Illinois State Museum – MuseumLink Art
Cast of Characters Lesson Plan: Comparing Artists

Purpose: To help students understand that artists influence
other artists and that artists working at the same time
influence each other's style.

Objective: After the students look at and read about work by
several artists, they will write a 1-3 page essay comparing
one artist's work with other artists and describe how an artist
may have been influenced by others or how they are similar.

Grade Level: 10-12
Time Required: 60 minutes to search WWW for images of specified painters, print
examples.
30 minutes to write an outline and draft of their comparison paper
30 minutes to edit for content and rewrite; 30 minutes to edit for style and rewrite
Total: 2-3 hours.

Motivation: The students will look at three paintings by each of the three artists in Cast
of Characters, and read the statements of the artists and their short biographies. They will
choose one artist to research as class discussion introduces the style elements of each
artist, and one artist to whom to compare him/her.

Artists:
1) Emil Armin's brand of modernism was perhaps influenced by the painting styles of
Paul Gauguin, Andre Derain (Post-Expressionists), and German Expressionists like Emil
Nolde, Max Pechstein, and Erich Heckel. Their use of color and brushstrokes can be
compared. Find other similarities and differences in the work of Paul Gauguin, Andre
Derain, Maurice Vlaminck, Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein, Erich Heckel, and others?
2) Gertrude Abercrombie can be compared to surrealists such as Julia Thecla, Max Ernst,
Giorgio de Chirico, Salvador Dali, and Rene Magritte.
3) Julia Thecla's use of fantasy can be compared to the work of Ellen Lanyon, Marc
Chagall, Max Ernst, and Giorgio de Chirico.

Procedure: Use the World Wide Web, art history books, encyclopedias of art, prints, or
art magazines
to find images, and descriptions of these artist's work. Students should view the paintings
on
the Web site at the same time they view the images of the other artists in order to notice
and keep in
mind the similarities. They can take notes on what they see, then write these notes up in
the form of
an essay or descriptive expository writing.
Alternative: Split the class into three groups, one for each of the three Chicago
artists. Have each student chooses an artist for comparison and comes back to the

group with information and ideas. The students discuss what they have found and come to a consensus, or a set of ideas backed by images.

Publication and Closure: Students or groups can present their findings to the class orally or in written form.

Assessment: Students should be able to point to the content of the paintings of each artist when they claim similarities or differences or influences in style; they should be able to answer questions and defend their comparisons.

Illinois State Board of Education Goals and Standards addressed:
Fine Arts Goal 25: Understand the Language of the Arts
Late High School 25.A.5: Analyze and evaluate student and professional works for how aesthetic qualities are used to convey intent, express ideas and/or meaning.
Fine Arts Goal 27: Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society, and everyday life.
Late High School: 27.B.5: Analyze how the arts shape and reflect ideas, issues, or themes in a particular culture or historical period.

Handout: Give each student a printout of the comparison sheet included in this lesson plan for note taking and organization.

Comparison Sheet for Artists:
Name of Artist Chosen: (Circle one)
       Emil Armin
       Julia Thecla
       Gertrude Abercrombie

Name of this artist's work(s) you are using to compare to another artist's works:
1)

2)

3)

Comparison Artist A:
Name: _____
Dates: _____

Works compared: _____

Write a comparison sentence or paragraph about how each artist is comparable or contrasting in the use of each element.
1) Use of line

2) Use of color

3) Use of form or shape

4) Use of value and contrast

5) Use of space

6) Approach to subject matter

7) Use of texture

8) Creation of mood