Analyzing a Visual Text

*Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Brueghel

**About this Lesson**
This lesson is based on ekphrastic poetry, poems written about works of art. One of the tasks of English teachers is to teach students how to think in ways that will enable them to be successful in Advanced Placement classes, on Advanced Placement exams, and on other high stakes standardized tests. The lesson focuses on an analysis of the painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* and the poem by William Carlos Williams; additionally, it provides a review of the Levels of Thinking. Students will complete activities which demonstrate the various levels as they move through the lesson. The link provided to “The Poet Speaks of Art” suggests additional examples for exploring the connections between art and poetry.

This lesson is included in Module 5: Connecting Devices to Meaning.

**Objectives**
Students will
- analyze a visual text as they review the Levels of Thinking from the Revised Bloom’s: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create.
- determine how details reveal mood and theme.
- create a new poem that reflects their understanding of mood and theme.

**Level**
Grades Six through Ten

**Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts**
LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.1</td>
<td>Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it. Cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.2</td>
<td>Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>III</td>
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<tr>
<td>R.6</td>
<td>Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
<td>Analyze</td>
<td>III</td>
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</table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SL.1</td>
<td>Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL.2</td>
<td>Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.</td>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>III</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
LTF Skill Focus
The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Thinking</th>
<th>Remember</th>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Apply</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evaluate</th>
<th>Create</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>written, spoken, and visual texts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
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<td>purposeful use of language for effect</td>
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<td>Composition</td>
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<tr>
<td>written, spoken, and visual products</td>
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</table>

Reading Strategies
- Annotation
- Determining Author’s Purpose
- Determining Main Idea
- Generalization

Literary Elements
- Detail
- Diction
- Imagery
- Mood
- Point of View
to perspective
- Theme
- Tone
tone determined through diction, imagery, detail,

Literary Techniques
deductive/inductive
- Characterization
direct
- indirect

Literary Forms
- Verse
- *Free Verse*

Connections to AP*
Analysis of details and imagery that create mood and reveal themes is a task that is required of students in both the free response and the multiple choice sections of the AP English Literature and AP English Language exams.

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Materials and Resources

- Landscape with the Fall of Icarus painting by Pieter Brueghel
- “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” poem by William Carlos Williams
- link to painting and poem at “The Poet Speaks of Art” webpage: http://homepage.mac.com/mseffie/assignments/paintings&poems/titlepage.html

Assessments

The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:

- short answer questions
- graphic organizer

Teaching Suggestions

If teachers use the PowerPoint® (which is available on the LTF website: English→Additional Materials and Resources→PowerPoints→Analyzing a Visual Text), the following instructions may be useful for presenting the lesson.

Remember (Activities I and II)

- Using the PowerPoint presentation, briefly project the first two slides—the slide showing the title and artist of the painting and the slide of the actual painting. Then ask students to answer the questions in Activity I. Allow only a minute or two for students to complete this activity.
- Show the next two slides and ask students to answer the questions for Activity II, now that they know what to look for. (The questions in Activity II are the same as the questions in Activity I.)
- Discuss the differences in their approach when they are given more specific directions before performing a task.
- Show students slide 4 with the information about “Remember.” Discuss this information, clarifying for students that these first two activities are strictly “Remember” activities.

Understand (Activity III)

- Project the slide of the painting again. Ask students to complete Activity III by writing a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting. Share responses.
- Ask students questions such as these:
  - How did they organize their descriptions (top to bottom, bottom to top, side to side, from largest object to smallest, etc.)?
  - What did they know already about Icarus or the painting? Did this affect their response?
- Show students the slide with information about “Understand.” Discuss this information, clarifying that summarizing the scene in the painting is an “Understand” activity.

Apply (Activity IV)

- Have students complete the bubble chart in Activity IV by filling in elements of the painting that appeal to each of the senses. They should then determine the mood of the painting, based on the sensory elements.
- Show the slide with information about “Apply.” Discuss this information.

Analyze (Activity V): Small Group Activity

- Ask students to complete Activity V by first looking for patterns in the imagery from the graphic organizer. Have students fill out the analysis template before they write a thematic statement. Finally, they should list three or more specific details that support their theme statement.
Share responses. Compare and discuss themes and details.

Show the slide with information about “Analyze.” Discuss this information, explaining that determining a theme of a painting (or of a literary work) is an “Analyze” activity.

Briefly return to the bubble chart used in Activity IV. Note that determining the mood of the painting is the same kind of activity as determining the theme of the painting (“Analyze”), but filling in the chart is an “Apply” activity. Remind students that a given activity might involve several Levels of Thinking.

Evaluate (Activity VI)

Have students determine which detail in the painting most effectively conveys their theme statement and justify their answer. Share responses.

Show students the slide with information about “Evaluate.” Discuss this information, clarifying that Activity VI is an “Evaluate” activity.

Create (Activity VII)

Show the PowerPoint slide with the William Carlos Williams poem “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” and have students refer to Activity VII in their lesson.

Ask for a volunteer to read the Williams poem aloud.

Go through the poem with students, adding end punctuation and capitalization to indicate the five complete sentences. (Note that this step is a “Remember” activity.)

Using the Williams poem as a model, students will write an original poem, following the directions in the lesson and taking the perspective of one of the people listed below:

- someone on the deck of the ship
- the plowman
- the fisherman on the bank
- Icarus
- Daedalus
- the sheepherder

Ask students to share their poems with others in their groups. You might ask each group to select one poem to share with the entire class.

Show students the PowerPoint slide with information about “Create.”

Discuss.

Answers

Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses. Some suggested responses are listed below:

I. and II. The title of the painting is _______ Landscape with the Fall of Icarus _______.

The artist is ________ Pieter Brueghel _________.

(Answers will vary.)

One detail in the foreground is an ox, a plowman, some sheep, a tree, etc. _______.

One detail in the background is a ship, the sun, clouds, a city, etc. _______.

III. Write a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting. (Answers will vary.)

Icarus splashes unnoticed into the sea with only his legs showing. Meanwhile, the plowman continues plowing his fields; the ship continues sailing; the sheepherder continues watching his sheep. The sun sets over the landscape, and life in general continues without change.
IV. Using details in the painting, complete the chart below. (Answers will vary.)

Sound: Animal sounds—horse, sheep, dog, wind blowing through trees, splash as Icarus hits the water
Taste: Salty air
Touch: Warmth of the sun, soft, newly-plowed earth, movement of ship, coolness of water, breeze in sails,
wind on horse, edge of plowed row
Sight: Sun going down, delicate sailing ship, plowman plowing, Icarus falling into sea, shepherder
looking into the sky, city in background
Smell: Scents of animals, salty air, newly-plowed earth, sweaty plowman, “fishy” smell
MOOD: Quiet, peaceful, mundane, apathetic, disinterested, idyllic, expectant, lonely, detached, etc.

V. What is a theme of the painting, Landscape with the Fall of Icarus? (Answers will vary.)
Focused on the details of their own lives, people fail to notice crises in others’ lives.

List three or more specific details that support this theme.

The plowman continues plowing, the ship continues sailing, the fisherman continues
fishing as Icarus falls into the sea. The sun doesn’t stop setting; no one changes his routine.

Adding capitalization and punctuation to the poem:

According to Brueghel when Icarus fell it was spring

[A] farmer was ploughing his field

[T] he whole pageantry of the year was awake tingling near the edge of the sea concerned with
itself sweating in the sun that melted the wings’ wax

[U] significantly off the coast there was a splash quite unnoticed

[T] his was Icarus drowning
Analyzing a Visual Text

I. The title of the painting is _____________________________.
The artist is _____________________________________________.
One detail in the foreground is _____________________________.
One detail in the background is _____________________________.

II. The title of the painting is _____________________________.
The artist is _____________________________________________.
One detail in the foreground is _____________________________.
One detail in the background is _____________________________.

III. Write a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
IV. Using details in the painting, complete the chart below.

- Sound
- Touch
- Taste
- Smell
- Sight

MOOD
V.
What patterns do you see in the imagery? Are there any contrasts?

Look at the words you wrote in the graphic above to describe the mood of the painting. Think about that mood in the context of what is happening.

While Icarus is drowning, the others in the painting are ________________________________.
and the mood of the painting can be described as ________________________________
which demonstrates the idea that ________________________________

Look at the idea you wrote above, then write a thematic statement about the painting, Landscape with the Fall of Icarus. What does this picture have to say about human experience?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

List three or more specific details from the painting that support this theme.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

VI.
Which detail in the painting most effectively conveys the theme? Justify your answer.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
VII.
Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

of the year was
awake tingling
near

the edge of the sea
concerned
with itself

sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings’ wax

unsignificantly
off the coast
there was

a splash quite unnoticed
this was
Icarus drowning

- William Carlos Williams


Directions: Add end punctuation and capitalization to the poem to indicate the five complete sentences. Then examine Brueghel’s painting again, but this time try to view the events from the perspective of someone more connected to the scene, such as one of the following:

- Someone on the deck of the ship
- The plowman
- The fisherman on the bank
- The sheepherder
- Icarus
- Daedalus

Using the Williams poem as a model, create an original poem. Begin with “According to ____________, when Icarus fell . . .” (or “When I fell . . .”)

Share your poem with other students.