

# POSTCARDS FROM UTAH



Jeanne Clarke, *Entertaining: Favorite Ladies II*



C.C.A. Christensen  
*Handcart Pioneers'*  
*First View of Salt Lake Valley*



Trevor Southey  
*New Bloom*

## Theme: Getting to Know an Artwork

**Lesson Motivation:** Introduce this lesson with the analogy that looking at artworks for the first time is like meeting someone new. Explain to the students that best way to get to know an artwork is to spend time with the artwork and get information about who made it, how, and why.

Introduce the Elementary Posters that have people in them, as if they were people the students were meeting. The three images at the top of this page all feature people: Jeanne Clarke (*Entertaining: Favorite Ladies*) Trevor Southey (*New Bloom*) and C.C.A. Christensen (*Handcart Pioneers*) After the groups have had a chance to look at these artworks, ask them if they know anything about these people. Ask them how they could get to know more about them. Explain that just like meeting new people, finding out information about artworks can help the students learn to know the artworks.

Ask for a few responses to the artworks: this is what an art critic would call an initial reaction. Have the students explore their reasons for their reactions.

## ART CRITICISM

**Art Criticism Objectives:** Students will be able to look, listen, think, and talk about reasons for their reactions to artworks, look at how an artist uses the art elements and principles in an artworks, and explore reasons their reactions to an artwork have or have not changed from their looking.

**Teacher Explanation:** Although Art Criticism is sometimes taught as a series of linear, discreet steps, this lesson uses an inquiry method which begins with the students' initial responses to an artwork, then proceeds to research to learn more about the artwork, the style, the artist, the artist's intent, and then discussion or presentation that is centered on meaning and value. Good art criticism gives students ideas and information they can then apply to other artworks. Criticism also should be recursive—students should revisit the artworks, look for more information, listen to or research others' reactions to the artworks, and compare and contrast various works.

As such, critical inquiry naturally includes aesthetic theories and art history as well as production activities that offer students the chance to gain greater understanding of particular artworks as well as to explore the students' own creative abilities and needs for artistic experiences that relate to their lives.

For young elementary students, who can neither read nor write effectively, this means the research material will have to be supplied by the teacher, and responses will need to be oral or simple statements the teacher or an aide can write out for the child. Older students can do the research themselves or be given some information by the teacher and find other information themselves.

Although no “right” answers can be arrived at, students do need to justify or explain their views/statements using references to specific characteristics of the artwork.

**A Formalistic Approach to Art Criticism:** Even very young children are comfortable talking about the reality of what is represented in artworks. They like to identify what it is they are seeing. In this task, you will need to help your students resist this tendency and look beyond the reality represented and pay attention to the formalistic qualities of an artwork. Your students will need to look at how the artist used specific art elements and principles to create the work.

Have the students get into groups of four and provide each group with a set of 24 postcards from the elementary postcard set. Next, show the large poster image of *Chelsea VI* by Donald Olsen from the elementary poster set.



Donald Olsen, *Chelsea VI*

Talk to the students about a color in Olsen's *Chelsea VI* that you like and explain why you like that color.

Ask the students to tell you why they think the artist used that color in that part of the painting. Ask them to also explain to you how they would go about choosing colors to use in their own artworks. Then ask the students to tell the classmate closest to them how they think an artist might pick a color to use in a painting. Also ask them to talk about how the artists' approach and their approach to picking a color to use are the same or different.

Now, have each group of students look at the postcard images and select one of the images that has the color they like the most as a group. Ask the groups to look at how the artist has used that color. Did the artist use the color in more than one place in the painting? Is this color brighter or duller than the other colors in the painting? Ask the students to think about how the color makes them feel. How do you think the artist feels about that color? What do you think the artist wanted you to feel about that color?

Next, have the students look for other postcard images in which a different artist used that same color or a similar color. Have the students compare the ways in which the two artists used this color.

Use questions to provoke similar conversations about the other art elements and principles used in the images of the artworks in the postcard set. This assignment can also involve the students in the use of creative dance movements to describe formalistic qualities of an artwork. For example, have students move in ways that are inspired by the colors or lines in an artwork.

In addition, the students can respond to the formalistic qualities of an artwork using sounds. Ask the students to think about how a line used by an artist would sound to them. Have them choose words to describe the elements. Then, students can find ways to produce appropriate sounds using rhythm instruments or objects in the classroom. You may want to introduce other connections by asking questions such as "How would this artwork feel if you could touch it? Which artwork would you most like to touch and why?" You can also ask the students to respond to and describe where they would find the elements and principles you have discussed in their own homes.

Teaching strategies like the ones described will help the students focus on a formalistic approach to artworks. It is important not just to have the students analyze the lines, shapes, and colors of an artwork but to help the students to relate to these art elements from their own perspectives using their own life experiences.

Now, give each group a postcard of *Jasmine Sidewinder #91* by Gene Davis which is part of the University of Utah's Museum of Fine Arts collection. Ask them if they think this is a formalistic artwork. Why? Have the students take turns sharing their responses to it. Try and let all of the students have a chance to explore their reactions. Remind them to give the reasons for their responses.

Next, show the students the images of *Chelsea VI* by Donald Olsen and *Jasmine Sidewinder #91* by Gene Davis again and have them look at them both together. Ask the students to turn to their

closest classmate and talk to one another about what they know about these two images. Then ask them to talk about how they feel about these artworks. Ask them to talk about how their feelings might have changed. Now ask them to share what they have talked about with the class.  
Assessment: Each student will use his or her copy of the following formative self assessment tool throughout each of the first grade lessons. By pointing to a symbol or by making a check in the appropriate box, they may indicate to the teacher their progress for each learning task.

During the learning tasks, the teacher will use the student's self-assessment tool on page 9 to help identify students who need more time to work or need help or who have mastered the task. The teacher then will use these self-assessment tools to assess mastery of all of the tasks by each student at the end of the unit of study.

Each of the four components of this lesson will involve the first four tasks of the assessment tool: looking, listening, thinking, and talking. The art production components will also involve these four tasks plus the task of making.

### **Resources/Materials:**

Elementary Postcard Set—SMA  
Elementary Poster Set—SMA

Additional Artworks—Gene Davis, *Jasmine Sidewinder* #91 from the Springville Museum of Art, Op and Pop Evening for Educator's packet, April 2001.

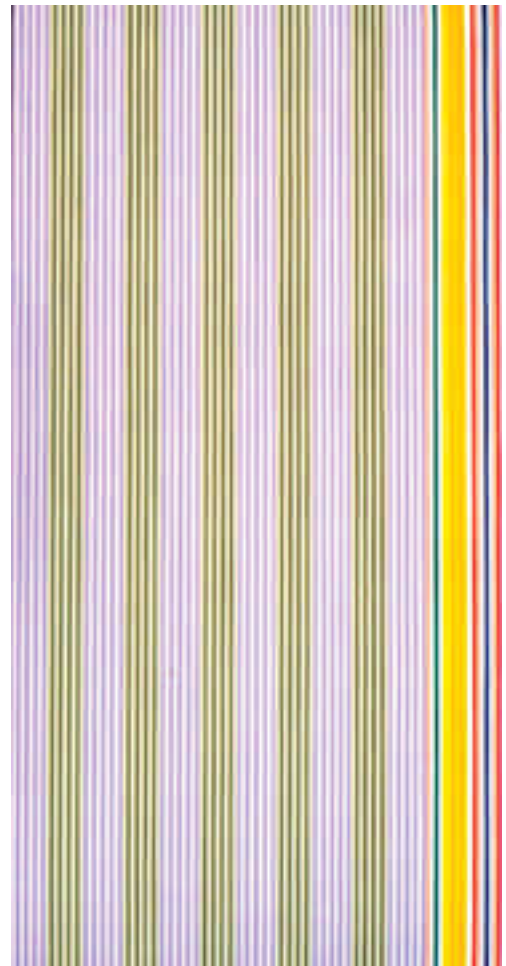
(Available via the Internet [www.sma.nebo.edu](http://www.sma.nebo.edu) or at the Springville Museum of Art)

### **AESTHETICS**

**Aesthetics Objectives:** Students will be able to look, listen, think, and talk about their understanding of beliefs concerning artworks.

**Aesthetics Lesson:** Explain to the students that different people have different ideas about what art should be. This information can help them get to know artworks. The teacher should explain the following aesthetic theories to the students and give each student a set of die-cut symbols to use in this task:

1. Realism—Some people believe art should mimic nature, should look "real."  
The symbol they will use is a die-cut of a camera .
2. Expressivism—Other people believe art should express feelings or ideas.  
The symbol they will use for this theory is a die-cut of a heart.
3. Formalism—Other people believe art is about lines and shapes and colors.  
The symbol they will use for this theory is a die-cut of a square or triangle.



Gene Davis, *Jasmine Sidewinder* #91

Allow students to ask questions and make whatever additional explanations are necessary. One student in the group will deal the postcards out to the group members. Each student gets a turn to place one postcard by the symbol that best represents the artwork. That student must give the reasons for the choice. This continues until all the postcards are on the table. When all the groups are finished, have the groups put their postcards under the symbols which you have attached to the board or a table. Tabulate the results. Summarize the results for the students.

**Assessment:** During the learning task, the teacher will use the student's self-assessment tool to help identify students who need more time to work or need help or who have mastered the task.

Resources/Materials:

Elementary Postcard Set and Elementary Poster set

Sets of symbols: camera, heart, and a shape such as a triangle or square (You will need 6-8 sets of the symbols, one set for each group and one set for yourself.)

Additional artworks—Gene Davis, *Jasmine Sidewinder #91* from Op and Pop Art, Evening for Educator's packet, April 2001.

(Available via the Internet [www.sma.nebo.edu](http://www.sma.nebo.edu) or at the Springville Museum of Art)

## ART HISTORY

**Art History Objective:** Students will be able to look, listen, think, and talk about the three artists who made the featured artworks, when they lived, what was important to them in their lives and their art. Students will also be able to identify artworks that may be similar or different from those artists' artworks.

Art History Lesson: Display the posters. Ask the students to review the aesthetic theories. Then explain that another way to learn about the artworks is to learn about the artists who made the artworks, when they lived, what they cared about, what their lives were like. Present information about the artists. You can use the information on the backs of the postcard or the information below.

1. James T. Harwood (*Boy and Cat: My Little Son, Heber James*)
  - J. T. Harwood was born in Lehi, Utah, in 1860—a long time ago.
  - Harwood went to France to study art.  
(Show the class where France is on a map or globe.)
  - His wife was also an artist  
(Show the poster: *Richard's Camp*. J. T. and Harriet are glancing at each other.)
  - Harwood loved his family.
  - This painting is of Harwood's youngest son, Heber.

Ask the students to choose an artwork from the set that is by an artist who cares about some of the same things as J. T. Harwood. Students should explain their responses to the members of their groups and do not have to agree.

2. Sven Birger Sandzen *Moonrise in the Canyon, Moab, Utah*
  - Birger Sandzen was born in Sweden, in 1871.

- He moved to Kansas and taught at a college.  
(Show the students where Kansas is on a map.)
- He came to Utah to teach in the summer.
- Sandzen liked to paint using bright colors
- He also liked the brushstrokes in his paintings to show.

(Demonstrate what a brushstroke is and then have students look at Sandzen’s painting to see the brushstrokes.)

Ask students to choose one of the artworks that might have been painted by an artist who studied with Sandzen. Students should explain why they think that artist may have been Sandzen’s student.

3. Donald Olsen, *Chelsea VI*

- Donald Olsen was born in Provo, Utah.
- He plays the violin.
- Olsen was a teacher. He taught art and music.
- He didn’t believe paintings should look like people or places, he thought they should just have shapes and color and line.
- Other artists who were alive at the same time also thought art should just have simple shapes and colors.

Ask the students to choose an artwork that is similar to Olsen’s and say how. Next they should choose an artwork that is different and tell the group how it is different.

**Materials:**

Elementary Postcard Set—SMA  
Elementary Poster Set—SMA



Louise Richards Farnsworth  
*Capitol From North Salt Lake*

**ART PRODUCTION**

**Production Objectives:** Students will be able to create two formalist artworks one of which will be three-dimensional.

**Production Lesson:** Research has shown that very young children enjoy the bright colors and simple shapes of abstract, minimalist artworks like *Chelsea VI*. Provide students with construction paper in several colors. Students will choose one color for the background. Then students will cut out simple shapes from other colors. You may wish to tie this to shapes they are learning to identify. Students should try several arrangements of the shapes rather than just using their first idea. When students have decided on a design, they should glue the shapes down. Then have students evaluate their designs. Are they satisfied or do the designs need anything added? (Choosing their favorite design from among several and later evaluating the design for completeness are important criticism processes.)

Display the finished artworks and allow students to comment on and to contrast and compare their artworks with Olsen's and any other similar artworks you have used in the activity. Make a display that includes professional artworks as well as the students' designs. You may also want to make a chart that has a one- or two-word definition of the three aesthetic theories you discussed and the symbols you used in the matching activity. This chart can be displayed during future lessons as a reminder of what the students learned and as a springboard for future art activities.

The unit may be expanded to include production activities that explore the process of making artwork that looks real and that expresses feelings. Summarize the major points, asking for student input: Different artists want their art to look different. Some artists want their art to look real, some want their art to express feelings, some want their art to show shapes and colors. Knowing what an artist was trying to do helps us understand their artwork. Knowing about the artists' lives can also help us understand their artworks.



Frank Riggs



Raymond Jonas

### Three-dimensional Formalism Lesson:

Have the students bring three-dimensional containers from home, such as wrapping-paper tubes, shoe boxes, or metal cookie tins. Then have the students paint the shapes primary colors using Tempera or Acrylic paint.

Divide the students into groups of four and pass out the shapes to the groups. Each group should have five to nine shapes.



Neil Hadlock

The students in each group should discuss and plan how to arrange the shapes into an interesting design. Remind the students about the thumbnail sketches they did with the two-dimensional assignment. They should use a similar approach with this assignment. Explain to the students that when they work with three-dimensional shapes, they must think about how the design looks from all sides.

Give the groups sufficient time to try several possible arrangements. The teacher may have to help the students avoid just stacking the shapes on top of one another. Help the students see how they can balance one shape over the edge of another or turn them different directions. Remind the students to check how each new change in the arrangement of the shapes affects the design from all the sides.

When the groups have finished arranging their shapes, have an adult help the students stabilize the design using “Blue Tack” or self-adhesive Velcro. Give each group an opportunity to share with the class what they think was most successful about the way their group solved the assignment. Have the students record a check in the appropriate box of the self-assessment tool. If possible, display the arrangement of shapes from each group in the classroom or in the media center.

Assessment: While the students are creating their artworks, the teacher will visit with each student and help him or her to assess their progress. The student will indicate and record their efforts in looking, listening, thinking, and talking about the process of making a formalistic artwork. The teacher will also help the students to assess their use of the art elements and principles in the design of their artworks and the overall look of the work.

The students will also look again at the artworks by Frank Riggs, Neil Hadlock, and Raymond Jonas to help them assess their own three-dimensional formalistic works.

Resources/Materials: Springville Museum of Art web site images: [www.sma.nebo.edu](http://www.sma.nebo.edu)

Frank Riggs	<i>Sentinel</i>
Neil Hadlock	<i>Effron</i>
Raymond Jonas	<i>Abstract Configuration</i>

Interdisciplinary connections: Language Arts Utah State Core Curriculum  
Topic: Speaking and Listening

Learn To Explore Ideas Through Talk

- Participate in discussions as a class and during group interactions
- Initiate conversation with peers
- Ask for clarification and explanation of words and ideas
- Follow implicit rules for conversation (i.e., taking turns and staying on topic)
- Tell and retell stories and events in logical order
- Ask and respond to questions in small group settings
- Explore ideas that may later be expressed in a personal artwork