

# RESPONDING TO ARTWORK/ HISTORICAL IMAGES



## ***Objective***

Students will look closely at artwork from the early 1800s, analyzing it for information and then writing creatively in response.

## ***Standards***

Visual Arts 1.2.b, 2.1.a, (grades 3 – 5)

Reading 4.A.2.a, 6.A.1.b, 7.A.2.c (grades 3 – 5)

Social Studies 5.A.2.a (grade 3)

## ***Grade level***

3 – 5

## ***Length of lesson***

45 – 60 minutes

## ***Materials from Trunk***

Paintings by John Lewis Krimmel:

- *The Country Wedding*
- *The Blind Fiddler*
- *The Pepper Pot*
- *Blind Man's Bluff*
- *The Village Tavern* (or *In An American Inn*)
- *The Quilting Party*

## ***Overview***

This lesson leads students in a discussion-based exploration of a painting by John Lewis Krimmel, including conjecture regarding his point of view. Students then produce a theatrical rendering of the painting, having developed a character sketch of one of the figures depicted in the painting.

## ***Teacher Background***

John Lewis Krimmel (1786 – 1821) immigrated to Philadelphia from Germany in 1809. His images of daily life and activities of people living in Philadelphia are some of the earliest produced in America. Starting with portraits and miniatures, Krimmel soon began sketching and painting genre scenes, or paintings that capture moments in everyday life (set in markets, homes, streets and taverns). Sometimes categorized as humorous (or ironic), his scenes often captured interactions and a wide range of figures engaged in various activities.

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## *Procedure*

1. Begin by looking carefully at the image “*The Country Wedding*” as a group. Use the following questions to lead a discussion. Record all comments on chart paper. What is happening here? Where does this painting take place (describe the environment)? Who are the people in this painting? What are they doing? Why are they there? Who is not represented? Why might they be missing? What period is this image portraying? What do you see that makes you say that?
2. Discuss student observations. Explain that Krimmel created images inspired by everyday life in the town and countryside surrounding Philadelphia in the early 1800s. His paintings often captured activity and various figures interacting. Given the class discussion, ask students what they could conclude about the artist’s point of view regarding daily life of Americans during this time? Who has he chosen to represent? Who is not represented?
3. Explain that students will be “animating” a painting by John Lewis Krimmel. In small groups, students examine one of the available paintings and identify a group of characters featured in the piece. They should answer the following questions about their group’s painting: What happened before this moment? What is about to happen? What is the relationship between the figures portrayed in the painting?
4. Then, each student chooses one figure in the painting and imagines what his or her experience and point of view might be. Students prepare a brief fictional/biographical sketch of the character that answers the following questions: Who are you? Why are you here? What activity are you engaged in at the moment? What are your thoughts and opinions? What is your relationship to others in the group? As a small group, discuss characters and prepare to share their animated version of the painting with the whole class. Remember, objects and costumes in the trunk may be used as props for this dramatic presentation.
5. As a whole class, each group introduces themselves and gives an “animated” version of the painting, physically recreating the image in 3 dimensions. Then each individual speaks out (in turn) about his or her personal experience and story. After all the presentations are made, conduct a wrap-up activity asking: Can any final conclusions be drawn? Were the groups similar? Were the stories alike or very different?

## *Extensions*

- Compare the John Lewis Krimmel paintings in the trunk – what elements seem the same and what are different? Small groups can each choose a painting to animate and then trade images with another group and animate that one as well. How are characters the same or different?
- Do more research on John Lewis Krimmel and the full body of his work. Who were the artists who influenced him (for example Benjamin West and William Hogarth)? And who was influenced by his work? How were his pieces received at the time they were created? And what about now?

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## *Modifications*

- Instead of asking students to animate the painting, you can also choose to have them do a more individual exercise. Lead them on “a sensory walk “through the painting. Ask students to look in silence at one of the paintings and answer the following questions in journal format. Imagine you are an observer in the painting: what do you see, feel, and smell? What is the weather like?

## *Related Resources*

See back of individual paintings for websites and specific information on paintings.

Books on John Lewis Krimmel

Anneliese Harding

1994 *John Lewis Krimmel: Genre Artist of the Early Republic*. Winterthur: Delaware.

Naeve, Milo M.

1987 *John Lewis Krimmel: An Artist in Federal America*. Associated University Presses, Cranbury, New Jersey.

Biographical Sketches of John Lewis Krimmel

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Lewis\\_Krimmel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Lewis_Krimmel)

[http://collections.terraamericanart.org/view/people/asitem/items\\$0040null:266/0](http://collections.terraamericanart.org/view/people/asitem/items$0040null:266/0)