You have been given a watercolor drawing that was sent with a letter that you will be given for Part 2. Working with your partner, study the picture.

1. List all of the nouns you see in the picture.

2. What do you think is going on in the picture?

Part 2 Working with your partner and using a separate sheet of paper, transcribe the letter.

1. After reading the letter, what do you think is going on in the picture?

2. What do you think you know about the person who wrote the letter? On separate paper make your list. As you write the list, identify what you know because it is RIGHT THERE, on the page (RT) and what you know by inference (I).

3. How would you describe his level of education? Why do you think this?

4. What questions do you have about the letter?
Describing Content

Transcription of letter from military prison August 31, 1864

Military Prison, Rock Island Illinois Aug 31/64

My Dear Cousin

I received your kind letter acknowledging the receipt of the ring pin. I was very glad to hear that you prize it so highly! You say you do not know how you will prove your appreciation that you have already done a dozen times. I wrote to Cousin Lucy and directed, to Georgetown, Ky not knowing that she was with you. Tell her that I am a thousand times obliged to her for the tobacco which she was so kind to send me. I will in return send her a ring. You spoke of another cousin having sent me some paper which I received and am under many obligations to her. Give me her name and I will send her a present of some kind. Enclosed you will find a “butter knife” of Rebel manufacture. If you will send me some silver and some buttons, I will have you some nice rings made. Tell Cousin Lucy Duke I would like very much to receive a letter from her, and will take great pleasure in corresponding with her if she has no aversion to corresponding with a prisoner of war. I send you the picture of our row of Barracks with a limited portion of the balance of the prison. Give my kindest regards to my cousins of whom you speak.

Your affectionate cousin

Jas W. Duke
The following is from the Library of Congress – American Memory Collection:

**Letter with colored sketch, James W. Duke to an unidentified cousin, written from a Union prison camp, 31 August 1864.**
(Characters Buford Papers)

There were about 150 military prisons on both the Confederate and Union sides during the American Civil War. The type of structures used to house prisoners of war included forts and fortifications, jails, penitentiaries, altered warehouses and factories, and enclosed barracks and tents. Only the South used open stockades. The facilities most dreaded by Confederate prisoners were the bleak and inaccessible fortifications at Fort Delaware in the Delaware River and Fort Warren in Boston harbor, Massachusetts, but no northern prison equaled the horrors of the Andersonville stockade in southern Georgia where more than thirteen thousand men died from exposure, malnutrition, and disease.

This color sketch of the federal prison on Rock Island, a small strip of land in the Mississippi River between Rock Island, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa, was found in a letter written by Confederate soldier James W. Duke to his cousin (presumably a woman) in Georgetown, Kentucky. The sketch was drawn by a soldier identified only as H. Junius, and it apparently is the item described in Duke's letter as "the picture of our row of Barracks." Duke likely inserted it as a keepsake and token of his gratitude for his cousin's "kind letter." As Duke's letter suggests, prisoners often sent various items, including prison-made jewelry, to civilians who wrote to them or supplied such comfort commodities as tobacco and baked goods.

Rock Island prison was authorized in July 1863. When finished, it consisted of eighty-four barracks, 82 feet long and 22 feet wide, arranged in six rows of fourteen each, and surrounded by a high fence. Each barrack contained two stoves for cooking, but potable water was scarce and at times nonexistent. From December 1863 until the end of the war, Rock Island held between five thousand and eight thousand Confederate prisoners, many of whom arrived before the facility was completed. Obviously, this idyllic sketch of men strolling peacefully on the grounds or performing routine chores among the neatly maintained barracks reveals more about the restrictions placed on outgoing mail than on actual conditions within the prison. Knowledgeable viewers can only assume that the artist was obliged to show the prison in as good a light as possible in order to get it by the guards, many of whom also served unofficially as censors.

*John R. Sellers, Manuscript Division*