

## **Davis Bottom in the 1890s: Teaching Tips**

Give students time to respond to the painting as a whole before focusing on each of the vignettes - show the painting in color (page 7) 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. Write haiku or other types of poems about the painting (see the accompanying instructions below).

2. Discuss how the artist has used the elements of art and principles of design in this painting. Suggested questions:

- What colors did the artist use? Where? Are some colors (like blue) repeated in different places in the painting?
- What do the colors tell us about the season and the weather?

Show the painting in color (page 7) and in black and white (page 8), or project the relevant slides 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?
- How many different kinds of lines can you find? (horizon line, ridge line, roofline, fence line, straight line, curving line, diagonal line, etc.)
- Do you think all the houses are about the same size in real life? Do they look the same size in the painting? Explain that the artist has used a technique called “perspective” to create the illusion of objects in three-dimensional space. To create perspective, artists make objects that are farther away smaller than objects that are close to the viewer.
- If students have learned about parallel lines, extend this activity. 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 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, show the color painting again, with (page 9) and without (page 7) the vanishing lines that the artist used to create perspective; or project the relevant slides in the PowerPoint. These lines are parallel in the real world but in a painting, they seem to converge to a spot called the *vanishing point*. Can students find examples of other lines that create perspective?

3. 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.

4. 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?

5. Read this quote from the assignment that was given to the artist. Then ask students to evaluate if the artist was successful in achieving the purpose.

*Our focus is to show people – residents engaged in daily lifeways and activities on a Sunday afternoon in September. Our goal is to create artwork that depicts a diverse, friendly, young and tight-knit community without being overly romantic.*

6. By leading students in the visual thinking strategy activity and activities 1, 2, 4, and 5 above, you have gone through the entire process of critiquing this work of art. You could ask students to write a formal critique.

## **Writing Haiku and Other Types of Poems**

Writing poetry helps students sharpen their observation and interpretive skills as well as develop their creativity and communication skills. Poetry provides a vehicle for distilling sensory images or complex thought processes into a few concise lines.

Rhymed poetry is especially difficult, but there are other poetry forms that provide students with a structured approach while encouraging individual expression. Below are six examples of poetry formats your class could explore with this unit: haiku, apology, biographical, “If I were...”, persona, and cinquain (pronounced *sin-kwane*) poems.

### **Haiku**

Haiku is a Japanese tradition of poetry, most often used to paint a scene of nature with words using sensory and emotive images in an unrhymed, metered pattern:

Line 1 – 5 syllables

Line 2 – 7 syllables

Line 3 – 5 syllables

To write a haiku, it helps to begin by creating a “word bank.” As a class, ask students to write down words and phrases that answer the following questions. Then use the answers to make lines with the proper number of syllables.

Use specific language. In other words, don’t just say a “tree.” Call it a maple, oak, birch, pine, flowering dogwood, or some other kind of tree.

1. Name three things that you see in the picture.
2. Name three colors that you notice.
3. Describe the colors.
4. Name something that you might hear if you were in the picture.
5. Name something that you might smell.
6. Describe the weather.
7. Describe how the weather would make you feel.
8. Name three things that you might do.

Here are some examples of haiku:

August in Kentucky

Horses’ hooves clatter  
on rocks in the dry creek bed,  
The Earth is thirsty

Forest Snow

The Master’s fine brush  
lays delicate white lines  
on silent branches.

Last Light

Bronze fades to pewter,  
Shadow fingers reach toward night,  
Shades of winter gray

**Apology Poems**

Apology poems give students an opportunity to explore irony. In this type of poetry, the author doesn’t really mean what he or she is saying. Here is an example:

This is Just to Say

by  
William Carlos Williams

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

**Biographical Poems**

Biographical poems allow students to draw a quick sketch of a person using salient points from their research, combining fact and interpretation/opinion. The author writes about a person, presenting the information in an ordered way.

First name  
Descriptive adjectives  
Daughter/son of. . .  
Lover of. . .  
Who fears. . .  
Who would like  
Resident of. . .  
Last name

Here is an example:

Lucretia  
Friend, Persuasive, Dedicated, Strong  
Daughter of Nantucket and the Sea  
Lover of Freedom, Justice, and Peace  
Who fears ignorance, brutality, and apathy  
Who would like to see slavery ended, women voting, everyone educated  
Resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Mott

## **“If I Were” Poems**

“If I Were” poems allow students to imagine themselves into an historic period or situation and describe what they would do. These poems can be a springboard for writing historical fiction as they provide the broad outlines of a character’s interaction with a particular time and cultural context. The author imagines that he or she is something or someone, and writes the poem in an ordered way.

If I were. . . . and/but  
I’d. . . . and  
I’d. . . . and  
I’d be. . .

Here is an example:

If I were a pioneer, I’d not head West, but  
Find myself a friend or two and  
Stir things up so I could live life well  
And I’d be out to rights for women  
And change the world!

## **Persona Poems**

Persona - or “mask” poems as they are sometimes called – encourage students to creatively explore point of view. In these poems, the author imagines that he/she is speaking from the point of view of an object.

Name of object  
I am . . .  
I wonder. . .  
I hear. . .  
I’ve seen/I see  
I want

I touch  
I try  
I cry  
I understand

I am  
I (an action).

Here is an example:

The Pacific  
I am a deep blue sigh  
I wonder why they gather there.  
I hear their cries of triumph.  
I've seen others like them on different shores.  
I want to understand their upraised arms and dancing feet.  
  
I touch their feet with foaming fingers.  
I try to tease them into joining me.  
I cry when they pull away.  
I understand now, I must teach them how to greet me.  
  
I am a deep, dark roaring water  
I send them scampering for shelter.

### **Cinquain Poems**

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

- 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.







