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The Art Study Approach

The Purpose of Displaying the Art Pieces

Displaying the works of the current artist being studied is a simple and effective way to create interest in that artist and in art, in general. That display can be arranged on a bulletin board, wall, easel or other designated area before any lesson work has begun with that particular artist. The art pieces are always readily available to be viewed. Daily views of the art pieces allow children an opportunity to examine a piece and then examine it again with a new perspective or approach, just as they are able to consider one work on one day and a different one by the same artist on another day.

General Approach to an Artist Study

1. Choose an artist and then 5-8 art pieces of that artist.
2. Gather books about the artist or research suggested books that could be checked from the library.
3. Print the art pieces in color or mark them in a book. You may also wish to find an article which explains or provides more information about each specific art piece, but this is optional.
4. Display the art pieces on an easel, bulletin board, wall space or other designated area with labels for each piece.
5. At the beginning of each new year, have a discussion about art. Why do we study art? Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art? See the included notes in this file on discussing the purpose of art study.

6. Read at least one biography of the artist. Usually a short book such as one by Diane Stanley or Mike Venezia will work, but books with short or chapter biographies of artists work as well.

7. After reading the biography, choose one picture for each lesson for study and discussion thereafter. The first lesson will focus on reading the biography and introducing the artist. The subsequent lessons will focus on one of the selected art pieces, one each per lesson. Each study of a piece will be followed by an art study narration. Choose the level that is best for each student individually and perhaps have your student complete a quick sketch of the art piece for each selection. Alternatively, have your students wait and complete a sketch for only their chosen favorite piece, which is completed at the end of the study.

8. When all of the pieces are completed, you may wish to have your students complete a notebook page for the chosen artist consisting of basic factual information about the artist, a list of the pieces studied, choice of a favorite of these pieces and why this piece was chosen, but this too is optional.

9. Here is where the quick sketch is completed of the chosen favorite selection, if you chose this approach.

What is the Purpose for Studying Art?

Note: While this discussion is helpful to have at the beginning of each new year, please feel free to adapt as needed to prevent too much repetition. Also, while this discussion begins the year, feel free to incorporate the ideas behind it throughout the year.

Level One

Discuss the purpose of art study. Why do we study art? Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?

Discuss how art is a method of expression for man. When we draw or paint a picture what do we feel while creating our art? How do we feel when it is finished? How would our feelings affect our art work? What would our art look like if we painted or drew or sculpted while happy (or angry or sad)? Have you seen art work that caused you feel happy, peaceful, sad, angry or scared?

Level Two

Why do we study art? Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?

Discuss how artists are influenced by their feelings and the times in which they live. Would an artist's feelings or thoughts be reflected in her art work? Think of an example. Would the time in which she lives be reflected in her art work? Think of an example. What inspires an artist? What would inspire you to create art? How does art represent history?

Level Three

Discuss the purpose of art study. Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?

Read the PNEU article “Picture Talks” ([Resources, The Arts](#)). From the article, discuss how art is man's means of expressing himself. Art is composed of a precise language and poetical thoughts. How is this art a reflection of the artist's ideas, thoughts and feelings? If art is a reflection of an individual's ideas, thoughts or feelings, what does this tell us about our response to their art?

Should art be beautiful? Who defines beauty? How would different peoples define art? How might this influence their ideas of beauty?

Do artists try to convey a message or illicit our own message? Distinguish between these two ideas. Think of an example for each.

Art Study Narrations

Level 1

The Art Study Narrations are completed as one individual art piece at a time is being introduced and after the entire art study has been introduced, the display created and the biography read. Please see previous teaching notes for the latter activities.

Study of Each Individual Piece

1. Have your student study the art selection, quietly and independently.
2. After studying it, have your student describe the art piece in great detail without looking at it. Let your student give their narration to you privately to keep siblings and friends from influencing their own thoughts and perspectives. Jot down some of their thoughts or points in a quick list as they narrate.
3. Following this description, look at the piece together to discuss any details missed. If you have more than one student participating in this study, you will come together as a group for this discussion. Share with your group the points which the students had in common about the pieces and offer at least one unique perspective for each student as well. You may also wish to allow the students to share individually, but this sometimes gets repetitive and offers the risk of influencing their own thoughts. Additionally, use your notes taken from any instructional commentary about the specific piece and incorporate whichever you feel best augments the discussion, if you wish. Often this will act as a substitute for a larger group than is available, giving a few more perspectives or particulars about the pieces to include.
4. Have your student make a quick sketch of the art piece and add color to it. Alternatively, wait until the study has been completed and have your student make a quick sketch for their favorite piece.

Level 2

The Art Study Narrations are completed as one individual art piece at a time is being introduced and after the entire art study has been introduced, the display created and the biography read. Please see previous teaching notes for the latter activities.

Study of Each Individual Piece

1. Have your student study the art selection, quietly and independently.
2. After studying it, have your student describe the art piece in great detail without looking at it. Let your student give their narration to you privately to keep siblings and friends from influencing their own thoughts and perspectives. Jot down some of their thoughts or points in a quick list as they narrate.
3. Following this description, look at the piece together to discuss any details missed. See Level One for additional notes.
4. Have your student write their narration.

Depending on their age and writing abilities you may want to include some of the following:

- Name and date of piece and by whom
- Background information about the artist
- Detailed description of the piece
- Personal thoughts about the picture
- Quick sketch of the picture and add color to it. Alternatively, wait until the study has been completed and have your student make a quick sketch for their favorite piece. **Remember this is a quick outline sketch and the student should not feel pressured to replicate the work of a famous artist.**

Scaffolding the Art Study Narrations

- A much younger student might use a sheet of story paper (half page blank for picture and half with lines for some writing) and on this page would sketch the piece and add color to it. They would add the name and date of the piece and by whom and then a couple of sentences describing it.
- The following year they might add personal comments to this same format.
- The following year you may wish to have them make their sketch on a separate sheet of paper or their sketch book and use a fully lined page for a narration which includes all of the previous years' information and then add background information about the artist.
- Each year you would increase the level of detail and expectations in writing.

Level 3

The Art Study Narrations are completed as one individual art piece at a time is being introduced and after the entire art study has been introduced, the display created and the biography read. Please see previous teaching notes for the latter activities.

Study of Each Individual Piece, Following the Introduction

1. Have your student study the art selection, quietly and independently.
2. After studying it, have your student describe the art piece in great detail without looking at it. Let your student give their narration to you privately to keep siblings and friends from influencing their own thoughts and perspectives. Jot down some of their thoughts or points in a quick list as they narrate.
3. Following this description, look at the piece together to discuss any details missed. See Level One for additional notes.
4. Have your student write their narration. You can vary how much detail and with what you would like the narration to include.

A Basic Narration Might Include:

- Name and date of piece and by whom
- Background information about the artist and the artwork being studied
- Very detailed description of the piece
- Personal comments or reflections of the student about the art
- Have them include, on a separate sheet of paper or in their sketch book, a quick sketch of the picture and add color to it. Alternatively, wait until the study has been completed and have your student make a quick sketch for their favorite piece, with the added option of spending more time with it and making it their own version of the piece.