

Common Core Lesson: Art Criticism and Aesthetics in Understanding and Appreciating Art

Grade Level: 9th - 12th grade

Subject: Art History

Objective: Students will be able to understand the basics of art criticism and aesthetics, and how they can be used to analyze, appreciate, and evaluate works of art.

Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1: Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

Materials:

Art history textbooks or online resources, see resources below for recommended books

Examples of artworks from various art movements and styles

Chart paper or whiteboard

Writing materials

Procedure:

Introduction (10 minutes)

Begin by discussing the concepts of art criticism and aesthetics, defining them for the students.

Engage the students by asking them to share their thoughts on what they believe art criticism and aesthetics entail.

Art Criticism (15 minutes)

Provide an overview of art criticism, explaining its purpose and key elements.

Discuss the different techniques used in art criticism, such as analyzing composition, color, texture, style, and historical/cultural context.

Show visual examples of artworks and guide students in analyzing them using art criticism techniques.

Facilitate a class discussion on the observations, interpretations, and evaluations made by the students regarding the artworks.

Aesthetics (15 minutes)

Introduce the concept of aesthetics, explaining its focus on beauty, emotional response, and meaning in art.

Discuss the subjective nature of aesthetics and the factors that contribute to the aesthetic experience, such as artist's skill, composition, and viewer's perception.

Present visual examples of artworks that evoke different emotions or convey meaning, and encourage students to share their personal aesthetic responses.

Analysis and Discussion (25 minutes)

Divide the students into small groups.

Assign each group an artwork from a specific art movement or style.

Instruct the groups to analyze the assigned artwork using both art criticism and aesthetic principles.

Each group should create a presentation highlighting their analysis, interpretations, and evaluations of the artwork.

Group Presentations (20 minutes)

Have each group present their analysis of the assigned artwork to the class.

Encourage students to engage in a discussion about the different interpretations and aesthetic responses to the artworks.

Facilitate a conversation that highlights the diversity of perspectives and the subjectivity of aesthetic judgment.

Reflection and Writing (15 minutes)

Ask students to individually reflect on the importance of art criticism and aesthetics in understanding and appreciating art.

Instruct students to write a short argumentative essay that discusses the role of art criticism and aesthetics in analyzing, appreciating, and evaluating works of art.

Remind students to support their arguments with evidence and examples from the class discussions and their own experiences.

Assessment:

Assess students' understanding of art criticism and aesthetics through their active participation in class discussions, group presentations, and written reflections.

Evaluate students' ability to analyze artworks using art criticism techniques and aesthetic principles, as demonstrated in their group presentations and written arguments.

Resources:

"Ways of Seeing" by John Berger

Description: This classic book by art critic and writer John Berger offers a thought-provoking exploration of how we perceive and interpret art. Berger delves into the power of images and how they shape our understanding of art and the world. He introduces fundamental concepts in art criticism, making it accessible and engaging for students.

Why it's recommended: "Ways of Seeing" provides a foundational understanding of art criticism and aesthetics, making it an excellent choice for high school students. It encourages critical thinking about visual culture and how we interact with art.

"ArtSpeak: A Guide to Contemporary Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords, 1945 to the Present" by Robert Atkins

Description: This book offers a comprehensive overview of key concepts, movements, and terminology in contemporary art. It covers a wide range of topics, from art history and

criticism to aesthetics and cultural contexts. Students can gain a deeper understanding of art criticism and the contemporary art world.

Why it's recommended: "ArtSpeak" is a valuable resource for high school students interested in contemporary art and its critical analysis. It provides clarity on complex art terminology and concepts, enhancing students' ability to engage with modern artworks.

"How to Write About Contemporary Art" by Gilda Williams

Description: This practical guide focuses on developing critical writing skills for analyzing and discussing contemporary art. It offers clear instructions on structuring art criticism, examining artworks, and conveying personal interpretations effectively. The book includes examples and exercises to help students hone their writing and critical thinking abilities.

Why it's recommended: "How to Write About Contemporary Art" is an ideal resource for high school students looking to improve their art criticism skills. It offers step-by-step guidance and hands-on exercises, making it accessible and useful for students aspiring to write thoughtfully about art.

Extensions:

Organize a visit to an art museum or gallery to provide students with firsthand experience in applying art criticism and aesthetics to the analysis of artworks. If you're in Grand Rapids, we recommend visiting Grand Rapids Art Museum, Cultivate, or Frederick Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park.

Invite a local artist or art critic to share their expertise and insights on art criticism and aesthetics. If you'd like recommendations, please email hello@cultivategrandrapids.org

Encourage students to explore and create their own artworks using different art movements or styles, applying the principles of art criticism and aesthetics in their own artistic practice.