

# PODCASTING: WRITING YOUR WAY INTO ART

A podcast is an audio program (such as a radio show) that is made available digitally. In this project, students will develop an audio tour for a classroom museum by writing and recording podcasts that tell a story about a work of art. Writing and recording a podcast can help students become better writers because, unlike more traditional projects, they can hear the flow of their words and ideas. Using technology to share their work engages students and encourages peer review. Podcasting about art also builds many common core skills by challenging students to observe, inquire, infer, describe, conclude, revise, produce, and publish.



*The Life Line*  
1884  
Winslow Homer, American, 1836 – 1910  
Oil on canvas  
28 5/8 x 44 3/4 inches (72.7 x 113.7 cm)  
E1924-4-15  
The George W. Elkins Collection, 1924

## Grade Level

Grades 6-8, but can be adapted to all ages

## Common Core Academic Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-8.3](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-8.4](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-8.5](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-8.6](#)

## Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Art

- Critical Processes 9.3.A
- Historical and Cultural Perspectives 9.2.D

## Art Images Required

Click on the titles below to view a high-quality photograph of the object on the Philadelphia Museum of Art website. Images that are also available on the ARTstor Digital Library are indicated by an ID number or search phrase. Entering that number or phrase into the ARTstor search bar will direct you to the corresponding item in that image database.

- [The Life Line](#), Winslow Homer  
ARTstor Search: E1924-4-15

## Art Images Suggested

- [Jilted](#), Briton Riviere  
ARTstor Search: 1989-70-6
- [The Robber and His Child](#), Karl Friederich Lessing  
ARTstor Search: W1893-1-65
- [Two Dragons in Clouds](#), Kanō Hōgai  
ARTstor Search: 1940-41-1
- [Mother Protecting Her Child](#), Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot  
ARTstor Search: 1943-40-52
- [Breaking Home Ties](#), Thomas Hovenden  
ARTstor Search: 1942-60-1
- [The Merry Jesters](#), Henri-Julien-Félix Rousseau  
ARTstor Search: 1950-134-176
- [The Imaginary Illness](#), Honoré Daumier  
ARTstor Search: 1954-10-1
- [Young Woman Fastening a Letter to the Neck of a Pigeon](#), Attributed to Johann Christian von Mannlich  
ARTstor Search: 1965-85-1
- [The Battle of the "Kearsarge" and the "Alabama."](#) Édouard Manet

- ARTstor Search: Cat. 1027
- [A Woman and a Girl Driving](#), Mary Stevenson Cassatt  
ARTstor Search: W1921-1-1
- [Cabin Days](#), Dox Thrash  
ARTstor Search: 1941-53-374
- [Officer Writing a Letter](#), with a Trumpeter, Gerard ter Borch  
ARTstor Search: E1924-3-21

## Lesson Process

Optional introduction:

If your students do not have experience writing about art, these are some activities that will help them develop observation skills and art vocabulary.

1. Draw and Describe: Organize the students into pairs. Give each student paper, pencil, and an image. Each student should take a turn describing their image to their partner, who should do their best to draw the image that they cannot see. At the end, reflect on the experience. What was difficult? How did you organize the description? What vocabulary was helpful? Introduce helpful terms such as foreground and background.
2. Six Word Stories: Practice writing about art by challenging students to tell the story of an artwork in only six words. Careful word choice and creative punctuation are key.

Podcasting:

1. As a class, listen to and critique the official audio tour stops for Winslow Homer's painting *The Life Line* developed by the Museum. You may want to listen more than once.  
<http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/102970.html>  
Suggested questions for discussion:
  - What did you hear that helped you understand or enjoy the painting?
  - Was the recording engaging? Why or why not?
  - How did the recording help you look at the painting?
2. Provide students with a selection of artworks from the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art that tell a story. (Suggestions also available from ARTstor are listed above.) The teams should select a work of art to be the focus of their podcast project. It is important to give students a choice, rather than assigning works of art. You can also try using the artwork selection process as a way to form the teams by having students sign up for the artwork of their choice.
3. Direct students to analyze their artwork in depth by leading them through the following steps:
  - Observe silently for one minute.
  - Write a question you have about the artwork along the top of a sheet of paper. Turn to your team and take turns discussing your questions.
  - Look again for another minute, this time with your paper rolled into a tube to help you focus on details.
  - Make a quick sketch of the entire work in only a few minutes, filling the rest of your paper.
  - Continue your sketch with language, adding words that could be labels, observations, general notes, etc.
  - Turn your paper over and divide the page into three sections. Label the sections Before, During, and After. Using evidence you can find in the artwork, describe in words and pictures what is happening at the moment the artist chose to depict and what you think happened before and after.
  - Return to your team and take turns sharing your drawings and discussing your thoughts about the artwork. How do your stories match up?
  - Find a new partner who has been working with a different work of art. Take turns sharing your artworks with each other. Take note of anything that captures their attention, questions they ask you, and other ideas that help you understand how to engage your audience. Do they see something you haven't seen before?
  - With your team, discuss if the outside observers added anything to your understanding of your artwork.
4. Instruct students to go back over their notes and highlight or circle the most important ideas that can serve as the basis for their podcast. Working individually or in teams, guide them through drafting a podcast of roughly 200-250 words that can serve as a stop on a virtual museum audio tour for the school. Encourage them to be creative, drawing on the audio tour stop about Homer's *Life Line* and their own

ideas, to dramatize a complete story inspired by the evidence available in the artwork and even voice the roles of the figures.

5. An excellent podcast will:
  - Be roughly 90 to 120 seconds in length (about 200-250 words);
  - Include the title of the artwork and the name of the artist;
  - Be clear and pleasant to listen to, not delivered too quickly or in a dull monotone;
  - Hook the listener's interest right at the beginning;
  - Tell a story with a beginning, middle, and end;
  - Tie every story element or observation to something visible in the work of art;
  - Guide the listener to look for things they might miss at first glance;
  - Invite the listener to consider their own version of the story;
  - Follow the guidelines for narratives in Common Core Standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.6-8.3.
6. Record the first draft of each podcast. At the most basic level, this can be done with just a computer and a voice recording website such as Vocaroo.com. Make sure whatever site you use will allow you to save and download your project. For more options, visit: <http://edtechteacher.org/index.php/teaching-technology/presentation-multimedia/podcasting>
7. Divide students into pairs who worked on different works of art and have shared their drafts. The listener should provide the author with 1-3 elements of the podcast they would keep and 1-3 constructive suggestions of things they would change. Give students time to make edits to their script and practice speaking slowly and engagingly.
8. All students should re-record their podcast, incorporating their feedback and practice.
9. If possible, publish and share the podcasts on the school website, iTunesU, or by posting them to an online file-sharing site for students and parents. If you can hang copies of the artworks around the room and put the podcasts on mp3 players, you can create an audio tour of your classroom.

## Assessment

- Assign students to self-critique their draft based on the criteria above or your own rubric.

## Enrichment

- Have the students create Beginning, Middle, and End triptychs in collage or another medium. The center should be their own representation of their chosen artwork, the left-hand side their imagined beginning, and the right-hand side their imagined conclusion.
- Incorporate a research element into the project. Students can visit the museum's website to search for their artwork and find out more about when it was made, where it came from, what other objects are related to it, etc. and write a follow-up podcast that shares what they have learned.