Art Investigation

Exploring works of art naturally engages our inquiring minds and encourages critical thinking. In this lesson, students practice making meaning through close looking, analyzing visual evidence, making inferences, and examining different perspectives.

Grade Level
Grades 4–12

Common Core Academic State Standards
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1
- CCSS.MATH.PRACTICE.MP3

National Visual Arts Standards
- Responding: understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

Next Generation Science Standards
- Scientific Practices: Analyzing and interpreting data
- Scientific Practices: Engaging in argument from evidence

Suggested Learning Goals
Students will be better able to:
- Analyze a variety of artwork to discover ideas, emotions, multiple perspectives, and meaning
- Connect visual and contextual evidence to inferences about and interpretations of artwork
- Express individual ideas about a work of art and recognize the ideas of others

Essential Questions
- What can we learn by using inquiry skills when we look at art?
- How can we connect observations, thoughts, feelings, and questions to make meaning from a work of art?

Suggested Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Observe</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compare</td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Perspective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contrast</td>
<td>Inference</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Magnifying Glass, 1977
Designed by Bernard X. Wolff, American.
Made by Steuben Glass, of Corning Glass Works, Corning, New York
Lead glass, silver
4 3/16 x 9 inches (10.6 x 22.9 cm)
Gift of Michele and Maurice Rosen, 1982
1982-127-20
Lesson-Specific Activity
This activity is designed to prepare students for thinking and talking about artworks they may see during an “Art Investigation” lesson.

- Select a series of photographs, like the photo essay suggested under Supplementary Materials. Choose images that are ambiguous or mysterious, leaving room for interpretation.
- Students will work in pairs for this activity. Assign each pair one image from the series without providing any additional information.
- After giving students time for a first impression, have them analyze and interpret the images. Guide their investigation with questions such as: What do you see in this image? What is the setting of the photograph? What kind of person do you think is depicted? Why do you think he is depicted that way? How do you think the photographer feels about this person? Is there anything confusing or surprising about the image?
- Have students create a list of at least five pieces of visual evidence for a one-sentence interpretation of their image. Ask students what story they think the image tells.
- Regroup as a class and display all the images from the photo essay. Compare and contrast the images and work collaboratively to determine what the main idea or theme of the pictures is. Encourage students to share how their interpretations evolve when they see all the images together. Brainstorm a title for the series.
- Show students the actual title of the photo essay and the photographer’s rationale behind it. Ask them to reflect on what information and assumptions might have influenced their interpretations.

Supplementary Materials
- “What Happened to Ukraine’s 5,500 Lenin Statues?,” by Niels Ackerman and Sebastien Gobert, New York Times