

Exercise 2: Learning Through Drawing and Describing

Prompt: Today, we're going to investigate how context affects writing.

Question for students: What might we mean by "context"?

- To warm us up, we're going to look closely at two images by the same artist, and we're going to exercise our analytical description, sketching, and collaborative skills.
- Get into pairs with someone sitting close to you. Arrange your seats so that one person in the pair is facing the front of the room and can see the projector very well. The other person in the pair should be facing in exactly the opposite direction.
- [Once set up complete] – Instructions for sketching and describing exercise.
- Optional: Jesse Day handout (esp. useful for ESL speakers)

Image 1: Picasso's *La Moulin de la Galette*

→ In-between images: Can anyone guess the artist?

Image 2: Picasso's *Guernica*

Post-exercise reflection questions:

1. What did you find the easiest part of the exercise?
2. What was the hardest?
3. Can you guess anything about the context of each of these works? What might each work be about?

MAKING THE CONNECTION TO YOUR TEXT:

PROMPT:

- Picasso's paintings were created in 1900 and 1937, respectively. Much changed in the artist's personal life, in wider history, and in terms of his creative approach to painting during those years. **His context shaped his artistic output.**
- Today, we're going to focus on a poem by the Chilean poet, diplomat and politician Pablo Neruda (1904-73).
- Like Picasso's paintings, Neruda's poetry was very much shaped by the context in which he lived.

Read the poem together as a class, each student taking a few lines/a stanza.

Neruda's poetry before the Spanish Civil War was just as shaped by his context of relative security as his poetry during and after was shaped by that experience of war and death.

INTEROGATE THE POEM IN-DEPTH.

Discuss imagery in the poem:

Eg.

"Blood of the children ran through the streets/without fuss like children's blood,"

- In 1936 the Spanish Civil War broke loose between the Republic and the forces of General Francisco Franco

- The war influenced many of his works including *I'm Explaining a Few Things*. This poem is about explaining why his writing changed, why his poetry no longer speaks of love and nature. It explains how one morning changed everything he knew, the morning of the war.
- In the three years between 1936 and 1939 Spain was broken; all he had left of how it used to be were his memories.
- Neruda was portraying the cruel actions taken by those who were in power. He was enlightening those who would read his poems on how the innocent were being treated during the war.
- One of the rules of war is not to kill children because of the purity that they have. The killing of women and children is looked down upon even in the most terrible of prisons.
- So when Neruda is expressing the idea that there is pure, innocent blood being spilt he is reaching the readers of his work in a passionate way. The second half of the phrase, "without fuss, like children's blood," is showing the defenselessness of the people (47).
- They weren't even able to put up any resistance against the terror they were being struck with. The phrase used within the poem is put at the end of a description of what was happening to those who were the victims of the people who were attacking Spain.

After analyzing the poem in depth, go back to Picasso's *Guernica*.

QUESTIONS:

1. Describers - Which elements stood out for you when you were describing this work? What did you notice first?
2. What similarities or differences do we see between the work of Picasso and Neruda? Do they tell the same story of the Spanish Civil War, or two different ones?
3. [Low-stakes writing prompt] Which work – Picasso's or Neruda's - is more persuasively anti-war, and why?

Context for Picasso's work:

See Smarthistory.org video "Guernica" - <http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/picasso-guernica.html>