

LESSON PLAN FOR JOSHUA JOHNSON,  
*GRACE ALLISON MCCURDY AND HER  
DAUGHTERS*, MARY JANE AND LETITIA  
GRACE, C. 1804

**TITLE: CINEMATIC STORIES**

**GRADE LEVEL: EIGHTH**

**ACADEMIC SUBJECT: LANGUAGE ARTS**

**GOAL/DESCRIPTION:**

To understand and illustrate how visual associations that accompany a creative writing piece can assist an audience in interpreting a story. To improve grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and spelling skills.

**BIG IDEA:**

Creating a cinematic story through creative writing and visual representation

**OBJECTIVES/OUTCOMES:**

Students will study the works, styles, and biographical backgrounds of Joshua Johnson and Mark Twain. Students will examine the similarities between artists and authors. Students will discuss the relationship between artist/author and audience. Students will compare the visual cues used by an artist with the written cues used by authors. Students will understand the use of a pen name. They will write a creative short story (using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation) loosely based on an event they experienced. Students will create visual accompaniments to depict the main character(s) and the setting in a classmate's story.

**TEACHING PROCEDURE/TIME ALLOTTED:**

ONE WEEK

MONDAY

**PRE-ASSESSMENT:**

Have students get together in small groups and answer the following questions:

What are the similarities between authors and artists?

What elements in a work of art help to tell a story?

What elements of a story help create a visual for the reader?

What are some reasons why an artist wouldn't sign a work of art?

What are some reasons why an author would use a pen name?

How do artists' and authors' backgrounds play a role in their work?

Next, bring all small groups back together and have them present their answers in the form of a class discussion.

#### INTRO/MOTIVATIONAL DIALOGUE:

Introduce Mark Twain (the class should already have some knowledge of him and his writing). Introduce Joshua Johnson using large reproduction poster of *Mrs. McCurdy and Her Daughters, Mary Jane and Letitia*. Discuss his background, how he never signed his paintings, and how his artistic style (composition, color, body language, and accessories) not only acts as a type of signature, but also tells the viewer about the people portrayed. Discuss how authors like Mark Twain use certain writing styles and **literary/fictional elements\*** (use of a pen name, **dialect\***, **symbolism\***, and regional characteristics) to do the same. Artists tell a story through visual clues, while authors create imagery through descriptive language.

Literary/fictional elements: Aspects or characteristics of text, including characters, plot, setting, theme, style, point of view, and tone

Dialect: A regional variety of language distinguished by features of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation from other regional varieties.

Symbolism: In literature, the artistic method of revealing ideas or truths through the serious and extensive use of signs and images.

#### TUESDAY

##### ASSIGNMENT:

Pretend you are an author. Create a pen name for yourself. Think of a memory from your childhood that you wouldn't mind sharing with the class. Using that memory as a starting point, write a **fictional\*** short story loosely based on the experience (Names will be changed, locations can be changed, details **exaggerated\***, etc). Be certain that the story describes both the characters and the setting. When you are finished, pick a partner with whom you will share your stories. You will then use colored pencils and markers to illustrate the main character(s) and setting of the story as you imagined them while writing. Students will be given a rubric at this time so that they know what is expected of them.

Exaggeration: to enlarge beyond bounds or the truth.

Fiction: Imaginative works of prose, primarily the novel and the short story. Although fiction can draw on actual events and real people, it springs mainly from the author's imagination. The purpose is to entertain as well as enlighten the reader by providing a deeper understanding of the human condition.

Work Period: Use the remaining class time to develop your idea.

### **Wednesday**

Work Period: Use the entire class period to work on stories

**Homework:** Have story ready for peer editing in next class period

### **Thursday**

Work Period: Peer editing

**Homework:** Make corrections, have story ready to exchange with partner for next class period

### **Friday**

Work Period: Exchange stories with a partner and work on character(s) and setting illustrations.

**Homework:** Finish illustrations and fill out questionnaire about your partner's success in describing character(s) and setting. Turn in story on Monday with partner's illustrations and completed questionnaire.

### **Plans for Differentiating Instruction:**

Students work both in small groups and large groups for discussions. They work in pairs for trading stories. They have the opportunity to be edited by their peers before being graded by the teacher.

### **ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:**

Artists tell a visual story through symbolism, the elements of art, and composition. Authors tell a cinematic story through descriptive language.

### **KEY KNOWLEDGE/SKILLS:**

(Declarative) Artists and Authors are both storytellers in their own right. (Procedural) Creative writing requires a level of description so as to guide the reader's visual interpretation of the story.

### **EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT:**

(Summative) Peer editing of short stories. Student opinions on how successful the author's writing was in providing written description of the main character, setting, and supporting characters in peer questionnaire. Teacher will grade based on a teacher created [rubric\\*](#) for grammar, punctuation, and spelling errors.

(Formative) As students work in class, teacher will walk around, stopping to ask each student about his/her idea and offer suggestions on improving the story.

[Rubric:](#) An authentic assessment tool for making scoring decisions; a printed set of guidelines that distinguishes performances or products of different quality.

### **MATERIALS/TEACHER RESOURCES:**

pencils, erasers, quality drawing paper, colored pencils, markers, large reproduction poster of Johnson's *Mrs. McCurdy and Her Daughters, Mary Jane and Letitia*, and student questionnaire.

<<http://www.osse.dc.gov/seo/cwp/view,a,1274,q,561249.asp>>

<[https://www.corcoran.org/collection/highlights\\_main\\_results.asp?ID=11](https://www.corcoran.org/collection/highlights_main_results.asp?ID=11)>

<[http://www.mtwain.com/l\\_biography.html](http://www.mtwain.com/l_biography.html)>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/10/books/10twain.html>>

<http://www.askart.com>

<http://www.mdhs.org/kids/joshua.html>

[http://www.marylandartsource.org/artists/detail\\_000000091.html](http://www.marylandartsource.org/artists/detail_000000091.html)

### **Teacher Reflection:**

This assignment gives students the opportunity to think like an artist as well as an author. It brings their attention to how an audience perceives their work while working to improve writing skills (in this case, the actual drawing skills will not be heavily weighted as long as they include all of the necessary visual description). Students should enjoy the story telling aspect as well as working with a friend throughout the process.

### **Development Rationale:**

Most 8th grade students are in the Artistic Challenge stage of artistic development. In this stage, students strive for their artwork to look realistic. They also tend to be inexperienced with their art due in part to their changing physical development. Students can be self critical and compare their work to that of other students so it is important for teachers to be sensitive and attuned to the students. It is also important to allow students to pick their own partners with whom to trade stories and work with in peer editing. If they are assigned to a partner that they are not comfortable with, the student may be less inclined to participate. Using artist Joshua Johnson and author Mark Twain as examples, this lesson provides students with the opportunity to draw realistic figures and settings as well as the opportunity to write creatively about an experience they have had growing up and share it with their classmates.

### **STANDARDS:**

- **8.LD-D.1.** Identify techniques to improve productivity of group discussions, including setting clear goals, understanding the purpose of the teaching project and the ground rules for decision making, and setting deadlines.
- **8.IT-E.2.** Explain how an author uses word choice and organization of text to achieve his purposes.

- **8.IT-DP.4.** Evaluate the adequacy of details and facts to achieve a specific purpose.
- **8.LT-C.1.** Relate a literary work to artifacts, artistic creations, or historical sites of the period of its setting.
- **8.LT-S.10.** Draw conclusions about style, mood, tone, and meaning of prose, poetry, and drama based on the author's word choice and use of figurative language.
- **8.w-I.1.** Write stories or scripts that include: well developed characters and setting, dialogue, clear conflict and resolution, and sufficient descriptive detail.
- **8.W-R.6.** Revise writing for word choice using a variety of references, appropriate organization, consistent point of view, and transitions among paragraphs, passages, and ideas.
- **8.EL.1-7.** Correct use of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.