

# Looking at art

a simple guide to  
getting the most out  
of your gallery visit.

## Teacher Notes

The activities in these notes can be used with the 'Looking at Art' swatch guide. A class set of the guides is available to borrow at the gallery, just ask on booking.

## Introduction

York Art Gallery has a nationally important collection of historic paintings, dating from the 1300s to the present day.

The gallery is also home to the Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA) which displays the country's largest collection of British studio ceramics.

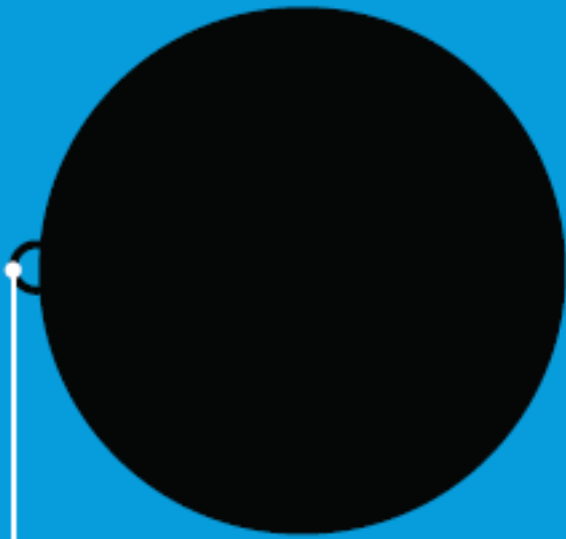
York Art Gallery hosts a programme of changing exhibitions featuring important artworks on loan from artists, collectors and other galleries around the country.

It is always a good idea to check what exhibitions are on display before you visit. You can do this on our website: [yorkartgallery.org.uk](http://yorkartgallery.org.uk).

You will receive a complimentary ticket to visit York Art Gallery once you have made a booking for your class. You can use this visit to consider which exhibitions your class will enjoy and which artworks you think it would be most relevant for them to look at.

“You don't  
have to  
like it all”

Alan Bennett on art



Choose  
what to  
look at...

## Teacher Notes

### The Viewfinder Activity

This activity helps children to look more closely at individual artworks by blocking out some of their field of vision.

You can use it to encourage the children to look for an artwork that interests them. They can then look more closely at their chosen artwork, picking out details.

You could also use the viewfinder as a tool for a treasure hunt:

### Treasure Hunt

Give the children a list of things to find in the artworks on their visit. For example: a slice of cake; a black cat; a red coat; a feather; a key; a bird.

You could focus on colours and ask them to find something red; something yellow; something blue and so on.

Choose one or two artworks in each space that catch your interest and spend more time with them.

What can  
you see?

## Teacher Notes

### Talking About Art

One of the aims of the national curriculum for art & design, is that pupils will learn to evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design. Real artworks stimulate enquiry and discussion.

#### Look

You do not need to understand what an artwork is about to consider how it might have been made. Asking what material the artwork is made from encourages pupils to look carefully at the artwork as an object.

#### Describe

Split your class into 3 groups – ask each group to describe different aspects of the artwork: one group could describe the colours and lines, another the shapes and patterns and the last the textures and mood.

Discuss each group's ideas as a whole class.

Working together will help your class to see more.

## Look and Describe

Can you tell what materials the artwork is made from?  
Can you tell how it was made?

Describe the artwork to someone else

Think about:

- Colours
- Lines
- Textures
- Shapes
- Patterns
- Mood



Make  
sense  
of it...



## Teacher Notes

### What do you think?

There are no right or wrong answers when discussing how an artwork makes you think or feel. The questions on this card are designed to encourage creative ideas.

### The Sensory Game

Ask each child to choose an artwork and answer the four sensory questions (what the artwork would sing; what flavour it would be; what animal and how it would smell.) They should keep their answers secret, write them on a piece of paper and hand them in.

Choose a set of answers at random – can the class work out which artwork the answers relate to?

## As you look at the artwork

What looks familiar?

What looks strange?



If this artwork sang karaoke, which song would it sing?



If this artwork were ice cream, what flavour would it be?



If this artwork were an animal, what would it be?



If the artwork were perfume, what would it smell of?



Tell tales...

## Teacher Notes

### Storytelling

Many of the paintings in York Art Gallery tell a story. Even those that don't can be used as a starting point for creating stories.

The most straight forward starting point is a painting of people doing something. By describing what the people are doing, considering why they might be doing it, and deciding what would happen next, you will construct a story.

### Let the Plot Twist:

Storytelling is a creative process. Allow stories to take their own course.

- What would happen if the people from one painting escaped and went into a different painting?
- What would happen if a spaceship landed?

## Imagine

If there are people in the artwork...

- What are they doing?
- What might they be thinking?
- What might happen next?

Imagine if at night, all the artworks came alive and spoke to each other...

- Which other artwork would this one talk to?
- What might they say to each other?
- What might happen next?



# Draw...



## Teacher Notes

### Draw

Drawing is an excellent way to record what the class have looked at and to remind them of their visit when they get back to school. Drawing also encourages careful, analytic looking.

### Imagine

Help the children to value their own artistic vision:

Ask them to pretend that they are sitting next to the artist on the day the painting, or sculpture was made. Ask them to imagine that they are looking at the same things the artist was looking at and to make their own drawing of the scene.

There are drawing materials and sketchbooks in every room.

Drawing something makes you look more carefully.

You might see how one part fits against another.

Sometimes you will notice details that you missed before.

Don't worry if your drawing looks different to the artwork.

If you like, you can write notes on your drawing to explain how it is different.

