



## Content Area Learning: Teaching in an Online World

### Images: Impact on Learning

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#### What Others Say

In *Looking to Write: Students Writing Through the Visual Arts* May Ehrenworth says “I care about engaging students with the visual arts, and that I believe that things happen in children’s writing when they write through the visual arts, that do not, perhaps, happen through other ways of teaching writing.”

Ralph Fletcher talks about writing a poem about a water lily in *Poetry Matters Writing a Poem From the Inside Out*. Can a student write a poem about a water lily if they have never seen a water lily?

Susan Goldsmith Wooldridge in *Poemcrazy: Freeing your Life with Words* uses a lot of natural items and nature walks to stimulate student writing.

Judith Jester’s article *Of Paint and Poetry: Strengthening Literacy through Art* discusses finding a correlation of skills between visual and language arts that helps her students generate lively writing and discussion.

Look for Hank Kellner’s book *Write What You See* out in January 2009.

#### Rationale

About 15% of the student population has low verbal skills. Using images to invoke responses helps that population.

Images require students to make critical analysis when writing.

#### Goal

Increase student test scores through improved writing.

## Objectives

Explore writing dialogue by using comic characters.

Discover details by analyzing paintings.

Expand use of imagery words through use of photos and paintings.

## Activity

Looking at the attached cartoon, fill in the bubble with dialogue and share.

## Other Ideas

Looking To Write by Mary Ehrenworth has students view paintings and expand on details of a story through the use of the paintings. Hudson River Painters.

Walk around the neighborhood and take pictures. Write a story or just words that these pictures bring to your mind. Using photos ask students to free write. Even better ask them to take a digital photo and then write. Use the photo as the background for their written work. Taking the photo gives ownership See examples from summer class 2008.

Using Georgia Heard's Writing Towards Home p.16 *Feng Shui*. Have the students write about where they find harmony and ask them to include a photo of that place.

## Additional Suggestions



*Prisoners from the Front* by Homer

Using a civil war photo ask students to select an individual pictured, research that event, and write a letter home as if they were that individual.



Use paintings or photos to encourage students to explore the senses. For example: Ocean photo- Salty smell, wet air feel, sound of ocean. This encourages students to expand the use of imagery words in their writing.

## The Case of the Thieving Seagull

Of all the writing activities that use images to inspire writing that have crossed my desk, Justin Van Kleeck's "Thieving Seagull" assignment is among the most creative and original. "I show my students a video of a seagull that steals a bag of Doritos from a store in Scotland every day," writes Van Kleeck. In the first part of the assignment, he directs the students to write a process paper in which they instruct their fellow seagulls on how to steal, open, and eat the Doritos. In the second part of the assignment, he tells the students to write from the point of view of a shopkeeper who is telling other shopkeepers how to prevent the seagull from stealing Doritos in a creative, non-violent way. "The key to the exercise," concludes Van Kleeck, "is for students to utilize the process approach while also employing their imaginations. They should be encouraged to create easy to follow, step-by-step instructions without skimping on style."

## Writing Dialogue



Consider prior knowledge and details of this drawing and insert your own dialogue into the bubble. This is a cartoon from the St. Joseph News Press May of 2008.

Asking students to insert their own dialogue into cartoons is a good way to get reluctant writers to try writing dialogue.

# Resources

## Books:

Ehrenworth, Mary. Looking to Write: Students Writing Through the Visual Arts. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003.

Fletcher, Ralph. Poetry Matters: Writing a Poem from the Inside Out. Harper Trophy, 2002.

Wooldridge, Susan. Poemcrazy: Freeing your Life with Words. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1996.

Heard, Georgia. Writing Towards Home. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1995.

Kellner, Hank. Write What You See. January 2009

*Of Art and Poetry: Strengthening Literacy Through Art* by Judith Jester:

<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/958>

*Sculpture Inspires Chicago-Area Students* by Judith Ruhana:

<http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/resource/299>

## Image sources:

Copyright-free pictures for educational uses: [www.pics4learning.com](http://www.pics4learning.com)

*American Memories* primary source documents and photos: <http://memory.loc.gov>

## Writing Process sources:

[http://www.geocities.com/fifth\\_grade\\_tpes/writing\\_process.html](http://www.geocities.com/fifth_grade_tpes/writing_process.html)

[http://web.mit.edu/writing/Writing\\_Process/writingprocess.html](http://web.mit.edu/writing/Writing_Process/writingprocess.html)

Graphic of writing process: <http://www.angelfire.com/wi/writingprocess/>

## Blogs that focus on writing with technology:

<http://writingwithtechnology.edublogs.org>

<http://mistyblue.edublogs.org>

<http://dogtrax.edublogs.org>

<http://techstories.edublogs.org>