

## **Civil Rights in Lexington – 4<sup>th</sup> of July, 1867: Teaching Tips**

Give students time to respond to the painting as a whole using visual thinking strategies before focusing on each of the vignettes (page 5 or project the slide in the PowerPoint). However, you may decide to do a brief overview and then return to the painting as a whole after examining the various vignettes. Tell students that the original painting measures 5 feet x 3 feet.

### **Activities**

1. Discuss/apply the italicized terms in the Background Essay.

abolished

civil rights

ratify

testify

2. The event on July 4, 1867, was an important civil rights gathering. You may want to connect this event and painting to other classroom activities related to post-Civil War history or to Black History or to the history of civil rights.

After exploring the vignettes, follow-up on the discussion questions by asking students to meet in small groups and discuss what they have learned from studying this painting and this event. What questions does it raise for them? What would they like to know more about? Ask each group to identify one “compelling question” and several “supporting questions.” Ask them to list sources that might contain relevant information. You may set parameters if you like, or allow them free choice.

Reconvene as a class and share out the topics and possible resources each group has identified, allowing groups to give feedback to one another. Discuss the different ways that teams might share the results of their research, encouraging them to think creatively about multiple media. Explain that sometimes it is difficult to find information on a particular topic and that not all attempts at research will yield equal results, so you will be grading the teams on their *research process* rather than on their ability to find answers to the questions they have generated. Work with them to develop a rubric for assessing their team efforts.

3. Write cinquain (pronounced *sin-kwane*) poems about the painting (see the accompanying instructions below).

4. Ask groups of students to create a “living tableau” of one group of people in the painting. A living tableau is a strategy in which students create a scene from an historic moment or a painting and freeze the action. Other students observe and discuss what is happening and their

reaction to it. You can have students simply recreate the posture and facial expressions of the people or ask them to creatively add props or costumes.

When they have determined the role of each student in the living tableau, have each student create a name for their character and a brief monologue to introduce themselves, including their reason for attending the event. You may assign specific information to be included in each monologue or allow free choice (you might even allow students to develop dialogue for two or more characters).

Have the groups practice forming their tableau and having each character “come alive” and perform their monologue. If you wish to make this an integrated drama activity, be sure to provide scaffolding in performance techniques such as articulation, projection, diction, and body language. Allow time for the groups to perform for one another and to respond to each performance.

5. Discuss how the artist has used the elements of art and principles of design in this painting. The point of view for this painting is unusual. Instead of looking up toward the speakers on the platform, the artist chose to show a view from behind and above the speakers. When you look at this painting, do you feel your eyes drawn out over the immense crowd toward the horizon? This is an intentional effect to emphasize the fact that literally thousands of people came out for this event.

One technique the artist used to create this impact is “perspective.” To create perspective, artists make objects (and people) that are farther away smaller than objects that are close to the viewer. You can see the faces on the members of the crowd that are close to the platform, but further back in the crowd, the people become small, undetailed blobs of color.

Perspective is also created by using “vanishing lines.” Vanishing lines are imaginary lines used to create accurate perspective in a painting. To illustrate this to your students, find a location inside or outside of your school building with a view that illustrates obvious perspective such as a long hallway, a long view of a road or fence line, or a row of trees or cars. Ask students to describe the difference in the way that objects appear depending on whether they are close to you or further away. Do they appear to be the same size or do the more distant objects appear smaller? What about the lines (the lines at the top and bottom of the walls in a hallway, the sides of the road, etc.)? You know they are parallel, but do they look as if they are converging? If possible, take photos of the view.

Back in the classroom, look at the color version of the painting again (page 5) and then the version showing the vanishing lines that the artist used to create perspective (page 6 or project the slides in the PowerPoint). The railings on either side of the platform would have been parallel in real life, but in the painting they seem to converge exactly on the horizon line at a point called the “vanishing point.” To make the impact even more striking, the artist has placed the

vanishing point right below a clear, open spot in the sky that is dramatically lighter than the rest of the painting, drawing our eyes over the crowd to the horizon.

Color is also an important element in this painting.

- What colors did the artist use? Where? Are some colors (like blue, red, and golden yellow) repeated in different places in the painting? Are there places where the contrast of colors draws your attention? Can you find the golden puddle with a reflection of a flag? What do the colors tell us about the season and the weather?

Show/project the painting in black and white (page 7 or project the slide in the PowerPoint).

- How do the colors create a mood for the painting? What do you think the mood is?
- Can you find places where the artist has used light and dark values to indicate sunshine and shadows? Using these clues, where do you think the sun is?

6. Lead students (or ask the art teacher to lead students) in drawing pictures with perspective, beginning with something as simple as a cube, a box, a road, or a railroad track.

7. Ask students to share their thoughts about the artwork's purpose. Encourage them to use proper arts terminology (functional, narrative, expressive, or persuasive). Does the title provide a clue?

8. Read this quote from the assignment given to the artist, then ask students to evaluate if the artist was successful in achieving the purpose.

*"Fourth of July, 1867: Lexington, Kentucky" (moderate detail). On this date, about ten thousand people, mostly African Americans, gathered in Gibson's Woods (aka Mr. Sayers' Grove) about 1.5 miles outside of town for a day of barbecue picnics, music and speeches on civil rights. Based on newspaper accounts, this artist's rendering is intended to show the scope of this unprecedented gathering.*

9. By leading students in the visual thinking strategy activity and activities 5, 7, and 8 above, you have gone through the entire process of critiquing this work of art. You could ask students to write a formal critique.

### Cinquain Poetry

Cinquain (*sin-kwane*) poetry has five lines and a title. Poets often use alliteration when writing cinquain poems.

- Line One – is a noun (This could refer to the event, the time in history, a concept like freedom, one of the flags, an instrument in the band, a person, or some other aspect of the painting).

- Line Two – is two adjectives that describe the noun in Line One but do NOT end in – ing.
- Line Three – is three adjectives that do end in –ing and describe the noun in Line One.
- Line Four – is a simile (a phrase beginning with “Like a …”) that describes the noun in Line One.
- Line Five – is another noun related to the noun in Line One. Line Five might be a synonym or another way of thinking about the noun in Line One.

The poem’s title should not contain any of the words in the poem and should introduce a new aspect of the theme. Below is a cinquain poem about summer.

### **Summer Pond**

Dragonflies  
Transparent blue  
Glittering, gleaming, glowing,  
Like ghost visitors from another world,  
Magic.

In this example, what alliteration did the poet use?





