

## A Picture's Worth a Thousand Words: From Historical Image to Detailed Narrative

This activity explores culture, vocabulary, voice, and characters in the context of inspirational historical artwork. By the end of the lesson you will: apply reading strategies (to understand, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts), draw on your prior experiences, demonstrate your knowledge of narrative writing (e.g., sequence, storytelling), explore connections between images and words, and use detailed vocabulary to write your creative narrative text.

1. Choose ONE of the attached pictures (page 2-3) to use for this assignment or one you source on your own.
2. Examine the picture individually for a few minutes, jotting down on a piece of scratch paper or in your writer's notebooks (make a new one at home if you would like a space to keep all of your writing) any features or details that you notice about the picture.
3. Using the notes you just jotted down, as necessary, brainstorm about the possible events and characters this picture illustrates and group them into categories.

### Example/Guiding questions:

Characters - What are the characters wearing? How many are there? What do you notice about them? Other thoughts about the characters? Example: grandfather, son, neighbor, ice cream vendor, dog, dresses, friends.

Setting - Where is this picture taken in your opinion? What is the mood or atmosphere? What is in the background? What stands out? Example: Park, sunny.

Situation - What are the characters doing? What do you think is happening? Example: Kids playing, dog running, buying ice cream, summer time.

Vocabulary - What words do you associate with this picture Example: happiness, smile/frown, sidewalks, ice cream cones, park, friendship, summer break, etc.

4. After you have used your reading comprehension skills to "read" the image and the ideas associated with it, and you have a good idea of the mood/characters/situation (remember this is just your interpretation; other writers may have their own perspectives), you will begin to take these ideas from the image and use this to write your creative detailed narrative piece of writing. Begin by choosing which character's point of view you will write from.
5. You may write about the character's feelings and thoughts, tell the story that leads up to the picture, narrate the events that follow, or simply use the picture as inspiration for your story. Try not to only describe the picture but to invent an *original* story related to the event illustrated. You are using the details from the image as your inspiration, not simply describing the picture (which you have done in point form in step one). You can sketch out the sequence of events for your narratives using the following link. If the link doesn't work for you due to computer restrictions, feel free to draw your own timeline to organize the ideas you will put in your story. Timeline Template- [http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline\\_2/](http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/timeline_2/)
6. As you write your stories, keep the following things in mind about narrative writing:
  - a) Have a clear, defined series of events that is in a specific order
  - b) Develop a plot (storyline) with a specific setting (where) and specific details (we need to imagine what it looks like).
  - c) Be reminded of the point of view you are using - which character are you writing as?
  - d) Use description and dialogue (talking) to develop your characters - tell us about them in a creative way.
  - e) Use transitional words and phrases to connect your ideas so one idea flows into the next smoothly.

Alternatives/Accommodations: Complete the assignment through pictures rather than simply writing - create a comic strip type story to develop your characters and your plot. Be sure to draw the scenery and use colour/shading to communicate the mood/atmosphere. Try to write a descriptive sentence with the main idea of the picture below each one, or orally explain your story to a family member or via Skype/Facetime to a friend or relative.

This lesson is adapted from:

O'Keefe, Alice M. 1996. *Motivating Writing in Middle School*. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 111-12.

Gardner, T. Readwritethink. National Council of Teachers of English. <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/picture-worth-thousand-words-116.html?tab=1#tabs>



Norman Rockwell (1894-1978), *Going and Coming*, 1947. Cover illustration for *The Saturday Evening Post*, August 30, 1947. From the collection of Norman Rockwell Museum. © 1947 SEPS: Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved



<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/30/sports/hockey/wwi-canadian-soldiers-national-hockey-association-stanley-cup.html>



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### Opportunities to extend your learning:

- \*Use the source under the picture you have chosen to research the image online and gather more information surrounding the broader context of the historical image/situation.
- \*Look up information on the following topics to enhance your narrative texts: using dialogue when writing, building characters in narrative stories, narrative leads, transitions in narrative writing.
- \*Have a parent, friend, or other relative read the text and provide you feedback on your writing before doing a final copy.

### English Language Learner Option:

Look at the pictures above.

Pick one you like.

Draw what you think happened right before or right after.

Label the people, objects, and other things in your picture by putting the word beside the object (example: clouds, mother, dog...)

Write 1-3 sentences explaining what is happening in your picture.

Have someone look at your picture and explain what they think is happening.

Add anything that might have been missing after showing it to someone else.

Present your story to a family member. Try to use full sentences as best you can.