly things we deem essential, and there are things that we simply must have with us, not of necessity, but for habit, comfort, or sentimentality. One of the minor fears we face in life is having the contents of our pockets, bags, or backpacks revealed, not because we are carrying anything illegal or illicit, but because the items reveal much about our personal preferences and inner life. What will people think of the implications revealed by our personal items? We may feel that same dread as our luggage is about to be searched at customs. And surely there is no greater affront than knowing someone has gone through our personal things without our knowledge or permission.

Thinking about what we need in specific settings and situations is just good planning and preparation. I don't go to the grocery store without a list, my coupons, and my charge card. Attending a birthday party at someone's home means bringing a gift, a card, and perhaps even a dish of food or favorite beverage. Coming to writing class means

bringing writing utensils and notebooks or computers and textbooks. The list of necessities for playing a sport or for traveling gets longer. Comedian George Carlin pokes gentle fun at us and our necessary things in his famous routine dealing with the "stuff" we keep and then carry around as we move or travel.

As they go into battle, soldiers also consider what they need, both in combat and at rest. Tim O'Brien gives us a glimpse of soldiers' gear in his famous short story, "The Things They Carried," set in Vietnam (see O'Brien, page 2, if you would like to read this detailed list to your students).

The usual things the soldiers carry can be divided into three main categories: standard equipment issued to every soldier based on assignment, location, and current legislation, personal items needed for hygiene and comfort, and also sentimental items and things carried for luck. So a toothbrush and a tattered letter may occupy the same space and both be considered essential by an individual soldier. Later passages of O'Brien's story list items of a more personally meaningful nature—the torn love letters, as well as chatty letters that were not written out of love, the pictures of loved ones, and amulets kept for luck or remembering a safer time.

In order to avoid fatigue, soldiers can obviously carry only a limited amount. Every item must have a valid reason for inclusion. There is a scene in the movie *Platoon* when the squad leader in Vietnam dumps unnecessary items from Charlie Sheen's rucksack.

In March 2011, hearings were held in which Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chiefs chairman Mike Mullen talked to lawmakers about the importance of funding appropriate and adequate state-of-the-art equipment for our soldiers. Several years earlier, in 2004, the Senate approved reimbursement of soldiers who purchased their own protective armor for combat. In 2006, however, the Pentagon banned the use of protective armor not issued by the military, citing the inability to guarantee the quality and safety of commercially purchased armor. This is a continuing debate within military and legislative circles.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts—Grades 6–12

Invite your writers to discuss issues that concern soldiers and how they are equipped. This conversation may include reflection upon which items would be most essential for combat and survival and which sentimental items would also be important. Share with them an

excerpt (pp. 1–6) or all of Tim O'Brien's short story "The Things They Carried."

You may also want to share selected sections of *Soldier* by Simon Adams, which gives detailed descriptions and illustrations of various kinds of dress, equipment, and weaponry used by our modern soldiers in the United States, and also items used in the past and in other nations and empires.

If you are currently studying a specific war, you may also want to share and compare dress and equipment of soldiers from that particular period.

There has been much discussion in the last several years about what the government will pay for, what soldiers are paying for, and what is allowed. You may also want to discuss the ongoing debate about funding for equipment for our soldiers. Small groups may want to discuss the following questions:

- What items are deemed necessary for our soldiers today?
- Should soldiers be allowed to buy additional equipment?
- Should soldiers have to buy their own additional equipment?
- Is there any item that soldiers should not carry or not be allowed to carry into battle?

Sharing Mentor Texts—Grades 4–6

Invite your writers to discuss issues that concern soldiers and how they are equipped. This conversation may include reflection upon which items would be most essential for combat and survival and which sentimental items would also be important. You may want to point out how important letters are to a soldier far from home, if your students do not mention this. Share excerpts or the entire book *Letters to a Soldier* by David Falvey and Julie Hutt's fourth-grade class. Each two-page spread includes a letter from a student to Falvey and his response. After reading, invite students to further discuss the importance of letters to soldiers and to the people who have written to them, citing information from both Falvey's responses and the students' letters, as well.

2. Writer's Notebook

In their writer's notebooks, invite students to think about the things they feel are necessities in their own lives.

Invite them to list the contents of their pockets, purses, or backpacks. Beside each item they may want to note its significance. Is there a pattern within the items that implies something about them personally?

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Reminding your writers of the writing work and discussions above, present them with several possible writing options:

Invite them to write about an item they carry with them. This may include a description of the item, its personal significance, and an explanation of its necessity. In the context of other items carried, how does this item fit?

Or

Invite them to write about things that soldiers carry. This writing may address the following issues and questions:

- What items are deemed necessary for our soldiers today?
- Should soldiers be allowed to buy additional equipment?
- Should soldiers have to buy their own additional equipment?
- Is there any item that soldiers should not carry into battle?

Elementary students may want to deal solely with letters and why they are important if they have read *Letters to a Soldier.*

The Mentor Texts

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien

This collection of related stories, considered a novel by many, is about a platoon of American soldiers in the Vietnam War.

Soldier (DK Eyewitness Books) by Simon Adams

This is a comprehensive compendium of information about soldiers throughout the ages, from medieval knights to modern troops. It includes descriptions and illustrations, including such topics as military dress, weaponry, and vehicles as well as training and missions.

Letters to a Soldier by David Falvey and Julie Hutt's Fourth Grade Class

Mrs. Julie Hutt's fourth-grade class in Roslyn, New York, wrote to a soldier in Iraq to thank him for his service and to find out what it's like to be a U.S. soldier. In the introduction, Falvey explains how important these letters were to him because they allowed him "to forget the serious nature of my life in Baghdad." The children's letters and artwork with the soldier's responses are included.

Additional Resources

Can Soldiers Buy Extra Gear? by Daniel Engber (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2006/01/can_soldiers_buy_extra_gear.html)

This regular column, Explainer, addresses questions related to news and current events. The particular article was posted on January 3, 2006, and deals with reimbursement for military equipment purchased by soldiers.

The History We Know

Grades 4–12

Expository or Personal Essay

Misconceptions About History

- What misconceptions do we have about events in history?

Background for the Teacher

As a young person, I learned from history books that Columbus "discovered" America and that George Washington cut down a cherry tree and refused to lie to his father about his guilt. Generations following me learned that Rosa Parks wouldn't give up her seat on a Montgomery bus because she was simply "tired." Yesterday, and still today, our history books are fraught with misconceptions, historical untruths, and myths, as well as missing voices and perspectives. Sometimes the omissions are due to simplification for younger readers or space limitations. Other misconceptions are caused by the connotations of word choices. And still others are due to presenting a particular slice of history in isolation, without the background or foreground. And sadly, some errors are due to the deliberate mis-telling in the interest of or to the detriment of a particular group.

The words we use to tell the story of events, situations, and circumstances, communities, people, and nations determine how we think about the events and people involved. If an enslaved people is described as unintelligent, childlike, and happy, singing as they work, then it is easier in the minds of both slave owners and witnesses to excuse the atrocity of slavery.

If Columbus discovered America, it must mean that the people living there were lost before he arrived and needed the help of outsiders to be a complete and thriving society—and at the same time, ignores the fact that Columbus himself was the one lost.

If Rosa Parks was simply tired, this ignores her agency in the situation, and the forethought of her entire community, as they prepared for the subsequent boycott and legal battle that followed this bus incident. And what about the people who refused to give up their seats before her and were arrested, such as 15-year-old Claudette Colvin? We don't hear some stories in history unless we dig deeper and use multiple sources.

My students were surprised to learn from Howard Zinn's *Young People's History of the United States* (Vols. 1 and 2) that Native Americans had been made slaves before Africans, that the Declaration of Independence did not declare independence for everyone in the colonies, and that the Emancipation Proclamation did not emancipate all slaves in the United States. They were appalled to learn that people they were told in their social studies book were the first ones here were removed forcibly from their homeland and marched many miles away to small reservations during the event that became known as the Trail of Tears. They returned to our history book with new curiosity about what other stories were missing and what other facts and events had an underside or alternative rendering.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Discuss how certain events in history come to be written or told in specific ways. To illustrate, you may want to use a particular event at your school or in your community and discuss who might write about it and how.

- Who might be the most logical person to report?
- Where might the reports be shared or published?
- Who might be left out of the narrative?
- Who is a person who may not even be asked about the event?

Use the related text sets below to discuss one event in history. Selections below deal with Columbus's landing in the Americas or Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Incident as well as Claudette Colvin.

As an alternative, you may select an event from history that you are currently studying. Read several brief accounts of the event. In either case, you will want to discuss which information given by the author helps you

understand the situation. Discuss the words that the author uses to describe the event.

- How do they determine how we think about the story?
- Whose perspective is represented?
- What else do you want to know?
- What has the author omitted?

Discuss where other information can be obtained about this event.

2. Writer's Notebook

Invite your writers to list events in history or science that they had always understood in a particular way and found out later that what they believed was incomplete, or partially or completely wrong. Next to each item on the list indicate the correct information and sources of both if possible.

You may want to allow time for students to discuss their lists in pairs or small groups. They may be interested in the similarities and differences in their individual lists.

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Invite your students to think about a recent event that you have been studying in social studies or history. It may come from the lists they have created above. Ask them to think about what surprised them about this event. They may compare what they have always thought with the actual events as recorded in their textbook and/or in other sources. They may also include how they came to know differently about this event and the effect the differences had on their own thinking and lives.

You may want to provide the Quad Entry Journal for Nonfiction (see Figure 2.1), which suggests ways to think and write about the perspectives of an author and the world in relationship to your own, to spark other writing related to this topic.

The Mentor Texts

Rosa Parks

Rosa Parks: My Story by Rosa Parks and Jim Haskins

If a Bus Could Talk: The Story of Rosa Parks by Faith Ringgold

Rosa by Nikki Giovanni and Bryan Collier

Figure 2.1 Whose Story? Whose World? What Lens?

Quad Entry Journal for Nonfiction	
*What does the **author** know, believe, and feel?*	*What does the **author** assume I know and believe and feel?*
Write a summary of the text (or an episode) from a perspective different than the author's or write from the perspective of a person related to the information but not included in the text. Write a dialogue between yourself and a person, place, or object in the text.	Write a poem/personal essay starting with *I believe* or *This I believe.*
*What does this **text** as a whole say about the world?*	*What is my **own** perspective?*
Write about the social justice issues addressed (or not addressed) in this text.	Write a letter to the author explaining your point of view. Include similarities and differences between your perspective and the author's.

Claudette Colvin

Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice by Phillip Hoose

Claudette Colvin: The First to Keep Her Seat. *We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History* (pp. 214–217) by Phillip Hoose

Christopher Columbus

Encounter by Jane Yolen

Follow the Dream: The Story of Christopher Columbus by Peter Sis

Additional Resources

For Teachers

She Would Not Be Moved: How We Tell the Story of Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott by Herbert R. Kohl and Cynthia Stokes Brown

"The Politics of Children's Literature: What's Wrong With the Rosa Parks Myth?" by Herbert Kohl, *Rethinking Popular Culture and Media*, Elizabeth Marshall and Ozlem Sensoy, editors (a PDF copy is available at http://www.wou.edu/~ulvelad/courses/ED632Spring11/Assets/RosaParks.pdf)

General U.S. History

We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History by Phillip Hoose

A People's History of the United States: 1492–Present by Howard Zinn

A Young People's History of the United States: Columbus to the Spanish-American War (Vol. 1) by Howard Zinn, Rebecca Stefoff (adapter).

A Young People's History of the United States: Class Struggle to the War on Terror (Vol. 2) by Howard Zinn, Rebecca Stefoff (adapter).

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong by James W. Loewen

The Remains of the Day

Grades 4–12

Satire, Scientific Report or Article

Our Common Objects as Viewed by Archaeologists

- What will our common objects mean to archaeologists in the future?

Background for the Teacher

One hundred years from now when our descendants pick up our dead cell phones, broken hair dryers, or microwave ovens, will they be able to deduce what these items are and how we used them?

Archaeologists do just that with artifacts—tools and ornaments and art of another time—the remains of a former day. They study the artifacts and attempt to describe the culture and determine the what and why and how of an object. Sometimes they are correct in their speculations, but other times they are completely wrong. The misconceptions about the significance of artifacts and their functions can be humorous and have given rise to several well-known satires or parodies of archaeological, anthropological, and sociological reports. Written in mock scientific language, these parodies prove hilarious in their seriously erroneous analyses.

I was introduced to one of the first of such parodies in a sociology class. I was horrified at the customs detailed in "Body Rituals Among the Nacirema," only to discover that this famous satire by Horace Minor dealt with bath habits in which I myself participated. ("Nacirema" is "American" spelled backwards; once that is known, everything becomes clear in the article.) The scientific descriptions and details transformed daily American hygiene habits into elaborate and exotic—at the very least—and horrible sounding torture, at its worst. Sociologists, anthropologists, and others teaching about culture have been assigning this article and asking students to create and write about additional rituals and other discoveries about the Nacirema since the introduction of Minor's article in the June 1956 issue of *American Anthropologist*. A quick search on the Internet of "Nacirema" reveals many additional clever versions, written as such assignments, and also some subsequent "official" versions that have been published. Neil B. Thompson revisited the Nacirema after the fall of their civilization and published "The Mysterious Fall of the Nacirema in Natural History" in 1972. Later, in 1992, Gerry Philipsen examined the speech patterns of the Nacirema.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Share "Body Rituals Among the Nacirema" with your group. Discussion about this article may include the way we view other cultures and their customs with an eye of superiority—thinking they are not like us. Your group may also discuss how the scientific writing structure, language, and vocabulary influence, either positively or negatively, what we think about the group of people.

To have the greatest effect in terms of truly considering how this article affects thinking, you will not want to reveal the true identity of the Nacirema until after the discussion, so that your writers will have the full impact of being influenced by perceived distance and scientific objectivity from a group of people that is actually themselves.

Once they know the secret, discussion of how the author achieved his desired effect would be helpful as students think about how to write their own satires of a normal, customary activity in their culture.

As either alternative or additional texts, you may share *Motel of Mysteries* by David Macaulay or *How Humans Make Friends* by Loreen Leedy. Both of these books are parodies, as well, in the above tradition.

2. Writer's Notebook

Ask writers to make a map or sketch of their bedroom, another room in their home, their classroom, or another room in your school. They should sketch in as much detail as possible and then begin to label items in the way an anthropologist or archaeologist might label them as they come upon them in the distant future.

You may want to remind them to be creative, but also to consider the authentic use of an item and how simply using alternative language to describe that very same use will present an alien perception of the item. For example, a hairbrush may be labeled Hair Catcher (especially if several hairs are stuck in the bristles), and likewise, a mirror might be labeled Instant Portrait Maker.

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Invite students to write a scientific report or article on their latest discovery of an item or their analysis of a particular cultural custom or activity based on one or more discovered items. Encourage them to include scientific structure, language, and vocabulary similar to the models. They may want to include information about the significance of their discovery. How will it influence other investigations, as well as modern life?

The Mentor Texts

"Body Rituals Among the Nacirema" by Horace Minor (https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/miner.html?pagewanted=all)

How Humans Make Friends by Loreen Leedy

Motel of Mysteries by David Macaulay

Additional Resources

Both of the following "shorts" included in *In Brief: Short Takes on the Personal,* edited by Judith Kitchen and Mary Paumier Jones, can be used to invite further reflection on artifacts and archaeology:

- *Artifacts of Memory* by Josephine Jacobson, pp. 270–272
- *Artifacts* by Brenda Miller, pp. 244–248

The Face of Reality

Grades 4–12

Persuasive Essay, Editorial Columns or Letters to the Editor

Reality TV Programs

- What happens when cameras follow people around in their everyday lives?

Background for the Teacher

We are nosy. We like to see what other people say and do. Thus, reality TV has become a phenomenal success. Like the "stories" or soap operas that our grandmothers followed, these shows feed our hunger for knowing about other lives. It is fascinating to eavesdrop on private conversations and to peek in on interactions and relationships that usually remain behind closed doors and pulled curtains. During the screenwriters' strike, which began in November 2007 and lasted through February 2008, reality shows hit an all-time high, as they did not rely on traditional scripts. While the shows are not scripted in the usual sense, the producers have full control over the editing, which may or may not reflect accurately the totality of all film available. During the 100-day strike, a multitude of new reality shows hit the airwaves with varying degrees of popularity and success.

Reality shows run the gamut from showing the lives of tattoo artists, top models, and other celebrities to game shows involving road trips, dating, outdoor adventures, weight loss, substance-abuse rehab, or dancing. Some take us into worlds that we would not in real life enter, such as operating rooms, police beats, and truckers rolling across frozen lakes. Some of the most popular are game shows, such as *Big Brother* and *Survivor*, which have houseguests live together in a house, on a remote island, or some

other location. Both premiering in 2008, these two shows ushered in our current reality show craze.

As a kid in the 1950s, I watched *Candid Camera*—and was always amazed at what people did when they didn't know a camera was there. Now I am equally amazed, and sometimes appalled, at what people do when they are positively aware that the camera and millions of people are watching. With these new shows, we have seen the rise to celebrity of heretofore unknown folks. They make the rounds on the talk shows, blog, write books, begin new businesses, and sometimes rise to genuine stardom from reality-show beginnings.

Children have gotten into the reality game, as well. *Kid Nation* was a reality show that premiered in 2007, featuring 40 kids, ages 8 to 15, who lived on a privately owned ranch. The premise of this show was that the kids would attempt to create a functioning society, including establishing a government. There are still websites devoted to this program. The whole concept reminded me of *Lord of the Flies.* As I remember, there were several controversies related to this show, including the fact that the participants missed school for the duration of the show, and one child was burned while cooking. I remember reading in the paper at the time that parents felt lines were fed to the children and scenes sometimes reshot to create particular effects, yet the kids were not treated as traditional actors or paid standard actors' fees.

Leonard Pitts Jr., columnist for the *Miami Herald*, along with others, questions the role that the TV reality spotlight played in the suicide death of Russell Armstrong, husband to reality star Taylor Russell of *Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*. According to Pitts, "people around him blame it on the pressures of seeing his wife file for divorce as his finances crumbled. . . ." This all transpired in public view, not only on the TV screen, but in the blogs and related media connected with the show and its cast of characters. Is TV to blame or would this have happened anyway? Do we have the right to know about every little detail of the reality stars' lives? Why exactly do they put themselves in this position?

And how is this affecting our students? A recent research study by the Girls Scouts has documented the detrimental effects of reality TV shows on girls.

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Select an editorial or column from those below or from a recent magazine, newspaper, or online site about reality shows in general or a particular reality show that is of interest to your students in particular. Discuss how the columnist presents his or her views—what facts are provided, how the opinion is supported, the effectiveness of examples chosen, and questions readers

still have concerning the writer's presentation or the issue in general. You may want to read more than one article to compare views, style, and techniques.

You may also want to share the findings of the recent Girl Scout study (see link below) and discuss both the negative and positive findings of this study. Invite your students to share how their own views connect and relate to the findings.

2. Quick Write Possibilities

Invite your writers to compose an editorial or persuasive piece about reality shows. Ask them to explain their opinion, supported with facts, evidence, examples, and other information. Also include why this all matters—why it is important and to whom.

Or

Invite your students to respond to the findings of the Girl Scout study, indicating how the findings affect them, whether they have questions about any of the findings, and further research they may want to see conducted.

Mentor Texts

Real to Me: Girls and Reality TV (Girl Scout Research Institute Study-2011) (http://www.girlscouts.org/research/pdf/real_to_me_factsheet.pdf)

"Reality Shows Have Real Consequences," by Leonard Pitts Jr., Columbus Dispatch, August 22, 2011 (http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/editorials/2011/08/22/reality-shows-have-real-consequences.html)

"Local Columnist Joe Banner on Reality TV and the Arab Spring" by Joe Banner, *Winston Salem Journal*, August 31, 2011 (http://www2.journalnow.com/news/2011/aug/31/wsopin02-joe-banner-guest-columnist-reality-tv-at—ar-1345181/)

"Reality TV Shows Have Poisonous Effect on Kids" "by Esther J. Cepeda, *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 24, 2011 (http://www.600words.com/2011/10/reality-tv-shows-have-poisonous-effect-on-kids.html)

Information about Kid Nation available at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kid_Nation

Reality TV International Debate Education Association (http://www.idebate.org/debatabase/topic_details.php?topicID=823)

This site includes comprehensive data, both pro and con, on reality TV shows, with a host of helpful links if students want to do more detailed research on this topic.

Pros and Cons of Reality TV Shows, The First Post. The Week. (2008, October 28) (http://www.theweek.co.uk/tv/35579/pros-and-cons-reality-tv-shows)

Metaphors: Seeing the World in Other Words

Grades 4–12

Personal or Persuasive Essay

Metaphors

- How do metaphors color the way we see the world?

Background for the Teacher

Everyone naturally uses metaphors as we try to make sense of our world and articulate our understandings of our journey in this world. We use metaphoric language as symbols of larger concepts, beliefs, or issues, to define and describe ideas and situations, to argue our passionately held points, and as tools of learning and discovery.

Metaphors can help us imagine something more abstract and complex in familiar and concrete ways. When we were studying the Revolutionary War in social studies, our History Alive series provided an apt metaphor to help my students understand the complex relationship between the colonies and their founding country. There was no student who did not quickly grasp the comparison to a parent-child relationship as they considered the protection and provision provided by Great Britain, the process of rule-setting, the rebellion of the colonies, the ensuing punishments and squabbling among the sibling colonies, and final independence. They were able to return to that metaphor and extend it to include each new piece of information and event, with both familiarity and understanding, as we discussed the complex concepts and relationships related to the revolutionary period. Metaphor often goes both ways—my students also gained new understanding of the parent-child relationship, as well, as they used this extended metaphor for learning about a historical period.

America itself has sometimes been described metaphorically as a *melting pot*, connoting the way that folks came to this country with the goal of

assimilating and also knowing this was expected of them by those already here. More recently, however, educators and other social scientists describing this process of immigration and integration in America have been prone to use the descriptively more accurate term of *salad.* Each metaphor shapes our thinking in particular ways. If we are indeed a melting pot, our differences are no longer visible, yet they contribute to the final dish in some unidentified way. If instead we are a salad, then we recognize and appreciate each difference, as it remains visible, while still contributing to and enhancing the final dish in a visible and positive way. If each of these two metaphors is extended, what else does it say about our nation and its people? What actions might we take based on the particular metaphor that we accept as reality?

Metaphors rest on direct or implicit comparisons by equating one thing to another, based on perceived similarities. Metaphors we use intentionally, and sometimes unconsciously, shed light on our thinking. For this reason, spies want to use our metaphors to determine our world views and, perhaps, ultimately to shape both our thinking and our actions. The Metaphor Program is currently being researched and developed by the Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA), a small research intelligence agency of the U.S. government. They want to understand how speakers of English and other languages, including Farsi, Russian, and Spanish, understand the world by analyzing use of metaphors in their ordinary conversation.

The thought is that by understanding the metaphors, we may understand the beliefs and thoughts of particular cultures, based on their preferred or predominant metaphoric images. Research studies by Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky (2011) have shown that metaphors can influence how we think about topics and what related actions we subsequently suggest.

For more on the Metaphor Program and research studies by Thibodeau and Boroditsky and about metaphors, see the suggested articles listed below in Additional Resources

The Quick Write Lesson

1. Sharing Mentor Texts

Talk about common metaphors with your students. There are sets of metaphors built around just one word, such as these "wolf" phrases (a wolf in sheep's clothing, crying wolf, wolfing down food), or they can describe an entire situation or concept. (The whole world is a stage. Life is one big party. Silence is golden.) Invite students to share common metaphors. Discuss with them how these metaphors help us think about the similarities being compared.

Share one or two of the books suggested below with your writers to consider metaphors for school, the world, or poetry and writing. After sharing an excerpt or the entire book, invite students to analyze metaphors they encountered in the texts.

- What elements are being compared?

Discuss whether these are apt comparisons.

- What are the similarities?
- Where does the metaphor fail or begin to break down?
- What other metaphors are related to the same topic or concept?

Or

High school students may be interested in reading an article in *The Atlantic* on the Metaphor Program and discussing potential advantages and disadvantages of such an endeavor.

- How could this program help our society?
- What are potential dangers to our world?

2. Writer's Notebook

Select one word and list all the metaphors that are built around that one word.

- How are they similar?
- How are they different?
- What is being compared?

Example: Eggs—*don't put all your eggs in one basket, walking on eggshells*

Example: Boat—*miss the boat, rock the boat, sink the boat*

What are common metaphors for the world, school, or writing? List words that are associated with these concepts.

3. Quick Write Possibilities

Invite students to choose and define a metaphor for the world, school, writing, or a topic related to your current areas of study. They may revisit their earlier list from their writer's notebook for ideas. In their essay they should explain their metaphor and why they feel it is an appropriate one. One possible and obvious way to begin their essay is to simply state their metaphor in simple terms, such as "The whole world is a stage," and then expound on their idea.

Or

Invite students to write a persuasive piece about the Metaphor Program. How do they think it will benefit our world and help to understand cultures? What are potential dangers and reasons they think the project should not proceed?

The Mentor Texts

"Why Are Spy Researchers Building a 'Metaphor Program'"? by Alexis Madrigal, *The Atlantic.com*, May 2011 (http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2011/05/why-are-spy-researchers-building-a-metaphor-program/239402/#slide1)

Metaphors We Think With: The Role of Metaphor in Reasoning by Paul Thibodeau and Lera Boroditsky, *PLoS ONE* (http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0016782)

World/Life

Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street by Roni Schotter

If the World Were a Village by David J. Smith

School

Once Upon an Ordinary Day by Colin McNaughton

Hooray for Diffendoofer Day by Dr. Seuss with Jack Prelutsky and Lane Smith

Poetry/Writing

A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams by Jen Bryant

Nothing Ever Happens on 90th Street by Roni Schotter

Additional Resources

For Teachers

Metaphorical Way of Knowing by Sharon L. Pugh, Jean Wolph Hicks, and Marcia Davis

Metaphors and Analogies: Power Tools for Teaching Any Subject by Rick Wormeli