

Art Speaks

A museum visit program for 4th-grade students in Philadelphia public schools



Connecting Visual Arts and Language Arts

Philadelphia
Museum of
Art

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Welcome to Art Speaks

Great artists are great observers. They consider the world around them, notice overlooked details, and make connections. Looking carefully at art helps us to develop these observation skills. Art encourages us to slow down, look closely, and reflect on what we see. When we accept this invitation, we are rewarded with new thoughts and perspectives. These ideas and insights provide rich material for discussion and writing.

Art Speaks is a museum visit program designed specifically for fourth-grade classrooms in Philadelphia public schools. The focus is art and the many ways we can learn about and respond to what artists create. The learning strategies are literacy based, and connect to The School District of Philadelphia's fourth-grade language arts curriculum.

Before your visit, a Museum Educator will come to your classroom to introduce your students to Art Speaks and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

When your class visits the Museum a Museum Educator will guide you through the galleries, introduce works of art, and lead your group through literacy-based activities that promote discussion of and writing about art. Some of the ideas your students will address are: What can art be? Who makes art? What is an art museum? How can I respond to art? How can I share my thoughts about art with others?

This booklet is full of pre- and post-visit suggestions for extending the learning from your museum trip, with image cards of 20 works of art, activity sheets, writing and discussion activities, and an overview of connections to fourth-grade literacy themes and standards.

We hope that every Philadelphia public school fourth grader participates in Art Speaks, and we look forward to seeing your class at the Museum soon.

To arrange your Art Speaks visit, please contact us:

schoolprograms@philamuseum.org
215-684-7582
philamuseum.org

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- 36 *Blind Singer*, William Henry Johnson
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- 38 *Portrait of James Baldwin*, Beauford Delaney
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Acknowledgments

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The content for this resource was developed under the guidance of Barbara Bassett, The Constance Williams Curator of Education, School and Teacher Programs:

Content Contributors

Bay Hollowell, Harriet Hurwitz, Ah-Young Kim, Becca Mitchell, Suzannah Niepold, Ilene Poses, Adam Rizzo, James Stein, Jean Woodley

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Philadelphia Museum of Art

Marla Shoemaker, The Kathleen C. Sherrerd Senior Curator of Education

School District of Philadelphia

Paula Don, Donna Jacklin, Rodney Johnson, Deb Klose, Toni O'Karma, Christopher Shaffer

Links to Pennsylvania Core Standards

English Language Arts, Grade 4

Art Speaks field trips and looking and writing activities align with the following Pennsylvania Core Standards for English Language Arts, Grade 4.

1.1 Foundational Skills

Students gain a working knowledge of concepts of print, alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions.

1.2 Reading Informational Text

Students read, understand, and respond to informational text—with an emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with a focus on textual evidence.

1.3 Reading Literature

Students read and respond to works of literature—with emphasis on comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and making connections among ideas and between texts with focus on textual evidence.

1.4 Writing

Students write for different purposes and audiences. Students write clear and focused text to convey a well-defined perspective and appropriate content.

1.5 Speaking and Listening

Students present appropriately in formal speaking situations, listen critically, and respond intelligently as individuals or in group discussions.

Visual Arts, Grade 4

Art Speaks field trips and looking and writing activities align with the following Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Visual Arts, Grade 4.

Big Idea	Essential Question	Standards
The skills, techniques, elements, and principles of the arts can be learned, studied, refined, and practiced.	How do artists document their ideas?	9.1.5.A 9.1.5.C 9.1.5.D 9.1.5.K
The arts provide a medium to understand and exchange ideas.	How can art tell a story?	9.1.5.E
People have expressed experiences and ideas through the arts throughout time and across cultures.	What can we learn about an artist through their artwork?	9.1.5.E 9.2.5.D 9.2.5.L 9.4.5.D
There are formal and informal processes used to assess the quality of works in the arts.	What role does description play in an assessment of a work's quality?	9.1.5.A 9.1.5.C 9.3.5.A 9.3.5.E 9.3.5.F 9.3.5.G
People use both aesthetic and critical processes to assess quality, interpret meaning, and determine value.	How does setting affect our judgment of a work's quality?	9.4.3.C

Curriculum Connections

Here are three ways to practice English Language Arts skills with your students all year long:

1. Use this table to find Art and English Language Arts curriculum connections.
2. Sign up for a free account at Readworks.org to find reading comprehension and scaffolded texts about Museum artworks.
3. Use the writing activities on pages 52–56 with an image card of your choosing to inspire student writing.

Connections with ReadyGEN Reader

ReadyGEN Unit and Theme/Texts	Art Connection	Curriculum Connection ReadyGEN (Pearson)	Standards
Unit 1, Module A: Becoming Researchers	Self-Portraits and Portraits: What can you tell about a person from a portrait or self-portrait? How does an artist tell you about a person's personality or interests through a picture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Science Squad: Porpoises in Peril</i> by Gwendolyn Hooks • <i>Mary Anning: The Girl Who Cracked Open the World</i> by Debora Pearson 	CC.1.4.4.A CC.1.3.4.B CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 1, Module B	Anatomy/Life Drawing: How do artists represent lifelike figures? What is the difference between realism and abstraction? Why do artists choose to represent the world realistically or abstractly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Skeletons Inside and Out</i> by Claire Daniel 	CC.1.2.4.D CC.1.3.4.G CC.1.3.4.H CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 2, Module A: Interactions in Nature and Culture	Humans and Nature: How does art reflect our understanding of the natural world?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why the Sea is Salty</i> by Dot Meharry • <i>Three Native Nations: Of the Woodlands, Plains, and Desert</i> by John K. Manos 	CC.1.3.4.H CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 2, Module B	Character in a story: How do artists tell a story using character, setting, and plot in their artworks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Longest Night</i> by Jacqueline Guest 	CC.1.3.4.C CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 3, Module A: Exploring Impact and Effect	Political artwork and depictions of historical events: How do artists represent historical and cultural events in their artworks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Earthquakes</i> by Seymour Simon • <i>Anatomy of a Volcanic Eruption</i> by Amie Jane Leavitt 	CC.1.2.4.E CC.1.2.4.G CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 3, Module B	Artwork as an emotional response to issues and events: How do artists communicate their feelings about world events? How do artists influence how we feel?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Tsunami Unfolds</i> by Susan Korman 	CC.1.3.4.G CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 4, Module A: Creating Innovative Solutions	New ideas in art: How can art change the way people see and experience the world? Can art be used to promote change?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lunch Money</i> by Andrew Clements • <i>Using Money</i> by Gail Fay 	CC.1.4.4.G CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D
Unit 4, Module B	Reactions to change: How do people react to new ideas in art? How do artists challenge what art can be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Tale of Two Poggles</i> by Margi McAllister 	CC.1.5.4.A CC.1.5.4.D



Philadelphia Museum of Art

**A landmark building. A world-renowned collection.
A place that welcomes everyone.**

We're located on one end of the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, the widest street in Philadelphia, facing City Hall. The Museum's main building overlooks the Schuylkill River and Fairmount Park, the largest urban park in the United States. Our beautiful, honey-colored building was designed by many architects, among them Julien Abele (1881–1950), the first African American to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania with a degree in architecture. Temples in ancient Greece, like the Parthenon, inspired the design. Inside you will find works of art from all over the world.

Before Your Visit

Arrange for a Museum Educator to come by your classroom for a pre-visit.

Share some image cards with your students and talk about what kind of things they might see on their visit. Refer to page 22 for tips on talking about art with your students.

Have students complete some or all of the pre-visit activity sheets. Digital versions of these sheets are available on the Art Speaks flash drive included at the back of this resource.

Art Speaks

Name: _____

KWL Chart

Before Your Trip

What I **know** about art

What I **want** to know about art

After Your Trip

What I **learned** about art

Art Speaks

Name: _____

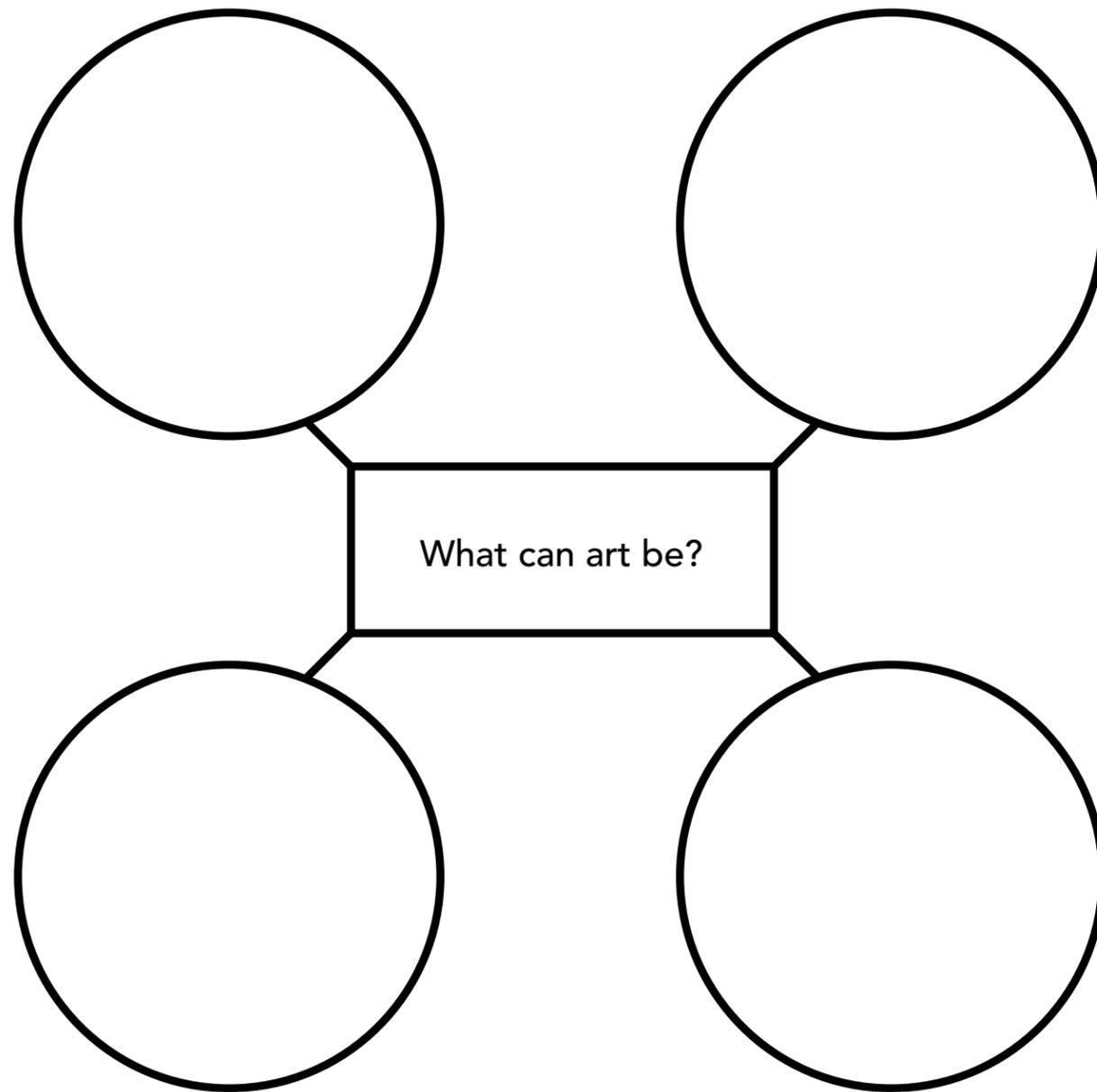
Art Speaks

Name: _____

Brainstorm Web: Art can be...

Art can be...

Circle all the things you think can be called art:



- | | | | |
|-----------|------------|--------------|----------|
| Chair | Book | Map | Scarf |
| Painting | Photograph | Teapot | Room |
| Car | Wallpaper | Illustration | Carpet |
| Comics | Quilt | Church | Soup Can |
| Sculpture | Armor | Music Video | Sword |
| Necklace | Mural | Shoes | Museum |
| Vase | Coat | Motorcycle | Mosaic |
| Clock | Drawing | Mobile | Mug |

Name: _____

When I visit the art museum, I want to...

Draw a picture here:



Write your ideas here:

During Your Visit

A Museum Educator will lead the tour, so you don't need to prepare a lesson. But we encourage you to help students make connections with classroom learning throughout the lesson.

Each student will receive an Art Speaks Journal to record observations and responses. (See a sample on the next page.)

Stay with your students at all times.

Discuss the following Museum rules with your students:

Please do not touch anything. The oils, salts, and acids on our skin can damage fragile works of art.

Keep a safe distance from art objects, walls, platforms, and cases. Backpacks are not allowed in the galleries and will need to be left in the coat room.

Please don't run.

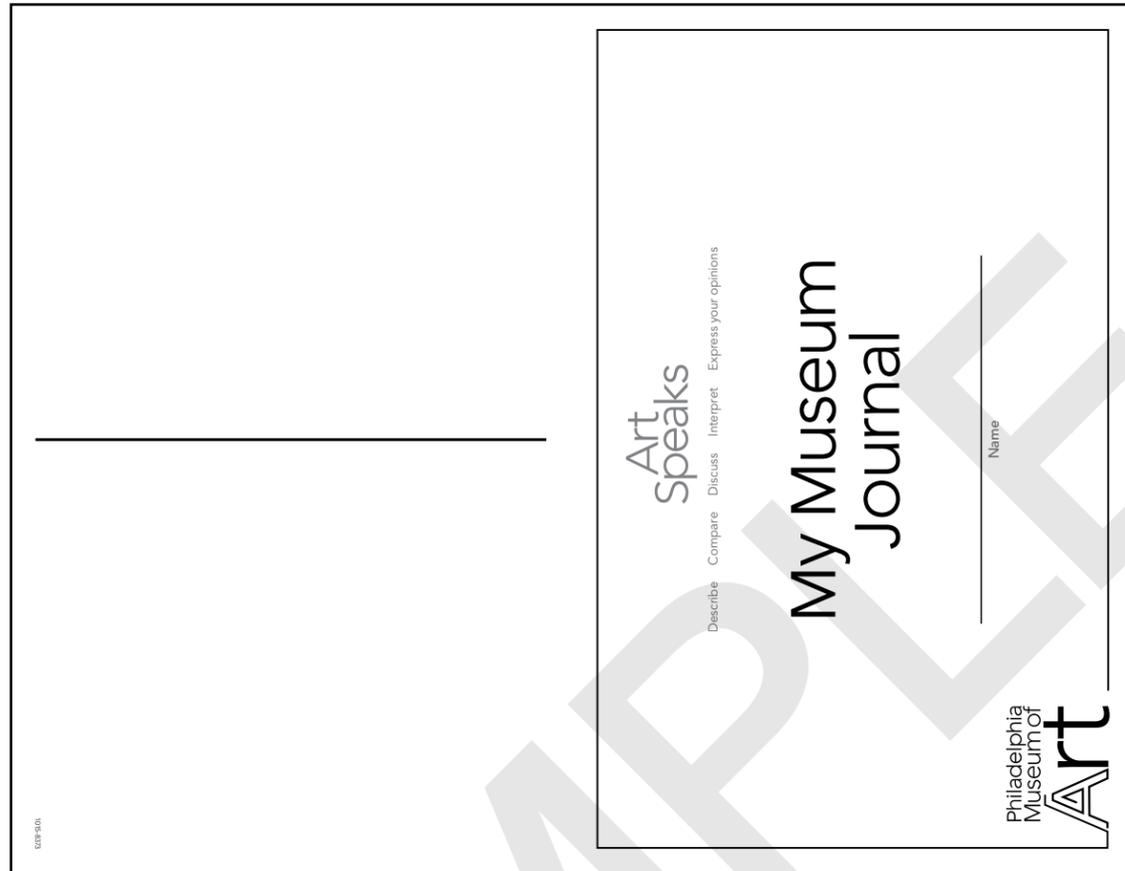
Be respectful of other visitors and use quiet voices.

Cell phones must be turned off.

The Museum is a big place, so be sure to stay with your group.

No need to bring pens and clipboards, which can damage works of art. We'll supply you with everything you need for your visit.

Photography is allowed in most galleries, but make sure your flash is turned off.

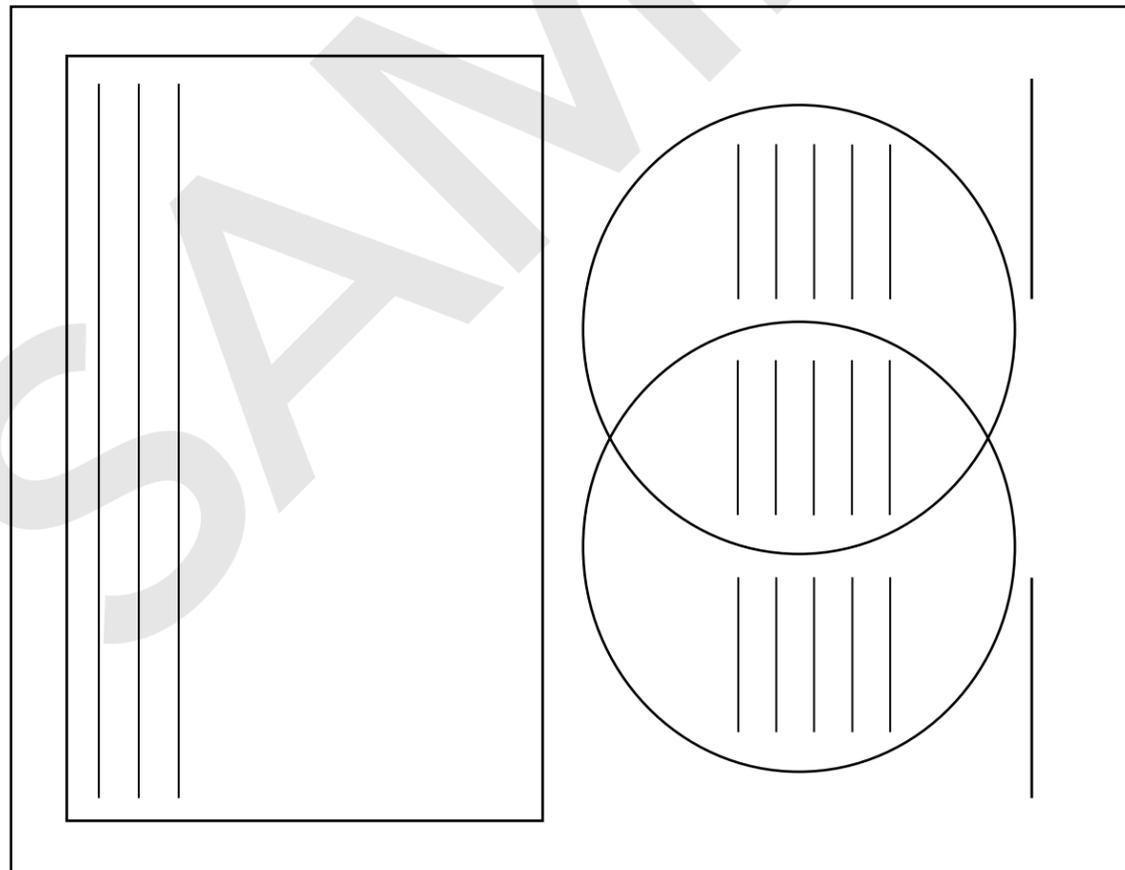


After Your Visit

Have students complete some of the post-visit activity sheets in the following section.

Throughout the year, use the writing prompts and image cards to keep practicing English Language Arts skills with art.

Digital versions of all activity sheets and image cards are available on the Art Speaks flash drive included at the back of this resource.

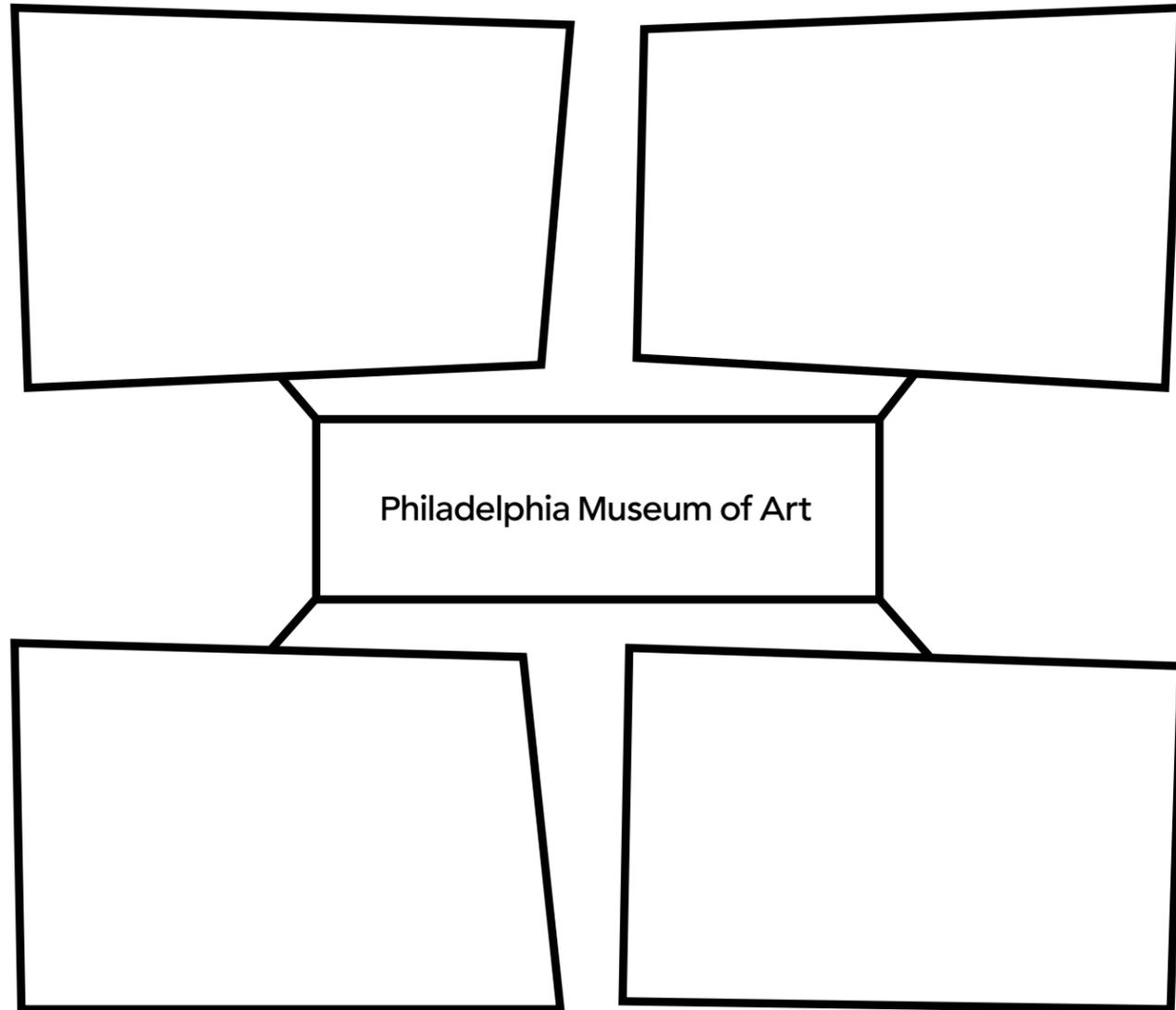


Art Speaks

Name: _____

Memory Web: What did you **see** at the art museum?

Add memories of what you saw on your visit in the shapes.

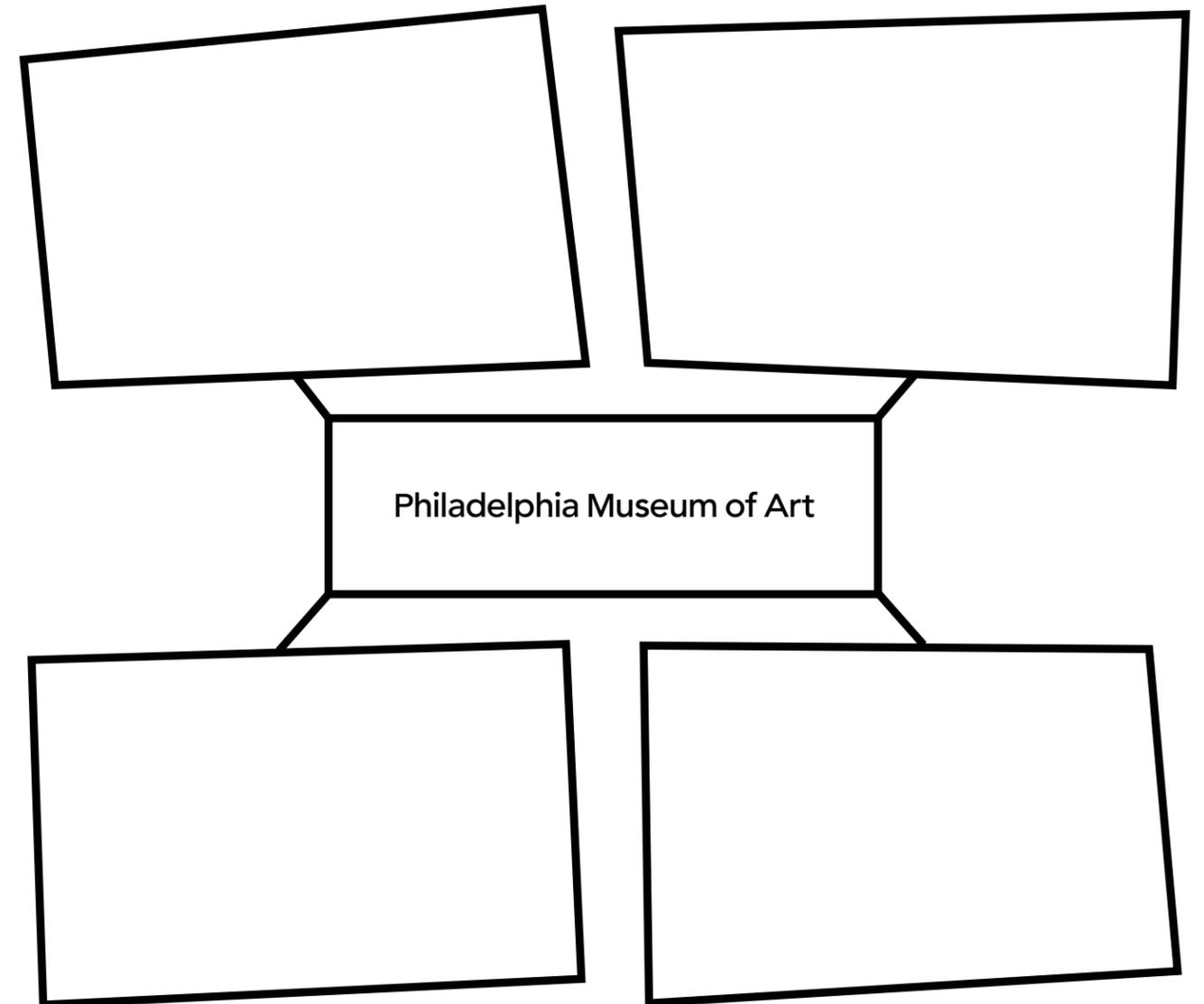


Art Speaks

Name: _____

Memory Web: What did you **do** at the art museum?

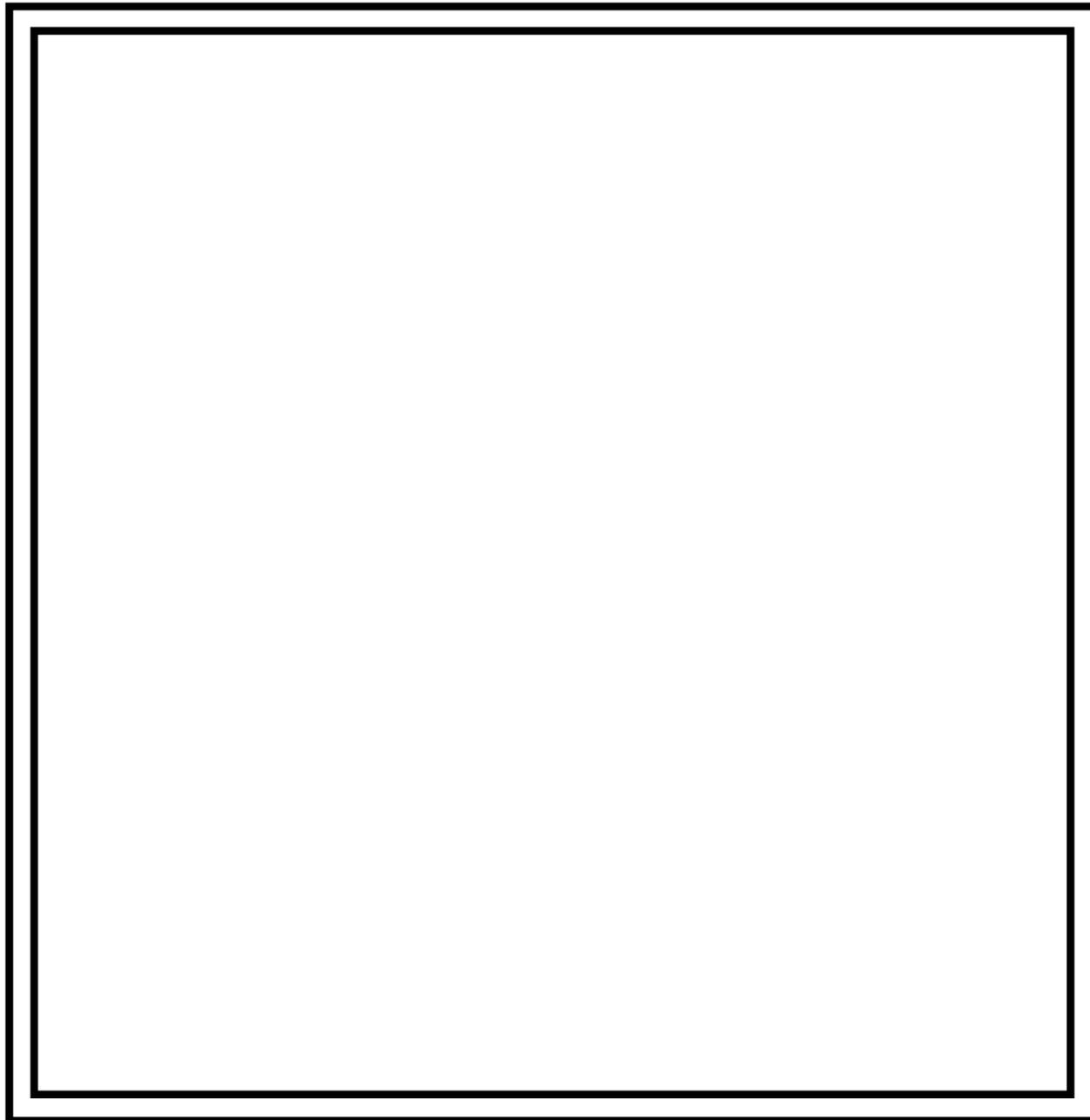
Add memories of what you saw in the other shapes.



Art Speaks

Name: _____

Draw your favorite work of art.



Art Speaks

Name: _____

An artist can be...

1. Circle who you think an artist can be.

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------|--------------|------------|
| Teachers | Mothers | Grandfathers | Presidents |
| Basketball players | Fathers | Grandmothers | Elephants |
| Children | Aunts | Friends | Robots |
| Soldiers | Uncles | Cooks | Soldiers |

2. Can you name some famous artists?

3. Who do you know personally who is an artist?

4. Who is your favorite artist?

5. When are you an artist?

6. Would you like to be an artist when you grow up? Why? Why not?

Talking about Art with Students

Why should students discuss a work of art before writing about it?

Discussing a work of art as a group generates interest in and ideas about the image. Given the integral relationship between speaking, listening, and writing, these discussions also prepare students for successful writing by allowing them to rehearse the language they will use in their written work.

Must all of the suggested looking/writing activities begin with group discussion?

No. Most of the activities will benefit from group discussions prior to writing, but you can decide what will work best for your class.

What questions should I ask to facilitate the discussion?

Look: Begin by asking everyone to look at the image quietly for a few moments. This gives them an opportunity to digest the visual information.

Describe: Next, have students describe what they notice about the work of art. What do we see? What more can we find? Perhaps write the observations on the blackboard.

Think: Next, ask more analytical questions. What do we think about what we see? What do our observations tell us about the story, idea, mood, or feeling of the work of art? Select looking questions from those provided on the reverse of the image cards and in the PowerPoint slideshow (see enclosed USB card) to guide your discussion, or ask questions of your own.

Discover: If factual questions arise, read the text on the reverse of the image card for more information. Then ask the group to consider what new thoughts they have.

Respond: Last, invite personal responses. How does the artwork relate to your own life experiences and prior knowledge? The suggested writing activities can build on these responses.

What if I don't know all of the information about a work of art or artist?

Having a discussion about art is about sharing ideas, not giving a lecture. You do not have to be an art expert to facilitate a discussion with your students. The idea is to observe and respond together.

The primary objective of this teaching resource is to use art as an inspiration for writing, not to learn art historical facts. If you want information about a work of art, read the reverse of the image card. If looking at a work of art inspires further investigation or research, that's terrific.

What if everyone has a different opinion or understands the artwork differently?

Art is multilayered in its meaning and everyone comes to it with their own life experiences. Therefore, everyone will respond a little differently. It is important to validate all ideas equally and without judgment. If visual details are misunderstood, it is fine to clarify for clarity's sake.

Tomb Figures: Bactrian Camel and Central Asian Groom

These ceramic figures of a Bactrian camel and groom were made over one thousand years ago in China for the tombs of wealthy aristocrats or merchants. Objects such as these, along with figures of guardians, soldiers, and entertainers, were placed in tombs so that the spirit of the deceased person might have a rich and full afterlife similar to the life he or she had lived on earth.

China was the eastern end of the Silk Route (also called the Silk Road), some five thousand miles of roads linking Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, along which traders exchanged not only goods and services but also customs and languages. Two-humped Bactrian camels were ideal for carrying the trade goods. Standing seven feet tall at the hump, they can carry great weight, walk on varied terrain with their large feet, and store fat in their humps, converting it to energy or water on long journeys.

The unknown artists who made these sculptures filled them with a lively spirit. The camel twists its neck and opens its mouth to bray loudly. The groom raises his arm as if to control a stubborn camel with invisible reins. Attached to the camel's saddle you can see a water flask, a slab of smoked meat, and a saddlebag with a fanged guardian face.

The figures were coated with cream, amber, and green glazes, which still shine brightly after a thousand years. The groom's face and legs were not glazed, but instead were originally painted with watercolors, which have faded away over time.

Looking Questions

Describe the poses and expressions of the camel and the man.

What do they tell you about each?

How would you describe the camel's behavior?

What textures and colors do you see on each figure?

What material was used to make these sculptures?

How can you tell?

These figures were found in ancient tombs in China.

Why might tombs have been filled with such things?



Bactrian Camel

618–907 (Tang Dynasty, 618–907)

Earthenware with *sancai* (tricolor) glaze

Height: 32 inches (81.3 cm)

Central Asian Groom

618–907 (Tang Dynasty, 618–907)

Earthenware with *sancai* (tricolor) glaze and traces of painted decoration on head

Height: 17 inches (43.2 cm)

China

Philadelphia Museum of Art: [Camel:] Gift of Mrs. John Wintersteen, 1964-9-1; [Groom:] Gift of Charles H. Ludington from the George Crofts Collection, 1923-21-12



1750–1850 (Qing Dynasty, 1644–1911)

Ink and color on silk; mounted as a hanging scroll

5 feet, 1/16 inch x 2 feet, 7 1/2 inches (152.6 x 80 cm)

China

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with Museum funds from the Simkhovitch Collection, 1929-40-188

Mandarin in His Study

This portrait is of a Chinese scholar and civil servant, known as a mandarin, who lived over 150 years ago during the late Qing (ching) dynasty. Mandarins spent many years studying to pass difficult exams for their position. The term “mandarin” refers to the Chinese dialect they spoke and the post they held as government officials in the emperor’s court. In addition to writing about the history of the Chinese people and helping run the government, mandarins created poetry, music, painting, and calligraphy.

Seated on an armchair in his study, this mandarin wears a plain, black robe and hat. At work, he would have dressed in fancy, formal court robes with an embroidered crest showing his high rank, and sported a jewel knob on his hat. His feet rest on a wooden stand with rollers—a foot massager! Behind him are books and writing tools in a container, reflecting his favorite pastimes. Nearby on an antique table, there is a small, wild orchid, prized for its delicacy and a symbol of the scholar’s modesty. Look for an ancient pine tree in the painting above his head. Because a pine tree is always green, it symbolizes a long and productive life.

The large Chinese calligraphy above the mandarin means “pouring energy,” and refers to the old man’s vigor and good health. A poem, written in two parts on the back wall, describes a beautiful, chilly landscape with the purple clouds and blue skies of a clear, autumn morning. Like the orchid and the painting of the pine tree, the poem evokes thoughts of nature.

Looking Questions

How old do you think this person is? Why?

Where does he live? How can you tell?

Make a list of all the objects in this painting. Based on these objects, what are this person’s favorite pastimes?

Can you find two things that show his love of nature?

Imagine a vertical line through the center of this painting and compare the right and left sides. What is similar and different? Does this painting feel balanced or off balance? Why?

White-Headed Eagle with Yellow Catfish

With his sharp talons, piercing eye, pointed beak, and imposing size, this white-headed eagle appears strong and fierce. Also known as the bald eagle, this bird is easily recognizable because of its white head and tail, which stand out against its dark brown body. As the official emblem of the United States of America, it represents majesty and courage.

As a young man, John James Audubon, a budding scientist and artist, enjoyed studying birds on his father’s farm near Philadelphia. In 1820, he took a three-month expedition down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, carefully observing a variety of birds and recording information about them through drawing, painting, and writing. His original watercolor paintings were later etched and printed in a seven-volume set of books called *Birds of America*, which included 435 large prints. This print is one page from volume 7. Audubon presented the birds in their natural habitats, engaging in typical activities such as hunting, feeding, courting, and caring for their young. Each image was accompanied by a written description.

In his text, Audubon described the bald eagle’s “strength, daring, and cool courage,” and noted its “ferocious, overbearing, and tyrannical temper.”¹ He admired its majesty in flight, soaring high with its impressive wingspan of seven to eight feet. Audubon witnessed bald eagles catching their prey and stealing recent kill of other birds, a notorious tactic of the eagle. Perhaps such scenes inspired Audubon’s image, in which the bald eagle grasps a catfish with his razor-sharp talons.

¹ John James Audubon, *Birds of America, Volumes 1–7*, First Octavio Edition, 1840, accessed July 12, 2010, http://web4.audubon.org/bird/BoA/BOA_index.html.

Looking Questions

The artist who created this image was a scientist and an artist. Which parts of the picture seem to focus on scientific accuracy?

What did the artist show us about what the eagle eats and where it lives?

What artistic choices were made to create a captivating image? Where do you see interesting lines, shapes, colors, and textures?

Where do you see areas of contrast—between light and dark, rough and smooth?

What adjectives best describe this eagle? Fierce or peaceful? Powerful or weak? How does the artist communicate those qualities?



Plate 31 from *Birds of America*, No. 7
1828

Plate: 25 x 38 inches (64.8 x 97.8 cm)

Original watercolor by
John James Audubon

(American, 1785–1851)

Hand-colored etching and aquatint by **Robert Havell, Jr.** (British (active United States), 1793–1878)

Printed and colored by
Robert Havell, Sr.

(British, 1769–1832)

Published by **John James Audubon**

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Caleb W. Hornor and Peter T. Hornor, 1968-120-1



No. 112 from the series *One Hundred Views of Edo* (*Meisho Edo Hya kkei*)
1857 (Edo Period, 1615–1868)
Color woodcut
Sheet: 14 x 10 inches (37.1 x 25.7 cm)

Utagawa Hiroshige I
(Japanese, 1797–1858)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1946-51-34

Yabu Lane below Atago

In this winter scene, people walk along a snow-covered street beside a bright blue stream. Three sparrows flutter about, looking for food. People shelter themselves from the falling snow with hats and umbrellas and leave trails of gray footprints as they hurry on their way. The snow dots the sky and water and weighs down the green bamboo on the right side of the picture, bending its branches.

This print is part of a series of images called *One Hundred Views of Edo* by the Japanese artist Utagawa Hiroshige I (Ooh-tah-gah-wah He-row-SHE-gay). Edo (Eh-doh), now called Tokyo, was a large and prosperous city in Japan that is the country’s capital today. This scene depicts the area at the foot of Mount Atago. This place would have been easily recognizable to Edo residents because of the bamboo thicket on the right, which was at the edge of a well-known mansion. The bamboo was thought to protect the mansion’s inhabitants from danger.

Hiroshige, who was born and raised in Edo, was known for capturing the mood and feeling of each place and season. His prints celebrated the beauty of the city and people’s enjoyment of it. Many people collected these works of art because they were beautiful, colorful, and inexpensive—about the cost of a bowl of noodles. You can see the artist’s signature in the red vertical box on the left side of the picture. The two red boxes in the upper right contain the name of the print series (right) and the title of the print (left).

Looking Questions

- Describe the plants, trees, animals, and people you see in this picture.
- Where might this scene take place? What clues tell you so?
- Describe the mood or feeling of this place. How does the artist get that feeling across?
- How would it feel to walk along this street?
- What stories do you think are taking place?

Railroad Bridge, Argenteuil

A small sailboat drifts along the water in this tranquil scene. Warm, golden light brightens the bridge’s white pillars and the boat’s sail. Their reflections in the water add pink, yellow, and orange hues to the blue of the river. Along the top of the bridge, a train chugs along, letting out puffs of smoke that drift across the sky. A gentle wind pushes the boat across the calm river below.

Claude Monet (Clah’d MOE-nay), the French artist who created this work of art, enjoyed painting the outdoors directly from observation. He appreciated the variety of colors in the sky, water, plants, and trees, especially those seen at sunrise and sunset. Notice the deep greens, blues, and purples in the grassy riverbank, and the blues and yellows in the train’s smoke. Monet had to work quickly to capture the color and light as he saw it, since both frequently change as time passes. Look closely and you’ll see the many short, quick brushstrokes that make up the grass, trees, water, and clouds. This style of painting is known as Impressionism.

This painting shows the Seine River in the town of Argenteuil (Ar-jen-TOY), located just outside Paris. Monet lived there when he painted this picture, so he didn’t have to travel far to observe this scenic spot. At that time, the railroad service was expanding, and it became easier for city dwellers to take weekend trips to the nearby countryside. Perhaps the tiny figures in the boat are enjoying time away from the faster pace of urban life.

Looking Questions

- What time of day do you think it is?
- What do you see that makes you think so?
- Describe the weather. What might it feel like if you were there?
- What colors are the shadows? What about the reflections in the water?
- Compare the two modes of transportation depicted. How are they different?
- If you could enter this picture, where would you go and what would you do?



1874
Oil on canvas
21 x 28 inches (54.3 x 73.3 inches)

Claude Monet
(French, 1840–1926)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: John G. Johnson Collection, 1917, cat. 1050



1884

Oil on canvas

28 x 44 inches (72.7 x 113.7 cm)

Winslow Homer

(American, 1836–1910)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: The George W. Elkins Collection, E1924-4-15

The Life Line

This painting depicts a suspenseful moment during a heroic rescue. Crashing waves, dark threatening skies, and fierce winds surround the two figures in the center. Remnants of a sinking ship are barely visible in the upper left. Only a thin rope supports the weight of the man and woman, who are suspended above the turbulent sea. The woman's clothing and hair are soaking wet, her head hangs back, and her right arm dangles above the water. She holds onto the rope with her left hand, indicating that she is conscious. Perhaps the figures on the distant cliff on the right wait to help the man and woman as soon as they reach the shore.

One year before he painted *The Life Line*, American artist Winslow Homer witnessed a demonstration of a lifesaving device like the one shown in this picture. He included details that show how it worked. For example, the slack of rope in the water on the left indicates that the people are being pulled to safety by the lower rope on the right. In addition, notice how only the right half of the upper rope has water droplets along its bottom edge. The left half was wrung dry as the pulley moved from left to right.

Homer left some details of this story a mystery. A red scarf flaps in the wind and hides the man's face. Why could this be? Homer also left the conclusion of the story unclear. It is up to us to imagine how this adventure ends.

Looking Questions

What do you think is happening in this painting?

What is the weather like? How can you tell?

What do you think the ropes connect to on either end?

If you could step into this painting, what would you hear, smell, see, touch, and taste?

Why do you think the artist chose this moment of the story to depict?

How do you think the story will end?

Sunflowers

Vincent van Gogh created this painting of twelve bright sunflowers in a simple clay jug soon after moving to Arles, a quiet, sun-drenched town in southern France, far from the noisy streets of Paris where he had been working. Excited about living in fresh, clean country air, surrounded by the vibrant colors of nature in Arles—especially the fields of sunflowers—he was also looking forward to the arrival of his friend, the artist Paul Gauguin (go-gan). Van Gogh planned to complete a series of sunflower paintings to celebrate his new beginnings and to decorate his new house and studio, “so the whole thing will be a symphony in blue and yellow.”¹ In this work, van Gogh painted the flowers in various stages of growth and decay, working quickly before they wilted. Some are only partially open, several are in full bloom with their lush, yellow petals spread wide, while another is already beginning to droop.

Although he grew up seeing the detailed, realistic style of Dutch painting, van Gogh painted in an Expressionist manner, using large brushstrokes and thick paint (called *impasto*). Each dab is visible on the canvas, and the entire surface seems to move and come to life. Bold colors—rusty brown, rich red, dark green, and gold—as well as an array of light yellows and oranges twist and turn against the pale turquoise background above the mustard tabletop. The orange outline of the jug and the artist's signature, “Vincent,” help anchor the tossing, spiky petals.

¹ Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Arles, around 21 August 1888, from van Gogh's Letters, Abridged & Annotated web exhibit. <http://webexhibits.org/vangogh/letter/18/526.htm>

Looking Questions

Can you find twelve flowers in this painting?

Which ones are in full bloom? Wilting? Why would van Gogh choose to include wilting flowers?

Which flower has a red-orange center? Where else do you see this color (outlining the jug, the table edge, and “Vincent”)?

How does van Gogh use yellow to lead your eye through the painting?

What is the mood of this painting? What do you see that communicates this?



1888 or 1889

Oil on canvas

36 3/8 x 28 inches (92.4 x 71.1 cm)

Vincent van Gogh

(Dutch, 1853–1890)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: The Mr. and Mrs. Carroll S. Tyson, Jr., Collection, 1963-116-19



1897

Oil on canvas

29 x 39 inches (74.3 x 100.3 cm)

Henry Ossawa Tanner
(American, 1859–1937)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Partial gift of Dr. Rae Alexander-Minter and purchased with the W. P. Wilstach Fund, the George W. Elkins Fund, the Edward and Althea Budd Fund, and with funds contributed by The Dietrich Foundation, EW1993-61-1

Portrait of the Artist's Mother

A woman sits on a wooden rocking chair and gazes ahead, deep in thought. A golden light brightens her face and left hand as well as the shawl that drapes onto the floor. She wears a long navy dress, and her black leather shoes are just visible beneath it. She appears relaxed, holding a palm leaf fan in one hand and gently resting the other against her cheek. Her pose and facial expression suggest that she is a strong and thoughtful woman.

African American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner painted this portrait of his mother, Sarah Elizabeth Miller Tanner, in 1897. When Sarah was a child, her mother put her and her siblings on an oxcart bound for Pennsylvania to escape slavery in Virginia via the Underground Railroad. Later, she married Benjamin Tucker Tanner, a highly educated minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and they had nine children. Their son Henry showed an early interest in art and studied painting at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. In 1891 he moved to Paris to pursue a successful artistic career and escape the racial discrimination he experienced in America.

Tanner created this portrait on a visit home after a long time abroad. He based the composition on James Abbott McNeill Whistler's famous 1871 painting known as "Whistler's Mother." However, while Whistler's portrait is cold and austere, Tanner's is warm and affectionate. In the bottom right corner, Tanner wrote, "To my dear mother, H. O. Tanner." This sensitive portrayal and endearing inscription capture the love and admiration the artist felt for his mother, the center of his large and distinguished family.

Looking Questions

Describe this woman's pose and facial expression.

What might she be feeling?

What might her clothing and the setting tell us about her?

Where are the brightest parts of the picture? The darkest? Why might that be?

How would you describe the mood of the painting?

If you could read this woman's thoughts, what do you think they would be?

The City

The French artist Fernand Léger (Fer-nahn Le-zhey) was inspired by the modern city and celebrated its vitality in his art. In *The City*, he filled the painting with geometric shapes and patterns that remind us of lights, shop windows, signs, buildings, and other objects. Unlike a traditional landscape in which space recedes into the background, many shapes and colors push toward the foreground.

Léger described modern urban life as "more fragmented and faster moving than life in previous eras."¹ He captured this exciting, fast-paced movement with striking colors, eye-catching patterns, and overlapping shapes that crowd together and compete for our attention. Our eyes jump from one place to the next, creating a sensation similar to what it feels like to move through busy city streets. With so many interesting things to see, we seem to only catch glimpses of each.

Living in the vibrant city of Paris, Léger admired the bold text and graphics on billboards and posters, and was fascinated by the power of train engines and airplane propellers. He also enjoyed movies, a relatively new form of popular entertainment in the early twentieth century, and appreciated the way scenes quickly moved from one to the next. All of these sources of inspiration are reflected in *The City*, such as in the white letters (including Léger's initials), flat colors, mechanical people, and its collage-like quality. The painting's size—over seven feet tall and almost ten feet wide—is also similar to a billboard or movie screen, encouraging viewers to feel as though they can easily enter this lively and colorful city.

¹Jodi Hauptman, "Imagining Cities," in by Carolyn Lanchner (New York: The Museum of Modern Art Department of Publications, 1998), 73.

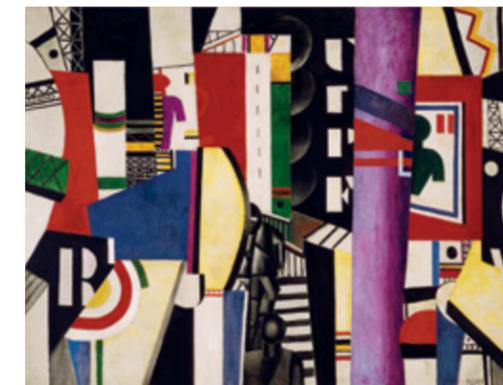
Looking Questions

Describe the shapes, patterns, and colors you see in this painting. What do they remind you of?

What letters can you find? Why might they be here?

Look at the title of the painting. How does it relate to what you see?

What do you think the artist is saying about the experience of being in a city?



1919

Oil on canvas

91 x 117 inches (231.1 x 298.4 cm)

Fernand Léger
(French, 1881–1955)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: A. E. Gallatin Collection, 1952-61-58 © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris



1926

Oil on canvas

28 x 36 inches (73 x 92.1 cm)

Joan Miró

(Spanish, 1893–1983)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: A. E. Gallatin Collection, 1952-61-82 © Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris

Dog Barking at the Moon

In this sparse landscape, a ladder reaches up toward the black night sky. Nearby, a colorful dog stands on the brown earth, looking up to the half moon and bird above him. The bright colors and humorous subject matter create a fun, playful mood. The title of the painting, *Dog Barking at the Moon*, adds to this lighthearted feeling. However, the dark background and the vast empty spaces between the dog, ladder, and moon also produce a sense of loneliness and mystery.

Although he spent each winter in Paris, Joan Miró (J'wahn Mee-ROE) found inspiration for his art in his home in Catalonia (Cat-ah-LONEee-ah), Spain, where he made sketches on his family farm. He based many of his paintings on these drawings and his memories of the farm, including this one. In Paris, he was influenced by Surrealist artists and poets, who were inspired by dreams and the unconscious.

While his art was always based on actual places and objects, Miró thought of reality as “a point of departure, never as a stopping place.”¹ In *Dog Barking at the Moon*, he provided a recognizable landscape, but the exact setting remains unclear. The dog, moon, and bird are also identifiable, but they are distorted. The ladder reaches toward empty space, resting on nothing. The original sketch for the painting included words, with the moon telling the dog that he does not care about his barking. Miró omitted these words in the final painting, leaving it up to the viewer to imagine the story taking place.

¹ Margit Rowell and Ann Temkin, “Miró,” in *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, vol. 83, no. 356/357 (Autumn, 1987) (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1987), 6.

Looking Questions

Describe what you think is happening in the picture.

When and where do you think this is taking place?

What do you see that tells you so?

What is the mood or feeling of the painting?

What do you see that creates that feeling?

What do you think the dog will do next?

What about the moon and bird?

If you could write a conversation between the dog, moon, bird, and ladder, what would they say?

Woman of Tehuantepec

This black-and-white photograph shows a woman balancing a large painted gourd on her head. Tina Modotti (Moe-DOT-tee), the photographer, took the picture in 1929 when she traveled to the town of Tehuantepec (tay-WAHN-tay-peck) in southern Mexico. The women in the town, known as “Tehuana” (tay-WAHN-ahs), have long been admired for their strength, independence, and colorful clothing. Traditionally, they controlled the economic and political life in the region. Modotti took a series of photographs of Tehuana women engaged in everyday activities such as caring for their children and walking to market.

Modotti carefully composed this picture to draw attention to the woman’s strength and beauty. Her stable posture, powerful gesture, and calm facial expression show her self-confidence. Modotti cropped the photograph so that the woman dominates the composition. She also took the picture from a low vantage point so that we look up at the woman, emphasizing her importance. Striking shapes and patterns frame her face—from the repeating triangles, squares, and diamonds in her dress, to her shiny circular pendant and earring, and the delicate flowers, fruits, and leaves painted on the gourd she carries.

Modotti was born in Italy and immigrated to California when she was sixteen years old. She moved to Mexico in 1923 and learned photography from the renowned American photographer Edward Weston. She became best known for her pictures of Mexican women, children, workers, and artisans. Both art and politics were equally important to Modotti, and she abandoned photography in 1932 to dedicate herself to political activism.

Looking Questions

What shapes and patterns do you see in this photograph?

From what angle was this photograph taken?

How does that affect the picture?

What might this woman be thinking and feeling?

What makes you say that?

Imagine the rest of the scene around the woman.

What is her story?



Around 1929

Gelatin silver print

Image and sheet: 8 x 7 inches (21.3 x 18.7 cm)

Tina Modotti

(Italian, 1896–1942)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Zigrosser, 1968-162-40



1931

Fresco

57 1/8 x 94 1/8 inches (145.1 x 239.1 cm)

Diego Rivera

(Mexican, 1886–1957)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Cameron Morris, 1943-46-2 © 2014 Banco de México
Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Sugar Cane

In this painting, Diego Rivera tells a story about life in Mexico during the Spanish colonial era before the revolution of 1910–20. Instead of focusing on a hero or several important characters, this story is about the millions of native Mexicans who worked for wealthy landowners for low wages. Even children raised and harvested crops instead of going to school. Beyond the two young girls and boy gathering papayas in the foreground, we see a light-skinned landowner lounging on his porch in a hammock, two overseers with guns and bandoliers (bullet belts) crisscrossing their chests, and workers cutting, tying, and carrying enormous stalks of sugar cane.

After attending art school in Mexico, Rivera traveled to Europe and visited churches in small Italian towns with murals illustrating stories from the Bible. Everyone, regardless of income or education, could understand the tales just by looking at the wall paintings, which impressed the young artist. When Álvaro Obregón, the newly elected Mexican president (1920–24), began commissioning public murals to give illiterate Mexicans a sense of their own history, Rivera quickly returned home.

With the help of skilled Mexican artisans, Rivera modified fresco techniques from Italian and pre-Columbian cultures. Powdered pigments are mixed with water and quickly applied to fresh plaster spread on a wall before the plaster dries. The artist used this technique to paint murals on the outer walls of public buildings throughout Mexico and in the United States, including this portable fresco, which was painted for an exhibition of Rivera's work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Looking Questions

How many people do you see? Which ones are children?

Which parts of the painting look warm and sunny?
Cool and shady?

Where could this scene be taking place? Why? What is happening in the foreground? Middle ground? Background?

Can you find vertical, curving, and diagonal shapes?
The color white?

What do you think Rivera wants us to know about Mexican history?

Bicycle Race

Four athletes speed toward the finish line in this colorful painting of a bicycle race. With determined looks on their faces, the two leaders hunch forward and tightly grasp the handlebars, pedaling as fast as they can. It is a bright, sunny day, and many spectators have come to watch the exciting event. On either side of the cyclists, children raise their arms and cheer. Other people sit and watch from atop a high wall on the right, their legs dangling off the edge. On the left, special guests and judges observe the race from a grandstand, decorated with colorful banners that blow in the breeze. Visible in the upper left, several people have even climbed up into tall tree branches to get a better view.

Mexican artist Antonio Ruiz (Roo-EEZ) painted this scene of a country fair in his hometown of Texcoco (Tes-KO-ko), located in central Mexico. He included many details to capture the look and feel of the town. For example, the red, white, and green striped banners are the colors of the Mexican flag. Jacaranda trees, which are found throughout Central America, loom over the street with their long branches. Ruiz also carefully depicted the different people's clothing, such as the judges' suits, the young boys' shorts and caps, and the sombreros, or wide-brimmed hats, worn by many of the spectators. Ruiz often added humorous details into his paintings, such as the goat bending down to eat something in the lower right, and the sleeping dog in the lower left corner.

Looking Questions

What is everyone doing in this picture?

How would you describe the setting—the place, season, and weather?

How does the artist show that the road goes far back into the distance?

What moment in the race is this? Why do you think so?

If you could enter this picture, what sounds would you hear?

If you could trade places with someone in the painting, who would it be and why?



1938

Oil on canvas

13 x 17 inches (33.3 x 43.2cm)

Antonio Ruiz

(Mexican, 1897–1964)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with the Nebinger Fund, 1949-24-1



Around 1939–40

Color silkscreen print on paper
17 1/2 x 11 9/16 inches (44.5 x 29.4 cm)

William Henry Johnson
(American, 1901–1970)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum (also known as the Philadelphia Civic Center Museum), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2004-111-719

Blind Singer

This lively image shows two musicians entertaining us with their voices, a guitar, and a tambourine. Facing us directly and standing close together, the man and woman catch our attention with their dynamic poses and their colorful clothing: a yellow hat with a blue band, a red tie, orange and blue jackets, and green shoes. Their bodies suggest movement: fingers strumming the strings of the guitar, hands shaking a tambourine, feet tapping, and hips swaying to the music.

William Henry Johnson would have seen musicians like these performing on busy street corners in New York City, where he worked and lived. He may have based these particular figures on gospel and blues singers from the 1930s and 1940s, such as Blind Boy Fuller, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, or the Reverend Gary Davis, who became popular first in the American South and then in northern cities such as Chicago and New York.

Johnson enjoyed the sights and sounds of New York’s Harlem neighborhood and captured the fashion, music, and dance around him in his images. His artistic style was influenced by the geometric shapes of West African sculpture, which he could see in the city’s museums. He was also inspired by colors and patterns used by other great modern artists like Pablo Picasso.

Looking Questions

What are these people holding? What are they doing?

Describe the lines, colors, and shapes that you see.
What kind of mood do they create?

What do you think you would see and hear if this work of art came to life?

Mr. Prejudice

Mr. Prejudice is a small painting with a powerful message. At the bottom, a group of figures, half white and half black, stand on either side of a large V. The men wear uniforms: a doctor in white, two sailors in blue, two aviators in tan, two men operating machinery, and two Army soldiers in brown, including a self-portrait of Horace Pippin himself, with his right arm that was injured in battle hanging at his side. Above them are larger figures: a white-robed member of the Ku Klux Klan (a white supremacy group), a white man in a red shirt holding a noose, and a brown Statue of Liberty. At the top, a grim-faced white man hammers a wedge down into the V.

Pippin was deeply affected by his experiences as a soldier in a segregated troop during World War I in France. Despite helping the United States achieve victory abroad—symbolized by the V—he and his fellow African American soldiers were treated poorly when they returned home. Pippin painted *Mr. Prejudice* over twenty-five years later, toward the end of World War II, when he saw more discrimination against the next generation of African American soldiers. This painting is one of his strongest artistic statements about segregation, racial prejudice, and social injustice.

Looking Questions

What do you notice first in this painting?

Look closely. What can you tell about the figures?
How are they interacting?

What do you think Horace Pippin is saying in this painting?
What makes you say that?

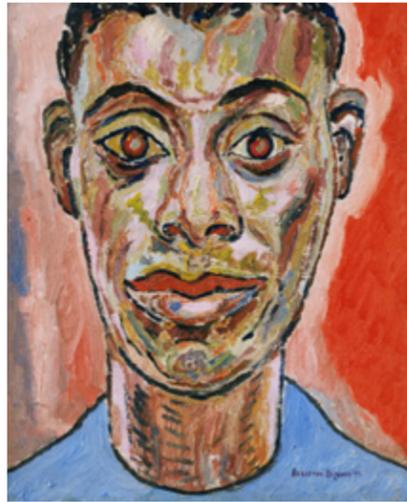


1943

Oil on canvas
18 1/8 x 14 1/8 inches (46 x 35.9 cm)

Horace Pippin
(American, 1888–1946)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Matthew T. Moore, 1984-108-1



1945

Oil on canvas

22 x 18 inches (55.9 x 45.7 cm)

Beauford Delaney
(American, 1901–1979)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: 125th Anniversary Acquisition. Purchased with funds contributed by The Daniel W. Dietrich Foundation in memory of Joseph C. Bailey and with a grant from The Judith Rothschild Foundation, 1998-3-1

Portrait of James Baldwin

In this striking portrait, the close-up image of a face with large features and eyes wide open stares back at us. This person's head almost fills the frame and is rendered with a rainbow of colors. Set against a bright red and pink background, it sits atop a strong, solid neck shaped like a cylinder and gently sloping, baby blue shoulders. This is a portrait of James Baldwin (1924–1987), who was twenty-one years old when he posed for this painting, and was soon to become a noted author and an impassioned, articulate spokesperson for the civil rights movement. Beauford Delaney called him “a prince.”

The heavy black outlines around Baldwin's head, neck, and large, staring eyes barely contain the many colors that define his forehead, cheeks, chin, lips, and nose. The combination of bold and subtle colors, thick paint (called impasto), energetic brushstrokes, and frontal gaze creates an unforgettable intensity and presence. This portrait presents Baldwin as Delaney saw him: a vibrant young man full of energy and promise, lovingly surrounded by a soft pink aura.

Delaney and Baldwin had much in common. They were both sons of strict Southern preachers and grew up in families that struggled financially. They both did well in public school, attracting the attention and support of their teachers. After the death of Baldwin's father, Delaney became Baldwin's mentor and surrogate father, helping him find a job, teaching him an artist's way of life, and introducing him to all kinds of music—classical, blues, boogie-woogie, and jazz—as well as to artists, musicians, and wealthy supporters.

Looking Questions

Which parts of the painting look flat? Three-dimensional? Point to some shadows, highlights, outlines, and parallel lines.

What features of this person's face stand out? Why?

What adjectives would you use to describe his personality? Why?

Why might Delaney have chosen to paint a full-face, close-up view of Baldwin?

If you were having your portrait made, what would you want it to say about you?

Isaiah

Isaiah Zagar created this self-portrait in 1986. He decorated this energetic print with vibrant colors and lively patterns. Turquoise and green horizontal stripes, layered with red flowers and leaves, create a playful background. Bold, red lines follow the contours of his bright yellow hair, eyes, nose, mouth, and beard. Look closely to find people, leaves, branches, flowers, hands, and even a coffee cup embedded within the picture. Zagar also included stamp-like texts, such as “Art is the center of the real world” and “Philadelphia is the center of the art world,” convictions that he has stated in his work for decades. These colors, patterns, images, and ideas become a part of Zagar's face, hinting about the artist's thoughts on identity and how he sees himself.

Isaiah Zagar is best known for his colorful, public mosaics on buildings in Philadelphia and around the world. The mosaics are made with pieces of mirror, tile, glass, and a variety of other materials. His largest artwork is Philadelphia's Magic Gardens, a massive, mosaic-decorated art environment outdoors at 1020 South Street that covers half a city block.

Looking Questions

Describe the colors, lines, and patterns in this print.

What objects, figures, words, and phrases can you find?

Isaiah Zagar is best known for his colorful public mosaics. How is this image like a mosaic?

What do you think he wanted to tell us about himself in this self-portrait? What does he say about the role of art in the world?

What words or phrases would you include in your self-portrait?



1986

Color offset lithograph

Image/sheet: 29 x 213/4 inches (76 x 55.2 cm)

Isaiah Zagar
(American, born 1939)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Gift of the Brandywine Workshop, Philadelphia, in memory of Anne d'Harnoncourt, 2009-61-90



1990
Silk
66 x 67 inches (167.6 x 170.2 cm)

Faith Ringgold
(American, born 1930)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with funds contributed by W. B. Dixon Stroud, 1992-100-1 © 1990 Faith Ringgold

“Tar Beach 2” Quilt

Faith Ringgold, who created this “story quilt,” is both an artist and author. This quilt tells the story of Cassie Louise Lightfoot, the protagonist in Ringgold’s children’s book, *Tar Beach*.

Several parts of the story are included in the picture. In the foreground, Cassie’s parents play cards with their friends on the tar roof (“tar beach”) of their apartment building in New York City. Cassie and her brother Bebe lie on a mattress nearby, looking up at the stars. A picnic dinner awaits them. Wet clothes and sheets hang to dry, flapping in the night wind. The George Washington Bridge stands tall behind the colorful buildings in the background.

In the book, Cassie dreams that she can fly and overcome any obstacle she faces. In the quilt, she appears twice in the sky, claiming the bridge for herself and giving her father the Union Building so that he won’t have to worry about employment. Ringgold included parts of the story in white writing in the purple sky.

To create Cassie’s story, Ringgold took inspiration from her own childhood in Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City. Much of her art explores social and political themes and features powerful women, especially African American women. For example, Cassie’s ability to fly gives her freedom and power to achieve anything she sets her mind to. At the end of the book, Cassie proclaims that anyone can fly, stating, “All you need is somewhere to go you can’t get to any other way. The next thing you know, you’re flying among the stars.”

Looking Questions

- What are the different people doing in this picture?
- Which characters appear more than once? Where?
- Where does this story take place? What do you see that tells you that?
- Some characters are flying. What might flying symbolize?
- How is this different from other quilts you’ve seen?
- How is it similar?

Portage (detail)

This image is a detail from a larger work of art—an accordion-fold book that is almost fourteen feet long. To create it, the artist William Kentridge arranged small pieces of torn black paper into figures. He then glued the figures onto pages that he removed from a French dictionary.

While the dictionary definitions in the background represent precise, factual information, the procession of shadowy figures presents a narrative that is more open to interpretation. Where are the people going, and why? Perhaps they are travelers on a road. Perhaps they are moving from one place to another. Maybe they are participating in a parade or celebration. The people carry various items such as chairs, tools, musical instruments, and other objects. What might these objects tell us about their stories?

The poses of the four figures pictured here give us clues about their feelings. The woman on the left seems to stride forward confidently, while the person in front of her looks down, perhaps tired or lost in thought. The next person holds something above her head. What could it be? The figure on the far right seems especially burdened with a heavy load. Whoever they may be, they move forward together.

Kentridge was born and raised in South Africa. His parents, who had Lithuanian and German-Jewish ancestry, were lawyers who worked against apartheid, a system of racial segregation. Kentridge’s work, which includes films, drawings, sculptures, and theatrical productions, often addresses political and social issues.

Looking Questions

- Where could these people be going? Where might they be coming from?
- What sorts of items do they carry?
- Could this be a parade? A journey? A migration? A celebration?
- Look closely at the figures’ poses. What could each person’s story be?
- Why do you think the artist used torn paper and pages from an old book in this work of art?



2000
Book with chine collé figures cut from black Canson paper, affixed to pages from *Le Petit Larousse Illustré* (Paris, around 1906), mounted on Velin Arches Crème paper, folded as a leperello
Image and sheet (unfolded): 10 x 166 inches (27.5 x 422.9 cm)
Portfolio: 11 x 9 x inches (28.6 x 24.8 x 2.1 cm)

William Kentridge
(South African, born 1955)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with funds contributed by the Young Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Thomas Skelton Harrison Fund, and the Print Revolving Fund, 2008-241-1 © 2011 William Kentridge



2001 (negative); 2003 (print)
Chromogenic print
Image: 6 x 10 inches (17.5 x 25.7 cm)
Sheet: 8 x 10 inches (20.3 x 26.4 cm)

Zoe Strauss
(American, born 1970)

Philadelphia Museum of Art: Purchased with funds contributed by Theodore T. Newbold and Helen Cunningham, 2003-104-8

South Philly (Mattress Flip Front)

This young boy is in the middle of a daring flip over a pile of worn mattresses. His arms swing out to his sides, helping him to complete his rotation. The boy's perfectly vertical body and round face create the shape of an exclamation point that hovers over the blue horizontal line of the top mattress. How did he jump so high and where will he land? Will the mattresses cushion his landing, or will he soar right over them?

In the background, another boy in a white T-shirt looks on. He holds his hand up to his mouth, perhaps reacting to his friend's acrobatic moves. The pavement, sidewalk, and red brick building with graffiti tell us that this scene takes place outside on the street or perhaps in an empty lot. The mattresses are missing some of their stuffing and the pile has shifted to the right, suggesting this game may have been going on for a while.

Zoe Strauss, the artist who took this picture, believes that "an important role of art is to mirror what is happening in the world."¹ She often photographs what is most familiar to her: the people and places in her neighborhood in South Philadelphia. This particular photograph is part of her larger project to document life in the city. During the ten years that she worked on the project, Strauss held annual outdoor public exhibitions of over two hundred of the photographs. Each of these pictures tells a story, and together they present an intimate narrative of Philadelphia.

¹ "Interview with Zoe Strauss, photographer in the Whitney Biennial 2006: Day for Night," Clare Hurley, June 2, 2006, accessed March 19, 2010, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2006/jun2006/stra-j02.shtml>.

Looking Questions

What is going on in this picture?

Describe the setting of this photograph—time of day, season, and location.

How do you think each boy is feeling?

Where do you think the boy in the air will land? Then what will happen?

Writing from Art

Narrative Writing

Narrative writing tells a story or part of a story. It can be fictional or non-fictional.

Character, setting, and plot in art

Select a work of art and discuss and/or write about the following:

Character: Choose a person, animal, or inanimate object in a work of art to explore as a character. What traits does this character possess? In what time and place do they exist? Where have they been? Where are they going? How do they feel? What are their thoughts and dreams? What do you see that tells you about them? What remains a mystery?

Setting: Is the setting in this work of art indoors or outdoors? If it's outdoors, what can you tell about the season, weather, location, and time of day? If it's indoors, what can you tell about the time and place it depicts? What visual clues tell you this information?

Plot: What happened before the moment depicted in this work of art? What will happen next? If there is a conflict or problem in the story, how will it be resolved? What do you see that informs your ideas? Why do you think the artist chose to depict this moment in the story?

Jump into a work of art

Imagine you can "jump" into a work of art and write a story about your adventure. How did you get there? What happened to you as you explored the work of art from the inside? How will you get back out? Illustrate your story with a picture of yourself inside the work of art.

Mixed-up pictures

Select a person, animal, or object from one work of art and imagine he/she/it has entered another (very different) work. What problems would arise? How would they be solved? What else might happen? Write a short story about the adventure that takes place.

Exploring dialogue: What would they say?

Write a dialogue between two figures in the same work. What is each one thinking? What would they want to ask or tell one another? What would they say in a conversation?

Alternative: Select a person or animal from two different works of art and imagine the conversation they would have with each other. Write out their imagined dialogue.

Extension: Using the dialogue, write a play based on the work(s) of art.

Letters

Write a letter from a person or animal in an artwork to you, the viewer. What do they want you to know? What is their daily life like? How do they feel about their surroundings? What are they thinking about?

Alternative: Write a letter to someone in a work of art. What would you like to tell them? What would you like to ask them?

Biography

Write an imagined biography for a person or animal in a work of art. What has happened in their life that has led them to this moment? Where are they in their life now? What are some important events in their life so far? What are their hopes for the future?

Journal

Write a journal entry from the perspective of someone or something in a work of art. Write about the events of your day, your current thoughts and feelings, as well as ideas, reflections, and what you wonder about.

Interior monologue

Imagine you can hear the thoughts of a person, animal, or object in a work of art. Using a stream of consciousness writing style, write a monologue of these thoughts. Read them aloud and see if your fellow students can guess whose thoughts you have recorded.

Multiple points of view

In a work of art with several figures, each one has a different point of view. Select two people or animals in the same work and write about how they each see the scene or story. What is different about what they see, think, and feel? What is similar?

The artist's point of view

Select a work of art and put yourself in the place of the artist who created it. Writing in the first person, describe what was happening as you made this work, what you wanted to capture, why you made the choices you did (such as subject matter, composition, materials, or color), and what it means to you.

Alternative: Everyone can begin with the same prompt—for example, “I was out walking when . . . ” or “Today I saw something incredible . . . ”—and write about the artist's experience of creating the work.

Informational/Explanatory Writing

This type of writing vividly portrays a person, place, or thing in such a way that the reader can visualize the topic and enter into the writer's experience.

Five senses descriptions

Art engages our five senses, telling us about how something looks, feels, tastes, smells, and sounds. Choose a work of art that enlivens your senses. While looking at the work in small groups or individually, write about how your senses would respond to this work of art if it came to life. These descriptions can be used as a brainstorming activity for further writing.

Alternative: Write a detailed description about a work of art for someone who cannot see/hear/smell, relaying as many details as possible to make the object come alive for them.

Back-to-back describe and draw

For this activity, two students sit back-to-back. One person (the describer) looks at a work of art and describes it to the other person (the listener), who cannot see it. While listening to the describer, the listener draws what they imagine the image to look like. The describer cannot look at the listener's drawing until it is finished. Afterward, discuss the experience. What words were most helpful? What was challenging? Switch roles and repeat the exercise with a new work of art.

Alternative: One student describes the pose of a person in a work of art and the other student must get into this pose.

Compare and contrast

Select two works of art that share something (they both depict a place, for example) but have significant differences. Brainstorm how the two objects compare and contrast in terms of subject matter, mood, feeling, colors, shapes, point of view, and/or materials. Use your notes to write about why these two works were chosen, what they share, and what makes each one unique.

Which is . . . ?

Select two works of art that have contrasting settings or moods. Describe the visual clues that give each one its unique feeling. Use collaborative brainstorming as the basis for a written piece.

Possible contrasts include:

Which is quiet, and which is noisy? What sounds would you hear?

Which is warm, and which is cold?

Postcard writing (see page 52)

Select a work of art to “enter” and write a postcard to someone who is not there. Tell them about what it feels like to be there and describe the sights and sounds of the place.

“Seeing” and “feeling” words

Select a work of art and look at it closely for several minutes. Brainstorm nouns to describe what you see (“seeing” words) and adjectives to describe the mood of the work (“feeling” words). Use these words to begin a discussion about the work of art or to develop a more finished written piece.

Texture

Bring in real objects with different textures. Pass them around one at a time and brainstorm descriptive words about how each object feels. (The object can also be placed in a bag so that it remains a mystery.) As the class passes around each item and describes its texture, work together to find a work of art that contains a similar texture. Use your descriptive words for further writing about the work(s) of art.

How does the artist . . . ?

Explore how artists visually convey information to us. How does an artist show us what season or time of day it is? How do they show if the setting is inside or outside? How do they convey a mood or tell a story? How does an artist show that a person or animal is happy, sad, strong, worried, angry, or curious? Select a work of art, explore one of these questions (or one of your own), and write about the visual evidence you find to support your observations.

Be a reporter

Imagine you are a newspaper or television reporter on the scene in one of the works of art. What will you record about the event? Take notes about what is taking place and interview some of the people who are present. Use these notes to write an article summarizing the event.

Instructions

Select a work of art and write a set of instructions related to the image. For example, explain how to win a race based on Antonio Ruiz’s *Bicycle Race*. Other ideas include instructions on how to enjoy a summer day (*Railroad Bridge, Argenteuil or South Philly*) or how to walk in the snow (*Yabu Lane*). Use one of these examples, or come up with your own.

Job descriptions

Write a job description for someone in a work of art. Explain the job requirements, what their daily tasks would be, and the kind of attributes the ideal candidate would have.

Interview

Choose a person, animal, or object from a work of art to interview. Sample questions include: What brought you here? What will you do next? Are you happy here, or would you rather be somewhere else? How are you feeling? What do you think of your surroundings? What else are you thinking about? Write your questions and your interviewee’s answers. Be sure to use as much visual evidence from the work of art as possible.

Scientific description

John James Audubon was both a scientist and artist, recording his observations about birds in his works of art. Taking inspiration from *White-Headed Eagle*, write a scientific description of the bird, including size, markings, habitat, diet, and other habits. Use the image on the card, the contextual information on its reverse, and information that you find in other sources to write your description.

Facts and opinions

Select a work of art and discuss it as a group, either using the looking questions on the image card or in the PowerPoint slideshow (see enclosed USB card). Read and share the background information about the object as well. Then, make a list of facts and opinions about the work. For the opinions, provide visual evidence that back up the claims. Discuss the differences between facts and opinions as the list develops.

Color description

Select a color in a work of art. Begin with the basic name of the color, then work to refine its description. To further describe the color you have chosen, discuss the following: What does it remind you of? Where does it occur in nature? What other objects are that color? What mood or feeling does the color create? Use these words to create a unique phrase describing this color. Several phrases can be used together to create a collaborative poem.

The elaboration game

Select a work of art and look at it carefully for several minutes as a group. One person begins by identifying a specific section of the work and describes what they see. A second person contributes to these observations by adding more detail. A third person elaborates further, and a fourth person adds even more. Each person describes what they see, leaving their interpretations for later. After four people have described the section in detail, someone else identifies a new section to be explored and the process begins again. Repeat until everyone has had a chance to make detailed observations or until all sections of the work of art have been explored. Continue the discussion with interpretive thoughts. During the observations, a recorder (teacher or student) writes down some of the key details and observations. Use these words and phrases as brainstorming for further writing.

The context of art

How does a work of art relate to the time and place in which the artist created it? Research the historical context of one object. Spend time looking at the object and reflect on connections you find between what you see and what you learned about when and where it was created. Write a short essay about these connections.

Alternative: Research the cultural and artistic context of one object. What other artists, writers, and musicians were working around this time? What artists or ideas may have influenced the person who made this work? How does it compare to other work that this artist made?

Headlines

Select a work of art that conveys a story and spend time looking at it. Write a news story headline (for a newspaper, magazine, blog, or website) that catches people’s attention and summarizes the main action of the story.

One theme, two artists

Choose two works of art and discuss how each one relates to a common theme. What does each artist convey about the idea or theme? How does the artist communicate those ideas? What is similar and different about the messages in each work? Spend time looking at the images and recording your thoughts. Read the text on the reverse of the cards for more information. Then, write a short essay about the two images and how the common theme is explored in each, supporting your ideas with details from the work of art.

Suggested themes:

Everyday Life	Journey/Traveling
Family	Man/Nature
Heroism	Modern Society/Cities

Poetry

Poetry uses evocative language and form to communicate an idea or an experience. There are a wide variety of structures and forms of poetry.

List poem

A list poem is an itemization of things or events, can be any length, and can rhyme or not. To create a list poem inspired by art, first select a theme. Themes could include colors, shapes, feelings (loneliness, happiness, excitement), ideas (flying, beauty, family, adventure), seasons, memories, or anything else. Working in pairs or as a group, select a work or several works of art that relate to the theme. Looking at the work(s), brainstorm words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) or short phrases that are inspired by what you see and relate to your theme. Remember to emphasize details. Using this list, arrange the words and phrases into a list poem.

Word pile poem

Select a work of art and look at it carefully for several minutes. On five separate index cards, write a word or short phrase (no more than three words per card) that describe your thoughts and observations about the work of art. Working individually or in small groups, arrange the cards into poems of any length. Create each line with either a single card or several cards together.

Ode

Odes typically celebrate a person or thing. They can follow a particular pattern or can be irregular. Select a person or thing from a work of art and write an ode to him/her/it. Describe what makes the subject of your poem unique, special, and worthy of admiration.

Haiku

Haiku poets traditionally write about everyday experiences, especially those related to nature. A haiku is usually written in three short lines, with the first and last a bit shorter than the middle line. It should have no more than seventeen syllables (typically arranged into 5/7/5 in lines 1, 2, and 3, but can vary). Select a work of art that depicts a place and brainstorm words and phrases that describe what you might see, smell, taste, or touch if you could be there. Use these words to create a haiku.

Metaphor poem

Select a work of art and identify a detail that catches your eye. Brainstorm what it reminds you of, such as something that has a similar shape, color, or texture. Use these ideas to create a metaphor describing the detail (for example, "Her peach fuzz cheek"). Repeat the exercise with other details in the work such as people, animals, objects, colors, lines, textures, or shapes. Select your favorite metaphors to create a poem.

Simile poem

Brainstorm adjectives to describe details in a work of art (such as the colors, action, or mood). Use these words as the beginning of a simile, adding either the word "like" or "as" after each. (For example, "Brave like _____," "Fast as _____," or "Red like _____.") Looking at the work of art, fill in your phrases. Select your favorite similes and arrange them into a simile poem.

Limerick (see page 53)

A limerick is a five-line poem in which lines 1, 2, and 5 contain three beats and rhyme, and lines 3 and 4 contain at least two beats and rhyme. Typically, limericks are humorous, have a first line that begins "There was . . .," and a last line that brings a twist or punch line. (Suggestion: Clapping while reciting a line can help determine the number of beats.)

Onomatopoeia poem

What sounds would you hear if a work of art came to life? Onomatopoeia poems celebrate sounds. Select a work of art that includes many people or things that would make noise. Brainstorm what these noises would be and how the words should be spelled (examples include "buzz," "hiss," and "ka-boom"). Discuss the visual clues that tell you about these sounds. Using these words, create poems that capture the noises of the work of art and bring it to life when you read the poems aloud.

Metaphor/simile poem (see page 54)

This four-line poem structure can be used with any work of art. After selecting an image and looking closely at it together, work collaboratively in small groups to create these four lines:

Line 1: Your own creative name for the work of art

Line 2: An action phrase based on what you see

Line 3: A simile that describes a character or the setting of the work of art using "like"

Line 4: Another short name for the work of art

Lune poem (see page 55)

One popular structure for a lune poem is a three-line poem with three words in line 1, five in line 2, and three in line 3. Because there are so few words in the poem, it is important to choose wisely. While looking at a work of art, brainstorm several facts about what you see and the feelings that the work inspires. Look back at your words and select three from your "facts" brainstorming for line 1. On line 3, write three words from the "feelings" brainstorming. On line 2, write five words that connect the ideas expressed on lines 1 and 3.

Walk poem

Take an imaginary walk through a work of art (or as someone pictured in one) and write about your journey. Walk poems typically fall into one of four types: a poem about what the poet sees on the walk; a poem about a walk that produces some kind of revelation; a poem whose length, style, and shape mirror the length, style, and shape of the walk; and a poem that reflects the way the mind works during the walk.

Calligram

Calligrams, or shape poems, do not have words arranged in horizontal lines like typical text. Instead, they take on interesting shapes and forms that relate to their content. During a discussion about a work of art, write down words and phrases that are shared. Taking from these ideas and adding some of your own, arrange the words and phrases into a form taken directly from the work of art or one inspired by it.

Alternative: After a discussion about a work of art, draw a shape that is found in the work. Fill it in with words and phrases brainstormed during the discussion.

Opinion/Argumentative Writing

This style of writing aims to convince the reader of a stated opinion or belief.

Divide and conquer

With the class divided into two groups, each group is assigned a different idea about a work of art (for example, two ideas about William Kentridge's *Portage* could be that the people are marching in a celebratory parade or that they are moving from one place to another due to famine). Pair off within your group and find evidence in the work of art that supports your assigned position. Next, pair with someone from the opposite group and discuss your findings to convince them of your position. Lastly, debrief. What happened when you met with each partner? What new thoughts or ideas did you have after your discussion? Was either person convinced of the other's position? What questions remain?

Is it art?

Sometimes artists challenge what art can be by introducing new ideas, styles, and subject matters into their work. Select a work of art that you think challenges what art can be. Brainstorm reasons why people may argue why it is and is not art. Older students can use these notes to write a persuasive essay defending their position.

Advertisement

Imagine you are a salesperson and need to convince people to buy something represented in one of the works of art (or the work of art itself). What is useful about it? What makes it appealing? Write an advertisement for the object.

Museum worthy?

Select a work of art that you find compelling. Imagine you are a museum curator and need to convince the museum to purchase it. Why is it important for the museum to have? How will the public benefit from seeing it on view? Why might it be important for it to be in the museum fifty or one hundred years from now? Research the artist and work of art to help further support your argument in a written statement.

Look, read, respond

Select a work of art that appeals to you and spend ten minutes looking at it. If you'd like to, write down your thoughts and questions as you look. After ten minutes, read the reverse of the image card and spend another five minutes looking at the work. What new thoughts do you have? Spend time reflecting on the following questions: What ideas or messages do you find in the work? What does it remind you of? Why do you think you were drawn to it? What new thoughts did you have as you looked more closely at it after you read about it? What new thoughts did you have after you read about it and looked at it again? Write an essay about your response to this work of art.

Prompts for Free Writing

Free writing is a prewriting technique that helps generate ideas. When given a prompt, the author writes continuously about whatever comes to their mind without regard for spelling, grammar, or organization.

Idea web (see page 56)

Using the looking questions on the image cards or in the PowerPoint slideshow (see enclosed USB card), look closely at a work of art and discuss it as a class. Next, consider its title. Brainstorm individually or as a group about the following questions: What associations do you have with the word(s)? What does the title remind you of? How do you think it relates to the work of art? Record your ideas in a web, placing the title in the center and related ideas in the connected circles. Use the idea web as a starting point for further writing.

Prompts

Select two or more works of art that share something, such as a motif, theme, idea, mood, style, color palette, or subject matter. Using that concept as a prompt, free write your thoughts as you consider the image(s) in front of you. Any associations—from what you see to those you make to your own life experiences—can be explored.

Suggested prompts:

Bridges	Danger
The Color Red	Joy
Contemplation	Seasons

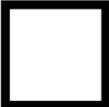
Name: _____

Postcard Writing



Dear _____

From _____



Name: _____

Limerick

Title of poem

Line 1: Contains three beats

Line 2: Contains three beats and rhymes with line 1

Line 3: Contains at least two beats

Line 4: Contains at least two beats and rhymes with line 3

Line 5: Contains three beats and rhymes with lines 1 and 2

Work(s) of art that inspired this poem

Art Speaks

Name: _____

Metaphor/Simile Poem

Title of Poem

Line 1: Your own creative name for the work of art

Line 2: An action phrase based on what you see

Line 3: A simile that describes a character in or the setting of the work of art using "like"

Line 4: Another short name for the work of art

Work(s) of art that inspired this poem

Art Speaks

Name: _____

Lune Poem

Title of the poem

Words that capture facts about the work of art:

Words that describe the feeling or mood of the work of art:

Line 1: Three words from your facts box

Line 2: Five words connecting lines 1 and 3

Line 3: Three words from your feeling or mood box

Work(s) of art that inspired this poem

Art Speaks

Name: _____

Idea Web

