

# ART & LITERACY

Cindy L. Clark [clarc754@alpine.k12.ut.us](mailto:clarc754@alpine.k12.ut.us)

## VISUAL AND VERBAL STRATEGIES FOR LEARNING

"The arts not only give expression to the profound urgings of the human spirit, they also validate our feelings in a world that deadens feelings. Now, more than ever, all people need to see clearly, hear acutely, and feel sensitively through the arts. These skills are no longer just desirable. They are essential if we are to survive together with civility and joy." --Ernest Boyer

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Tomorrow's workforce—and especially its leaders—will need broad abilities beyond technical skills. There will be a demand for people who are creative, analytical, disciplined, and self-confident—people who can solve problems, communicate ideas, and be sensitive to the world around them. Hands-on participation in the arts is a proven way to help develop these abilities.

And what are young people learning when they learn the arts? To use their minds in verbal and non-verbal ways. To communicate complex ideas in a variety of forms. To understand what someone else is trying to tell them in words, sounds, or images. To imagine new possibilities and to do the hard work of making them happen. To appreciate quality.

Our public schools must educate children to be fully literate, which in the twenty-first century will clearly include arts-derived knowledge. --Longley, Laura. "Gaining the Arts Literacy Advantage." *Educational Leadership*, October 1999, p. 71-74.

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"Pictures as well as words are important to human beings in their communication. We need to expand our narrow definition of literacy to include visual dimensions, and in so doing answer the call of researchers for the recognition of multi-literacies and ways these literacies can work to complement each other."

Hubbard, Ernst. 1994.

### Reading TEXT and ART

#### BEFORE

Activate prior knowledge  
Build schema  
Preview  
Build anticipation

#### DURING

Monitor understanding  
Make connections  
Ask questions  
Infer/predict  
Determine importance  
Synthesis

#### AFTER

Explain  
Interpret  
Apply  
Explore self  
Pursue new paths

Ultimate goal: Students become effective learners WITHOUT our guidance.

## ACTIVATE PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Activating prior knowledge helps students to search their knowledge and life experiences for what they already know about the topic or what they can discover from looking at the artwork. This helps students connect new knowledge to the old.

### **ABC LISTS**

1. Divide page into twelve squares.
2. Label squares AB, CD, EF, GH, IJ, KL, MN, OP, QR, ST, UV, WXYZ.
3. In each square, list as many words as you can think of that begin with the letters.

### **BRAIN DRAIN**

1. Divide the class into small groups.
2. "I'm going to give you a topic (or an art work). When I say GO, your group is to generate as many words or phrases about the topic (or art work) as you can in (3) minutes. Try to 'drain your brain' onto the paper. Decide who will write your list. The topic (or art work) is \_\_\_\_\_. Ready. GO!"
3. Time students. Call "time."
4. Teams count items and share lists. Find the group with the most unique items, OR have teams pass their lists to another group OR call for one group to read its list and for others to add information to their lists.
5. End with "What else do you know about \_\_\_\_\_ that has not been discussed?"  
"What are some questions you have about what you have observed?"

### **LIST, WEB, and QUESTION**

1. Decide key categories of information students should know.
2. Have students make lists of prior knowledge about the topic as in "Brain Drain." After the lists are made, show them a WEB with the categories listed and have them group what they know under each. Sample web chart <http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/cluster.htm>
3. After looking at the finished web, have students think of authentic questions they have about the topic. Authentic questions are those students ask because they do not know the answers and are curious to know.

### **KWHL**

1. Students list what they already KNOW about a topic.
2. They list what they WANT to know or don't know.
3. They list HOW they think they can find out.
4. After the lesson, they list what they have LEARNED that they didn't know before.

Chart found at <http://www.graphic.org/kwhl.htm>

## BUILD SCHEMA

Schema is what you know (previous knowledge) and how your brain has chosen to organize it. Schema reflects the experiences, conceptual understandings, attitudes, values, skills, and strategies a person uses to interpret new information. Learning occurs best when schema is sufficient enough to allow the brain to understand new material and incorporate this new material into the existing schema. The main goal in learning is to connect the new to the known.

**There are three ways to make these connections:**

**Art-to-Self: Relate the art to something personal.**

**Art-to-World: What does the art teach about the outside world? Society? History?**

**Art-to-other Art: Viewer relates ideas from one artist to another artist. Are the concepts/styles the same or different?**

### **SEEKING INFORMATION 5,3,2**

1. Identify key concepts an artist assumes viewers already know and that are needed to understand the painting, but that students may in fact not know at all. They lack the necessary schema.
2. "Please learn all you can about \_\_\_\_\_ by asking me YES/NO questions. After you have asked five of these questions, you may ask any three clarification questions and I will try to answer them with good explanations. Then I will ask you two questions that I would have asked if I were you and we will try to answer them."
3. Continue as above with the other key concepts students need for understanding content in the artwork.

### **BUILD ANTICIPATION**

Wanting to know helps increase the likelihood that understanding will occur.

#### **PREDICT FROM OBJECTS**

1. Bring in objects that relate to the concept being taught. Have students predict what these objects have to do with the topic.
2. They list their guesses.
3. They examine the artwork or read material and see what changes they need to make in their predictions. What evidence is there to convince them to change?

### **PREVIEW**

Help the student to look over several works by an artist.

OR Help students look over a piece of text so that they have a framework for the whole.

This gives them "hooks" for new knowledge.

#### **PREVIEW INTERVIEW**

1. Students prepare to "interview an artist" as they look at his/her works of art. In pairs, students examine the work with different roles.
  - a. **Previewer** looks at artwork and describes techniques, media, subject, elements, principles, etc. Then he/she tries to say what it is about-- tries to capture what content seems to be expressed.
  - b. **Interviewer** listens without looking at the art, and asks one or two authentic questions about the art.
  - c. Students do not attempt to answer questions yet. They will do that when they "interview the artist."
2. They switch roles, and look at other works of art by the same artist.
3. When finished previewing, they have looked over the artwork, tried to ascertain essential information from each work, and developed questions to guide their learning and enhance their curiosity. Now they "interview the artist" as they examine the work individually.

#### **LOOK ALOUD/THINK ALOUD (modeled after a read aloud)**

**HOOK:** Share your enthusiasm for the topic, and show a part of the art that was surprising, fascinating, or puzzling for you. Suggest that students look with the same enthusiasm. Ask them to share things they find surprising, fascinating, or puzzling.

### **LOOK ALOUD/THINK ALOUD, con't**

1. Students do not have a copy of the art, yet. Read them the title, and see if they can predict the subject or content.
2. Describe a section or two of the artwork as you "Look ALOUD," showing how you process visual images with energy, insight, connections, inquiry.
3. Invite students to look aloud / think aloud with you. Discuss, predict, clarify, question. Do this for several minutes as you examine the artwork. Pause for students to "Look ALOUD." As they learn to think, apply art concepts, and discover meaning.
4. Have students continue to examine artwork in pairs. Encourage them to be aware of their thinking as they examine art.

### **DURING OBSERVATION/ READING**

#### **QAR's (Question / Answer / Relationship) THE FINE ART OF QUESTIONING**

**RATIONALE:** (see Vacca and Vacca, *Content Area Reading*. New York: Longman, 1999. p. 59-63).

The type of question asked to guide comprehension should be based on the *information readers need to answer the questions*. Therefore, teachers must help students become aware of likely sources of information as they respond to questions. In addition, students can learn to generate their own questions about reading material. Harry Singer contends, "Whenever readers are involved in asking questions, they are engaged in *active comprehension*."

Some questions are textually *explicit* (fact or definition questions)—with answers found "right there" in the text. Other questions invite the student to think about information they have read and search for ideas that are related. These questions are textually *implicit* (thought questions). Still other questions require students to rely on their own prior knowledge and experience (opinion questions).

QAR's (Question-Answer-Relationships) make explicit to students the relationships that exist among the type of question asked, the text (or artwork), and the reader's prior knowledge. Students become aware of and skilled in using learning strategies to find the information they need to comprehend at different levels of response.

#### **WHY IS QUESTIONING IMPORTANT?**

- Research reports that teachers ask lower level questions and assess comprehension rather than teach it.
- Teachers often encourage students to satisfy the teacher's or text's purposes, not their own.
- Student generated questions have two advantages. (a) they make reading an active process; (b) they force the reader to focus on the material to be learned.
- Studies indicate that if we want students to do something we must teach them how.
- Self-questioning is more effective for low ability students than high ability students.
- Students at all grade levels can be taught to generate questions and those of low verbal ability benefit most.

- First, teachers should become familiar with the different types of questions. Then they should teach students these differences. (That is what we are going to do in this lesson).
- Student-generated questions increase motivation:
  - Students take a more active role in their learning.
  - Students learn to guide their own thinking.
  - It places the responsibility for learning on the students, increases their attention, and allows students to take corrective action.

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**PROCEDURE:** Teach students strategies for generating answers for each type of question. Then teach them how to ask questions of each different type.

**FACT QUESTIONS:** (Explicit/ right there) These questions have single answers. They are not subject to interpretation, but are based on clear information. Sometimes we know the answer to a fact question immediately, but sometimes we must look up the answer in a book, ask a resource person for help, or calculate results. No matter the strategy, answers to these questions are solid and are not open to interpretation. There are "right" answers, which make these the simplest questions to answer.

**THOUGHT QUESTIONS:** (Implicit questions/ requires synthesis and gathering of information) These questions ask for analysis and explanation—or present alternatives. They do not have single answers as fact questions do, and generally require using evidence or examples for support.

**OPINION QUESTIONS:** (Rely on prior knowledge and experience) These questions ask for value judgments based upon individual feelings. They can be answered "yes" or "no" or "I agree" or in some other similar format. They should require an explanation of "why" to support the opinion. Not all people will have the same responses, but the responses will be direct and personal. There is no right or wrong answer for an opinion question.

## THE FINE ART OF QUESTIONING

Name \_\_\_\_\_

"Of all qualities, questioning is fundamental to being human. It is how we dispel confusion, probe into new areas, strengthen our abilities to analyze and deduce. It is how we learn about other people and deepen friendships. Those who take the time to ask thoughtful, provocative questions are those who help us learn about ourselves. Through their questions, we also learn about them." P. 99-100 *Mosaic of Thought* by Keene and Zimmerman

**DIRECTIONS:** Answer the following questions which will be used for a discussion later.

1. What is your mother's first name?
2. Compare Van Gogh's style with Gauguin's. How are they alike? Different?
3. Who was Van Gogh's brother?
4. Compare an art class with an English class.
5. Do you like classical music? Why?
6. What is surrealism?
7. Do owls usually hunt in the day or night?
8. Do you like cold weather?
9. Do you like post modernism better than impressionism? Why or why not?
10. How much money do you have with you?
11. How many letters are in the alphabet?
12. Do you like Coke classic?
13. Explain the similarities between an artist and a writer.
14. Have you ever been roller-blading?
15. Should we reduce class size?
16. Does art help cure social ills?
17. What is an analogous color scheme?
18. Why should we have school assemblies?
19. Is it snowing today?
20. Who threw himself down the stairs to feel the sensation of falling and bit the head off a bat?

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the text and write questions that cannot be answered with a yes or a no or a one-word answer.

1. Write a question that asks about an important detail in the text.
2. Create a question about something that is puzzling in the text.
3. Write a cause and effect question.
4. Compose a compare/contrast question.
5. Write a question that addresses a future outcome.
6. Compose a question that relates to values and principles.

**DIRECTIONS:** Examine the artwork and write questions that cannot be answered with a yes or a no or a one-word answer.

1. Write a question that asks about an important detail in the artwork.
2. Create a question about something that is puzzling in the artwork.
3. Write a cause and effect question.
4. Compose a compare/contrast question.
5. Write a question that addresses a future outcome.
6. Compose a question that related to values and principles.