

Aesthetics for Advanced or Experience Students

Objective: Students will demonstrate their understanding of aesthetic theories by identifying artworks and explaining how they fit a particular aesthetic theory.

Materials

Students will need a copy of the explanations of the theories.

Research materials—art history texts, art reproductions, past Evening for Educator packets, the Internet

Poster of *Storm Spirits on Horizon #6*

Show the class the poster and ask the students to apply the Mimetic Theory to it. Ask students how the artwork matches the theory and how it doesn't. If students do not believe the artwork is very mimetic, have them determine another theory it better fits and say why.

Divide the students into small groups and have them discuss the theories on the handout. Then students should find at least two examples of art that match each theory. They must write out the reasons for their decision. Have each group present their artworks to the class, explaining their reasoning.

Variation: Have each group take a different theory. Each student in the group is responsible for finding one artwork that matches their group's theory. Each artwork must be from a different artist. Students will create posters or bulletin boards explaining the theory and displaying the artworks. Students will give a brief presentation to the class about their group's display.

Variation: Assign students to research a particular aesthetic theory and artists who worked within that theory. Students will present their information as a panel. Or, have students debate the theories' merits. Have a student act as the judge.

Related Production Assignment: Students will choose an aesthetic theory and produce an artwork that matches that theory. Artworks should be displayed with didactics that indicate the criteria the students were working within.

MIMETIC THEORY (Imitationalist or Realist)

Definition: The Mimetic Theory is concerned with the art work itself. It is a reflection of nature. The art work is a correct representation of reality.

Assertions:

- Art Imitates nature.
- To be a work of art it needs to look realistic.
- The work needs to copy reality.
- One tends to like art that looks real because one can recognize and understand it.
- To be art it needs to be correct, complete, and vivid in its representation.
- The work of art needs to show that the artist has technical skill.

EXPRESSIONIST THEORY

Expressivism—Definition: The Expressivist Theory is concerned with the artist in a work of art. Art that fits into this category may communicate ideas, feelings, and emotions of the artist. It does not necessarily have to involve the audience, as long as the artist was able to express his inner feelings. These ideas, if conveyed, are usually communicated forcefully by the artist.

Assertions:

- If a work of art expressed the feelings of the artist then it is considered a work of art.
- Art that is filled with emotions.
- The emphasis is on the artist and the art work.
- Technical skill is not as important as the feelings, moods, emotions, and ideas that the artist expresses.
- Art is the transmission of a feeling that the artist has experienced.
- The artist can create an art work and it doesn't necessarily need to be understood.
- Realism is not important.

HEDONIST THEORY

Definition: The Hedonist Theory is concerned with the work of art and the audience. For a work of art considered a good work of art, it need to bring pleasure to the audience.

Assertions:

- The more pleasure one receives, the better the art work.
- People tend to judge too quickly whether it gives them pleasure or not.
- If a piece of art gives one feelings that one likes, then it is considered a good work of art.
- A great work of art is something that gives pleasure, either to a small audience or to a large audience.
- The audience becomes absorbed in the art work and forgets himself.
- Art works that are judged by the Hedonist Theory tend to be more decorative.

Instrumentalist—Art can promote social/political concerns. Art is evaluated on how effectively the artwork

Yes, No, Maybe So

Grades 6-12

Follow-up: This lesson can be a basis for almost any lesson on aesthetics.

Adaptations (Special Needs population): Do the homework in class with a peer tutor. Do worksheets in groups.

Extensions (Gifted): Have students interview other faculty about what art is to them and how they came to that conclusion.

Concepts/Foci: What is Art?; Introduction to aesthetics; Define what art is.

Critical/Creative Skill: Write definition of what art is.

Vocabulary: Aesthetics

Multiple Intelligences: Interpersonal, Linguistic, Touch, Auditory, Spatial

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Give examples of what they think is art, not art, and what could be art,
- Summarize their own ideas of what art is in a brief definition,
- Categorize objects as "Art," "Non-art," and "Maybe Art,"
- Appreciate that others define art differently,
- Recognize that not everything is art,
- Identify postcard images with aesthetic clusters. (Utah Art Core Standard 3.A.1)

Motivator:

Place in front of the class a large wrapped box. Talk with the class about occasions when they receive gifts. Lead the class to discover it is when people want to share something of worth with others. In this box are six smaller boxes as well as objects that are art, not art, and could be art. Examples for objects are a small ceramic pot, flashlight, bar of soap, a wood craft/Christmas ornament, geode or crystal or some type of decorative rock, a real art work, a Brillo box, model airplane, unusual looking shoe, and so forth. Inside the smaller boxes are postcard examples and questions for the six clusters of aesthetics. They are as follows: What is art?; What is beauty?; Artist Intent; Aesthetic Experience; Artistic Creation; Art and Other Values.

Pass out the small boxes. One by one have students open them. Show the postcards or have large images up front for the class to see. Let the students read the questions in each box. Answer and discuss the questions together. Spend about three to five minutes per box. Do the What is Art? Box last. For each box use the postcards to engage in discussions. This last box is the focus of the lesson.

Lesson steps:

- Motivator.
- Pull the objects out of the box. Have students decide if it is art, not art, or could be art. Pick specific objects to discuss.
- If students are not engaging in the discussion use objects that are part of popular culture such as a car, clothing, designer shoes, and so forth.
- Give homework assignment worksheet "Yes, No, Maybe so."
- Discuss with class what they found on their worksheets.
- Lead students to verbally express what they believe art is. In doing so, help the students recognize that not everything is art. Example, the toilet in the bathroom.

- Have students choose a postcard. Students will use the postcard to help them fill out the “Making Distinctions” worksheet. Use the Barbie article to help fill out the worksheet. The last step of the worksheet is to write a personal definition of what art is.

The small boxes:

What is art?

- John Chamberlain, Delores James, 1962
- Who makes art?
- Where is art?
- When is art?
- Why is art?

What is beauty?

- Emily Carr, Shoreline, 1936
- Francis Bacon, Study After Pope Innocent X by Velazquez, 1951
- What is beauty?
- Subjectivism– beauty is in the eye of the beholder
- Objectivism–only one universal definition
- Is there an ugly or are there just degrees of beauty?

Artist Intent • Any work of art by Andy Warhol

- Any work of art by an animal. These can be found on the Internet. I use Singgah the Asian Elephant.
- Can anyone or anything make art?
- Is anything an artist makes art? What about pizza or cookies?
- Does it have to have intent to be art?

Aesthetic Experience • Most paintings by van Gogh

- Collin McCahon, Will He Save Him?, 1959
- What are your reactions to a work of art. Is this similar to your reactions to nature?
- Is it good art if you have a negative reaction to the art, or if you don't have a reaction?

Artistic Creation

- George Segal, Bus Riders, 1962
- Clive Arlidge, Heke Meets the Guv, 1962
- Does the process of making art matter?
- Does the artist have to make something or can he/she just put a stick on a pedestal and call it art?

Art and Other Values

- Ethical
- Chris Burden, Doorway to Heaven, November 15, 1975
- Political
- Faith Ringgold, The Flag is Bleeding, 1967
- Religious
- Salvador Dali, Crucifixion, 1954
- Historical
- Lascaux Cave Paintings, Galloping Horse, 15,000 B.C.
- Economical

- Jasper Johns, Three Flags, 1958
- Social
- Any work by Shirin Neshat
- Can values affect the viewers perception?
- Should people spend \$17 million for a Jasper Johns' painting?
- Is it good art because it's old?
- Do art and politics mix?