

GIVE ONE, GET ONE (ADAPTED VERSION FOR WHOLE GROUP ACTIVITY)

GOALS:

- To develop the ability to look closely at and describe a work of art.
- To share descriptions so that all have many phrases “detailing” the work of art for use in later writings.

LENGTH: 15-20 minutes

STEP 1

Give each student a clipboard with a worksheet and pencil.

STEP 2

In front of a work of art, tell the students they will have 5 minutes to list at least 25 phrases (or as many as they can) that describe what they see in the work of art. Students should write these phrases in the left hand column or on the left hand side on the back of the sheet if they need more room.

STEP 3

After five minutes, ask students “who has the **most** phrases”? Ask the person with the most to slowly read their phrases (GIVE ONE). The listeners should put a checkmark next to their phrases that are similar to the reader’s responses. If the listeners do NOT have a phrase of similar details on their list, they should write the new phrase in the right hand column of the worksheet (GET ONE).

STEP 4

Ask others to read any remaining descriptions that haven’t been heard (GIVE ONE). Again, those not reading should write new phrases in the right hand column (GET ONE).

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Ask students to use their lists as the basis for a free verse poem. They may use **any** of the written phrases, not just their original list.
- Group students and have each group write a collaborative poem using phrases they have chosen from the list. Share each “group poem” with all students.

I SEE...I THINK....I WONDER...ACTIVITY

GOALS:

- To develop the ability to look closely at and describe a work of art.
- To develop the ability to speculate about the work of art and construct possible meaning based upon descriptions noted.
- To develop the ability to ask questions about the artist's process, medium, or intent.

STEP 1

Give each student a clipboard with a piece of paper and a pencil.

STEP 2 (about 10 minutes)

Tell students to write **I SEE...** at the top of the page and then to look closely at the work of art and write down as many phrases as they can that describe what they see in this work for five minutes. Share and discuss as many responses as time permits.

STEP 3 (about 5-10 minutes)

Tell students to write **I THINK...** under their descriptions. Ask them to write down their speculations about what this work of art might mean or how they might interpret it based on their descriptions. Ask students to generate possible titles. Emphasize that there are **MANY** possible titles and meanings. Share and discuss as many of their ideas as time permits.

STEP 4 (about 5-10 minutes)

Tell students to write **I WONDER...** under their speculations. Then ask them to write down any questions they still might have about this work of art. Share and discuss (and maybe answer) as many questions as time permits.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Ask students to write a free verse poem. They could "structure" it as 3 stanzas that each begins with "I see...I think...I wonder..." (or a structure of their choosing).

Ask students to write a poem or a story about a) what is happening in this work of art or b) what happened **before** this (prequel) or c) what will happen after (sequel).

Toledo Museum of Art Visual Literacy-Based Ekphrastic Poetry Activity

Originally titled "Abstract Painting and Poetry Activity"
(Adapted with TMA Education Department and Vivian Ladd)

Tips for writing in a gallery:

- Invite the participants to get comfortable in their seats.
- Ask them to be sure they are in a spot where they can see the work they have chosen to write about.
- Invite them to sit quietly for a moment, maybe with their eyes closed. Ask them to take a deep breath, relax their shoulders, and let go of the stress(es) of the day.

Consider doing the writing activity with your group; it helps the group to know that you are going to take the risk with them. However, although it is possible, depending on the group it may be a challenge to do the activity as they do it, as you are keeping track of their timing.

Transition: Now that you're comfortable...

Step 1: Sketching

Make a rough sketch of the work of art. The sketch should focus on the basic lines and shapes – without a lot of detail. No artistic skill is needed at all. No one will see it.

Step 2: Add Description

Begin to fill each part of your sketch with words to describe what you see in the work of art in that space. Maybe choose single words to describe colors, shapes, textures. You might use similes and/or metaphors – short adjective phrases, if parts of the work prompt associations, feelings.

Step 3: Write a Free Verse Poem – about three lines (may be more)

Using the words that you generated, take a few minutes to create a short free verse poem – about three lines - to describe the work of art or to express what it makes you think about or how it makes you feel. You may add words, as necessary - try to use as many of your words and phrases from your sketch as you can.

Step 4: Sharing and Discussion - Invite the group to share/read what they've written.

Once the group has sketched and written, invite group members to share their poems with the group. Sometimes it can be affirming for you to read their poems a second time. Thank them. Relate parts of the writing (words/phrases) to the work of art. Look for similarities/differences between poems. Why might that be? What are you noticing in the work of art that you hadn't originally?

Step 5: Discussion/Conversation, if time:

Use any method for further discussion of a work of art, if time. If it seems appropriate, share relevant information about the work. Allow the group to discuss different interpretations.

Practical Tips:

In the Museum Setting

When we do this activity in a gallery, we ask participants to choose a work of art, then sit in front of it on a stool. Everyone is handed a clipboard with paper and pencil.

If you don't have/want clipboards, use blank, larger index cards – maybe 5" by 8." Give each person two cards – one for sketching/ writing and one for support, while sketching/writing. Participants can sketch on one side of the card and write on the other. This activity can be done with or without stools, although stools are good to have.

Adaptable Activity

Although we've often used this activity as a final activity during an ekphrastic writing tour, this, and the TMA visual literacy activities you've experienced today, can be used on many different tours – we've used this one successfully with 5th grade through adults.

Originally, we used this activity in galleries that hold abstract art - paintings. It enriches an abstract art experience well, helping viewers to make personal connections. However, we've found that it works with other types of art – not solely abstract art. Although we haven't done it, we think it could work with 3-D - artifacts, sculpture.

Timing

This activity generally takes 25-30 minutes, but it can be modified to take less or more time. Read your group as to timing. You don't need to wait until everyone is finished with each direction to add another direction. Keep the flow going.

Enjoy

We have found that groups enjoy this activity and generally don't need any coaxing to read what they have written. If you experience reticence, you might offer to read one. During TMA Ekphrastic Writing Tours or any tours, this activity helps prime participants to choose their own works from the collection for writing in response to art, prompting them to enter the TMA Ekphrastic Poetry Contest.