I. Introduction

Is good art only something you like? Do you have to understand the mood or motivation of the artist in order to appreciate the work? Is art only something you can hang on a wall or display on a shelf? Since man started painting pictures on cave walls there have been critics who become experts, or think they are experts, in interpreting works of art. But who are these people and how do they form their opinions? What makes art—Art?

II. Objective

♦ Students will discuss works of art using the process of evaluation which focuses on art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and studio production.

III. Standards Assessed


**Standard 1.0**
Artistic Perception: Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to the visual arts.

**Standard 2.0**
Creative Expression: Creating, performing, and participating in the visual arts.

**Standard 3.0**
Historical and Cultural Context: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture.
IV. Materials Needed

- paper, pen or pencils
- prints of paintings
- color crayons or oil pastels or pencils
- television
- print ads
- computer
- radio

V. Preparation

Have the students bring in pictures of various artworks. Encourage the students to vary the artwork from representational to abstract and be sure to have them include artworks from a variety of cultures and styles. Have the students pick one of their pictures and research the artist, period in which the artist lived, background of the subject, and provenance if available.

VI. Lesson Activities

Part I, Pre-Visit (in the classroom)

Criticism should not be querulous and wasting, all knife and root-puller, but guiding, instructive, inspiring.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

You be the critic! Good art criticism is not fault finding, but searches for the qualities that make a picture special—qualities that give it the status of ART. Research shows that adults and the casual viewer typically look at art for 30 seconds- pass judgment, and move on to the next piece. This exercise is an outline for developing an “intelligent eye.”
Part A

1. Tell the students that they will be art critics during this activity and that they will be writing a review of the artwork. Before beginning this exercise, do a preliminary survey on why each of the students selected their artwork.

2. Hand out the “Analysis of a Work of Art” and have the students complete the worksheet and write a review.

Part B

1. After looking at an artwork, how many times have you heard someone say “I could paint that!” How many versions of the Mona Lisa have you seen, or Blue Boy or Pinkie? Reverse the role! Have the students become the artist and have them “repaint the picture” that they selected. Have an art showing and display the artworks with the originals next to them. How do the interpretations compare with the original?

2. Hand out the “Analysis of a Work of Art” and see how the students re-interpretations compare with the original.

Part II (at the Huntington)

During their visit to the Huntington, students will participate in inquiry based learning to gain knowledge about specific works of art. By using the “Analysis of a Work of Art” as a guideline, students will have a critical understanding of the artworks.

Part III, Post Visit (back in the classroom)

Ask the students to recall a specific artwork while on their visit to the Huntington.

1. Why did they select this artwork?

2. Was it the setting, the subject, the colors, mood, historical context?

Tell the students to put themselves in the shoes of the artist— but they are painting this artwork for today’s audience. Using the media of today, e.g., television, radio, computer, design a publicity campaign to “sell their product.”

1. What kinds of ideas would they include in the presentation?

2. Who would be the audience?

3. Where would they advertise?

4. Would they change or add anything to the artwork?
Method for the Analysis of a Work of Art

Generally, in analyzing a work of art, the art critic should deal first with evidence internal to the object itself and then consider evidence external to the object. Art criticism is not finding fault, but searches for the qualities which make an artwork special—which gives it the status of ART.

Directions: Use the following outline as a guide to analyze artwork. Supply information to as many categories as possible in order to make an informed decision. The focus of this worksheet is not to pass judgment on an artwork, but to refine the “intelligent eye.”

A. Descriptive Mode (dealing with the object itself—its formal fundamental structure)
   I. Physical Dimension
      a. Substantive analysis - measurement, weight
      b. materials
      c. construction
   II. Intellectual Dimension (analysis of content)
      a. subject matter
      b. narrative content (story)
      c. iconography (symbolic meaning)
   III. Visual Dimension
      a. structure/composition
      b. color
      c. light
      d. texture

B. Empathetic and Deductive Mode (object to the viewer—linking the material world represented, to our own world)
   I. Sensory Experience (either empathetic or direct)
      How does the object make you feel emotionally? Is it awesome, pretty, sad, etc.?
      How would you feel if projected into the world of the image?
      a. direct sensory experience for a utilitarian object. How is the picture used and how does this process make you feel physically?
      b. empathetic sensory experience. Does this picture relate to your experience?
   II. Intellectual Apprehension
      a. deducing elements like the time of day, season, etc.
      b. how does the space of the picture open to the viewer?

C. Speculative Mode
   The viewer poses questions that have arisen about the art work’s historical meaning and context.

Extension project: You are the critic!
Based on the above observations about a particular artwork, write a review.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>art criticism</td>
<td>an organized system for looking at the visual arts; a process of appraising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asymmetry</td>
<td>a balance of parts on opposite sides of a perceived midline, giving the appearance of equal visual weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>background</td>
<td>the most distant part of a scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canvas</td>
<td>a piece of cloth prepared as a surface to receive paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>color</td>
<td>the visual sensation dependent on the reflection or absorption of light, from a given surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>composition</td>
<td>the organization of elements in a work of art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foreground</td>
<td>the nearest part of a scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horizon</td>
<td>a view of a section of countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>landscape</td>
<td>reliance on line, rather than color or texture, to create form; smooth paint, with barely visible brush work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masterpiece</td>
<td>major work of any great artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middleground</td>
<td>the area between the foreground and the most distant part of a scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mood</td>
<td>the state of mind or feeling, communicated in a work of art, frequently through color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oil paint</td>
<td>a paint made by mixing ground (powdered) color pigment into oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>a system for representing, three dimensional objects viewed in spatial recession on a two dimensional surface</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>portrait</td>
<td>a likeness of a person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proportion</td>
<td>the size relationships of one part to the whole and one part to another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sculpture</td>
<td>a carved figure of stone, wood: a modeled figure in clay or wax: a cast figure in metal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>still life</td>
<td>a painting of a collection of objects usually taken from nature (flowers, birds’ nests, etc.) or from domestic settings (glasses, foodstuffs, pipes, books, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>style</td>
<td>the characteristic expression of an individual artist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>