

# LEARNING TO LOOK AT ART

## Instruction and Guiding Questions for a Visual Reading/Visual Literacy Lesson

**Note:** Prior to teaching a Visual Reading/Visual Literacy lesson, choose an image which parallels the theme or content being taught in written text. Look for a piece which will allow students to practice unit vocabulary while they describe and discuss the art as text. As you go through the four steps of the Visual Reading/Visual Literacy lesson, treat the analysis of the artwork like a “close read” of a written text; concepts from literacy translate well into the analysis of art. After asking students guiding questions, follow up their answers by asking them to identify their evidence from the artwork.

Step 1: Description	<b>Focus:</b> “What are the descriptors/text features? What do I see?”
	<b>Guiding Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What colors, shapes, lines, textures, etc. can you name?</li><li>- What kinds of things do you see in this artwork?</li><li>- Who are the subjects?</li><li>- What is the setting (when and where the subject takes place)?</li><li>- What words would you use to describe this artwork?</li><li>- What else do you see?</li><li>- How would you describe this artwork to a person unable to see it?</li></ul>
Step 2: Analysis	<b>Focus:</b> “What is the most interesting part of the work?”
	<b>Guiding Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Is the art balanced (symmetrical) or unbalanced (asymmetrical)?</li><li>- What is the focal point? What are the first things you see when you look at the artwork?</li><li>- What is the theme of the artwork?</li><li>- What can you tell me about the colors used in this artwork?</li><li>- What questions would you ask the artist about this work if she/he were here?</li></ul>
Step 3: Interpretation	<b>Focus:</b> “What does it all mean? What is its purpose?”
	<b>Guiding Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What is happening?</li><li>- What is the artist trying to say?</li><li>- What is happening in this artwork?</li><li>- Pretend you are inside this artwork. What does it feel like?</li><li>- Why do you suppose the artist created this artwork? What makes you think that?</li></ul>
Step 4: Evaluation	<b>Focus:</b> “How do I feel about the art?”
	<b>Guiding Questions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Did the artist do a good job?</li><li>- What do you think is good about this artwork? What is not so good?</li><li>- Why do you think other people should see this work of art?</li><li>- What does this artwork mean or say to you?</li></ul>

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## Activities to Extend a Visual Reading/Visual Literacy Lesson

**Activity 1:** Have students think of the image you are working with as the middle of a story. Encourage students to create images to represent what would have happened before and after to create a story cycle.

**Activity 2:** Have students write a statement about an event or memory and give the statement to a partner. The partner will then draw a visual representation based on the written statement. Remind students that they can only draw what has been written on the paper (Ex: If the statement is “I looked at the sky,” the partner can only draw a sky without clouds or color. However, if the statement reads “I looked at the dark blue night sky, the stars peeping out from behind heavy gray clouds,” the partner now has colors they can use and items they can place in their visual representation of the sky).

**Activity 3:** Give students individual print copies of the image being discussed during the lesson. Give students cards with a targeted vocabulary word written on each card. Students will then place their vocabulary cards on the print of the image to identify and designate a visual representation of the meaning of the vocabulary word.

**Activity 4:** Place a variety of artwork (by the same artist, on the same theme, etc.) around the room. Give students a stack of cards, with a targeted vocabulary word written on each card. Students will walk around the room, placing a vocabulary word beside an image they think it belongs with or represents. After all cards have been assigned to an artwork, students will move to stand beside their favorite piece. Students will then use the vocabulary word cards placed with their art piece to write a descriptive summary of the piece.

**Activity 5:** Have students work in groups of 2-4 to focus on a piece of artwork. Choosing one part of the piece, students will collaborate to bring the piece alive through dramatization. As they prepare their tableau, have students consider what thoughts the subjects in the artwork might have prompting their actions in order to enact it.