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***Reading Art: Making Choices***

Writer: Carolyn Walker, English Language Arts Teacher

Grade Level: 3-5

Related Big Picture Concepts: Meaning, Communication

Subject Areas: Art, Language Arts, Social Studies

Duration: 3–4 class sessions of 45 minutes

Essential Question: *How do choices artists and authors make affect understanding?*

Abstract:

In this lesson, students will explore the ways writing and painting express meaning. They will investigate a biography and painting of Harriet Tubman and consider the tools the artist and writer used to communicate information about this heroine.

Focus Work of Art:



Jacob Lawrence (American, 1917 - 2000)

*Forward*, 1967

Tempera on masonite panel

1ft 11in x 2ft 11in (58.4cm x 88.9cm)

# North Carolina Standards Correlations

Visual Art:

3.V.1.4, 3.CX.2.2

4.V.1.3, 4.CX.2.2

5.CX.2.2

Language Arts:

3.W.3, 3.SL.1

4.W.3, 4.SL.1

5.W.3, 5.SL.1

Social Studies:

3.H.1.2

5.H.2.2

# Student Learning Objectives

* Students will discuss how information from other subjects can help their understanding of art, as well as how information gained from art can help their understanding of other subjects.
* Students will write a narrative, using understanding of how word choice affects meaning and communication.
* Students will gain understanding of the historical figure Harriet Tubman and her values and principles.
* Students will investigate the expressive nature of color.

# Activities

1. Choose one of the biographies of Harriet Tubman listed below. Read the story of Harriet Tubman to the students and discuss her life. Ask:

*When did she live? What do you think life was like at that time for an African American woman? What kind of citizen was she? How did she help her community? Why do you think she did these heroic things? What are her values and principles?*

1. Present the [black-and-white outline](http://www.ncartmuseum.org/artnc/content/lesson/sampleRubric/16.pdf) of Jacob Lawrence's *Forward*. Tell students that the painting represents the story of Harriet Tubman. Give them each a copy of the outline and allow them to fill in the empty spaces with colors of their choice. Do not show them the color version of the painting beforehand.
2. Compare the students' work to the original painting. Ask:

*How are the colors you chose different from or similar to the ones Jacob Lawrence chose? How does the artist's choice of color affect our reaction to this painting? Why?*

*How do the colors the artist chooses help us determine which figures are most important to the story?*

1. Discuss the way color sets a dramatic mood, communicates the time of day, and attracts our attention to the main character in this painting.
2. Review the definition of an adjective and adverb. Give each student the [story worksheet](http://www.ncartmuseum.org/artnc/content/lesson/sampleRubric/16.pdf). Tell them to fill the blanks with the adjective or adverb of their choice. (Model the activity for the students, if necessary.) Read the completed stories aloud and discuss the differences and similarities among the students' choices. Then read the original story and ask:

*How are the words you chose different or similar to the ones in the original story? How does the author's word choice affect our reaction to the story?*

1. As a group, discuss the similarities in the ways artists and writers use description in their creative works. Ask:

*What does a writer use to describe or emphasize action or certain character traits in a written text?*

*How does an artist do the same with paint?*

1. Have students write an imagined narrative about the event depicted in *Forward*. Model introducing a narrator, and encourage students to use dialogue and description to convey the emotion of the event. Discuss word choice and relate to the adjective/adverb activity. Confer with students as they write.

# Assessments

* Teacher will assess discussion for understanding of the relationship between other subjects and art, use of color as an element of art, and inference of meaning from the focus work.
* Using local rubrics, teacher will assess narrative writing piece, particularly noticing powerful word choice.
* Teacher will evaluate discussion using local rubrics for student participation, including following rules for discussion, building upon others’ ideas, and asking questions.
* Teacher will evaluate writing and discussion for understanding of the influence of Harriet Tubman and her values and principles.

# Resources

Vocabulary:

adjective

adverb

biography

mood

shade

slavery

Underground Railroad

Materials:

Markers, colored pencils, or crayons

Links and books:

Whitney Museum of Art, [Jacob Lawrence: Exploring Stories](http://www.whitney.org/jacoblawrence/art/index.html)

http://whitney.org/www/jacoblawrence/

Deborah Hopkinson, *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*

Ann McGovern, *Wanted Dead or Alive: The True Story of Harriet Tubman*

Dorothy Sterling, *Freedom Train: The Story of Harriet Tubman*

Faith Ringgold, *Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky*

George Sullivan, *Harriet Tubman (In Their Own Words* series*)*

Jeannette Winter, *Follow the Drinking Gourd*

***Forward***

# Story Worksheet

The night was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. We walked

(adjective) (adjective)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, trying to reach \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before sunrise. The baby

(adverb) (noun/proper noun)

slept soundly, but the rest of us were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Harriet pushed us onward

(adjective)

with her \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and her \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(adjective) (noun) (adjective)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ when we became \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I did not want to

(noun) (adjective)

return to the place I had escaped from, but I was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of where I was

(adjective)

going. During the night a man tried to turn back, but Harriet changed his mind when she

said, “You’ll be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.” Those words made

(adjective) (verb)

me realize the risks this \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ woman, the Moses of her People, was

(adjective)

taking to bring us to freedom.

