



James Castle House Lesson Plan: Ekphrastic Writing

Art has the power to inspire us, excite us, and spark new ideas! Ekphrastic writing is just one way to explore the feelings and creative thoughts we experience when we look at art.

Ekphrasis is writing that is inspired by art. Ekphrasis can be expressed through poetry, short stories, or even verbal storytelling. This lesson plan can be an individual or collaborative activity and can be modified to support a variety of ages and abilities.

Use one of the artworks from the James Castle House's collection to inspire your own ekphrastic poem or story!

Materials

- Paper
- Writing utensil
- Artwork

Activity

1. Select an Artwork
 - Which artwork is your favorite? Which one reminds of you of someone or something you know? Which one makes you feel curious?
2. Decide How You Want to Write About the Artwork
 - Write a poem (*haiku, rhyming, or free verse all work*).
 - Write a story. Remember, stories have a beginning, middle, and end.
 - Tell it out loud. This option is great for younger children!
3. Activate Your Imagination
 - If writing a poem:
 - Focus on your five senses (*touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste*).
 - What emotions or memories come to mind when you look at this artwork?
 - Consider the materials used to make this artwork. Imagine what it might have been like to use those materials to make this particular artwork.
 - Is there anything else this artwork reminds you of (*a book, song, movie, a friend, etc*)?
 - If writing a story:
 - Whose voice is telling the story? Is it an unseen narrator, the subject of the artwork, or one of the inanimate objects in the scene?
 - What do you notice in the artwork? What stands out to you? What is hiding in the background? What might the subjects or objects be thinking? What emotions does this artwork make you feel?
 - What is happening in the depicted scene? Make a list of “What if...” questions based on the artwork (i.e. *What if the house was alive? What if this artwork had eyes?*)
 - Where are the events in the artwork happening?
 - When is the story being told (*past, present, or future*)?
4. Write and Share
 - Review your brainstorm and decide on which idea(s) you'd like to use to guide your writing.
 - Write! Try a few different versions of the same line or sentence if you feel stuck.
 - Have a trusted friend read your writing to check for spelling mistakes and give feedback.
 - Give your ekphrasis a title and share it with your family and friends!



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