

**American Writers Museum**  
**Field Trip *American Voices***  
**Teacher Material**

**Description of Museum**

Mission: The American Writers Museum will:

- Educate the public about American writers – past and present
- Engage visitors to the Museum in exploring the many exciting worlds created by the spoken and written word
- Enrich and deepen appreciation for good writing in all its forms
- Inspire visitors to discover, or rediscover, a love of reading and writing

Through innovative and dynamic state-of-the-art exhibitions, as well as compelling programming, the American Writers Museum will educate, enrich, provoke, and inspire the public.

Located at 180 N Michigan Ave, AWM is on Chicago's Cultural Mile, a short walk up the street from the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Symphony and the Chicago Cultural Center. Its galleries offer visitors a sweeping history of United States literature from Native American storytelling traditions to today's innovative works through interactive, digital touch-screen exhibits, reading spaces and encounters with familiar and unfamiliar works.

**Description of Field Trip**

Every writer has his or her own motivation for writing. Throughout American history, the story of writing has evolved and shifted to include the various voices and purposes of the time. The field trip, *American Voices*, aims to encourage students to explore various authors and their writings, and determine what purpose or motivation each author had to write. It will also call each student to personally reflect on what drives them to write themselves.

This field trip will have students explore the museum, but spend time in the exhibit *American Voices* where students will learn about various American authors throughout history. Students will be asked to find examples of American authors for each category of purpose: persuade, inform and entertain. Students will identify an author for each category and will need to defend their responses with explanation and evidence.

After discussing their findings, students will reflect on what makes them motivated to write. Students will create a bookmark identifying why they write and what author inspired this. Bookmarks could be formatted: I want to write to \_\_(type of purpose)\_\_\_ because \_\_(why)\_\_\_ just like \_\_(American Author)\_\_\_.

American Voices is ideal for students in 5th-7th grade. Many of the activities, both at the museum and the extension activities, can be adapted to varying classrooms within this age group.

**Time Frame:**

1 Hour and 30 Minutes Field Trip:

5 minutes- Welcome to the American Writers Museum

10 Minutes- Activating Prior Knowledge: Author's Purpose

45 Minutes- Guided Self-exploration of Museum and Exhibits

30 Minutes- Whole Group Discussion on Museum Exploration.

Reflection on Why We Write and Bookmark Creation

**Standards: Common Core Standards (Grades 6th Grade ELA)**

- RI 6.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and explain how it is conveyed in the text.
- RL 6.9: Compare/contrast texts in different forms/genres in terms of their approaches to similar themes/topics.
- RL 6.1: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of text, both inferential and explicit.

**Contact Information:**

**Some of the More Than 300 Authors Highlighted at AWM**

Anne Bradstreet  
Thomas Jefferson  
Washington Irving  
Emily Dickinson  
Ida B. Wells  
Laura Ingalls Wilder  
William Carlos Williams  
Herman Melville  
F. Scott Fitzgerald  
Ernest Hemingway  
Ralph Ellison  
Richard Wright  
Flannery O'Connor  
James Baldwin  
Gwendolyn Brooks

**Recommended Classroom Extensions Prior to AWM**

- Teach author's purpose: persuade, inform, and entertain
- Discuss examples of each purpose (e.g. newspapers articles are often to inform,

- comics are to entertain, etc)
- Read and analyze a variety of written works. We encourage you to select ones from author's highlighted in the museum.

### **Classroom Extensions After the AWM Visit**

Below are classroom activities that can be completed after visiting the AWM. Feel free to use these extensions in your own classroom using the materials completed at the field trip.

- Use the word waterfall notes and have students write a story or poem
- Provide students a topic (or even a word or phrase) and have students choose their purpose and write on it.
  - Example: Civil War- students could write to persuade by creating an advertisement encouraging men to join the war efforts; to inform could be a summary of one of the battles studied in class; or entertain could be a fictional story of a soldier at war.
- Using a text already analyzed in class, have students rewrite it in with a different purpose.