

Exploring Rural Kentucky Through Documentary Art: Supplementary Resource Set 1 | Dennis Thrasher - Documentary Artist - For the Teacher -

OVERVIEW

Artist Dennis Thrasher describes the process of researching and composing documentary art. His goal is to tell an accurate and compelling story of a particular time and place.

TEACHING TIPS AND ACTIVITIES

[Dennis Thrasher - Documentary Artist](#) provides a window into one artist's process of researching and composing documentary art to tell stories of a particular place and time. It serves as a springboard for

- **visual and media art** activities, such as analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating documentary art, exploring how perspective influences perception of subject matter, and creating and presenting students' own documentary art linked to their community's history.
- **social studies** extension activity that links students' understanding of local history to key concepts in U.S. or world history.

Connect the short video, [Dennis Thrasher](#), and its associated activities with the [Creelsboro Landing, 1890s - Documentary Art Interactive](#) and with the [Irvin Store, 1920s - Documentary Art Interactive](#) for a deeper experience in interpreting and creating documentary art and exploring the economy and lifeways of rural Kentucky communities in the early 20th century.

Suggested Activities – Visual and Media Art

1. **Responding:** Look at one of the paintings that Dennis Thrasher created for the documentary - *Creelsboro and the Cumberland: A Living History* (see [Creelsboro Landing, 1890s - Documentary Art Interactive](#) or [Irvin Store, 1920s - Documentary Art Interactive](#)) or project the paintings using the powerpoints ([Creelsboro Landing, 1890s - Images for Projection](#) or [Irvin Store, 1920s - Images for Projection](#)). Lead your students in analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating a painting. Focus on how the artist achieves balance and movement. Allow students to develop criteria that reflect the purpose of the painting.

Extension: Click on the interactive of the painting and explore each vignette in more depth.

Visual and Media Art Standards

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

2. **Creating, Presenting, Responding**: Dennis Thrasher likes to paint from an eye-level perspective. Working individually or in small groups, ask students to take a series of photos of objects, buildings, people, or scenes from different perspectives. Ask them to create a multimedia or virtual gallery using some of their photos and develop captions and artist statements exploring how perspective influences our perception of subject matter. They may choose to explore the same subject represented from different perspectives or the same perspective applied to diverse subject matter.

Visual and Media Art Standards

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic technique and work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.

Anchor Standard 8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.

3. **Creating, Presenting, Connecting**: Lead students in a discussion of their communities and the histories of their communities. You may want to invite a local historian, librarian, or tourism director to visit your class to share information about the communities in your school district.

Working in small groups or as a class, decide on one or more stories about the communities that you want to document through narrative art. You may determine if each student should do research or if you should assign students to research teams. For ideas about how to find resource materials, review the available resources at Documenting Local History Using Primary Sources (teacher version [here](#), student version [here](#)) and its short video [Using Primary Sources](#).

Consider the visual resources you have that can help tell one or more stories about local history. Decide if you will do individual paintings, a collaborative mural, or take a different approach. Consider how you will share your documentary art. Will you create public art, develop an exhibit, make a video, or create a virtual gallery?

Lead students in creating and presenting documentary art representing one or more aspects of local history.

Visual and Media Art Standards

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 2: Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.

Anchor Standard 3: Refine and complete artistic work.

Anchor Standard 4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 5: Develop and refine artistic technique and work for presentation.

Anchor Standard 6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.

Anchor Standard 10: Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.

Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.

Suggested Extension Activity – Social Studies

4. As part of their project, engage students in developing compelling questions and supporting questions to frame their thinking and develop their understanding of local history within the context of key concepts in U.S. or world history. How can they interpret their understanding of the local community through their documentary art?

Social Studies Standards

HS.UH.I.Q.1 Generate compelling questions to frame thinking, inquiry and/or understanding of key concepts in U.S. history.

HS.UH.I.Q.2 Generate supporting questions to develop knowledge, understanding and/or thinking relative to key concepts in U.S. history framed by compelling questions.