



Peregrinations in Art

Peregrinations are excursions, usually on foot, where a person wanders and explores a place. This lesson is a peregrination of a landscape painting encouraging students to observe and to imagine what it would be like to experience the landscape from inside the painting and create a story of their own. The activity is inspired by the poem "The Brooklyn Museum of Art" by poet laureate Billy Collins to further enhance their engagement with the painting.

Begin by asking the students to choose a landscape painting that appeals to them on that day. Maybe it's the mood, maybe it's the type of scenery, the location, the geography. As they choose a painting, ask them to stand facing it, facing away from you, and look.

Ask sensory questions, having the students free write words and phrases.

- What sounds do you hear?
- What things do you smell?
- What things in the landscape might you touch? How would those things feel?
- Is there anything you might taste if you were in this place?
- What would it taste like?

Read the poem aloud to students asking them to look for connections between the poem and the landscape they have been observing.

Poem: The Brooklyn Museum of Art

I will now step over the soft velvet rope
And walk directly into this massive Hudson River
Painting and pick my way along the Palisades
With this stick I snapped off a dead tree.
I will skirt the smoky, nestled towns
And seek the path that leads always outward
Until I become lost, without a hope
Of ever finding the way back to the museum.
I will stand on the bluffs in nineteenth-century clothes,
A dwarf among rock, hills, and flowing water,
And I will fish from the banks in a straw hat
Which will feel like a brush stroke on my head.
And I will hide in the green covers of forests .
So no appreciator of Frederick Edwin Church,
Leaning over the soft velvet rope,
Will spot my tiny figure moving in the stillness
And cry out, pointing for the others to see,
And be thought mad and led away to a cell
Where there is no vaulting landscape to explore,
None of this birdsong that halts me in my tracks,



PORTLAND MUSEUM *of* ART

Seven Congress Square, Portland, ME 04101

And no wide curving of this river that draws
My steps toward the misty vanishing point.

Then tell students it is their turn to peregrinate into their landscape. Let them know that you'll begin each sentence, and they can complete it however they so choose. For example, "Your poem begins with the words, *I will...*" Repeat each starting phrase several times to make sure everyone can hear and watch their writing to determine your pace.

I will...
And walk...
With this...
I will...
And seek...
Until...
And then...
I will...
Until...
And finally...

You can then ask students to pair-share, share aloud, or just keep the poems for themselves.