

John Whipple

Title: *Hope: I've Been Looking Forward to This For a Long Time*

Overview:

Students will explore the theme of Hope through the lens of three works of art: the poem *Hope* by Emily Dickinson, *Sonata Pathetique* by Beethoven, and the artwork *Hope* by artist John Whipple.

By studying artists' themes and techniques, and by looking for visual, literary and musical clues, they will make connections and inferences about the artworks for inspiration in writing a creative nonfiction piece entitled *Hope: I've Been Looking Forward to This For a Long Time*.

Subjects:

Visual Arts, Language Arts, Music

Age Group :

Secondary (Grades 6 - 12)

Standards:

21st Century Learning Skills:

- Critical Thinking and Reasoning
- Information Literacy
- Self-Direction
- Invention

Colorado Academic Standards:

Visual Arts

- Observe and Learn to Comprehend
- Envision and Critique to Reflect
- Invent and Discover to Create
- Relate and Connect to Transfer

Language Arts

- Oral Expression and Listening
- Writing and Composition
- Research and Reasoning

Music

- Aesthetic Valuation of Music

Essential Question(s):

- *What symbolizes hope to you... Hope =*
- *What are internal and external qualities of hope?*
- *How do people express themselves through art?*
- *How does an artist's technique and style inform content?*
- *How does art help us tell people our feelings?*
- *What do you think the artist was feeling during the making of the work?*
- *What inspires me?*

Rationale:

Exploring works of art for clues, students can find inspiration in the higher thinking and resultant works of artists. Additionally, the writing activity engages their imaginations by having them connect theme and imagery to tell a story.

Objectives:

Students will:

- learn about the art and process of the artwork *Hope* by artist John Whipple
- learn about and discuss artwork from different genres with a related theme
- examine the creative use of symbols in artworks to express an idea or tell a story
- examine theme and imagery in the artworks and make connections and draw details from them to inspire their own writing

Materials:

- Handout 1: *Hope* by Emily Dickinson
- Ability to play *Sonata Pathetique* by Ludwig van Beethoven, either on You Tube or CD with CD player
 - Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor; 2nd Movement: Adagio Cantabile (slow and songlike)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WeAc0oh818s&list=RDWeAc0oh818s>
- Images of *Hope* by artist John Whipple (overhead projector, internet or color copies)
- *The Art and the Artist* information on *Hope* (found at the end of this lesson plan)
- Lined paper or journals

- Pencils/pens

Duration:

50 minutes class time; additional time to complete writing assignment

Vocabulary:

- *Symbology*: the study or use of symbols
 - In art, a symbol is usually a solid, recognizable thing—an animal, a plant, an object, etc.—that stands for something else. A symbol can also represent someone’s whole story.
- *Creative nonfiction*: a genre of writing that uses literary styles and techniques to create factually accurate narratives.
 - The primary goal of the creative nonfiction writer is to communicate information in a factually accurate way, but to shape it in a way that reads like fiction.
- *Fiction*: literature in the form of prose, especially short stories and novels, that describes imaginary events and people.

Lesson:

1. Warm-up: Lead students in a discussion of “hope.” What does hope mean to them? Do they have personal definitions of what hope means? Ask what they feel hopeful about. If they could use a symbol to represent hope, what would it be? If desired, write the following on the board: *Hope* = _____ and list students’ responses as they brainstorm.

2. Discuss symbology and the use of symbols to represent ideas.

- *Symbology*: the study or use of symbols
- Explain that artists often use symbols — recognizable images — to represent an idea, event or emotion, and that sometimes a symbol can stand for someone’s whole story.
- Ask the students to give examples of symbols in art, music and/or literature.
 - After they have shared their ideas, explain that they will be exploring the theme of Hope in three works of art: a poem by Emily Dickinson, a music piece by Beethoven, and a painting by American artist John Whipple.

3. Read and discuss the poem *Hope*, by Emily Dickinson.

- Hand out copies of the poem (see Materials, Handout #1). Read it or ask for a student to read the poem aloud.
- Have the students identify symbols and images in the poem.
 - Ask what it is about these symbols that represents Hope. What is the ambience of the poem? Can they “see” any pictures in their minds when they read or hear the poem? How does the poem make them feel? What other images come to mind as they listen to and read the poem?

4. Listen to and discuss the 2nd movement of *Sonata Pathetique*, by Beethoven.

- Explain that ‘pathetique’ can be translated as ‘sorrow’ and that Beethoven wrote it the year he began to notice his hearing loss. (He was 27 in 1798.)
 - Creating masterpieces in the face of severe personal difficulties is one of the hallmarks of Beethoven’s creative legacy.
 - Beethoven’s music often depicts struggle followed by triumph, and the emotional arc of *Sonata Pathetique* follows that pattern.

- The main theme is played three times, with contrasting sections that modulate, lifting the mood each time to higher ground.
- Ask for responses to the music. Can the students hear the hope emanating from the piece as it progresses? What do you think the artist was feeling during the writing of the piece? Why did he choose to take the subject of sorrow, but move it along to hope?

5. Show and discuss *Hope*, by American artist John Whipple.

- Read the Artist Statement:
 - “Each piece I create is a one of a kind original. I start by choosing a piece of wood. Usually I use Finland birch because of its beautiful grain and light color. I try to design an image to take advantage of the grain’s pattern.
 - “I then use charcoal with kneadable erasers to create the image. Once I’m satisfied with the drawing, I seal it with acrylic spray, which brings out the grain and allows the charcoal to be top coated. Then I apply 4 to 5 layers of thin translucent oil glazes, which creates the luster of each piece.”
 - There is the possibility that the piece is a self-portrait: the smudges for knuckles on Hope’s hands are actually John’s smudges from working with all of the charcoal.
- Ask the students some leading questions:
 - Do you think the image is a boy or a girl? (We don’t know for sure.)
 - How do the artist’s style and technique inform the content or theme he wants to express? (Some possible answers: he uses transparent glazes; the use of wood makes some color and line recede, while pushing others forward; hope can be hard to capture, it is ethereal, etc.)
 - What is the mood of the piece?
 - What symbology does the artist use to represent hope?
 - What are internal and external qualities of hope?
 - What inferences can you make about what the artist is communicating?

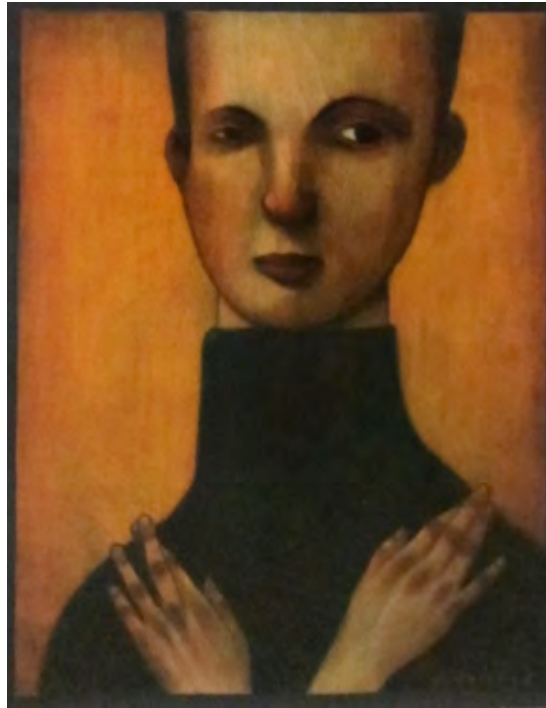
6. Writing a work of creative nonfiction.

- Explain that students will write a work of *creative nonfiction* with the title and theme *Hope: I’ve Been Waiting For This For a Long Time*.
 - *Creative nonfiction*: a genre of writing that uses literary styles and techniques to create factually accurate narratives.
 - The primary goal of the creative nonfiction writer is to communicate information in a factually accurate way, but to shape it in a way that reads like fiction.
 - Taking inspiration from these three works of art, and other influences as desired, they will write a personal essay.
- If you wish, have students share their compositions with the class.

Extensions:

- Following the artwork examples, students could write a poem, a piece of music, or a visual art work depicting the subject Hope.

The Art and the Artist



Hope

John Whipple

Charcoal on wood

“Each piece I create is a one of a kind original. I start by choosing a piece of wood. Usually I use Finland birch because of its beautiful grain and light color. I try to design an image to take advantage of the grain’s pattern.

“I then use charcoal with kneadable erasers to create the image. Once I’m satisfied with the drawing, I seal it with acrylic spray, which brings out the grain and allows the charcoal to be top coated. Then I apply 4 to 5 layers of thin translucent oil glazes, which creates the luster of each piece.”

Provided through the generous support of Janus.

Hope is the thing with feathers

~ Emily Dickinson

American poet; 1830 - 1886

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.