

Analyzing a Visual Text Teacher Overview

Skill Focus

Levels of Thinking					
Remember	Understand	Apply	Analyze	Evaluate	Create
Close Reading		Grammar		Composition	
Reading Strategies Generalization Inference Summary Literary Elements Detail Imagery Mood Point of View perspective Setting Theme Literary Techniques Argumentation deductive/inductive reasoning Characterization Literary Forms Verse		Mechanics Punctuation		Multiple Mode Imaginative Style/Voice Deliberate Manipulation of Point of View Experimentation with Original Forms and Structures	

Materials and Resources

- Prints of *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Breughel (available at <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/B/bruegel/icarus.jpg.html>)

Lesson Introduction

This lesson is based on an analysis of the painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* by Pieter Breughel and guides students through the levels of thinking by providing activities that demonstrate each level. Teachers will need to project the painting and/or provide printed copies to enable students to complete Activities I-VI. Activity VII asks students first to read a poem about the painting by William Carlos Williams and then to write their own original poem from the point of view of someone else pictured in the painting.

Analyzing a Visual Text

I.

The title of the painting is _____.

The artist is _____.

One detail in the foreground is _____.

One detail in the background is _____.

II.

The title of the painting is _____.

The artist is _____.

One detail in the foreground is _____.

One detail in the background is _____.

III.

Write a brief description of the scene depicted in the painting.

Following is the myth of Icarus, as recounted in Edith Hamilton's Mythology:

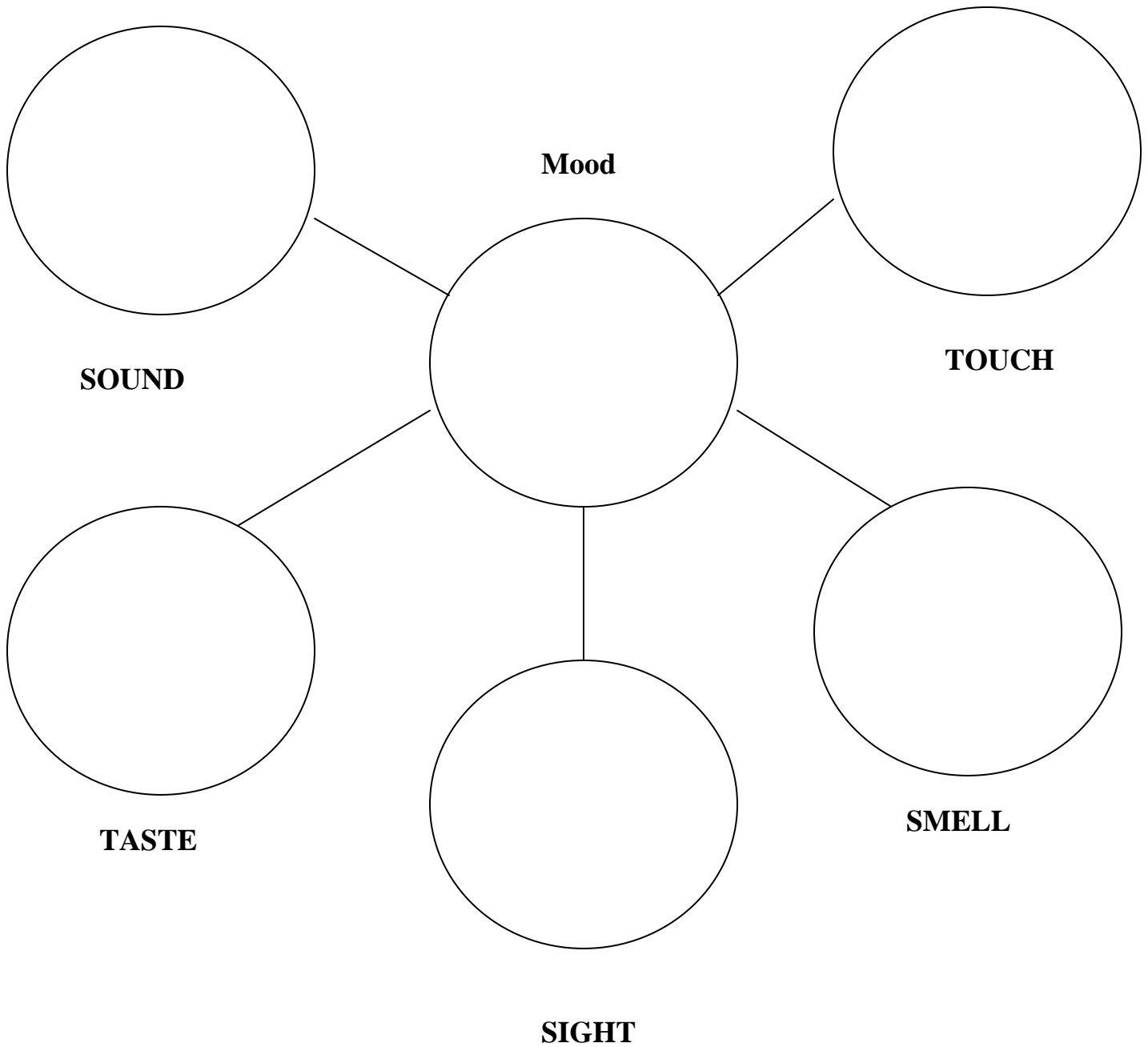
Daedalus was the architect who had contrived the Labyrinth for the Minotaur in Crete, and who showed Ariadne how Theseus could escape from it. When King Minos learned that the Athenians had found their way out, he was convinced that they could have done so only if Daedalus had helped them. Accordingly he imprisoned him and his son Icarus in the Labyrinth, certainly a proof that it was excellently devised since not even the maker of it could discover the exit without a clue. But the great inventor was not at a loss. He told his son,

Escape may be checked by water and land, but the air and the sky are free,

and he made two pairs of wings for them. They put them on and just before they took flight Daedalus warned Icarus to keep a middle course over the sea. If he flew too high the sun might melt the glue and the wings drop off. However, as stories so often show, what elders say youth disregards. As the two flew lightly and without effort away from Crete the delight of this new and wonderful power went to the boy's head. He soared exultingly up and up, paying no heed to his father's anguished commands. Then he fell. The wings had come off. He dropped into the sea and the waters closed over him. The afflicted father flew safely to Sicily, where he was received kindly by the King.

IV.

Using details in the painting, complete the chart below.



V.

What is a theme of the painting, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*?

List three or more specific details that support this theme.

Are you an inductive or deductive thinker? (Circle one)

Inductive
(*Specific to General—ISG*)

Deductive
(*General to Specific—DoGS*)

VI.

Which detail in the painting most effectively conveys the theme? Justify your answer.

VII.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

of the year was
awake tingling
with itself

sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings' wax

unsignificantly
off the coast
there was

a splash quite unnoticed
this was
Icarus drowning



- William Carlos Williams

From *Collected Poems: 1939–1962, Volume II* by William Carlos Williams, published by New Directions Publishing Corp. © 1962 by William Carlos Williams. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

Directions: Add end punctuation and capitalization to the poem to indicate the five complete sentences. Then examine Brueghel's painting again, but this time try to view the events from the perspective of someone more connected to the scene, such as one of the following:

- Someone on the deck of the ship
- The plowman
- The fisherman on the bank
- The shepherd
- Icarus
- Daedalus

Using the Williams poem as a model, create an original poem. Begin with "According to _____, when Icarus fell . . ." (or "When I fell . . .")

Share your poem with other participants.