

Art Institute of Chicago  
**Strategic Questioning Practice**  
Karin Jacobson

When organizing your tour, remember to start with an overall goal or focus for the tour as a whole. Each work of art you then choose to include represents one or more points or objectives you want your visitors to come away with. These objectives support the overall tour goal and are achieved through strategic questioning. For example:

**TOUR**

Self, Family, and Community

**TOUR GOAL/FOCUS**

Students will realize some of the ways in which participation in family and community life affects them

**WORK OF ART**

Paul Gauguin, *Portrait of a Woman in Front of a Still Life by Cézanne*  
(1925.753)

**OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will understand that even if we might not know the name of the portrait's sitter, there is much we can learn about her through looking.
2. Students will discover depth: the sitter is in front of a painting
3. Students will learn that artists look at each other's work and such looking has an impact on the way they (in this case) paint
4. Students will relate the concept of influence to events in their own lives.

**REMEMBER:**

Strategic questioning involves asking questions with an educational strategy in mind. We construct our questions in order to follow a direction we have developed prior to the tour. These directed questions seek to achieve the educational objectives and goals we have developed. There are three kinds of strategic questions:

**OPENING QUESTIONS:** encourage directed looking

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:** ask the visitor to pursue the inquiry by looking and considering the object in more depth

**PUSH-THROUGH QUESTIONS:** ask for analysis and critical thinking based on the questions that have already been asked and discussed.