

Art and A Poetry Puzzle: A Quick Lesson in Viewing Art and Creating Poetry

Painting is silent poetry. ~Plutarch

Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen. ~Leonardo da Vinci

GRADE LEVEL: This lesson can be adapted for any grade level

TOPIC

Ekphrastic Poetry To enable students to look at and react to a work of art with phrases/lines that will become part of a poem.

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will explore ekphrasis—writing inspired by art.

Students will write individually 2 or 3 lines/phrases using such poetic language imagery, simile, metaphor to describe a work of art selected by the teacher.

Students will compose a group poem about the work of art.

Students will write a brief explanation of what they wrote and why they ordered their ideas as they did.

MATERIALS

Large poster of a piece of art or computer projected image.

(Van Gogh's "A Starry Night" works VERY well)

Small strips of paper

TIME

One class period for viewing and individual responses and group writing.

One class period for presentation and discussion of poetic language and relevance to artwork.

PLAN

1. Begin by having students look quietly at the piece of artwork,
2. Provide each student with five strips of paper on which to record what images strike them. Encourage students to think in terms of imagery, personification, simile and metaphor. This will depend on grade and ability.
3. Divide the students into groups of four and ask them to bring their five strips of papers with them.
4. Instruct the students to think of their task as a poetry puzzle where they then put together all of their ideas into a twenty line poem. Instruct them to think about "voice/speaker," form, and logical progression of ideas.
5. Once the poems are created and polished, each group will present its poem as an interpretation/understanding of that particular work of art.

Follow Up: Students can find another piece of art and the poem written about it. Students can choose another piece of art and write another poem independently.

Both Art and Poems can be a bulletin board display.