

Beginning / Middle / End | *The Family of Saltimbanques* by Pablo Picasso

Language Arts: Narrative, Characters and Setting

Adapted from Kristen Kullberg, Sacred Heart School, Washington, DC

Target Thinking Dispositions: Observing and Imagining

Thinking Routine: Beginning/Middle/End

Work of Art: Pablo Picasso, *The Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905

Disciplines: Language Arts, Creative Writing, Art

Curricular Topics: Narrative, Characters, Setting, and Plot

Grade Level/Age: Grade 7 or Ages 12-13 (adaptable for older or younger students)

Total Time: 50-55 minutes (adaptable for shorter time frames or two sessions)

Learning Objectives: Students will closely observe a work of art, consider the portrayal of characters and setting, and use their imaginations to build a story based on what they observe.

Materials Needed:

- Art reproduction of *The Family of Saltimbanques* by Pablo Picasso (poster, digital image, or individual prints)
- Beginning/Middle/End templates, journals, or paper and pens/pencils (1 per student)

Beginning/Middle/End

1. Close looking: ~10 minutes

As students look carefully at the painting for one minute, guide them by asking: “What might the characters be doing? How might they be feeling? What might they be thinking about? What do you notice in the background or setting?” As students respond, ask for justification of their thinking by asking “What do you see that makes you say that?”

2. Considering the narrative: ~5 minutes

Next, using the Beginning/Middle/End template, invite students to independently write their first thoughts on the following three questions:

- 1) If this work of art is the beginning of a story, what might the beginning of the story be?
- 2) If this work of art is the middle of a story, what might have happened before? What might be about to happen?
- 3) If this work of art is the end of a story, what might the beginning of the story be?

3. Building the stories ~5 minutes

Explain to students they have started creating their stories and will continue in small groups by building off of ideas they hear from peers. Instruct everyone to share their own thinking, listen to the thinking of others, and select one idea shared by a group member they find especially interesting, surprising, or important.

4. Writing or Sketching

~20 minutes

Invite each student to independently build a new story now that they have shared ideas. They may silently write or draw using storyboards. Finally, have students share out their stories.

5. Curriculum Connection

~5-10 minutes

Continue to focus on the curricular topic by posing an open-ended question for discussion, such as: "What new ideas do you have about setting after this experience?"

6. Wrap-Up:

~5 minutes

Summarize the activity for students, highlighting linkages between the thinking routine (Beginning/Middle/End), key dispositions (reasoning with evidence), and any relevant curricular content.

Additional Suggested Works of Art:

This lesson can be applied to other works of art, such as:

- Alfred Jacob Miller, *Election Scene, Catonsville, Baltimore County*, c. 1860
- American 19th Century, *Allegory of Freedom*, 1863 or after
- John Willis, *Pine Ridge*, 2004

For more works of art related to the subjects of narrative, characters and setting, please refer to the Uncovering America resource on the National Gallery of Art website:

www.nga.gov/uncoveringamerica