

## Analyzing a Visual Text

### *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Brueghel

#### About this Lesson

This lesson is based on ekphrastic poetry, poems written about works of art. One of the tasks of English teachers is to teach students how to think in ways that will enable them to be successful in Advanced Placement classes, on Advanced Placement exams, and on other high stakes standardized tests. The lesson focuses on an analysis of the painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* and the poem by William Carlos Williams; additionally, it provides a review of the Levels of Thinking. Students will complete activities which demonstrate the various levels as they move through the lesson. The link provided to “The Poet Speaks of Art” suggests additional examples for exploring the connections between art and poetry.

This lesson is included in Module 5: Connecting Devices to Meaning.

#### Objectives

Students will

- analyze a visual text as they review the Levels of Thinking from the Revised Bloom’s: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create.
- determine how details reveal mood and theme.
- create a new poem that reflects their understanding of mood and theme.

#### Level

Grades Six through Ten

#### Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts

LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

Code	Standard	Level of Thinking	Depth of Knowledge
R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it. Cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.	Understand	III
R.2	Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.	Analyze	III
R.6	Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.	Analyze	III

R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.	Evaluate	III
R.9	Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.	Analyze	III
R.10	Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.	Understand	II

Implicitly addressed in this lesson

<b>Code</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Level of Thinking</b>	<b>Depth of Knowledge</b>
SL.1	Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.	Understand	II
SL.2	Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.	Evaluate	III

**LTF Skill Focus**

The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

Levels of Thinking					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Close Reading <i>written, spoken, and visual texts</i>		Grammar <i>purposeful use of language for effect</i>		Composition <i>written, spoken, and visual products</i>	
<b>Reading Strategies</b> Annotation Determining Author’s Purpose Determining Main Idea Generalization <b>Literary Elements</b> Detail Diction Imagery Mood Point of View perspective Theme Tone tone determined through diction, imagery, detail, <b>Literary Techniques</b> deductive/inductive Characterization direct indirect <b>Literary Forms</b> Verse <i>Free Verse</i>					

**Connections to AP\***

Analysis of details and imagery that create mood and reveal themes is a task that is required of students in both the free response and the multiple choice sections of the AP English Literature and AP English Language exams.

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## Materials and Resources

- *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* painting by Pieter Brueghel
- “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” poem by William Carlos Williams
- link to painting and poem at “The Poet Speaks of Art” webpage:  
<http://homepage.mac.com/mseffie/assignments/paintings&poems/titlepage.html>

## Assessments

The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:

- short answer questions
- graphic organizer

## Teaching Suggestions

If teachers use the PowerPoint® (which is available on the LTF website: English→Additional Materials and Resources→PowerPoints→Analyzing a Visual Text), the following instructions may be useful for presenting the lesson.

### Remember (Activities I and II)

- Using the PowerPoint presentation, briefly project the first two slides—the slide showing the title and artist of the painting and the slide of the actual painting. Then ask students to answer the questions in **Activity I**. Allow only a minute or two for students to complete this activity.
- Show the next two slides and ask students to answer the questions for **Activity II**, now that they know what to look for. (The questions in Activity II are the same as the questions in Activity I.)
- Discuss the differences in their approach when they are given more specific directions before performing a task.
- Show students slide 4 with the information about “Remember.” Discuss this information, clarifying for students that these **first two activities are strictly “Remember” activities**.

### Understand (Activity III)

- Project the slide of the painting again. Ask students to complete **Activity III** by writing a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting. Share responses.
- Ask students questions such as these:
  - How did they organize their descriptions (top to bottom, bottom to top, side to side, from largest object to smallest, etc.)?
  - What did they know already about Icarus or the painting? Did this affect their response?
- Show students the slide with information about “Understand.” Discuss this information, clarifying that summarizing the scene in the painting is an “Understand” activity.

### Apply (Activity IV)

- Have students complete the bubble chart in **Activity IV** by filling in elements of the painting that appeal to each of the senses. They should then determine the mood of the painting, based on the sensory elements.
- Show the slide with information about “Apply.” Discuss this information.

### Analyze (Activity V): Small Group Activity

- Ask students to complete **Activity V** by first looking for patterns in the imagery from the graphic organizer. Have students fill out the analysis template before they write a thematic statement. Finally, they should list three or more specific details that support their theme statement.

- Share responses. Compare and discuss themes and details.
- Show the slide with information about “Analyze.” Discuss this information, explaining that determining a theme of a painting (or of a literary work) is an “Analyze” activity.
- Briefly return to the bubble chart used in Activity IV. Note that determining the mood of the painting is the same kind of activity as determining the theme of the painting (“Analyze”), but filling in the chart is an “Apply” activity. Remind students that a given activity might involve several Levels of Thinking.

### **Evaluate (Activity VI)**

- Have students determine which detail in the painting most effectively conveys their theme statement and justify their answer. Share responses.
- Show students the slide with information about “Evaluate.” Discuss this information, clarifying that **Activity VI** is an “Evaluate” activity.

### **Create (Activity VII)**

- Show the PowerPoint slide with the William Carlos Williams poem “Landscape with the Fall of Icarus” and have students refer to **Activity VII** in their lesson.
- Ask for a volunteer to read the Williams poem aloud.
- Go through the poem with students, adding end punctuation and capitalization to indicate the five complete sentences. (Note that this step is a “Remember” activity.)
- Using the Williams poem as a model, students will write an original poem, following the directions in the lesson and taking the perspective of one of the people listed below:
  - someone on the deck of the ship
  - the plowman
  - the fisherman on the bank
  - Icarus
  - Daedalus
  - the shepherd
- Ask students to share their poems with others in their groups. You might ask each group to select one poem to share with the entire class.
- Show students the PowerPoint slide with information about “Create.”
- Discuss.

### **Answers**

Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses. Some suggested responses are listed below:

**I. and II.** The title of the painting is Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

The artist is Pieter Brueghel.

(Answers will vary.)

One detail in the foreground is an ox, a plowman, some sheep, a tree, etc.

One detail in the background is a ship, the sun, clouds, a city, etc.

**III.** Write a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting. (Answers will vary.)

*Icarus splashes unnoticed into the sea with only his legs showing. Meanwhile, the plowman continues plowing his fields; the ship continues sailing; the shepherd continues watching his sheep. The sun sets over the landscape, and life in general continues without change.*

IV. Using details in the painting, complete the chart below. (*Answers will vary.*)

Sound: *Animal sounds—horse, sheep, dog, wind blowing through trees, splash as Icarus hits the water*

Taste: *Salty air*

Touch: *Warmth of the sun, soft, newly-plowed earth, movement of ship, coolness of water, breeze in sails, whip on horse, edge of plowed row*

Sight: *Sun going down, delicate sailing ship, plowman plowing, Icarus falling into sea, shepherd looking into the sky, city in background*

Smell: *Scents of animals, salty air, newly-plowed earth, sweaty plowman, “fishy” smell*

MOOD: *Quiet, peaceful, mundane, apathetic, disinterested, idyllic, expectant, lonely, detached, etc.*

V. What is a theme of the painting, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*? (*Answers will vary.*)

*Focused on the details of their own lives, people fail to notice crises in others’ lives.*

List three or more specific details that support this theme.

*The plowman continues plowing, the ship continues sailing, the fisherman continues fishing as Icarus falls into the sea. The sun doesn’t stop setting; no one changes his routine.*

**Adding capitalization and punctuation to the poem:**

According to Brueghel when Icarus fell it was spring .

[A] farmer was ploughing his field .

[T] he whole pageantry of the year was awake tingling near the edge of the sea concerned with itself sweating in the sun that melted the wings’ wax .

[U] nsignificantly off the coast there was a splash quite unnoticed .

[T] his was Icarus drowning .



## Analyzing a Visual Text

### I.

The title of the painting is \_\_\_\_\_.

The artist is \_\_\_\_\_.

One detail in the foreground is \_\_\_\_\_.

One detail in the background is \_\_\_\_\_.

### II.

The title of the painting is \_\_\_\_\_.

The artist is \_\_\_\_\_.

One detail in the foreground is \_\_\_\_\_.

One detail in the background is \_\_\_\_\_.

### III.

Write a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting.

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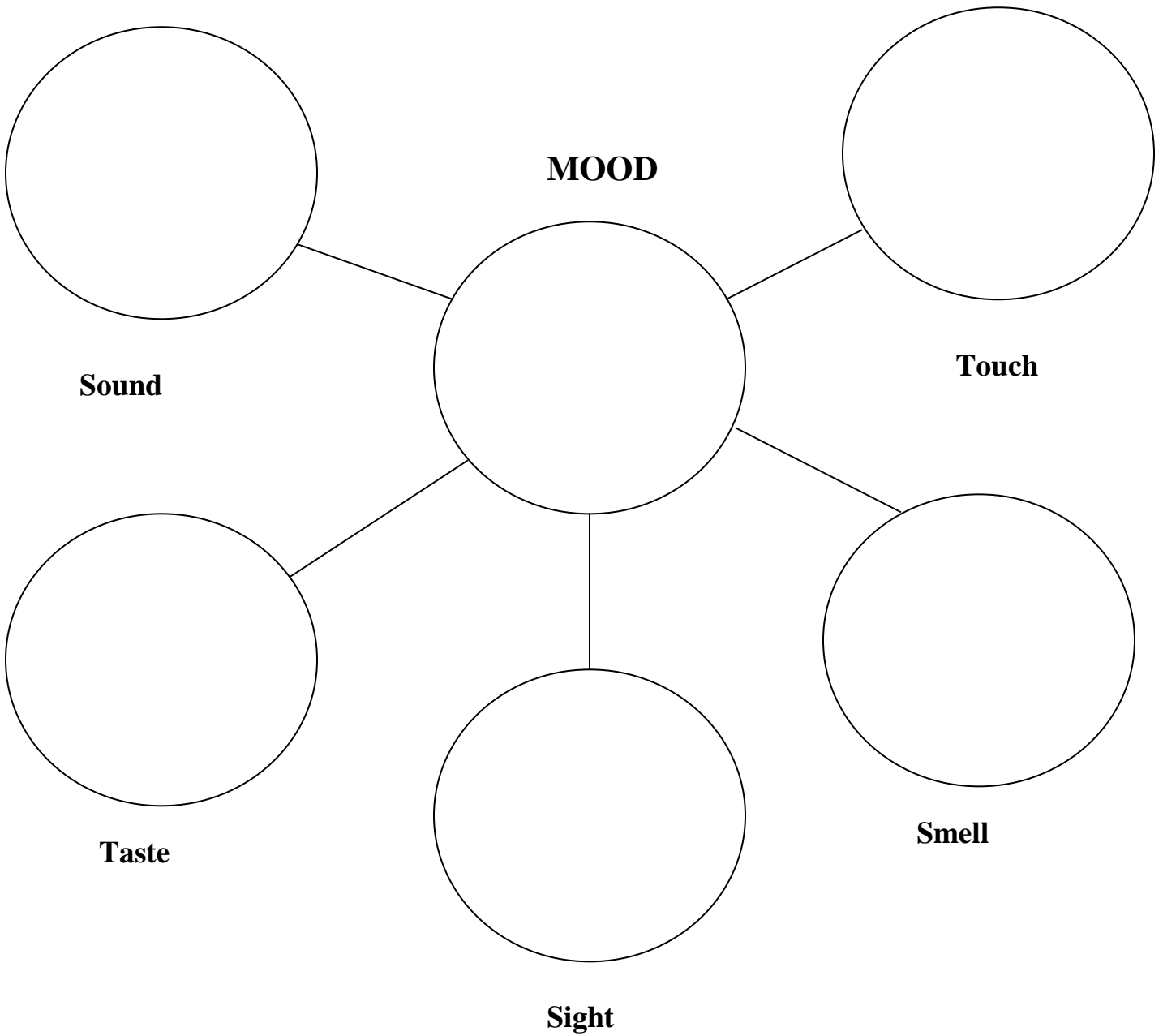
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**IV.**

Using details in the painting, complete the chart below.





**V.**

What patterns do you see in the imagery? Are there any contrasts?

Look at the words you wrote in the graphic above to describe the mood of the painting. Think about that mood in the context of what is happening.

While Icarus is drowning, the others in the painting are \_\_\_\_\_.

and the mood of the painting can be described as \_\_\_\_\_

which demonstrates the idea that \_\_\_\_\_

Look at the idea you wrote above, then write a thematic statement about the painting, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*. What does this picture have to say about human experience?

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List three or more specific details from the painting that support this theme.

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**VI.**

Which detail in the painting most effectively conveys the theme? Justify your answer.

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## VII. Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

According to Brueghel  
when Icarus fell  
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing  
his field  
the whole pageantry

of the year was  
awake tingling  
near

the edge of the sea  
concerned  
with itself

sweating in the sun  
that melted  
the wings' wax

unsignificantly  
off the coast  
there was

a splash quite unnoticed  
this was  
Icarus drowning



- William Carlos Williams

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From *Collected Poems: 1939–1962, Volume II* by William Carlos Williams, published by New Directions Publishing Corp. © 1962 by William Carlos Williams. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

**Directions:** Add end punctuation and capitalization to the poem to indicate the five complete sentences. Then examine Brueghel's painting again, but this time try to view the events from the perspective of someone more connected to the scene, such as one of the following:

- Someone on the deck of the ship
- The sheepherder
- The plowman
- Icarus
- The fisherman on the bank
- Daedalus

Using the Williams poem as a model, create an original poem. Begin with "According to \_\_\_\_\_, when Icarus fell . . ." (or "When I fell . . .")

Share your poem with other students.