

Name: _____

IDENTIFY COMPLETELY: (e.g. artist, title, date, medium, size, etc.)

STYLISTIC PERIOD or CULTURE: (When/Where – This is different from merely knowing the date.)

SUBJECT/ICONOGRAPHY: (What is the idea/concept? Where and when is this taking place? Who or what is being represented here?)

STYLE/TECHNIQUE: (Analyze the ways in which the artists handle form, color, shape texture, lines, and light. What kinds of material does the artist use? How does the artist apply technique and sense of composition? In what ways do scale and point of view come into play? Analyze the artist's use of design principles.)

SIGNIFICANCE/FUNCTION/PURPOSE: (How does the work convey social, political, popular or religious values of that culture? What is the unique vision of the artist or patron? What is the purpose of the work and where is its original and intended setting?)

Visual Analysis Guide #2: Students need a great deal of guidance in knowing where and how to begin talking about works of art. Throughout the year, I reinforce with students the **“purposes of art”** to help them articulate the different ways in which to analyze works of art. It helps students consider **“why”** works of art are made in the first place and how meaning is conveyed within multiple contexts.

To help students to go beyond simply describing works of art, teachers should encourage the students to question **WHY** a work of art is made in the first place. It is critical to be able to inquire about the original purpose of a work, since the works we encounter in our lives (in museums and textbooks) are far removed from their original and intended settings. Art historians often use the term purpose to refer to the function of a work – **WHAT** it was made for and its use is ultimately tied to some specific cultural value. Thus, the purpose and function behind a work of art differ from one culture or time to another. There are many reasons for creating the work; among them are:

- For magic or metaphysical transmutation
- For religious worship
- For human obsession with death and to provide for afterlife
- As a gift to the gods
- To commemorate an event
- To document a place, event, and time
- To assert power or authority
- As an expression of wealth and status
- To glorify or commemorate the life of an individual.
- To protest and address a social/political issue
- To teach
- As form of study
- To tell a story
- To impress others with mastery of technique or design
- To challenge or shock the viewer
- To communicate and express human emotion
- To promote an artistic theory or an aesthetic experience
- To depict the natural world
- To depict idealized beauty
- To humor and provide satire
- To portray everyday life
- As propaganda
- For private and personal enjoyment
- To establish personal or cultural identity
- To emphasize symbolic meaning
- To express and record the process of making art

YOU ADD ON MORE REASONS FOR MAKING ART

Visual Analysis Guide #3: Students need a great deal of guidance in knowing where and how to begin talking about works of art. Throughout the year, I use this chart and reinforce with students **“what to consider”** when analyzing works of art in different art forms. It is sort of like a **“menu”** for students to select applicable combinations of factors and make connections to **“how”** and **“why.”**

CONSIDER PURPOSE/FUNCTION
(Circle appropriate in relation to the work)

- For magic or metaphysical transmutation
- For religious worship
- For human obsession with death and to provide for afterlife
- As a gift to the gods
- To commemorate an event
- To document a place, event, and time
- To assert power or authority
- As an expression of wealth and status
- To glorify or commemorate the life of an individual.
- To protest and address a social/political issue
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- To depict idealized beauty
- To humor and provide satire
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- For private and personal enjoyment
- To establish personal or cultural identity
- To emphasize symbolic meaning
- To express and record the process of making art
- **ADD ON MORE REASONS FOR MAKING ART**

What to Look for in Each Art Form
(Circle appropriate in relation to the work)

SCULPTURE

- Scale/Proportion
- Relationship to viewer's space
- Original and intended setting
- Interaction among figures
- Sculpting technique
- Material/media
- Surface texture/color
- Degree of realism or abstraction
- Movement/gesture/facial expression
- Stance/presentation
- Open/closed form
- Negative/positive space

ARCHITECTURE

- Architectural style and aesthetics
- Location/site/orientation
- Decoration (sculpture/relief, etc)
- Interior space organization
- Engineering technique
- Building material/structure
- Plan/elevation
- Scale/proportion
- Space/light
- Vaulting/fenestration

2-D (Painting, Relief, Print, Photography)

- Color/value/shape/line/texture
- Balance/unity/emphasis/pattern
- Composition
- Organization of picture plane
- Illusion of depth and space
- Figure/ground relationship
- Material/media
- Artist's technique
- Surface quality
- Scale/proportion
- Degree of realism or abstraction
- Perceptual/conceptual
- Movement/gesture/facial expression
- Original and intended setting

Visual Analysis Guide #4: This is the final in the series of four guides for helping students to begin looking, thinking, talking, and writing about works of art. Throughout the year, I use this guide to reinforce with students the many interpretative approaches to making sense of art. Art historians term this as "Methodology: Approaches in Art." I like to think of methodology as "**placing of filters and wearing of lenses**" when looking at art – somewhat similar to methodology applied to interpretation and analysis of literature. Often in art, we have to use multiple filters and lenses simultaneously.

FILTERS and LENSES

The following is based on Laurie Schneider Adams, *The Methodologies of Art* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

- **Formalism**: The analysis is based on examining the formal elements of art and the principles of design. The discussion is in terms of the study of technique and stylistic analysis.
- **Psychoanalytic**: Based on the writings of leading thinkers in search of the unconscious mind, this method examines the motivations of the artist and the artwork, which could be the result of pathological drives.
- **Context (social context or social history)**: The study of how the work reflects the cultural values and social forces that produced it – including its religion, philosophy, science and other social factors of its time such as, historical events, political systems, patronage, class and economics.
- **Iconography**: The study of subject matter and content, with interest in interpreting meanings of symbols.
- **Feminist Criticism**: Concerned with issues of gender as a prime factor in understanding how women artists construct their world – what subjects they choose and how they represent those subjects – and the depiction of women in works by male artists.
- **Aesthetics**: A branch of philosophy dealing with questions about the process behind the viewer's response to a work of art and how the artists caused that response. In addition to analyzing the artist's intention, this approach to interpreting art questions the meaning of art with inquiries into: What is art? What constitutes beauty? How does art appeal to the human senses?
- **Semiotics** (the study of signs, texts and subtexts): Originating in the study of linguistics, semiotics is now also applied to images. The idea is that a work of art is read as the interpretation of signs (in words and images) and the viewer must decode hidden meanings that may not mean what it appears to mean.
- **Biographical**: Consideration for how viewer's knowledge about an artists' life expand the understanding of his or her work.