

Looking at Art

For grades K-4

This activity will help students look more critically at art. A similar activity is available for museum visits. This version was designed to be used with any Museums by Mail exhibit. Although more suited to original art you may also use this activity with available art reproductions.

Before beginning the activity discuss the following *Art Words* as a class. You may wish to write them on the board and encourage students to use them in their answers. Also, review *Elements and Principles of Art and Design* with the class. These are included for reference. Discuss how to read a museum label by pointing out the artist name, title, dates, etc. You can find this information on the back of each Museums by Mail artwork, although some may not have as much information as others and they do look slightly different than a museum wall label. Nevertheless, you may wish to download a copy of *How to Read an Exhibit Label* from the Educator Resources section of our website at www.umma.umaine.edu.

Have students work individually if enough art is available. If not, have them work in small groups around an artwork. Be sure to remind them that looking carefully is important in understanding art and that it should be done quietly with respect for their classmates.

Each student should get a copy of the three-page activity *Looking at Art*. Have them sit comfortably in view of an artwork. Give them a pencil with an eraser and ask them to write neatly and check spelling. Note that there are two places in which they are required to write full sentences for their answers. After at least 30 minutes gather the class together for a discussion about the students findings.

Related Material

- *Art Words* (included)
- *Elements and Principles of Art and Design* (included)
- *How to Read an Exhibit Label* (download from website)
- *Looking at Art* (included and ready for photocopying: 1 per student)

Looking at Art: Activity

Instructions

- First, look at *Art Words*.
 - Next, sit down in front of the artwork your teacher has given to you or your group.
 - Answer the following questions while you look carefully at the art.
 - Remember to look quietly and write neatly!
-

Step One

Who is the artist? : _____

What is the *title* of the artwork? : _____

What year was it made? : _____

What is the medium (paint, photo, ink, etc.)? : _____

What type of art is it (landscape, portrait, etc.)? : _____

Step Two

Description If you had to describe this artwork to a friend that hadn't seen it how would you do it? If you don't know where to begin, start at one corner and work your way around, writing about any details you notice.

Are different colors used? If so, which ones?

Is there one thing that seems to jump out at you? If so, why do you think it does?

Step Three

Response

Based on your observations, what do you think the artist was trying to say?

What do you think it means?

Does it remind you of anything (another artwork, a person, something in your life)?

How does it make you feel?

Write at least *two* full sentences to explain why you think it makes you feel the way it does.

Do you like it? Why or why not? Write at least *three* full sentences explaining.

Art Words

abstract

An artwork that is not realistic. It may contain different shapes, lines, and/ or colors. Artists use abstraction in many ways and for many different reasons.

collage

An arrangement of things to form an artwork. An artist may use paper, photos, images cut out of a magazine, found items (like leaves), yarn, etc. Some collages can be mixed-media, which means that they may combine several *mediums* like a drawing with photos glued on.

landscape

An artwork that has the natural world as its main subject. This can also include the ocean which is sometimes called a *seascape*. Landscapes can have people or animals or items that are man-made, but the main focus must be the natural world.

medium

The type of art supply used to create an artwork. Some examples:

paint, pastel, pen, pencil, photograph, crayon, charcoal

portrait

An artwork that has a person (or animal) as its main subject. The subject can be placed in the natural world but the main focus must be on the person (or animal).

sculpture

A three-dimensional work of art, like a statue.

still life

An artwork that has objects as its main subject. These objects are usually arranged in a way that is appealing and might be sitting on a table. Examples of possible still life objects are: fruit, flowers, bowls, vases, books, etc.

title

What an artist calls his or her artwork. Titles are often chosen very carefully and might help you understand the artwork better. Sometimes the art is called *Untitled*, which is still a title!

Elements of Art and Design

Light Either the sensation of light, a source of light, its illumination, the representation of it in a work of art, or awareness as if there were light on a subject.

Texture An element of art which refers to the surface quality or “feel” of an object, its smoothness, roughness, softness, etc. Textures may be actual or simulated. Actual textures can be felt with the fingers, while simulated textures are suggested by the way the artist has painted certain areas of a picture.

Shape An enclosed space defined and determined by other art elements such as line, color, value, and texture. In painting and drawing, shapes may take on the appearance of solid three-dimensional object even though they are limited to two dimensions.

Line A mark with length and direction(s). An element of art that refers to an identifiable path of a point moving in space. Types of line include: vertical, horizontal, diagonal, straight or ruled, curved, bent, angular, thin, thick or wide, interrupted (dotted, dashed, broken, etc.), blurred or fuzzy, controlled, freehand, parallel, hatching, meandering, and spiraling. Often it defines a space, and may create an outline or contour, define a silhouette; create patterns, or movement, and the illusion of mass or volume. It may be two-dimensional (as with pencil on paper) three-dimensional (as with wire) or implied (the edge of a shape or form).

Space An element of art that refers to the distance or area between, around, above, below, or within things. It can be described as two-dimensional or three-dimensional; as flat, shallow, or deep; as open or closed; and as positive or negative.

Color Produced when light strikes an object and then reflects back to the eyes.

It has three characteristics:

Hue refers to the name of a color, e.g. red, blue, yellow.

Intensity refers to the purity and strength of a color, e.g. bright red or dull red.

Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a color. Value is an especially important element in works of art when color is absent.

Principles of Art and Design

Balance The way in which the elements of art are arranged to create a feeling of stability in a work. It can be described as asymmetrical, radial, or symmetrical.

Emphasis The use of any technique that stresses or gives dominance to a single feature of an artwork. Artists often use emphasized elements to direct a viewer's attention to what they consider to be the most important aspects of a composition.

Harmony A way of combining elements of art in order to accent their similarities and join the aspects of a composition into a cohesive whole.

Movement Often implied, it can be achieved by arranging the elements of art in such a way that the viewer's eye is invited to jump rapidly or glide smoothly from one to the next.

Pattern The repetition of anything in order to create a design.

Rhythm A way of combining elements of art in order to produce the look and feel of movement, especially with a visual tempo or beat.

Proportion (or scale) refers to the relationships of the size of objects in a body of work. Proportion gives a sense of size perceived as a relationship of objects; from small to large.

Contrast The use of opposing elements, such as values, colors, forms, or lines, in proximity to produce an intensified effect in a work of art. Contrast can be used to create an area of emphasis.

Looking at Art

Maine Learning Results: English Language Arts Standards

A. Reading: Students read to comprehend, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and appreciate literary and expository texts by using a variety of strategies. They connect essential ideas, evaluate arguments, and analyze the various perspectives and ideas presented in a variety of literary and expository texts.

A1 Interconnected Elements: Comprehension, Vocabulary, Alphabetics, Fluency

Pre-K-2

Students read texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, and apply their knowledge and strategies of comprehension, vocabulary, alphabetics, and fluency.

- a. Use comprehension strategies to understand texts within a grade appropriate span of text complexity.
- b. Develop vocabulary using knowledge of word parts and relationships among words including action words and different words that describe similar meanings.
- c. Demonstrate phonemic awareness and use phonics to decode new words.
- d. Read fluently and accurately with appropriate pacing and expression.
- e. Demonstrate comprehension by making logical predictions based on text or stating connections made.

3

Students read and draw conclusions from texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, by applying their knowledge and strategies of comprehension, vocabulary, alphabetics, and fluency.

- a. Use a range of strategies as they read including constant monitoring, searching, connecting, and inferring to deepen their understanding of text (s).
- b. Demonstrate ownership of appropriate vocabulary by effectively using a word in different contexts and for different purposes.
- c. Determine the meaning of unknown words by using a variety of strategies including using the context of the text, word connections, and a dictionary.
- d. Use phonics including syllable types, word parts, word families and common prefixes and suffixes to read fluently and build meaning as they read.
- e. Fluently and accurately read text, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, using appropriate pacing, phrasing, intonation, and expression.
- f. Demonstrate comprehension of text(s) by stating connections or inferences made.

4

Students read and draw conclusions from texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, by applying their knowledge and strategies of comprehension, vocabulary, alphabetics, and fluency.

- a. Use a range of strategies as they read including constant monitoring, searching, connecting, and inferring to deepen their understanding of text (s).
- b. Demonstrate ownership of appropriate vocabulary by effectively using a word in different contexts and for different purposes.
- c. Determine the meaning of unknown words by using a variety of strategies including applying knowledge of synonyms, antonyms, homophones, and homographs.
- d. Use phonics including word parts and common root words to read fluently and build meaning as they read.
- e. Fluently and accurately read text, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, using appropriate pacing, phrasing, intonation, and expression.
- f. Demonstrate comprehension of text(s) by stating connections or inferences made and stating questions or conclusions that indicate deeper understanding(s).

A3 Informational Texts

Pre-K-2

Students read informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- a. Ask and answer relevant questions.
- b. Restate facts from the text.
- c. Follow one-step and two-step written instructions.

3

Students read and summarize informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- a. Generate questions, with support that can be answered using text features and information found within the text.
- b. Use organizational text features including titles, tables of contents, chapter headings, a glossaries, an index, illustrations, and maps to locate information or to aid comprehension.
- c. Identify answers in the text or important ideas to demonstrate understanding.
- d. Make reasonable statements about text.
- e. Follow simple written instructions.
- f. Identify the main reason or purpose for a particular section of text to aid comprehension.

4

Students read, paraphrase, and summarize informational texts, within a grade appropriate span of text complexity, for different purposes.

- a. Create questions that can be answered by the text using text features and information found within the text.
- b. Use organizational text features including headings and sub-headings, bullets, bold-face fonts, illustrations, maps, and charts to locate information or to aid comprehension.
- c. Identify the main idea(s) of and details from the text which support the main idea(s) succinctly stating this information.
- d. Draw conclusions about information from text.
- e. Follow multi-step written instructions with four or more steps.
- f. Identify the main purpose of a text, particular paragraphs, or a section of the text to aid comprehension.

B. Writing: Students write to express their ideas and emotions, to describe their experiences, to communicate information, and to present or analyze an argument.

B1 Interconnected Elements

Pre-K-2

Students use a writing process to communicate their ideas.

- a. Select a focus for writing and develop an idea, including a beginning, middle, and end.
- b. Respond to clarifying questions and suggested revisions.
- c. Edit, with assistance, for correct grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- d. Create legible final drafts.

3-5

Students use a writing process with an emphasis on the development of a central idea, for a variety of audiences and purposes.

- a. Select a purpose for writing.
- b. Pre-write using graphic organizers or other structures to organize their ideas.
- c. Establish an organizing structure and maintain a consistent focus.
- d. Include an introduction and conclusion.
- e. Write coherent paragraphs that have supporting sentences and a concluding sentence.
- f. Revise original drafts to improve coherence, provide better descriptive details, and to convey voice.
- g. Edit for correct grammar, usage, and mechanics.
- h. Create legible final drafts.

B3 Argument/Analysis

Pre-K-2

Students write to inform an audience on a specific topic.

- a. Write brief descriptions of objects, people, places, or events.
- b. Record and share, in writing, information that has been gathered.

3-5

Students write to identify and explain a position to an identified audience.

- a. Summarize information from reading, listening, or viewing.
- b. Write about a central question or idea by using relevant supporting facts and details.

B4 Persuasive

Pre-K-2

Students write to explain likes and dislikes.

- a. Support opinions with examples.

3-5

Students write to persuade a targeted audience.

- a. Establish a clear position on a topic and support the position with relevant evidence.

D. Language: Students write and speak using the conventions of Standard American English. They apply knowledge of grammar and usage when reading to aid comprehension. They know and apply rules of mechanics and spelling to enhance the effectiveness and clarity of communication.

D1 Grammar and Usage

Pre-K-2

Students demonstrate an understanding of the parts of speech and simple sentence structures to communicate.

- a. Identify and use nouns and verbs correctly.
- b. Use simple sentences.

3-5

Students use parts of speech and vary sentence structure to communicate.

- a. Use forms of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and interjections correctly.
- b. Use simple, compound, and complex sentences.

D2 Mechanics

Pre-K-2

Students apply the rules of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to communicate.

- a. Use commas in the greeting and closure of a letter and in dates.
- b. Capitalize proper nouns and words at the beginning of sentences.
- c. Use periods, question marks, and exclamation points.
- d. Spell high frequency grade-level words.
- e. Use phonics patterns to aid in spelling.

3-5

Students apply the rules of capitalization, punctuation, and spelling to communicate.

- a. Use end marks correctly.
- b. Capitalize correctly.
- c. Spell high-frequency grade-level words.

E. Listening and Speaking: Students listen to comprehend and speak to communicate effectively.

E1 Listening

Pre-K-2

Students use early active listening skills.

- a. Ask relevant questions at appropriate times.
- b. Converse without interrupting.
- c. Follow one-step and two-step oral instructions.

3-5

Students apply active listening skills.

- a. Ask clarifying questions.
- b. Attend and respond appropriately to classmates and adults.
- c. Follow multi-step oral instructions.

E2 Speaking

Pre-K-2

Students use speaking skills to communicate.

- a. Make clear requests at appropriate times.
- b. Make simple presentations using eye contact.
- c. Use voice level appropriate to the situation.
- d. Share stories and information and support opinions using oral and visual examples.

3-5

Students use active speaking skills to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts.

- a. Explain ideas clearly and respond to questions with appropriate information.
- b. Speak using eye contact, clear enunciation, clear gestures for emphasis, and appropriate volume and rate.
- c. Share information summarized from reading, listening, or viewing and form a position on a topic, supporting the position with a variety of print and non-print sources.

Maine Learning Results: Visual Arts Standards

A. Disciplinary Literacy: Students show literacy in the art discipline by understanding and demonstrating concepts, skills, terminology, and processes.

A1 Artist's Purpose

Pre-K-2

Students recognize a variety of purposes for making art, including telling a story, communicating emotion, or beautifying functional objects.

3-5

Students explain purposes for making art in different times and places, and the relationship to cultural traditions, personal expression, and communication of beliefs.

A2 Elements of Art and Principles of Design

Pre-K-2

Students identify features of composition.

- a. Identify Elements of Art: color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.
- b. Identify Principles of Design including pattern and balance.

3-5

Students describe features of composition.

- a. Describe Elements of Art: color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.

D. Aesthetics and Criticism: Students describe analyze, interpret, and evaluate art (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts).

D1 Aesthetics and Criticism

Pre-K-2

Students observe, listen to, describe and ask questions about art forms.

- a. Describe the art form by applying grade span appropriate arts concepts, terminology, skills, and processes as referenced in Standard A: Disciplinary Literacy.
- b. Ask questions about the art form to further understand how the artist created/performed the work of art.
- c. Recognize a variety of purposes for making/performing art works, including telling a story and communicating emotions and ideas.

A3 Media, Tools, Techniques, and Processes

Pre-K-2

Students name art media and associated tools, for multiple art forms and genres.

3-5

Students describe a variety of media and associated tools, techniques, and processes, for multiple art forms and genres.

E5 Interpersonal Skills

Pre-K-2

Students identify positive interpersonal skills that impact the quality of their art and participation in the arts.

- a. Getting along with others.
- b. Respecting differences.
- c. Working as a team/ensemble.
- d. Managing conflict.
- e. Accepting/giving/using constructive feedback.
- f. Accepting responsibility for personal behavior.
- g. Demonstrating ethical behavior.
- h. Following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening to art.
- i. Demonstrating safe behavior.

3-5

Students identify and demonstrate the positive interpersonal skills necessary to get along with others and participate in the arts.

- a. Getting along with others.
- b. Respecting differences.
- c. Working as a team/ensemble.
- d. Managing conflict.
- e. Accepting/giving/using constructive feedback.
- f. Accepting responsibility for personal behavior.
- g. Demonstrating ethical behavior.
- h. Following established rules/etiquette for observing/listening to art.
- i. Demonstrating safe behavior.