

GRADES 9-12



Student Name _____ Grade _____

Directions:

Today you will explore the American Writers Museum to learn more about the history and process of writing. Please use the educational materials to help guide your visit. Your interactions with the exhibits will help you to answer the questions in this packet. We encourage you to take your time and to answer the questions thoughtfully.

- At the end of your visit, we will gather as a group to discuss your field trip experience.
- Please be prepared to share your answers in this packet.

AMERICAN VOICES

Following are seven of the more than 300 writers highlighted in the museum. You can find more information on all the authors listed in this packet in our **American Voices** virtual exhibit.

Please select **FOUR or more** of the following authors and work on the questions for each of them.

Era: Colonial Vision

Phillis Wheatley - Phillis Wheatley became the first published African-American author at the age of 20. She so impressed George Washington with a poem that he asked to meet her. During her visit with the president, he treated Wheatley with a respect unusual for a slave owner.

If you had the opportunity to travel back in time to meet author Phillis Wheatley, what do you imagine talking to her would be like?

Create a conversation with the author Phillis Wheatley.

Era: The New Nation

William Apess - In his work *An Indian's Looking Glass for White Man* (1883), he states "Now suppose these skins were put together, and each skin had its national crimes written upon it - which skin do you think would have the greatest?.. I should look at all the skins, and I know that when I cast my eye upon that white skin, and if I saw those crimes written upon it, I should enter my protest against it immediately, and cleave to that which is more honorable."

What do you understand by the author's words above? What is the author exactly trying to convey?

AMERICAN VOICES (*more*)

AMERICAN VOICES (*continued*)

Frederick Douglass - Frederick Douglass was a relentless advocate for change and constantly challenged the status quo in American society through his writing and speeches. Everyone who seeks change faces obstacles they must overcome.

Taking inspiration from his life, answer the following: How do you challenge your status quo, and how have you been challenged?

Era: Many Voices

Maria Ruiz de Burton - In her work *The Squatter and the Don*, she states “Let us cry for the spilt milk, and remember how, and where, and why, we spilt it. Much wisdom is learnt through tears, but none by forgetting our lessons.”

What do you understand by the author’s words above? What is the author exactly trying to convey?

Era: Modernism

Zora Neale Hurston - In her work *How It Feels to Be Colored Me* (1928), Zora Neale Hurston wrote, “I am not tragically colored. There is no great sorrow dammed up in my soul, nor lurking behind my eye. ...Even in the helter-skelter skirmish that is my life, I have seen that the world is to the strong regardless of a little pigmentation more or less. No, I do not weep at the world—I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife.”

What do you think the quote means? Do you agree or disagree?

Richard Wright - Taking inspiration from Richard Wright’s writing from his novels *Native Son* and the autobiographical *Black Boy* where he exposes the entrenched racism that (in Wright’s words) made all Americans “powerless pawns of blind play of social forces” answer the following question:

What is a community? What can we do to positively impact our communities?

Era: New Voices

Vine Deloria Jr. - The American Indian Movement of the 1970s protested humanitarian atrocities and broken treaties by occupying places of trauma, such as Alcatraz Island and Wounded Knee. Indian writers like Vine Deloria Jr. promoted native identity, tribal sovereignty, and the citizens’ rights while challenging stereotypes and the mainstream historical narrative.

Have you witnessed prejudice? Reflect on its impact on you.

<p>Author _____</p>

AMERICAN VOICES *(continued)*

Author _____

Author _____

Author _____

Author _____

SURPRISE BOOKSHELF

Find all the different things in our **Surprise Bookshelf** located in the **Nation of Writers** gallery.

1. Find at least 2 smells:

Name of Author	Name of Book/Work	What kind of smell was it? Does this scent remind you of anything?

Describe a smell that you like. What memories do you have of that scent?

2. Find at least 2 videos:

Name of Author	Name of Book/Work	What does the video talk about?

3. Find at least 2 Audios:

Name of Author	Name of Book/Work	What does the audio tell you?

4. Find at least 2 dioramas:

Name of Author	Name of Book/Work	How is the diorama connected to the work?

What kind of diorama would you create for the following work?

(Please read the text for the following work and create a diorama based on the text.)

- Gil Scott-Heron, *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, 1971
- Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House*, 1959

THE WORD WATERFALL EXHIBIT

Looking at the Word Waterfall exhibit, answer the following: **What does it mean to be an American?**

READERS HALL

Independent Voices

Read the poem, *To the Diaspora* by Gwendolyn Brooks (below)

Who is the author speaking to in this poem? What evidence in the poem makes you think that?

Four horizontal lines for writing an answer.

To the Diaspora

When you set out for Afrika
You did not know you were going.
Because
You did not know you were Afrika.
You did not know the Black continent
That had to be reached
Was you.

I could not have told you then that some sun
Would come,
Somewhere over the road,
Would come evoking the diamonds
Of you, the Black continent - -
Somewhere over the road.
You would not have believed my mouth.

When I told you, meeting you somewhere
Close
To the heat and youth of the road,
Liking my loyalty, liking belief,
You smiled and you thanked me but very little
Believed me.

Here is some sun. Some.
Now off into the places rough to reach.
Though dry, though drowsy, all unwillingly a-wobble,
Into the dissonant and dangerous crescendo.
Your work, that was done, to be done to be
Done to be done.

Access for All

The first public libraries did not emerge until the late 1800s. Now, there are nearly 120,000 in the United States. Other than lending out books, what other services do public libraries provide?

Seven horizontal lines for writing an answer.

What year did the Boston Public Library open?

One horizontal line for writing an answer.

MIND OF A WRITER GALLERY

Featured Works

On our Featured Works table LISTEN to 1 (one) of the following excerpts and answer the question(s):

1. *A Bird Came Down the Walk (Poem 328)* by Emily Dickinson
 - a. After listening to the poem, does the author have a positive or negative perspective of nature?
 - b. What evidence in the poem supports your thought?

2. *Sonny's Blues* by James Baldwin
 - a. After listening to the excerpt, what do you think the "it" is referring to when writing, *'I read about it in the paper, in the subway, on my way to work. I read it and I couldn't believe it, and I read it again...I stared at it in the swinging lights of the subway car, and in the faces and bodies of the people, and in my own face, trapped in the darkness which roared outside.'*
 - b. Is there a place in the excerpt that made you think that?

Build a Routine

Describe a routine that makes you feel your best. Describe the space you are in? What objects and fuel are necessary for you to do your best work?

Do you share similarities to any of the authors displayed in terms of routines?

Make Meaning

Frenemy *noun* Half friend, half enemy

Gossip columnist Walter Winchell created this portmanteau in 1953, while writing for the *Nevada State Journal*. He used it for the title of an article about Cold War tensions: ***Howz About Calling the Russians Our Frienemies?***

Using what you have learned about writing so far, create a new word.
What does it mean? Describe its definition.

CHICAGO GALLERY

1. Lorraine Hansberry gave a speech about writing in 1964.

“Write if you will: but write about the world as it is and as you think it ought to be and must be-if there is to be a world... Work hard at it, care about it. Write about our people: tell their story. You have something glorious to draw on begging for attention. Don’t pass it up.”

The exhibit quotes this speech. If you were to write, what topic would you choose to write about and why?

2. Activist and writer, Saul D. Alinsky said : *“All change means disorganization of the old and organization of the new.”*

In your own words describe what you understand from this statement?

Creating Art from the Everyday

Listen to the poem, *We Real Cool* by Gwendolyn Brooks

We real cool. We
Left school. We

Lurk late. We
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We
Die soon.

After listening to the poem, why do you think the author ends each line with 'We' except for the last line?
