

## Connections tour – VTS, stories, and connection chain

(45 minutes total)

grades 3-6

materials:

- sign with parts of a narrative
- sign with connection prompts
- pipe cleaners – one color only

### Intro (5 minutes)

- Go over museum manners
  - Quiet voice, walk slowly, respect the art by staying an arm's length away.
- Form a circle with the students (could be sitting)
  - Quickly go over names
- “Touch your nose if you have been to this art museum before”
  - Explain that it doesn't matter if you've been here before or not! Anyone can look at and connect with art.

### Deep Analysis of a Piece of Art (20 minutes)

- Overview:
  - This activity is intended to introduce students to one way to observe art, based on Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS). Through this activity, students should gain a deeper understanding of this piece of art, such as *Native Lands*, through their observations. This can be done with any piece of art with no prior knowledge. Students will discover that their interpretation of what could be going on in the piece, apply concepts they may have encountered in the classroom with reading/writing, and ultimately create a story for the piece.
  - *Enduring Understandings*
    - Anyone can find meaning in art
    - Personal connections can drive observations of art
    - Everyone has both similarities and differences in their observations (explicitly point this out)
    - Art can be “read” just like a book; stories can be created from art work
- *Students are asked to:*
  - Look carefully at works of art
  - Talk about what they observe
  - Back up their ideas with evidence
  - Listen to and consider the views of others
  - Discuss multiple possible interpretations

### Steps:

- **PART 1**
  - **10 min:** Use VTS as a means to start the activity (open-ended questioning):
    - What is going on in this painting?
    - What do you see that makes you say that?
    - What MORE can we see/find?
    - \*\*While questioning, point, paraphrase and make connections between ideas

- **PART 2**
  - **10 min: Put up sign listing narrative components**
  - Find narrative components: CHARACTERS, SETTING, ACTION, PROBLEM, SOLUTION in painting
    - Briefly introduce the 5 elements using the sign in case students have not learned about them in the classroom
    - Assess familiarity with concepts
      - i.e. TPR: show me thumbs up or thumbs down if you think you know what these components are
      - If lots of thumbs down, explain what each word means, if not, give a minute or two to pair share with each other what they mean
    - Now explain the activity:
      - “Take a few moments in your head to try to think about what each of these could be in the painting”
      - Say “Characters” and give them 1-2 min individual think time, then say “setting” and give 1-2 minutes individual think time...
      - “Now talk with the person sitting next to you about what each of the components could be, then create a story together.
    - After a few minutes, bring the group back and ask who wants to share their story (not all groups have to share).
- **Closing (5 min)**
  - Explicitly point out how there were so many similarities and differences in the stories we came up with
    - “Every single one of those stories could be what the artist was trying to convey.”
  - Explicitly connect to classroom and to reading/writing
    - “Where else do you use these components in school?”
    - A lot of stories you read in school have these five components; you can also use them when writing stories
    - we read this painting like a book and created stories like when we write!

### **Student Connections Activity (Total 15-20 min)**

#### **Materials:**

**pipe cleaners – one color**

**poster:** *Which piece of art reminds you of*

1. *...Yourself?*
2. *...Your family?*
3. *...A place you have been?*
4. *...Someone you know?*

#### • **Overview**

For this activity students will be asked to walk through a specific room (Loo Gallery) in the permanent collection and find a piece of art they can make a personal connection to. The goal is for them to feel like they were able to make connections to art and to each other, ideally using strategies that they have learned in the classroom with the art card prompts and/or with VTS-style methods which they just completed.

- *Enduring Understandings:*
  - To help students understand that they have the ability to form personal connections with art
  - Help students to feel that their opinions are valued in a museum
  - Help students feel confident in using personal connections as a valid way to “look” at art
- *Students are asked to:*
  - Observe art
  - Make personal connections to art
  - Talk about their observations
  - Listen to others and synthesize their ideas
  - Reflect on what they learned
- **Instructions (5 min)**
  - Every student will wander through the gallery to find art they can connect to
  - They will be given a pipe cleaner and will be told to make the pipe cleaner into a loop when they have developed their connection [“On this poster are several examples of how you can make a personal connection, such as if it reminds you of your family or a place you’ve been. You will receive a pipe cleaner and once you’ve found a piece of art that you’ve made a connection to, you can make into a loop to show that you have made a connection” (\*model making a loop\*)].
  - Then give example of “connecting the connections” (i.e. model: a piece reminds me of going on a picnic with my grandparents, this piece reminds the other docent of visiting his uncle in California. We connect because our connections are both about family).
    - When they find a similarity between their connections, students loop their pipe cleaners together to make a chain.
  - A student will be asked to recap what the activity is (\*check for understanding\*)
  - Pipe cleaners will be handed out, they can look around to find a piece they connect to, find another person with a looped pipe cleaner and share with each other.
    - This pair share asks students to stand by the painting they each have chosen while talking about their connection.
  - Once they have pair shared their connection with someone else, they sit in circle

*Potential issues:*

- *Pipe cleaner fiddling*
  - *Use adults to ‘float’ and encourage students to find connections*
    - *OR could wait to hand out pipe cleaners til sitting in large group (I.e. raise hand or put hand on head when connection is made, then hand out pipe cleaner. Or just ditch the pipe cleaners all together)*
  - *Clearly instruct to not wrap the stems too tightly: a loose un-twistable loop should be made.*
    - *This will be modeled in the beginning*
- *Students who make instantaneous connections*

- *If only one student has made a quick connection (no other students are demonstrating a made connection with their pipe cleaner), then an adult can hear their seed and prompt them to develop it with detail and the 5 elements; or find other details in the artwork they connect to*
- *Challenge them to make other connections*
  - *Can you make connections between art to art or art to world?*
  - *Can you make another connection to the same piece?*
- *Students who are stuck and struggle making connections*
  - *Have optional prompts visually represented*
    - *Refer to poster with prompts on the wall*

*\*\*To challenge students even more (older age group, etc.) do this activity with more “challenging” layers. By thinking about a piece of art is “text”, connections can be made from text to text and text to world, not just text to self. Other galleries can be used as well.*

- **During Activity (6 min to wander and pair share)**
  - While the students wander, ensure all are engaged and able to make connections. Help those struggling and challenge those who quickly made a connection.
  - Sometimes students need facilitation in partnering up
    - Suggest students to be partners and share their connections
  - If two or more pairs have finished sharing but the rest of the group has not, two pairs can share with each other and try to find connections between their groups
- **Closing (4 min)**
  - Once students are sitting in a circle, begin a group discussion about the connections and how they can *all* connect their connections
  - If there is enough time and a small group, have every group share their connections to each other. Then ask: “Does anyone see any similarities between these connections? Who has ideas of how we can connect our pipe cleaners into a longer chain?”
    - If there is not enough time, they can pair share with a partner from a different original partnership (i.e. I would share mine and David’s connection with someone who looped pipe cleaners with someone else).
      - Then a few students can try to find connections between the pipe cleaner connections and start to make a chain of pipe cleaners
  - Discussion questions
    - Ask a few questions to assess the impact of this activity. “What did you learn in this activity?”
    - Other questions:
      - Who learned something new about a classmate today?
      - Who feels like they could connect to many pieces of art?
      - How can you take what you learned in this activity and use it after today?
      - Could you lead a family member through this activity?

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