

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART

THE ANSCHUTZ COLLECTION

American Museum of Western Art—The Anschutz Collection and Lighthouse Writers Workshop’s Write Denver Project **Writing the West: Working the Mine**

Warm-Up: *From Mining to Smelting:*

Choose a painting that *strikes* you in some way. Mine the painting of its details, such as colors, composition, subject matter, theme, or all of the above. If it helps, make a list of your findings. Then, use the heat of your imagination to *smelt* out a piece of writing from this *ore*. If there’s time, use the same raw materials to write another piece, only this time use a different genre, or a different form within the same genre as your delivery method. For example, if you wrote a free verse poem first, write a formal poem second, such as a sonnet or haiku. What do you notice? What happens, if anything, when you switch forms using the same material?



Dean Cornwell, *Days of the 49ers* (top) & *Gold Rush* (bottom), 1926:

These two paintings depict a flurry of activity surrounding the time of the Western gold rush. How is that flourish being shown? Simultaneously, are there aspects of the paintings that go against this frenetic movement? Pick a detail that you believe best tells the story of this ensemble cast of characters and write a piece where that detail takes precedence. You might focus on, for example, facial expressions, or tools, or perhaps even the sounds of the painting. Whatever the detail, try to capture a spectrum of motivations that although individually told manifest collectively.

Writing the West is a collaboration between the American Museum of Western Art—The Anschutz Collection and Lighthouse Writers Workshop. Please visit our websites for more information: www.anschutzcollection.org, www.lighthousewriters.org, www.writedenver.org.



Albertus Del Orient Browere, *Goldminers*, 1858:

What do you think is the tone of this painting? If you had to say what the tone was using only one word what would it be? How did you come to this conclusion? Was it through the collection of details, or by some other factor? How does the evolution of mining technology shown here (from staking your own claim to company mining), a sort of subtext to the painting, affect its tone? Choose a painting on this floor. Study it for a few minutes, and when you're ready name its tone in one word. Then, without using this word, write a piece about the painting that attempts to convey this tone.