

Learning to Look

How can we learn to see more when we look at art? This lesson leads students to become better observers of both art and the world around them through looking, describing, imagining, and responding. Drawing and writing activities are adapted for students' grade level.

Grade Level

Grades K–3

Common Core Academic State Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1](#)

National Visual Arts Standards

- Responding: understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

Suggested Learning Goals

Students will be better able to:

- Make observations and descriptions about a variety of artwork using all five senses
- Respond to artwork thoughtfully through discussion, drawing, and writing

Essential Questions

- How can we learn to see more when we look at art?
- How can close looking, describing, and imagining help us to experience artwork in a more meaningful way?

Suggested Vocabulary

Compare	Describe	Observe	Relate	Wonder
Contrast	Imagine	Reflect	Respond	

Lesson-Specific Activity

This activity is designed to prepare students for thinking and talking about artworks they may see during a “Learning to Look” lesson.

- Tell students that they are going to play a looking game. You will choose a familiar classroom object to describe using only five words. You won't use the name of the object in your description. Students will guess what the object is based on the five describing words. (Example: I am thinking of an object that is long, wooden, hard, thin, and numbered. What is it? A ruler!)



Memorandum Case with a Portrait of a Woman's Left Eye, c. 1800

Artist/maker unknown (English)

Watercolor on ivory

Miniature: 1 5/16 x 9/16 inches (3.3 x 1.4 cm)

Case: 3 7/8 x 3 3/16 inches (9.9 x 8.1 cm)

Gift of Joseph Carson, Hope Carson Randolph, John B. Carson, and Anna Hampton Carson in memory of their mother, Mrs. Hampton L. Carson, 1935

1935-17-1

- Play the game a couple of times, giving clues to your students and having them guess.
- When students get the hang of it, give them a chance to choose an object for their classmates to guess.

Extension Activities

There are many games you can play in pairs or as a class to encourage close looking and observation.

- Have students gather in a circle with one student standing in the center. Allow a few minutes for the students in the circle to look closely at their classmate's clothing, hair, and accessories. Then, tell them to cover their eyes while the student at the center changes something about his appearance. When the others open their eyes, they will try to observe what is different.
- Students can also practice the above activity in pairs. Alternatively, you might ask students to look closely at how the classroom is arranged and make a change for them to observe when they return from lunch.
- Even a daily classroom routine like observing and describing the weather, or changes in the seasons, is an opportunity to practice looking.