

Illinois State Museum – MuseumLink Art
A Matter of Style: 19th Century Furniture: Language Activity

Purpose: students will use descriptive language to capture the feeling of objects based on the associations they make with the object and its style.



Illinois State Museum Web site used:
<http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ms.html>

Objective: students will make a list of descriptive adjectives they feel appropriate for each of six styles of furniture. These adjectives will be based on the students' observations of the objects, the students' personal associations, and their study of style characteristics. They will follow up with a discussion in which they share and compare.

Grade level: 4-8

Time required: one 50-minute period

Materials: worksheet, pencil

Motivation: Each style has characteristics that appeal to our senses and emotions. Modern car designs make us think of speed, sportiness, convenience, or comfort. Victorian Gothic-style houses are associated with ghost stories or mysteries. Furniture styles can evoke emotions, too. In this activity you will think of and write descriptive adjectives that capture the feeling of each style as you look at each of the six pieces of furniture in *A Matter of Style* <http://www.museum.state.il.us/muslink/art/htmls/ms.html>. Pass out the worksheets and go over the format and content using an example (such as a chair in the room – hard, uncomfortable, gray) that is not in *A Matter of Style*.

Procedure:

- Students will record their ideas on the worksheet as they review each of the six furniture styles in *A Matter of Style*.
- They will think of and write down at least three adjectives to describe how the style of each piece of furniture makes them feel; e.g., happy, springy, and cheerful.
- They will write why they chose those adjectives under the Associations section. Examples: It reminds me of flowers; it's big enough for a giant; it's made of curved pieces like C's; it's like church furniture.

Publication and Closure: When students are finished writing, project a blank worksheet on the overhead.

Compare and contrast answers. Is there a consensus? Most answers are acceptable if there is a valid reason given. Discuss how some answers are more universal, and that this leads to attitudes about styles (too fussy, too expensive to make, classic or timeless). Those who suggested different adjectives, associations, and attitudes may be more independent

in their choice of style. This could be pursued if students are comfortable about discussing peer pressure.

Assessment: Students should include at least three adjectives under each piece of furniture on their worksheets and at least one reason each why they chose them.

Illinois State Board of Education Standards and Goals addressed:

Language Arts: 3.A: Communicate ideas in writing to accomplish a variety of purposes.

**A Matter of Style: 19th Century Furniture
Language Activity**

Name _____

Classical Revival Style Piano

Adjectives: _____

Associations: _____

Gothic Revival Style Chair

Adjectives: _____

Associations: _____

Rococo Revival Style Etagere

Adjectives: _____

Associations: _____

Renaissance Revival Style Secretary

Adjectives: _____

Associations: _____

Aesthetic Style Fireplace Mantel and Screen

Adjectives: _____

Associations: _____

Eastlake Style Table

Adjectives: _____

Associations: _____