



HOW TO ANALYSE AN UNSEEN ARTWORK LESSON

Notes for the teacher

INTRODUCTION: VIDEO (4-5 minutes)



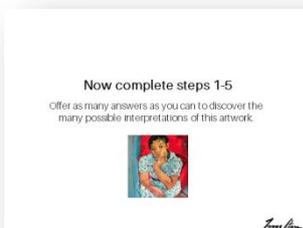
This short video introduces the lesson, placing emphasis on the attitude and skills needed to analyse an unseen artwork.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION (30 – 50 minutes)



During the initial observation: Allow learners at least one minute to observe the image. Ask them to let their eyes travel over the entire picture surface, not missing a centimetre. Do not draw their attention to anything in particular. This quiet and contemplative practice is where the learner starts to selectively see. If you give them a framework from the start, it will shape their thinking and observational process in a uniform manner. We want individual and emotive responses at this early stage.

In the ensuing discussion, encourage learners to offer as many observations as possible by:



- Validating their responses, e.g.: 'Yes, I see that, well observed.'
- Now tell me what you think about... ' Asking other learners to debate the response, not criticise a peer.
- 'Do you think that the artist tried to convey sadness by using the cool colours?' Always highlight learners' ideas; not their names, to keep the discussion un-judgemental and non-threatening.
- Can you find other evidence that supports this observation? (Discuss how colour contributes to mood) Does anyone have an alternative opinion?'

If there are few or no responses, get the learners to contribute to a list by asking for example: 'Let's define these cool colours by giving them names. What do you associate with this particular blue?' Learners provide names e.g.: baby blue, very light and airy blue, sea blue. Now let learners make further associations with the adjectives: baby, sea, airy, etc. How does this help us understand the emotional value of these colours?

Does the meaning or appearance of the cool colours change when they are placed next to the fiery red?

Make links between responses from different learners: 'Earlier it was pointed out that her body was folded over in a protective manner and at the same time it was a planned 'thinking pose'. We have also just observed that the girl is cropped off to fit in the frame and beyond the frame. How does this choice in composition affect your reading of her body language? Does it support your initial opinion or not?

Try to get real, individual responses and keep the discussions going around one topic or element for as long as possible. The idea is to generate information through association. The more they talk and contribute, the more 'fun' it gets to offer another perspective and have many interpretations revealed.



Discuss each step individually, allowing for as many responses as possible.

Ask a learner to be a scribe and write down all the ideas for everyone to see. This could be in the form of lists, with each step as a heading.

Guiding questions for discussion:

STEP1

- Does anyone know anything about this artist?
- Does the title reveal any new information about the artwork?
- What about the painting does the title not refer to? What does the title focus on?
- What do we know about events or life in 1939? How many years ago was 1939? Can you recall a family member who was alive in 1939 – how old were they then, how would you describe their values, fashion, lifestyle?
- What do we know about the materials and techniques used to create this painting? Does anyone have any experience of using these materials?
- Let's measure out the dimensions of this artwork... how does the scale affect the way we see this artwork?

STEP2

Go around the classroom once, twice or thrice giving everyone a chance to keep adding to the list of things they see or notice. This list can be endless... go into great detail, e.g.: at first someone will say dress, then someone can add printed dress, then describe the pattern, the motif, the colours, the tones, lines, the shape of the dress, etc. get them to look for as long as possible to discover the smallest marks to the layout, etc.

A viewfinder can also help here, to identify interesting parts of the image or to zoom into detail.

STEP3

Learners often look to the person's expression only for 'mood'.

Guide them to discuss the feeling expressed by the combination of objects, subjects, shapes, colours, textures, materials, etc., to create a certain effect or atmosphere.

- If the red patch was left out, how would that change the mood?
- Let's identify the main colours – which associations do you have with these colours? What is the effect of this combination?
- Discuss the difference between a naturalistic artwork, a simplified artwork, an expressive artwork... what was the artist's choice here? Why?
- Have you seen any other artwork or pictures that use the same language (portrait, cartoon, and photograph)?

STEP4

The artist chose this shape and size of canvas, in which to place the image.

- How does the subject fit into the picture space? How is the picture space divided up?
- Which parts hold the most interest for you and why? Is it because it is emphasised (how), repeated (define the sequence), contrasted (with what), etc.

Discuss what has been cut off; left out, etc... can you imagine how things extend beyond the picture space? Why did the artist crop or frame the picture this way?

STEP5:

- Does the roughness or smoothness of the paint have an effect or message?
- Which choices did the artist make?
- How is the paint applied?
- Which tools do you think the artist used?
- Are the tones naturalistic? What is the effect of this choice?
- Can you see the various brushstrokes? *Ask 3 learners to describe an appealing area in the painting and compare these areas.
- Did she blend the colours when they were wet or dry? How do you know this?
- Can you see the canvas through the paint? What is the effect of this choice on the painting?
- Did she apply paint uniformly? Why do you think she did this?
- Can you see evidence of the artist's hand? Can you imitate the gestures used to create the pattern on the dress, the shading of the background, the skin tones in her face, the lines of the chair?
- How did the artist move or behave when painting this: fast, slow, wild, tenderly, etc. How does this add to the style or mood?

STEP6:

This is a portrait of one human being that was created in paint by another human being who chose, placed and carefully observed the other person. The artist made many choices to create the message or vision they had in paint on canvas.

- What did they want you to perceive, debate or admire?

Look carefully at all the information (lists) we've made and see which ideas or observations are important or repeated.

WORKSHEET

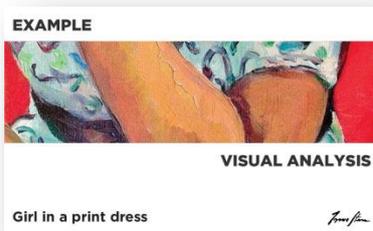
Subject matter What is the subject of the painting and how does it relate to the overall theme of the artist's work? What is the artist's message? What is the artist's style? What is the artist's technique? What is the artist's use of color? What is the artist's use of light and shadow? What is the artist's use of texture? What is the artist's use of composition? What is the artist's use of perspective? What is the artist's use of scale? What is the artist's use of proportion? What is the artist's use of balance? What is the artist's use of contrast? What is the artist's use of rhythm? What is the artist's use of pattern? What is the artist's use of repetition? What is the artist's use of variation? What is the artist's use of emphasis? What is the artist's use of hierarchy? What is the artist's use of focus? What is the artist's use of depth? What is the artist's use of space? What is the artist's use of time? What is the artist's use of place? What is the artist's use of people? What is the artist's use of objects? What is the artist's use of events? What is the artist's use of actions? What is the artist's use of emotions? What is the artist's use of thoughts? What is the artist's use of feelings? What is the artist's use of attitudes? What is the artist's use of values? What is the artist's use of beliefs? What is the artist's use of opinions? What is the artist's use of judgments? What is the artist's use of conclusions? What is the artist's use of recommendations? What is the artist's use of suggestions? What is the artist's use of implications? What is the artist's use of inferences? What is the artist's use of deductions? What is the artist's use of inductions? What is the artist's use of abductions? What is the artist's use of deductions? What is the artist's use of inductions? What is the artist's use of abductions?	Emotional Address Title: Artist: Date: Medium: Dimensions:  Meaning Describe the meaning of the painting. How does it relate to the overall theme of the artist's work? Materials and technique Describe the materials and techniques used in the painting. How do they contribute to the overall effect of the work?
---	---

The visual analysis worksheet can be used as homework assignments or /and in class activities to fortify learning.

It will assist learners to organise their ideas after they have spontaneously generated them.

*Three additional worksheets are available for download at the bottom of the website page

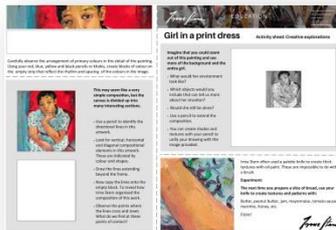
EXAMPLE OF A VISUAL ANALYSIS



The presentation: How to analyse an unseen artwork: written example will help learners to see how to write their lists and ideas out in full. This document can also be used as notes.

This is quite a bit of reading to do in class, please see the video: How to analyse an unseen artwork: audio, to listen to the analysis while observing the artwork.

ACTIVITY SHEET



The four activities can be used separately as homework assignments or /and in class activities to fortify learning.