



EduTrend Contents

W4C · ART HISTORY AND APPRECIATION · PRIMARY

Art Detectives

Look slowly and find clues in a painting

Ages 7–10

Level: Foundation

60 minutes

Groups of 4 · up to 30

Activity 01

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 pupil worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 01 · AT A GLANCE

Art Detectives

Pupils learn to look slowly at a painting for two full minutes, then use the See, Think, Wonder routine to describe details, make interpretations backed by clues and ask questions. Groups solve a painting mystery and present their evidence.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session pupils can:

- look closely at an artwork for a sustained time;
- describe details using art vocabulary;
- support ideas with evidence from the artwork;
- ask questions about an artwork.

KEY WORDS

slow looking · detail · foreground · background · evidence · interpret · artist · portrait · landscape

CURRICULUM LINKS

Art and design: responding to artworks. English: inference and speaking. History: evidence from sources.

1**LOOK**

Slow looking

2**DESCRIBE**

What do you see?

3**ANALYSE**

How was it made?

4**CONTEXT**

When, where, why?

5**INTERPRET**

What does it mean?

6**RESPOND**

Judge and create

Materials (per group)

- Large prints of four paintings from museum open-access collections
- Magnifying glasses and card viewfinders
- Clue cards and sticky notes
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Choose paintings with rich detail and a story, from different times and cultures.
- Print them large.
- Prepare clue cards with questions.
- Try the routine yourself.

SAFETY

No special hazards. Handle prints carefully and share magnifiers.

ACTIVITY 01 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Insist on two minutes of silent looking first: pupils notice far more than they expect.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–10 min Hook	Show a detail of a painting. What could it be part of?	<i>"What clues do you see?"</i>
10–20 min Slow looking	Groups look silently for two minutes, then list everything they see.	<i>"What did you notice that no one else did?"</i>
20–35 min See, Think, Wonder	Groups record what they see, what they think and what they wonder.	<i>"What makes you say that?"</i>
35–50 min Mystery	Groups use clue cards to decide what story the painting tells.	<i>"Which clues are the strongest?"</i>
50–60 min Present	Groups present their case with evidence; reveal the title and artist.	<i>"Were you right? What surprised you?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Solve a painting mystery by describing at least five details and using them as evidence for what the painting shows.

ACTIVITY 01 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The art history in brief

Slow looking means spending time with a single artwork before talking about it. Art historians and museum educators use it because the eye keeps finding new details. Describing what we see before deciding what it means keeps ideas grounded in evidence.

See, Think, Wonder is a thinking routine developed by Project Zero at Harvard University. The question “What makes you say that?” helps learners back up interpretations with evidence. Paintings can be portraits, landscapes, still lifes or scenes that tell stories, and each has conventions artists use.

Common ideas to listen for

- “There is only one right answer about a painting.”
Different interpretations can be supported by evidence.
- “Looking takes a few seconds.” Details appear only with time.
- “Old paintings are boring.” They are full of stories and clues.

Adapting the activity

Support

Give each group a detail checklist: people, objects, colours, weather, time of day.

Stretch

Compare two paintings on the same theme from different cultures.

WORKSHEET 1

Detective notes

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Record what you see.

See, Think, Wonder

I see...	I think...	I wonder...

WORKSHEET 2

Evidence board

Match clues to ideas.

Clues and ideas

Clue in the painting	What it suggests
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

WORKSHEET 3

Case closed

Reflect.

Our answer to the mystery

Most important clue

One question I still have

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight pupils; copy as needed.

Pupil	Describes details	Uses evidence	Asks thoughtful questions

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Art Detectives is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents W4C Art History and Appreciation programme (primary, level: foundation). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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