

Tips for Discussing Art with Children

Learning to Look



“Reading” a work of art is a cognitive process involving many of the same skills used to read and comprehend written text. Both strong readers and effective viewers pay close attention to details, analyze their findings, and make connections. Practicing these skills will not only enhance viewing experiences, it will also strengthen reading comprehension.

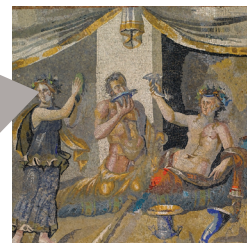
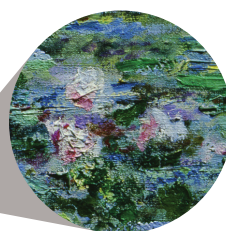
Things to think about when interacting with a work of art:

1. Take time to look carefully, taking note of the details.
2. Think about and identify key details.
3. Bring personal experiences to the artwork.
4. Make inferences.
5. Use key details, background knowledge, and experiences to support thinking.
6. Empathize with the people depicted.
7. Pay attention to the mood.
8. Identify possible themes.
9. Listen to the voice inside your head.
10. Pay attention to the images or feelings that come to mind while viewing.
11. Make meaningful connections.
 - a. artwork to self
 - b. artwork to artwork
 - c. artwork to text
 - d. artwork to world
12. Ask questions.
13. Compare and contrast.
14. Verbalize thoughts and feelings and discuss.



Some things great viewers say:

1. I notice ...
2. I also see ...
3. I think they/she/he are/is _____ because ...
4. The weather looks _____ because ...
5. The mood seems _____ because ...
6. That reminds me of ...
7. A possible theme of this artwork is _____. I think that because ...
8. A connection I have is ...
9. I agree because ...
10. I disagree because ...
11. Another way to think about that is ...
12. What I find so interesting is ...
13. I wonder why the artist ...
14. I can tell by ...
15. It makes me feel _____ because ...



Writing about Art



Writing is an excellent way for viewers to engage more deeply with a work of art and gives them a chance to reflect on and clarify their thinking. It also provides the opportunity to expand on initial ideas and reactions and enables viewers to see that their thinking may change over time. It allows recorded thoughts, experiences, and discussions to be revisited and may generate new insights and connections. Additionally, writing allows viewers to share their experiences and ideas with others, which can be a valuable way of deepening or expanding understandings.

Written pieces do not need to be long to be valuable. Below are some things to think about before writing.

1. Make a list of everything you see.
2. Describe the mood of the people, setting, or the work itself and provide as many details supporting your thinking as possible.
3. Compare and contrast one work of art with another.
4. Identify a theme in the work and provide evidence to support your thinking.
5. Think about connections you have to the work. Strong connections are usually associated with the theme, or big idea. Connections can be artwork to self, artwork to artwork, artwork to text, or artwork to world.
6. Write about a painting you find interesting and explain what the artist did that grabbed your attention.



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Winslow Homer, American, 1836–1910, *At the Window*, 1872. Oil on canvas, 57 x 40 cm. Gift of Francis Bosak, Class of 1931, and Mrs. Bosak (y1985-38); Chinese (Southern Song dynasty), *Guanyin Seated in Royal-ease Pose*, ca. 1260. Wood with traces of blue-green, red, and gold pigments on white clay underlayer with relief designs, 110 cm. Museum purchase, Carl Otto von Kienbusch Jr. Memorial Collection Fund (y1950-66)

Front: Claude Monet, French, 1840–1926, *Water Lilies and Japanese Bridge*, 1899. Oil on canvas, 90.5 x 89.7 cm. From the Collection of William Church Osborn, Class of 1883, trustee of Princeton University (1914–1951), president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1941–1947); given by his family (y1972-15); Roman (Turkey, Antioch-on-the-Orontes), *Mosaic Pavement: Drinking Contest of Dionysos and Herakles* (detail), early 3rd c. AD. Stone and glass. Gift of the Committee for the Excavation of Antioch to Princeton University (y1965-216). Photos: Bruce M. White.

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