

Observation

Overview: Students practice noticing and describing details.

Goals: This lesson will

Support concepts & skills: Note and describe details, patterns, and relationships.

Fulfill Learning Standards: Science Inquiry 1, 14. Properties of matter, technology: properties of materials; Visual Art: 1, 2, 3, 5.

Practice: noticing, describing details, noticing patterns, relationships; interpreting meaning.

Familiarize students with: works of art, genres, styles.



Portrait of a Young Woman
Roman

Objectives for Students: Students will

Be able to: observe closely, noticing details, patterns, relationships; describe accurately what they see, using precise language.

Key Questions (to be answered by students):

1. What makes this object unique?
2. What vocabulary will describe this object most precisely?

Materials Needed: Observation and Description Activity worksheets.

Museum Objects: Any work(s) of art will be appropriate for this lesson. Object shown is *Portrait of a Young Woman*, Roman, carved marble, A. D. 117-138 (2001.1).

Pre-Museum Visit – Play noticing games, such as hidden pictures; practice identifying patterns.

At the Museum – Ask students to work in pairs, and follow the directions on the worksheet: choosing an interesting work of art, observing it closely, and writing clues. The goal is to write a precise description so that their classmates will easily be able to identify the object. Ask pairs to exchange clue paragraphs and see if they can identify the object described by the other pair.

Post-Museum Visit – Reflection: “Which descriptions helped you most in identifying the object? Why? What details would you add, or what vocabulary would you change to make the description more precise?”

Supportive Material: Observation and Description Activity worksheet.

Documentation and Assessment Options: Repeat this activity several times, keeping their worksheets. Analyze whether there is any change in the number of details they notice, the kinds of details they write, or the precision of their descriptions.

Links to Other Curriculum: A similar worksheet can be used to create a “clues / find” game for poetry, continents, countries, species, landforms, elements or compounds, etc.

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Observation and Description Activity

Work with a partner. Pick an art object that interests both of you.

Observing and describing the object.

Your challenge is to notice as many different things as you can about this work of art. Write each thing that you notice on a separate line on the paper below. There are many different kinds of things to notice. You might pay attention to: the material it's made of, the technique and how it is made, the shape, line, color, decoration, patterns, size, meaning, and many other things. Make each description that you write as specific as possible. For example, instead of writing "It's neat the way it looks," write something more specific about what you see.

When you have written all the observations you can think of (or if the time is up) turn to the next page.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.

Writing a precise description.

Your next challenge is to write a very precise description of your object so that another person could find the object you are describing. The catch is that there are some things you are not allowed to write anything about. You are not allowed to write what kind of work of art it is (painting, sculpture, mask, drawing, vase, etc.). And you are not allowed to write about the subject of the work of art. The subject is what the work is ABOUT, for example, a landscape, a woman, a house, a jaguar, a feast.

So what does that leave that you CAN write about? How it looks. What it's made of. How it is decorated. The shapes, lines, patterns, or colors you see. The contrast, balance, or repetition you see. The mood that it shows. You will think of others.

Go back to your original list and cross off all off-limits descriptions, then use the remaining ones to write a paragraph below. When we come back together you will give your paragraph to someone else who will then have to find the object you have described.