

Creativity and the Common Core  
Tour Outline  
Grades 5-12

**Description**

Students will explore three to five works of art, giving them the opportunity to make personal connections while acknowledging the diverse perspectives of their classmates. Students will participate in independent and collaborative activities that integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These open-ended, student-centered activities foster skills addressed in the Common Core English Language Arts Standards, including communication, critical thinking, and evidential reasoning.

**Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- Analyze a work of art using visual clues
- Communicate ideas about works of art and identify evidence for those ideas
- Collaborate with others to complete an activity

**Examples of Common Core Standards addressed on tour**

- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take
- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences
- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively
- Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate
- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text

**Introduction**

- Welcome the students and introduce yourself.

- Explain to students that together you will explore a few works of art during the tour, spending lots of time at each one in order to think about and analyze the stories in the works of art.

### **Suggested gallery activities**

#### **1. The Frame (25-30 minutes; paper, pencil, and poem sheet required)**

- Common Core Connection: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text
- For this activity, each student will need a piece of paper, a pencil, and something to write on.
- Ask students to look at an artwork for 1-2 minutes.
- Ask students to turn to a partner and discuss what they see.
- Ask students to roll up their papers to make a telescope and look at the artwork through the telescope for another 1-2 minutes.
- Ask students to turn to another person and discuss what they saw. Ask students how their observations changed based on telescoping the paper.
- Ask students to draw a frame on their paper, leaving about an inch between the frame and the edge of the paper. Then pose the question, “If you could ask this painting one question, what would it be?” Ask students to write their question above the frame.
- Ask students to trade their papers with another partner and write their response to the question on their new piece of paper below the frame.
- Ask participant to trade their papers with another person (remind them to trade with a different person). On the right hand side of the frame, ask students to write down as many colors as they see in the work of art.
- Ask students to trade their papers with another person (remind them to trade with another person). On the left hand side of the frame, ask students to write down as many short phrases that they used or heard during the course of their conversations when looking at the artwork.
- Ask students to trade their papers with another person. Using any words on the page, ask students to write a creative response/poem in the center of their paper. The poem could be a limerick, a metaphor/simile poem, haiku, ode, free verse, etc. Show students examples if they are stuck.
- Ask students to trade their papers two more times (double switch). Then ask for volunteers to share the written response on the paper in front of them.
- If time permits, ask students to share their experiences with this activity.

#### **2. Tableaux and Characterization (15 minutes)**

- Common Core Connection: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone

- A tableaux is a frozen picture that replicates the composition of an artwork. Characterization is when someone takes on a character's role and considers his/her thoughts, feelings, and words.
- Select a work of art that has many characters. Characters include animals and objects such as trees, boats, etc
- Call on volunteers to choose a character and pose like him/her. Ask students to look carefully at the characters' poses and faces to determine what they are doing and how they are feeling. How will the character pose in relation to the other characters? What are the gestures and the facial expressions? The rest of the group can help pose the students.
- Ask students to take turns saying a "line" that applies to the character. They can also have dialogue with another character.
- How does the content and tone of the characters' words affect the story? What did you learn about the characters and their relationships to each other? What did you learn about the story in the artwork?
- What elements, if any, would you want to change? The composition? Poses? Words?

### **3. Last night I had the strangest dream... (10-15 minutes; paper and pencil required)**

- Common Core Connection: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences
- Select a work of art for all the students to study. If you are in a contained area (for example, the Salon or the Study) you can allow each student to select an artwork that they are interested in studying.
- Explain that they will look closely at the work of art and use the prompt "Last night I had the strangest dream..." to free write about what they see.
  - Imagine all of your senses. What does it sound, smell or feel like? Imagine your way into the artwork. Where are you? What is it like to be there? What might be happening?
- Ask a few volunteers to share their pieces.
- If you use the same work of art for the entire class, ask students if they saw things differently after their fellow students read their work out loud.

### **4. Story Building (10-15 minutes)**

- Common Core Connection: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate
- Ask students to stand in a semi circle facing the work of art. Give them a few minutes to explore the piece and then ask them to share a few details about the characters and setting.
- Explain to students that together they will create a story about the work of art using visual clues that they see in the piece.

- Give students a genre and a prompt for their story, for example, a ghost story that begins “on a dark and stormy night...” Students will take turns adding sentences to the story. Remind them to listen carefully to their classmates since their sentences must build upon each other.
- As students create their story, you may want to ask clarifying questions or remind them to consider the different parts of the plot.
- Students can also suggest a different story genre and/or prompt. For example:
  - Fantasy: Once upon a time...
  - Science Fiction: In a galaxy far, far away...
  - Mystery: All of a sudden, I heard in the distance...

#### 5. Before, During, and After (10-15 minutes)

- Common Core Connection: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from text
- Divide students into groups and give each group a part of the story: “before,” “during,” and “after.”
- Ask students to look carefully at the work of art. Based on their group assignment they will decide what happened before this moment, what is happening at that moment, or what will happen after this moment.
- Ask groups to share their portion of the story. Analyze the sequence of the story: does it make sense? What would you change?

#### 6. Point of View (10-15 minutes; story prompt required)

Note: Students will discuss how a story can change depending upon the “point of view” of a character. This activity refers to *An Accident*, and can be adapted to other works of art with more than one character.

- Common Core Connection: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
- Ask students to identify the main character of this painting (i.e. the little boy). Read (or have a student read) the following text which tells a story about this painting from the little boy’s point of view:

*Psst! Over here – see me? I’m the little boy in the middle that everyone looks so worried about, but I’m not worried. Do you know why? Because this doctor says that I’ll be just fine. I was out playing in the nearby field when I had an accident. I tripped and hurt my hand. My mom says I need to be more careful and watch where I’m going.*

*I didn’t want to play today but my little brother begged me to go. I was sure glad he was there. He ran right home and told mom and dad. And boy, was it my lucky day, there was a doctor passing through town! That’s him right there in the center bandaging me up. The only problem is, I wish my family wouldn’t worry so much, the way they are all standing around is making me nervous. But I’ll be tough and show my little brother that I’ll be all right. Now that I’m all bandaged up, the doctor says that I’m not allowed to play until my hand is all better. You can bet I’ll be more careful next time.*

- Divide the class into five groups. Discuss with the students how a “point of view” can change according to a character. Assign a character from the painting to each group. The characters include:
  - Little Boy in the back
  - Balding Peasant
  - Lady in Black
  - Crouching Woman
  - Cat
- Ask students to create a first-person account of the reason for the accident or the steps leading up to it according to their character. If students have difficulty coming up with their story, use the following questions to stimulate their discussion.
  - What do you notice about your character (clothing, expression, etc)?
  - What do you see from where you are standing? What do you hear from where you are standing?
  - What is your character doing in the painting? Why do you think this is the case?
  - What is your character’s relationship to the boy? What makes you say that?
  - From your character’s point of view, how do you think the boy is feeling?
- Ask students to share their stories with their classmates. They should tell their story using the first person point of view. Discuss how the story differed depending on who was telling the account. Discuss whether students agree or disagree with one another. Discuss how the storytelling helped the students to understand what was going on in the painting.

## **7. Parts of Speech (10-15 minutes; index cards and pencil required)**

- Common Core Connection: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences
- Ask students to spend a few minutes looking carefully at the work of art.
- Divide students into 3 groups. Assign each group a part of speech: noun, verb, adjective
- Give each student an index card and pencil and ask them to write down a word (noun, verb, or adjective according to their assignment) based on the work of art.
- Ask the students to come back together as a group. The students will work together to arrange the cards on the floor to create a poem about the work of art. You can also give them up to three blank cards in order to add “wildcard” words—words that will help them create a better poem. For example: to, and, the, etc.
- After the students create their poem, ask them to describe how the poem affected their understanding of the artwork.

## 8. Creative Comparisons Option 1 (10-15 minutes; poem required)

Note: Students will compare two “texts,” a work of art and piece of writing. This activity refers to *The Evening Star* and can be adapted to other works of art with a companion text.

- **Common Core Connection:** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take
- Explain to students that the artist of this painting was inspired by Alfred de Musset’s poem *The Willow: A Fragment*. Ask a volunteer to read the following passage:

*Star of the evening, thou bright messenger,  
From thy blue palace that shinest afar,  
With face all aglow from the clouds of the sun,  
Wherefore this watchfulness over the plain?*

*The tempest has lulled, and the winds softly breathe;  
The forest a –tremble, weeps over the heath;  
The butterfly glided, in his airy flights,  
Crosses the sweet-scented mead and alights.*

- Ask students to comment on the poem. What is the poem about? Who is the speaker? What literary devices did the poet use (metaphor, simile, personification, alliteration, rhyme, imagery, etc. Did you like or dislike the poem? Why?
- Now ask students to examine the painting. What do you think the painting is about? What do you see that makes you say that? Is it similar or different from the poem? Support your answers with evidence. What are some details in the poem that are evident in the painting? What kind of mood are you feeling? What contributes to this?
- Do you think the painting accurately represents the words in the poem? Why or why not? If you were the artist, how would you change the painting?

## 9. Creative Comparisons Option 2 (10-15 minutes)

Note: Students will compare two works of art with the same subject matter or theme. This activity refers to the two versions of *Judith Cutting off the Head of Holofernes* in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Renaissance Paintings galleries. This activity can be adapted to other works of art that address the same theme and created by different artists or in different time periods.

- **Common Core Connection:** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take
- Begin by looking at one of the works of art and ask students to identify the characters, setting, and plot. Ask them to describe the mood of the work of art and how the artist conveyed that mood. What is your opinion about the characters depicted?
- Next, look at the other artwork and discuss how the artist decided to express the story of Judith and Holofernes. What moment in the story is depicted? What is the mood? How do you feel about the characters as they are depicted in this painting?

- Compare the two pieces. How are they similar and different? Do you think one painting is more effective than the other in portraying the story? What do you see that makes you say that?

**Conclusion**

- Which activity did you like the best and which did you like the least? Why?
- Which work of art was your favorite? Why?
- How did the activities affect your understanding of the works of art?

## Writing Response Examples For the Frame Activity

### Haiku

Usually describes nature

3 lines

Lines 1 and 3 have 5 syllables

Line 2 has 7 syllables

### Limerick

Usually humorous

5 lines

Lines 1, 2, and 5 rhyme; 3 beats (da Dum, dadaDum, dadaDum)

Lines 3 and 4 rhyme; 2 beats (daDum, dadaDum)

### Ode

Celebrate a person or thing

Describe what makes the person or thing special and unique

3 parts of varying lengths

No rhyming

### Simile

Describe things using *like* and *as*

### Metaphor poem

Describe things in metaphor

### Free Verse

Open form

No rhyming

Rhythm of natural speech

### Lune Poem

Short and sweet

Lines 1 and 3 have 3 words

Line 2 has 5 words

### Acrostic

The first letter, syllable or word of each line, paragraph or other recurring feature in the text spells out a word or a message

Spell a word vertically

Use each letter to start a phrase related to the word that is written vertically