

Four Step Evaluation of a Work of Art Handout

Student Handout Guiding Questions

Evaluating a work of art isn't as difficult as it may seem. There are four basic steps: describing, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating. Use these handy guiding questions and you'll be a pro!

Student's Name: _____

Date: _____

Name of the Artwork Evaluated: _____

Step 1: Describe

Describe what you see in the artwork:

Objects:

What sort of artwork do you think this is?

Portrait

Figure

Landscape

Seascape

Cityscape

Poster

Abstract

Nature

Still life

What kind of objects do you see in the artwork? (you may choose more than one)

People

Buildings

Boats

Landscape

Seascape

Animals

Plants

Water

Food

None

Other: (describe: _____)

What style do you think the artist primarily used?

Realistic

Abstract

Non-objective

Media: What media or medium did the artist use? (What material is the work made from?)

Two-Dimensional:

Crayon	pencil	fabric	yarn
Paint (oil, acrylic, tempera, watercolor)		ink	pastels
			photograph

Three-Dimensional:

Clay	stone	found objects	
Wood	glass	metal	papier-mache

Step 2: Analysis

The Elements of Art

Lines

What kinds of lines do you see?

Sharp	thick	heavy
Jagged	choppy	vertical
Diagonal	fuzzy	thin
Curved	graceful	smooth
Horizontal	straight	broken
Zigzag	dotted	wavy

Other: _____

Shapes and Forms

What shapes do you see?

Circles	Squares	triangles
Rectangles	diamonds	other : _____

What forms do you see ?

Cones	spheres	cylinders	cubes
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How would you describe the shapes and/or forms?

Curved angular hard-edged

Soft-edged organic free-form

Other: _____

Colors

What kinds of colors do you see in the artwork?

Bright darks/lights (values) soft

Strong warm colors cool colors

Neutral colors (browns, greys, earth tones)

Complementary colors (colors opposite of each other on the color wheel)

Monochromatic colors (a single color containing light and dark values of that color.)

Triadic colors (three colors that are equidistant from each other on the color wheel; i.e., red, yellow, & blue; green, orange, & violet)

Texture

What kinds of textures do you see?

Rough smooth soft

Hard dull bumpy

Other: _____

Space

Illusion of space: How is space used in the artwork? (circle one)

Deep Space (looks like you can see for miles, a very wide range of light and dark values)

Shallow Space (shapes are flattened with limited use of light and dark values)

Flat Space (shapes appear one value/color, objects appear not three-dimensional at all.)

If the work is a landscape what do you see in each division of space?

- Foreground (objects nearest the viewer)
- Mid-ground (space between the foreground and the background)
- Background (objects that appear the most distant from the viewer)

The Principles of Design

How are the elements of art in the work arranged?

Emphasis/Focal Point

What is the first thing you see when you look at this art work?

How do you think the artist created the focal point?

Contrast

Are there noticeable differences between light and dark areas?

Yes

No

If there are noticeable differences, identify where the lightest and darkest areas appear to be in the work. Squint your eyes and look at the artwork. Circle where you see most of the light areas.

Top

bottom

middle

right

left

Circle where the darkest areas are located:

Top

bottom

middle

right

left

Harmony/Unity

Circle which elements of art have been used to create a sense of unity or hold the work together in a pleasing way.

line

color

value

texture

shape

space

Balance

What kind of visual balance is used in the artwork?

- Asymmetrical balance (each side of the artwork is different)
- Symmetrical balance (the halves of the artwork mirror each other)
- Radial balance (emphasis is in the center, viewer's eyes are directed like the spokes of a wheel, flower, or target moving toward the middle)

Repetition & Pattern

What do you see repeated in the artwork?

Lines shapes colors light/dark values textures

Pattern or repetition that is used to lead the eye on a path through a work of art is called movement. Do you see movement in the artwork? If so, where?

Another planned use of pattern is rhythm, which can lead the viewer's eye through an artwork while also giving the work of art a pulsating or even unbalanced quality. Do you see rhythm in the artwork? If so, where?

Variety

Variety refers to the differences of the use of the elements of art in the work. Variety can be achieved by using different shapes, textures, colors and values in the work. Circle the elements of art that have been used in a variety of ways to create visual interest.

Lines shapes colors light/dark values textures

Step 3: Interpretation

What is the purpose or meaning of the artwork?

You uncovered clues about the meaning of this artwork in the first two steps of this exercise. Sometimes even the name of an artwork can tell you something about its meaning or purpose.

Explain what the name of this artwork tells you about the meaning or purpose of this work.

There are many purposes of art. Circle which of these purposes you think the artist was primarily concerned with in this artwork.

- Expressive art (expressing emotions, feelings, and/or ideas)
- Narrative art (describing and illustrating experiences, telling a story)
- Functional art (art that serves a practical or useful purpose)
- Ceremonial or ritual art (work that celebrates or commemorates)
- Decorative art (created for the purpose of decorating or beautifying)
- Persuasive art (advertising, marketing, or propaganda art)

- Formalist art (works that deal solely with the arrangement of elements of art/principles of design as subject matter – found most often abstract or non-objective art)
- Reflecting the world – (art that imitates nature)

Circle the words that best describe what you think is the meaning of this artwork. (use as many words as needed – even supplying some new ones if necessary.)

Strength	fear	loneliness	fun
Mystery	anger	hate	love
Beauty	courage	peace	war
Sadness	happiness	madness	hope
Adventure	excitement		

Interest in color complexity of design interest in shapes

Simple design

Step 4: Evaluation

What do you think about the artwork?

What is the value that you find in the artwork? For example, is it a beautiful work of art? Thought-provoking? Does it have an important social message? Does it give us window for understanding the past?

Does the work communicate an idea, feeling, or principle that would have benefit for others? Explain.

Rather than seeing the work as being very effective or totally without value, does the work fall somewhere in between? Do you think that the work is just ok? On what do you base this opinion on? (Possibilities might be the use of the elements of art, or the principles of design; lack of personal expression; lack of major theme or focus.)

Write a brief narrative expressing your opinion of the artwork. Include both your positive perceptions and your criticism of the work and explain your answers.