

American Writers Museum
American Voices
Teacher Material

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 elaborate virtual exhibits, as well as compelling programming, the American Writers Museum strives to educate, enrich, provoke, and inspire the public.

Located at 180 N Michigan Ave, AWM is on Chicago's Cultural Mile. 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.

Description of American Voices

Every writer has his or her own motivation for writing. Throughout American history, the story of writing has evolved and shifted to include the various voices and purposes of the time. *American Voices* aims to encourage students to explore various authors and their writings, and determine what purpose or motivation each author had to write. It will also call each student to personally reflect on what drives them to write themselves.

This will have students explore *American Voices* virtual exhibit where students will learn about various American authors throughout history. Students will be asked to find examples of American authors for each category of purpose: persuade, inform and entertain. Students will identify an author for each category and will need to defend their responses with explanation and evidence.

After discussing their findings, students will reflect on what makes them motivated to write. Students will create a bookmark identifying why they write and what author inspired this. Bookmarks could be formatted: I want to write to __ (type of purpose) __ because __ (why) __ just like __ (American Author) __.

American Voices is ideal for students in 5th-7th grade. Many of the activities, both the virtual content and the extension activities, can be adapted to varying classrooms within

this age group.

Time Frame:

We suggest using at least 2 class sessions or a 1-hour block to explore the virtual exhibit content as well as going through the educational material.

Standards: Common Core Standards (Grades 6th Grade ELA)

- RI 6.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
- RL 6.9: Compare/contrast texts in different forms/genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes/topics.
- RL 6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of text, both inferential and explicit.

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

Recommended Classroom Extensions Prior to AWM

- Teach author’s purpose: persuade, inform, and entertain
- Discuss examples of each purpose (e.g. newspapers articles are often to inform, comics are to entertain, etc)
- Read and analyze a variety of written works. We encourage you to select ones from author’s highlighted in the museum.

Classroom Extensions After *American Voices* Virtual Exploration

Below are classroom activities that can be completed after exploring the virtual exhibit. Feel free to use these extensions in your own classroom using the materials completed at the virtual exploration.

- Use the word waterfall notes and have students write a story or poem
- Provide students a topic (or even a word or phrase) and have students choose their purpose and write on it.
 - Example: Civil War- students could write to persuade by creating an advertisement encouraging men to join the war efforts; to inform could be a summary of one of the battles studied in class; or entertain could be a fictional story of a soldier at war.
- Using a text already analyzed in class, have students rewrite it in with a different purpose.