The most important quality of thoughtful life, sustained by cultural institutions in the attention they give to learners, is mindfulness. I see this as the generative ability to pay attention, encourage reflection, and to think flexibly of contexts and ideas. This is the quality – cognitive activity - that allows us to become different people than the ones we were this morning. Mindful use of a museum or a library transforms us.

Questions always lead thinking. We find our way by questions; we find our way into things, and we find ourselves in things, all by asking what no one else can ask. The idea of helping people to ask the questions that only they can ask is at the heart of what can happen in a cultural institution; here people become more clearly the people they are capable of becoming, the people they were meant to be, by asking their own questions. And they do that with your help, and with the objects they find here, because in every object something invisible is moving, inviting, leading the mind, leading the learner on.

David Carr

The Museum as a Place for Learning. Herbert Johnson Museum, Cornell University. 2001

Agenda

Strategies to facilitate a learning process that enables students to:

- Investigate visual materials
- Make inferences on their observations
- Develop critiques that reflect understanding

Presenters

Kaaren Thompson, Acting Coordinator of the Visual Arts, Greece Central School District
Carol S. Yost, Assistant Curator of Education, Memorial Art Gallery
Essential Question: How can we facilitate the learning process of our students so as to enable them to investigate visual materials, make inferences on their observations, and develop critiques that reflect understanding?

DESCRIPTION/INVESTIGATION

Focus question: As teachers, what do we want students to brainstorm about developing a description of an artwork?

Rationale: To view the artwork like a reporter, and give the information (only factual) based on observation.

Procedure:
Using a hardcopy to reference, label some of the main objects or elements in the artwork.

- What NOUNS do we see? A person, place, thing (element), pick the top 5 that stand out and label them.
- What ADJECTIVES can we use to describe them? Write 2 for each noun
- What VERBS can we use to connect them?

WHO: Who was the artist?
WHAT: What did the artist use to create the artwork?
WHERE: Where is it now?
WHEN: When was it created?

WHO: Who is in the painting?
WHAT: What are the characters doing in the painting? How are they interacting?
WHERE: Where are the objects, figures, elements? Where are they placed?
WHEN: Are there any other additional clues? Can we make decisions about when, by viewing the artwork?

Annolight / Annotate Artwork
Hardcopy / Post it notes
Utilizing Narrative Work
Identifying Nouns and Verbs

Thoughts and Reflections
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ANALYZING

Focus question: How can we accomplish enduring understanding with our students so that they apply the knowledge of the basic elements and principles to the artwork they are viewing?

Rationale: Students often get lost in images, and have difficulty making connections to the elements, how they are arranged, and how to describe them. Using a variety of techniques and questions, we can develop the student’s vocabulary to explain what he or she is seeing.

Procedure: Scavenger Hunt
Each team member will be given a specific element to seek out in specified artwork. The team helps the individual develop a better understanding of the element in the specific artwork. Throughout the process, the team brainstorms their observations and findings.

Students can analyze the work through a number of differentiated processes:
   - Word worksheet to circle and highlight words that describe
   - Free writing
   - Visual representation of the visual elements

Participants will then jigsaw the activity together to discuss their findings. Brainstorm how to utilize the scavenger hunt and develop a writing sample.

Thoughts and Reflections

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INTERPRETATION

Focus question: What strategies can we use to help students draw inferences, make predictions, and interpret artists work?

Rationale: Interpreting is a challenge for students. Often times they are disconnected because of cultural disconnect or an unclear understanding of the time period.

Procedure:
Have students develop questions about the artwork to ask one another.
Have students develop prediction strategies for what they view.
The goal is for students to make a claim and support their claim with evidence.
C-E-I

Thoughts and Reflections

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JUDGING

Focus question: What questions can we ask students to help guide them through their thought process on an artwork? What connection can students make to previously stated information in order to provide evidence for their opinion? What emotional words could be used to help develop students’ more thoughtful responses to the artwork that they critique?

Rationale: Students jump to conclusions quickly or make general statements that do not connect to any information about the artwork. Getting students to develop a more in-depth vocabulary and giving them clear expectations about how to support their answers with evidence will help them develop responses that are more thoughtful.

Procedure:
Questions List:
- Can you think of anything in your family or life that helps you connect to the artist's message?
- What emotional words could you use to describe this artwork?
- Why, what evidence have you described to support your answer?
- Do any of these emotional words contradict one another?

A – Z Emotional List
Brainstorming
Reading questions
Reconnecting back to the description, analyzing, and interpretation

Thoughts and Reflections
The Fable of the Fox and the Heron, 1630-40
Frans Snyders and workshop, Flemish, 1579-1657
oil on canvas
72.75

LET'S LOOK:
What do you see?
What in the painting makes you say that?
How does the artist help us to see that?
What questions do you have?

STUDENT ACTIVITIES:

Five Senses
Ask students to imagine and describe textures, smells, sounds, and tastes they “see” in the artwork. What specific details are they “reading?”

Using the line drawing of the painting, students can fill in the missing details that they think are important.

Then What Happened?
Introduce the artwork as if it were a scene from a storyboard. Ask the students to imagine how the story might continue (group activity).

Using the storyboard worksheet, the students can draw additional or alternate scenes using details gleaned from the brainstorm session.

Fact or Fiction?
This scene looks so real, but could it really have happened?
Ask the students to identify details that are imaginary.
What details are not only realistic but are also believable and factually correct?

Research real animals found in the painting.

Read Aesop’s fable “The Fox and the Crane” (included) and have students identify the story details in the artwork.

TARGETED SKILLS:
description, details, vocabulary, point of view
story structure, details, sequencing
details, categorizing, sequencing, compare/contrast

Support for the Memorial Art Gallery’s 2005-06 school programs is provided by Bank of America, Dominion, the Mary W. Clark Trust, and Rochester Gas and Electric Corporation. Additional support is provided by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Judson Jr., the estate of Estelle B. Goldman and an anonymous donor for the McPherson Director of Education.
The Fable of the Fox and the Heron, 1630-40
Frans Snyders and workshop, Flemish, 1579-1657
oil on canvas
72.75

About the Painting:
Several familiar animals dominate this painting: a furry red fox, very similar to those in upstate New York; two tall herons with black and white feathers; a mallard duck, and assorted frogs. They are all arranged at the muddy edge of a stream beneath a tree. The animals are looking intently at a large glass vase containing a fish, some frogs, and an eel. The heron is eating while the fox looks on anxiously. In the background you see distant woods, seemingly people-free except for the tall steeple of a church. Also in the distance, another fox and heron bend over a plate or shallow dish.

About the Artist:
Frans Snyders (1579-1657) was a very successful artist who lived and painted in Antwerp. By 1620, Snyders was the pre-eminent master of still life painting in Antwerp, but he also painted hunt and animal scenes. Snyders was one of the first painters to specialize in fable pictures, producing about 25, including two versions of The Fox and the Heron. He often loosely based his designs on engravings in a popular edition of Aesop’s Fables. However, the believability of the animals and their setting comes from Snyders’ careful observations and sketches from nature. This story is usually called The Fox and the Stork or The Fox and the Crane, but Snyders may have used a heron partly because it was a common native bird he could easily observe.

Aesop’s Fable:
Fables are stories that teach a lesson through the interactions of animals with human-like qualities, and the fables of Aesop have been read, taught, and interpreted for centuries. In Snyders’ painting, the distant fox and heron represent the first part of the story, while the episode continues in the foreground.

The Fox and the Crane

Once upon a time there was a Fox who decided to play a trick on his friend the Crane. Fox invited Crane over for dinner, much to Crane’s delight. However, when Crane arrived, he found that Fox’s dinner consisted of soup served in a shallow dish. Fox easily lapped up his soup, but Crane’s long bill kept him from tasting a single drop. Fox was delighted with the success of his trick, but Crane went away hungry and annoyed. The next day, Crane visited Fox, thanking him for the delightful dinner and inviting Fox to have dinner at his home that evening. Fox, always eager to avoid extra work, agreed happily. On arrival at Crane’s house, though, Fox found his dinner presented in a jar with a tall, narrow neck that was too tight for his own short snout, and he could only watch Crane enjoy his own delicious meal.

MORAL: Treat others the way you would like to be treated.

Additional Information:
Antwerp is a city now in Belgium, but in the 16th and 17th centuries the area was known by the name of Flanders, and the people there were called Flemish.
Parts of this painting fit into 3 painting types popular at this time:
Still Life: detailed paintings of artfully arranged fruit, flowers, glasses, bread, etc.
Landscape: outdoor views, with trees, mountains, cloud-filled skies, etc.
Narrative: a scene from a story -- in this case, a fable attributed to the ancient Greek writer Aesop.
Activities for Creating Pictures & Poetry

Art Gallery Stories

Articulate Game of ARThought and ARTalk
1 game (1 spinner board, question cards, score cards, directions, question card blanks)

The Art Teacher’s Book of Lists

Celebrate America in Poetry and Art

Color Me a Rhyme: Nature Poems for Young People

Come Look with Me: Enjoying Art with Children

Draw Me a Story. An Illustrated Explanation of Drawing-As-Language

Heart to Heart: New Poems Inspired by Twentieth-Century American Art

Interdisciplinary Connection: Art and Language Arts, the Artist as Story Teller
Take 5 posters and teacher's guide

Language as Object: Emily Dickinson and Contemporary Art
Susan Daly, ed. Amherst, MA University of Massachusetts Press and Mead Art Museum, 1997.

Looking at Pictures: an Introduction to Art for Young People
SMART ART: Learning to Classify and Critique Art
   Reproducible worksheets for students.

Telling Images: Stories in Art
   Chicago, IL: Art Institute of Chicago, 1996.
   Teacher manual and 6 slides

Words for Images: A Gallery of Poems

Voices in the Gallery: Writers on Art


Zoom in on Art

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