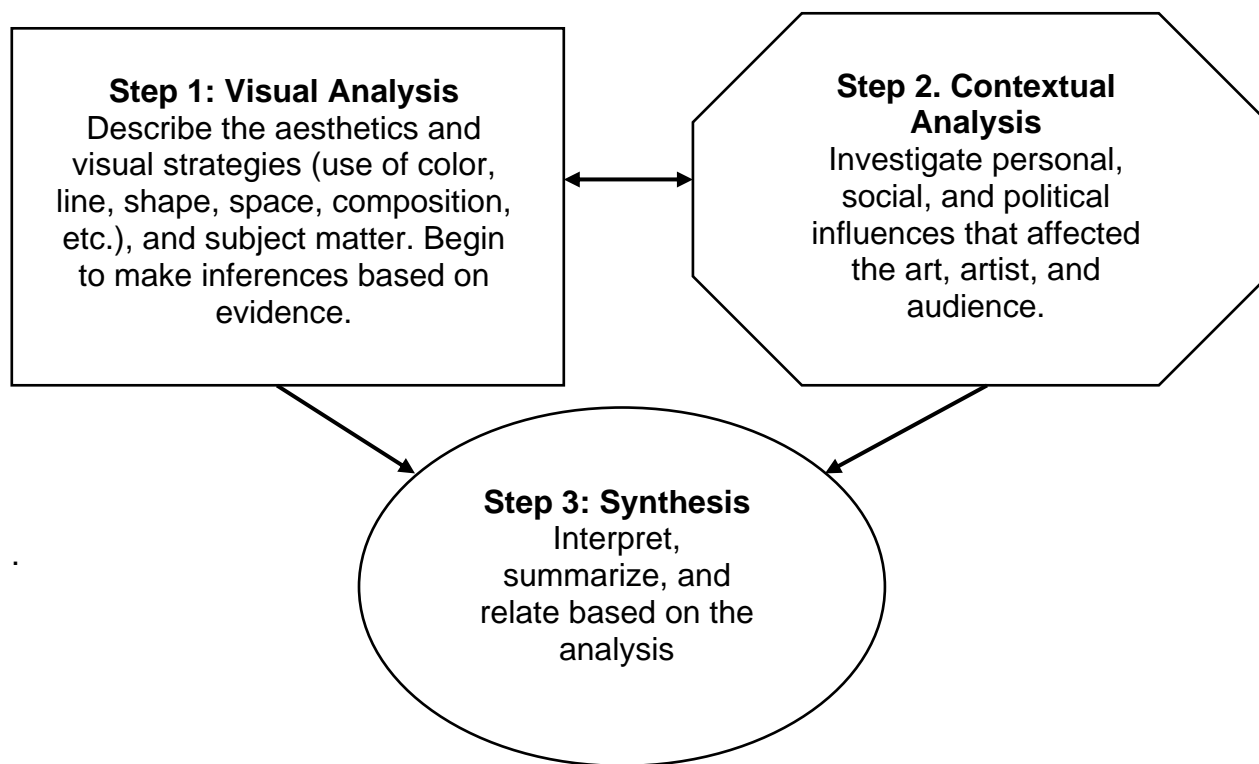


Teacher Lab

Look, Learn, Connect: Interpreting a Work of Art through a “Close Read”



Examples of Relevant Teaching/Learning Strategies:

- Engage and focus attention
- Create a personal connection
- Ask open-ended questions
- Clarify observations
- Compare and contrast
- Research
- Support ideas with examples and information
- Justify inferences with examples and information

Close Read Step 1: Visual Analysis

Describe the aesthetics and visual strategies (use of color, line, shape, space, composition, etc.), and subject matter. Begin to make inferences based on evidence.

Sample Questions:

Encourage students to give looking time.

- *Spend some time looking closely at this work of art, then we'll talk about what you see.*
- *Take a minute to study this image, then list in writing the details you notice.*

Invite students to share their observations.

- *So what did you see?*
- *What's going on in the painting?*

Help student direct their attention to things you want them to notice.

- *What objects are included in this painting?*
- *What is something you notice about _____?*

Help students analyze the artist's visual strategies.

- *What did you notice first and why?*
- *How does the artist show us what's important?*
- *How does your eye travel through the picture?*
- *Notice the artist's use of line (or color, shapes, etc.). What adjectives describe the lines (colors, shapes, etc.)?*
- *What's the overall mood of the painting? How do the lines (colors, shapes, etc.) help to create that mood?*

Invite students to interpret or speculate about the meaning of the artwork, (motivate students leading to step 2 of the Close Read):

- *What do you think the artist wanted to communicate?*
- *What's the main idea?*
- *What would be a good title for this work and why?*

Guide students to support their responses with evidence.

- *What do you see that makes you say that?*

Encourage students to ask questions of their own, leading to step 2 of the Close Read.

- *What would you like to know about the artwork?*
- *What would you like to ask the artist?*

Close Read Step 2: Contextual Analysis

Investigate personal, social, and political influences that affected the art, artist, and audience.

Gather information (or have students gather information) relevant to the lesson about the time period, artwork, and artist. Sample questions to guide research appear below:

About the TIME PERIOD

Relevant Kinds of Information:

- *At the time the artwork was made, what was happening in society, the economy, or politics that the artist was probably responding to?*
- *What do primary or secondary sources say about that time period that is relevant to understanding the artwork?*
- *What or who is missing from the artwork? Are there realities the artist didn't address?*

About the ARTWORK

Relevant Kinds of Information:

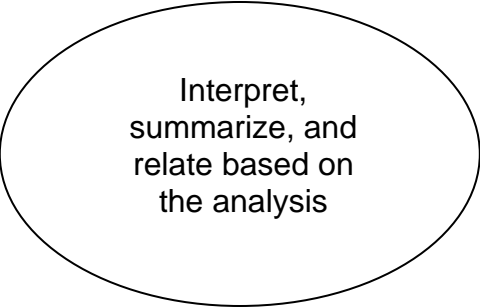
- *What is the subject?*
- *What does the artwork represent?*
- *What visual strategies did the artist use to get his/her ideas across?*
- *Did the artist write about the work? Is he/she quoted as saying anything about it?*
- *What did critics or art historians say about it?*
- *In what ways is the work a reflection of society or a product of its time?*
- *Why was the artwork made? Was it made for or commissioned by somebody?*
- *Why does the artwork look the way it does?*
- *What expectations was the artist responding to?*

About the ARTIST

Relevant Kinds of Information:

- *When did the artist live?*
- *Where did he/she work most of the time?*
- *What about the artist's life experiences might have influenced or inspired him/her to make the work of art?*
- *What was happening in the artist's life when he/she made the work?*
- *What is the artist known for (what subjects or processes for example)?*
- *What was he/she most interested in exploring as an artist?*

Close Read Step 3: Synthesis



Interpret,
summarize, and
relate based on
the analysis

From what was learned during steps 1 and 2 of the Close Read, what conclusions can you or students draw or connections can you make to the artwork?

Examples of synthesis questions:

Based on what you have learned, what do you think

- *the artist's message is?*
- *the artist shows about American ideas, ideals, or values?*
- *about how the artwork relates to the time period?*
- *about how the artist communicates?*
- *about how this artwork relates to your experience?*
- *about how this artwork relates to stories, poems, and other artworks we've studied?*