

# Memory Draw

## A routine for looking closely to explore complexity

LOOK:	Look closely at an image, painting, photograph or object.
REPRODUCE:	From memory, draw everything you can remember of it as best you can. Imagine your mind is a photocopier and try to reproduce it as accurately as possible.
COMPARE:	When you are finished, compare your version to the original. Record similarities and differences. What seems to match up when you compare your version to the original? What seems very different? What's not present at all in your version?
REFLECT:	What have you learned? Why key insights have you had about the image, painting, photograph or object that seem important and worth holding on to?

### **Purpose: What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?**

This routine encourages learners to slow down, observe closely, and appreciate the creativity and complexity embedded in the world around them.

### **Application: When and where can it be used?**

The routine can be used in any subject area where students are required to look closely and read for meaning. For example, when visiting an art gallery this routine might help avoid what David Perkins calls 'audience impressionism'\* (the tendency of gallery or museum-goers to look briefly at artefacts, noting only whether or not they like the artefact, and not much else), but rather to look closely and learn deeply from 1 or 2 exhibits. Similarly, History teachers might use the routine to explore source material such as a cartoon or photograph, English teachers might use it to explore imagery from a picture book, Science teachers might use it to look closely at a complex diagram, and Technology teachers might use it to help students explore the creativity and complexity of a manufactured artefact.

It is important that the image/object selected by the teacher is complex and multi-faceted; if it is simple, and lacking in complexity, the Memory Draw will not be challenging and may be frustrating for learners without leading to rich insight.

*\*The Intelligent Eye: Learning to Think by Looking at Art (David Perkins, 1994)*

### **Launch: What are some tips for starting and using this routine?**

The first time you use this routine, teachers might avoid telling students that they will be required to reproduce what they are looking at, perhaps saying, "I'd like you to look very closely at this image. Take 2 minutes, and allow yourself to look closely at all of its parts and elements. There's a reason why you're doing this - I'm just not telling you that yet."

Subsequently, however, it's fine if students work out what is happening and guess that they are beginning a Memory Draw. If anything, this just encourages them to look more closely. When it comes to reproducing, it's helpful to allay any fears that some students might have: "Don't worry if you don't feel you're a confident artist just yet. It's not a test of your artistic ability. It's not a test at all. And if you can't remember very much, that's great – that'll make it an even richer learning experience. Just try your best."

When it comes to the compare phase, hold learners back for as long as you can to exploit their growing curiosity. As they begin their comparison, encourage them to record both similarities and differences – similarities are just as important as differences, and 'similarities' doesn't mean 'identicalities'.

In the reflect phase, they might reflect both on what they have learned about the process of close and slow looking, and the specific insights they have developed about the image through the process of Memory Draw.