

COMMON CORE CONNECTION

DESCRIPTIVE LANGUAGE AND LOST ILLUSIONS

COMMON CORE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

Intended audience late elementary/early middle school English/Language Arts teachers

Time frame one 50-minute lesson

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will identify sight and sound sensory imagery in a primary-source document, artist Charles Gleyre's diary, about a painting called *Lost Illusions*. Then, students will match descriptive language in Gleyre's diary to images in the artwork.

SUPPLIES

- Printed or digital copies of *Lost Illusions* ([37.184](#))
- Printed or digital copies of Identifying Imagery worksheets
- Pens/pencils

ACTIVITY

- 1 Explain to students what sensory imagery is. Sensory imagery, which consists of details that appeal to sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell, helps artwork and written text come alive for the viewer by connecting it to a shared understanding of reality.
- 2 Explain to students that an artist named Charles Gleyre wrote a diary entry that gives a description of his painting entitled *Lost Illusions*. Gleyre was a Swiss artist who lived from 1806 to 1874. He taught many younger artists who later became famous, including Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and James Abbott McNeill Whistler.
- 3 Next, have students read the primary document diary text found on the worksheet and identify and list the images Gleyre uses on the accompanying worksheet.
- 4 Students should then be shown *Lost Illusions* and, as a class, they will discuss what they see and share their reactions to the painting. Then they will verbally identify where the sensory images from the text appear in the painting. Ask students to explain why Gleyre was either successful or unsuccessful in putting clear visual and sound details in his painting.
- 5 Now have the students choose a work of art as inspiration for their own writings. Using the Walters' [Works of Art website](#), students should find a work of art that they like. They can pretend to be the artist and write a diary entry describing a "vision" or dream the artist could have had before her or she "created" the artwork.

POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS

- Have students draw or create an artistic representation of their writing incorporating as many of the sensory details as possible (incorporating taste and smell can be very challenging!)



37.184

IDENTIFYING IMAGERY WORKSHEET

Read the following diary entry by an artist named Charles Gleyre. While sitting on the banks of the Nile River in Egypt, he had the vision described below. Eight years after he wrote this diary entry, he created a visual representation of his words in a painting called *Lost Illusions*.

It was on the 21st of March, 1835, during a beautiful twilight on the Nile . . . The sky was so pure, the water so calm that, after the brain excitement to which I have abandoned myself all the day, it would have been difficult to have said whether I was sailing on the stream or through the air's infinite space. As I turned toward the setting sun, I thought I saw, in fact, I did see, a bark¹ most happy in form in which were a group of angels, clothed with such elegance and posed in a such calm and noble attitudes, that I was enchanted. Insensibly they approached and I was able to distinguish their voices; they chanted a chorus of divine music. The bark stopped just beyond a cluster of palms planted on the bank. The sparkling surface of the river repeated so exactly these charming objects that they seemed doubled. Never during my life will I forget it. The triple harmony of form, color, and sound was complete.

List of sight image from the text:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____

List of sound imagery from the text:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____

¹ bark = boat