

Teacher Lab

Developing Questions about Works of Art

Identify key ideas about the work of art that you want students to understand. Then draft the following types of questions that help students look, analyze, and interpret the work of art:

- **Questions or activities that encourage students to examine the image—to give looking time.** Examples: *Spend some time looking closely at this work of art then we'll have a discussion about what you see. Take a minute to study this image then list in writing the details you notice; afterward we'll have a discussion.*
- **Questions that invite students to share their observations.** Examples: *So what did you see? What's going on in the picture?*
- **Questions that direct attention to things you want students to notice, relevant to key ideas you want them to understand.** Examples: *What objects are included in this portrait? What is the sitter holding?*
- **Questions that help students analyze the image and artist's visual communication strategies.** Examples: *What's the focal point? How does the artist show us what's important? How does your eye travel through the picture, and why? What adjectives would you use to describe the painting? What's the mood of the painting? How do the colors, lines, or shapes help to create that mood?*
- **Questions that invite students to interpret or speculate about the meaning of the image and elements in the image.** Examples: *What do you think the artist wanted to communicate? What's the main idea? What title would you give this work of art, and why?*
- **Questions that help students ground their responses in evidence.** Example: *What do you see that makes you say that?*
- **Questions that encourage students to ask questions of their own.** Examples: *What would you like to know about the artwork? What would you like to ask the artist?*

Next Steps

- **Research:** Have students seek answers to their questions.
- **Reinterpretation:** Have students revisit their initial impressions and interpretations after they have read what others have written about the artwork.
- **Synthesis and Application:** Have students respond creatively to the artwork—building on ideas and themes that the artist explored.