Using Art to Discover Power and Focus in Your Writing

Objective

The objective of this lesson is twofold. First, students are to gain an understanding and appreciation of the tools an artist uses to create emphasis and effect a response. By practicing recreating an established piece of art in order to shift focus and emphasis, students have the opportunity to see how such an approach can be an effective strategy in their own writing. The second is in allowing students to begin thinking metacognitively about their own writing and revision processes. A key component of teaching effective writing strategies is in allowing students to self-reflect about their own choices in writing and then go back into their writing and revise.

Tools: Tracing paper, colored pencils or crayons, four suggested art pieces incorporating a common or connected scene or subject

Time: ~ 2 days

Directions:

STEP 1: Reflecting on each of the four provided art pieces, students try and identify the dominant element in each and what tools they believe the artist utilized to create that emphasis.

STEP 2: Teach students the general technique of using tracing paper to transfer an image to a new location. Using the technique students will then use the four ocean scenes to create variations of the images with a different and specific new emphasis.

STEP 3: Involves students writing a brief reflection of what tools they used to create the new drawings, each emphasizing a new and different element. At this point it might be helpful to ask students what tools writers can use to create a different focus in the rewriting process.

STEP 4: Students try to write a response (timed quick write) about a subject different from the one emphasized in the art pieces. By doing so, they are making a metaphoring connection.

STEP 5: A metacognitive reflection about the whole process.

Art	Information	Dominant Element
	"Fishing Boats on the Beach" Vincent van Gogh 1888	❏ Ocean ❏ Boat ❏ Human ❏ Shore ❏ Sky Achieved through ❏ Placement ❏ Color ❏ Shape ❏ Other _____
	"*Under the Wave off Kanagawa*" Katsushika Hokusai about 1830–31	❏ Ocean ❏ Boat ❏ Human ❏ Shore ❏ Sky Achieved through ❏ Placement ❏ Color ❏ Shape ❏ Other _____

	"The Gulf Stream"
	Winslow Homer
	1899
		❏ Ocean
		❏ Boat
		❏ Human
		❏ Shore
		❏ Sky
		
		Achieved through
		  ❏ Placement
		  ❏ Color
		  ❏ Shape
		  ❏ Other _____

	"Children Playing on the Beach"
	Mary Cassatt
	1884
		❏ Ocean
		❏ Boat
		❏ Human
		❏ Shore
		❏ Sky
		
		Achieved through
		  ❏ Placement
		  ❏ Color
		  ❏ Shape
		  ❏ Other _____

Art	Variation #1 Color Change	Variation #2 Emphasis on the Sea

Variation #3 Emphasis on the Boat(s)	Variation #4 Emphasis on People	Variation #5 Emphasis on Sky

Art	Variation #1 Color Change	Variation #2 Emphasis on the Sea
Variation #3 **Emphasis on the Boat(s)**	**Variation #4** **Emphasis on People**	**Variation #5** **Emphasis on Sky**

Art	Variation #1 **Color Change**	Variation #2 **Emphasis on the Sea**

Variation #3 **Emphasis on the Boat(s)**	Variation #4 **Emphasis on People**	Variation #5 **Emphasis on Sky**

Art	Variation #1 **Color Change**	Variation #2 **Emphasis on the Sea**

Variation #3 **Emphasis on the Boat(s)**	Variation #4 **Emphasis on People**	Variation #5 **Emphasis on Sky**

Reflection

How did you go about accomplishing each task? In other words what tools did you use to create emphasis? Describe both your method and your intent (why or how did the use of these tools create the emphasis you were trying to get at?).
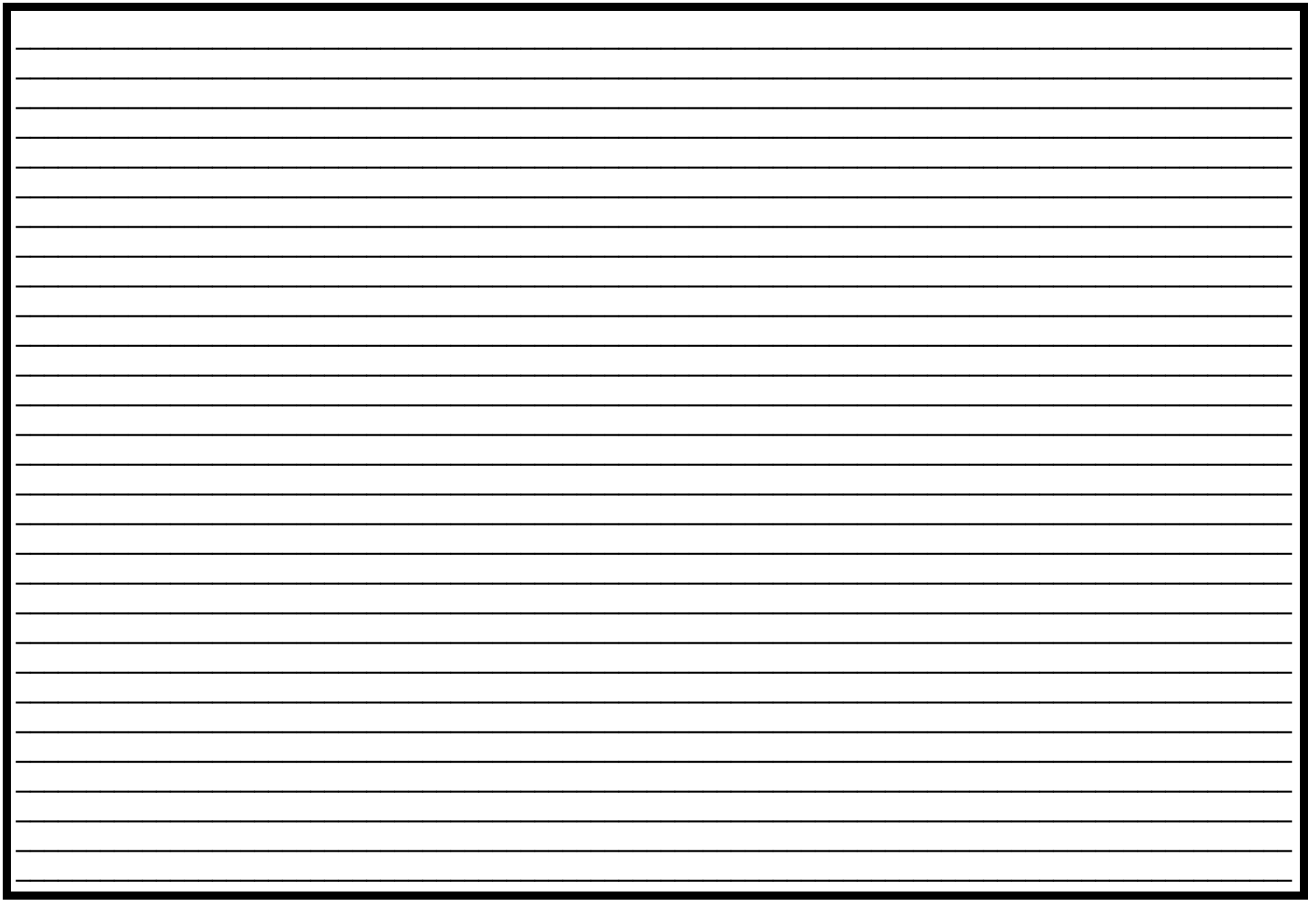
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Essay--Quick Write (10 minutes)

What does it mean to love another person? Choose one of the paintings you have worked with during the course of this exercise. Incorporate it in some manner in this essay about what it means to love another person.

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Metacognitive Response (Reflecting about your choices and thinking)

What was the most difficult aspect of writing this essay?

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Did you experience any thoughtful or unique ideas by reflecting on the art as you addressed this topic (even though the art subjects and the essay subject seem widely different? What role do you think such a pre-writing exercise has in your future writing? In other words, how can linking what seem to be very different topics with your writing subject help you to think through a stronger response to a writing prompt?

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