

Guidelines for leading Learning to Look; Looking to Learn lessons

Objective: students will learn and practice critical thinking skills as they move from observation to analysis and interpretation.

Procedure:

- **Students will look at a work of art. They should not see any identifying or support information at this point.**
- **Ask open-ended questions to guide their looking. Suggested activities can further their looking and thinking.**
- **This is best done with a group where everyone offers ideas; each new thought enables everyone to see new things.**
- **Students will have many different observations and interpretations but all should be asked to connect their thoughts to specific information they see in the work of art.**
- **Only after the students have completed their own interpretations should they be told the title as well as biographical or cultural information. This is an opportunity for more discussion about the artist's choices and their own skill at observing and interpreting the work of art.**

Observation: Looking for details

Guiding questions:

What do you see? What is going on in the painting or sculpture?

What colors, shapes and kinds of lines does the artist use?

How has the artist organized the work of art?

Activities to encourage careful looking:

Look quickly; close your eyes and try to remember.

Draw what you see.

Find a specific detail.

Cut the image into puzzle pieces; assemble details into a whole.

Description: Turning images into words

Guiding questions:

What do you see? What in the painting makes you say that?"

Activities to encourage careful analysis:

Generate lists of words that capture what you see.

Describe the painting to another person before he actually sees it.

Categorize the observation lists.

Prioritize the lists of details.

Interpretation: Making meaning

Guiding questions:

What do you think the artist is telling us?

How does the artist signal what is most important in the work of art?

What would you title this work of art? Why?

Activities to encourage thoughtful interpretation:

"I think the artist is telling us ____ because I see ____."

What questions would you like to ask the artist to help you "read" the work of art?

What other information would you like to have to understand the artwork?

How does the title of the work of art help you understand it.?

Reflection

Guiding questions:

What do you think about when you see this work of art? What does it make you feel?

What do you like about it? Why?

Is there anything that you would change if you were the artist?

How would you use art to express your ideas and feelings?

Activities to encourage reflection:

Create your own title for this work of art.

Interpret your feeling in your own work of art. Perhaps you would express yourself through poetry, music or dance.

Support for the Gallery's school programs is provided by Bank of America, Dominion and the Mary W. Clark Trust. Additional support is provided by the Fred and Floy Willmott Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Judson Jr., the estate of Estelle B. Goldman and an anonymous donor for the McPherson Director of Education.