

**American Writers Museum
Field Trip American Identities
Teacher Material**

Prior to Arrival to AWM

1. Description of Museum

Mission: The American Writers Museum will:

- Educate the public about American writers – past and present
- Engage visitors to the Museum in exploring the many exciting worlds created by the spoken and written word
- Enrich and deepen appreciation for good writing in all its forms
- Inspire visitors to discover, or rediscover, a love of reading and writing

Through innovative and dynamic state-of-the-art exhibitions, as well as compelling programming, the American Writers Museum will educate, enrich, provoke, and inspire the public.

Located at 180 N Michigan Ave, AWM is on Chicago's Cultural Mile, a short walk up the street from the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony and the Chicago Cultural Center. Its galleries offer visitors a sweeping history of United States literature from Native American storytelling traditions to today's innovative works through interactive, digital touch-screen exhibits, reading spaces and encounters with familiar and unfamiliar works.

2. Description of Field Trip

Themes are a central point of any written piece. Various themes are woven throughout American pieces to highlight important events or topics of the time. This field trip, American Identities, will ask students to critically think about these essential questions: what does it mean to be an American? How has the American identity changed over time? What does the American Identity look like today? Students will explore the museum with a focus on a subtheme of the American Identity: race, religion, gender and national origin.

Starting as a whole group, the staff of the American Writers Museum will introduce the essential questions and guide students to identify their prior-knowledge to the themes and pieces in the museum. Next, working in small groups and independently, students will explore the museum and exhibits while focusing on one subtheme of the American Identity. Students will read through the various written pieces and explore the exhibits to find examples of their given subtheme. Additionally, students will create their own personal word waterfall that can be used to create a final writing piece at the museum or to bring back to the classroom for extension activities. At the end of the field trip, students will work in their small groups to create a writing piece. These writing pieces will be displayed at the museum at the exhibit "Story of the Day."

American Identities is ideal for students in middle or high school. Many of the activities, both at the museum and the extension activities, can be adapted to varying classrooms within this age group.

Time Frame:

Field trips are available in 1.5 Hour Field Trip:

10 minutes- Welcome to the American Writers Museum

10 Minutes- Whole group discussion on theme of American Identities

50 Minutes- Guided self-exploration of museum and exhibits

20 Minutes- Story writing and sharing

Standards: Common Core Standards (Grades 9-10)

- **RL.9-10.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in details its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text
- **W.9-10.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

Contact Information:**3. Some of the More Than 300 Authors Highlighted at AWM**

Anne Bradstreet
Thomas Jefferson
Washington Irving
Emily Dickinson
Ida B. Wells
Laura Ingalls Wilder
William Carlos Williams
Herman Melville
F. Scott Fitzgerald
Ernest Hemingway
Ralph Ellison
Richard Wright
Flannery O'Connor
James Baldwin
Gwendolyn Brooks

4. Recommended Classroom Extensions Prior to AWM

- Discuss the theme of identity and how it has been seen throughout already read novels, poems, etc.
- Define and identify examples of subthemes focused on during the field trip (race, religion, gender, and national origin.)
- Read and analyze a variety of written works.
- Compare two perspectives of an event or theme

- Example: Compare poems “I hear America Singing” and “I too hear America”

Classroom Extensions After the AWM Visit

Below are classroom activities that can be completed after visiting the AWM. Feel free to use these extensions in your own classroom using the materials completed at the field trip.

- Retell or create a story read in class, but write with the focus on perspective of the subtheme explored in class.
 - Example: Retell a portion of the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* with an emphasis on the subtheme of national origin identity.
 - Example: Create a story that highlights the theme of American Identity of race.
- Find current events related to the subthemes and discuss the current day American Identity. Possibly extend this to comparing it to examples of written pieces from the museum.
- Focusing on an American author seen in the museum, discuss a current or historical event and identify the author’s perspective on the event. Assign students or small groups various authors to have them present or discuss the author’s perspective.