

Tips for looking at art with 5th–12th grade students

Begin by choosing a theme to connect 8-10 artworks like narrative, identity, elements of art, etc. Then...

- **Look** – Take the time to look closely with students and ask open-ended questions. Ask students to back up their statements by describing what they see in the artwork that makes them say that. Make sure to honor all students' observations.
- **Layer** – Weave information into the conversation when appropriate.
- **Connect** – Connect the artwork to students' lives by asking if something about the work might remind them of something they've seen or felt before.
- **Reflect** – Synthesize the ideas covered.

Tips for engaging students on a self-guided visit (choose one age-appropriate activity per artwork):

- **Pair Share:** Have students turn to a partner and talk about what they see. Then, ask each pair to share their observations with the entire group. Point out any similarities or differences that were shared and weave in information about the artwork.
- **Memory:** Have students look closely at an artwork for 30 seconds. Then, ask them to turn around so that they are facing away from the artwork. Ask the group what they remember seeing. Students will begin to piece together what they saw with each other's help. Then, have students face the artwork again and ask if there was anything they missed.
- **Whip-around:** Ask each student to say the first word that comes to mind when looking at the artwork. Point out similarities in the words and ask students what they see that makes them think of these words.
- **Compare/Contrast:** Ask students to compare and contrast the artwork in front of them with the last work they saw.
- **Telescope:** Invite students to discover details in an artwork by making a telescope with their hands and looking through it.
- **Blind Contour:** Choose one spot to look at in an artwork. Give each student a sheet of paper, a pencil and a drawing board. Have them place the point of a pencil at a random spot on their paper and keep the pencil on the paper while looking at that spot in the artwork. Without looking down at the paper or picking up the pencil off of the paper, ask students to draw what they see.
- **Freewriting:** Have students write about their thoughts and observations of an artwork without stopping for 5 min. Then ask students to underline three words that stand out and choose one of the words to discuss.
- **Post-it Poetry:** After discussing an artwork, ask students to get into groups of 4. Pass out post-its and pencils, and ask students to each write a one-word response to the artwork they see. Then, have students arrange the words in their group to form a line in a poem. Ask a volunteer from each group to read their collaborative line out loud to form a group poem about the artwork in front of them.
- **Strike a Pose:** (Individually) Have students pose like figures in a painting or a sculpture or, (as a group) divide students into groups of at least 2-3 people. Assign an artwork to each group and have students learn about the piece with their partners. Assign one student in each group to adopt a pose. The partners can help the "poser" get the details just right by giving verbal instructions only. Have each group present their poses and share information about the artwork and 1 unusual detail that the group found interesting.
- **Selfie Symbols:** After exploring different symbols found in the Museum's collection and their meanings, invite students to draw a symbol that represents them.
- **Imagine:** After discussing an artwork, have students close their eyes and imagine what they might hear, feel or see (choose one) if they were inside the artwork.
- **Reflect:** At the end of the visit, reflect by asking what their favorite artwork was and why, and/or what is something they'll remember about their visit.
- **Debate:** Divide the group in half, with each group supporting an opposing stance (example: this is art vs. this is not art). Give each group a few minutes to gather proof from carefully observing the artwork and writing down their observations. Then, have each group debate their case and ask which group won. Another question to ask is if anyone disagreed with the stance they were given. *Note: this activity should be done when there are no other tours going on nearby.*