



## Writing From “Inside the Frame” a 30 – 60 minute classroom activity

Grades 3 – 12+ adaptable

By Conrad Schumacher, Centennial Park School and Portland State University

### Lesson Overview:

Normally (whatever that is!) when we look at images (and in particular works of ART, be they famous, iconic, shocking, beautiful...) we look **AT THEM from the outside in**. What would happen if we switched that dynamic and “looked” at an image from the INSIDE? What would happen if we became PARTS of the image? How would what we see, say, feel and write about that image change? Well, let’s give it a try.

### Suggested Posters:

- Nottingham Studio, *Untitled (Portrait of a Couple)*, ca. 1898
- Albrecht Dürer, *Die wunderbare Sau von Landser (The Monstrous Sow of Landser)*, ca. 1496
- William Cumming, *Three Kids*, 1968
- Hale Woodruff, *Sunday Promenade*, 1939
- Diego Rivera, *Los Frutos del Trabajo (The Fruits of Labor)*, 1932
- Elizabeth Nourse, *Femme aux Fagots (Woman with a Bundle of Sticks)*, ca. 1899

### Materials:

- Paper and pencils or pens

### Before the Lesson:

1. Select one or more works of art.
2. Provide copies. Groups of students can gather around a large poster. Or you can print multiple copies from the PDFs on the Poster Project website.

<https://portlandartmuseum.org/learn/educators/resources/posters/>

### Lesson Steps:

Teachers: First, lead students through this activity together, looking at the same image. Then, give them the assignment of choosing their own images.

1. First, look at the image below **from the outside and write about what you see** for two minutes. Try to write for the whole two minutes.
2. **Now let’s try writing from inside the frame**, that is, from within the picture itself. We are going to write from **three different views** from within the picture. All of the writing you will do now will be in the **1<sup>st</sup> person**, that is, I...and it will all be **metaphorical**, that is you will be the things you are writing about.

For this next step (being inside the frame) get out a new sheet of paper.



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3. First, write from the point of view of objects in the setting or background of the picture. Begin with something like **I am the carved bench the man is sitting on** or **I am the gold and green forest** (depending on the image). Again, try to write for two minutes.  
**Now, don't edit or revise your first bit yet, we'll do that later.**
4. Next, write from the point of view of **one of the figures in the picture**. Become that figure. What are you thinking, feeling, smelling, saying, doing... Write for another two minutes. Be sure to describe yourself and begin with **I am...**
5. Finally, **write from another figure's point of view**.
6. Now look over your writing and **edit and revise** it to bring it together, **to unify it**.
7. Compare the two samples of writing, from the outside and the inside, with the people at your table talk about the differences in approaches. What are the pros and cons of each? Which one more accurately reflects the image? Which one more accurately reflects you? Share back thoughts from your table group with the whole class. Turn in your piece to your teacher.
8. Now the assignment(s):

Find two images that “speak to you” (as we all know images can be worth a 1000 words). These need not be “famous” paintings or such, but they do need to be publicly appropriate (naturally). Quite often I find good sources for these are images from my favorite movies, or magazines. Be honest in your selection of images, make sure they really are ones that you can relate to...that you can become.

For each of the images, follow the steps that we just did with our shared image. Write from three different things/objects/colors etc. from within the image(s) you have selected. Write metaphorically and in the first person. Edit, revise, rewrite until you are happy with the work. For display, put the image and writing together on one document. Remember, the audience for these is the whole school, not just me and the artists in this class.

Have fun and may the thesaurus be with you!

Go online for Poster PDFs in Spanish and English, maps, and more:  
<https://portlandartmuseum.org/learn/educators/resources/posters/>