WRITING PROMPTS AND ACTIVITIES FOR VISUAL ART ENGAGEMENT

To book a guided tour at the Halsey Institute:
(843) 953-5957  |  HalseyTours@cofc.edu
halsey.cofc.edu/learn
Using the questions below, dissect the art work and discover the visual means the artist used to communicate ideas or examine theoretical problems.

List all the adjectives that come to mind in your first look at the artwork.

List all the materials the artist used.

How are the materials arranged?

Are the materials man-made or natural?

What do you think the artist is trying to tell us? What message are they trying to convey?
Find pieces that match these aspects of Contemporary Art.

1. Use interesting materials and/or techniques.
   Title:
   Medium:
   Comments:

2. Express emotions without relying on recognizable images.
   Title:
   Medium:
   Comments:

3. Be primarily about the arrangement of shape, line and color on a flat surface.
   Title:
   Medium:
   Comments:

4. Challenge us to view the world in a new and different way.
   Title:
   Medium:
   Comments:

5. Find one piece that you have not listed above and think of the reason(s) the artist created it. Write it below in the same format as the answers above.
   Title:
   Medium:
   Comments:
   Reason:
TO GET THINKING

Attempt to address all learning styles: verbal, visual, aural, kinesthetic and spatial. Of course, only choose items from the list below that fit with the artwork and age group or themes of the exhibition or topics requested by the instructor.

QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?
Take this is the direction that students lead with their answers. They may concentrate on the subject matter, formal elements or the design or the process and medium.

WHAT IS ABSTRACTION?
[[ formal definition: Abstraction is the distillation of something to its essence. Words can be abstract if one doesn’t know the meaning. The act of considering something as a general quality or characteristic, apart from concrete realities, specific objects, or actual instances. An impractical idea; something visionary and unrealistic. ]] Follow up: Is this an abstraction?

THINK LIKE AN ARTIST
How do you think this was made? What tools did the artist use? What would you have done differently? Why did the artist choose the size they did? What might have inspired this? Why did the artist choose this moment in time to depict?

STRANGEST DREAM
Pretend that last night you had the strangest dream and it took place inside on of the pieces. Describe what you saw, hear and smelled. What did you feel and sense? Was it a nightmare or a very lovely dream?

MAKE A LIST
Name all the types of lines you see. Name all of the shapes you see. Name all the colors you see, but give them an adjective as if you are naming crayon colors. ex: Cranberry Red, Arctic Ocean Blue, Grizzly Bear Brown.
ENTER THE LANDSCAPE
Tell the students to choose a spot in a landscape and look around. What do you see? Use your five senses to describe the landscape. Point out specific elements of the work that correlate to what you are describe. How would you move through this atmosphere? What is the temperature? How does your voice sound here? Would you want to stay long?

MOVEMENT AND MUSIC
If this was on the front cover of a CD, what kind of music do you think it would be? Hold out your arm and follow a line as you walk along the work. What kind of lines are present? Make up a movement that is inspired by an element of this work. What sort of noises would you hear if you were inside this piece? Let’s all make the noise out loud together on the count of three! Would it be easy to move around? Demonstrate the movements. Imagine that one of the figures in the piece could move. How would it look for them to walk?

COMING ALIVE
With two or more works: Imagine they could talk. What would they say to each other? Would one dominate the conversation? Would they be friendly? Say the conversation out loud using different voices.

OR

With one work: imagine this piece is looking for a pen pal. Write a letter that contains information about them. Describe their likes and dislikes, a physical description and information about their home and family. Try and piece together a personality.

FINISH THE STORY
Imagine that this piece is the middle of a story. What happened before this? What will happen next? Study the expression on the figure’s face and their gesture. What is around them?

EMULATE THE ART
Using movements or acting, emulate either a portion of the landscape or a person in the work. The rest of the group will guess what aspect you are copying.

TONGUE TWISTER
Pick a letter. Using the work as inspiration, name two adjectives, three verbs, two adverbs, three nouns and one plural noun. Use these as a word bank for creating a tongue twister!

MAKING METAPHORS
In three different columns, make a list of three non-material (invisible) things, three colors, and three material objects. Draw lines between items in the three columns to create metaphors. These can be used as the first line of a poem or writing exercise.

Anger silver an island
Time orange paper cup
Memory hot pink horse’s saddle

Memory is a silver horse’s saddle. Time is a hot pink island. Anger is an orange paper cup.
VISUAL ARTS - GENERAL QUESTIONS

- How does the work make you feel? Does it change the way you view the world/think?
- Composition: What objects/people does the artist use in the painting? How are they placed?
- Color: Which colors does the artist use? Is there an emphasis on certain colors?
- Light: Where is the light focused in the painting? Where is light missing?
- Line: What kind of lines are used in the painting? Where do they lead your eye?
- Rhythm: Is there any repetition in the painting? Where?
- Balance: How is the art work/painting arranged? Are all sides equal in visual weight, or is one side heavier than the other?
- Perspective: Where is the observer positioned in the painting? Where would the onlooker have to be standing to see it this way?
- Pick objects or elements from the artwork that you find the most interesting or perplexing.
- What do you associate with these objects and their placement?
- What is the artist’s purpose? Is there an agenda or a message or a theme in their artwork? Where do you see it? Is it effective/persuasive? Why or why not?
- What are the roles of certain elements in the work (e.g. line, color, composition)? How do they affect the work as a whole?
- Does the artist use symbols in the artwork or create new ones? What are they? What do they mean? Why are they important?
- What is influencing the artwork (e.g. social ideologies, historical events, personal life)? How can you tell?
BLOOMS TAXONOMY This instrument is used to determine the nature of a work of art. In this instance, use this instrument in order to come to know a work of art.

Title ____________________________________________ Date ______________________________

Medium _________________________________________ Size ____________________________

DESCRIPTION Only describe what you see. Do not use value-laden words such as “beautiful”, “pretty”, or “striking” in this section. The objective here is to take a complete inventory of what is there without making an apparent value judgment. This section of your paper will deal with subject matter. Write several sentences.

ANALYSIS Here you discuss how the visual elements—line, shape, value, texture, mass (volume) and color—function in the artwork. Discuss elements and not the subject matter. Write several sentences.

INTERPRETATION Review carefully your written description analysis for clues as to the idea or ideas the artist may be attempting to communicate. Remember that the artist may have more than one “message”. However, one idea or concept will stand out. Essentially, you will deal with the question of content meaning of the work.

EVALUATION After having carefully described, analyzed, and interpreted the work of art, you are now in a position to evaluate it. Is the works you have selected an example of good art—perhaps masterpiece? Or, is it pedestrian, mediocre,uneventful? Write several sentences.
ELEMENTS OF ART AND DESIGN
The basic components used by the artist when producing works of art. Those elements are color, value, line, shape, form, texture, and space.

**COLOR** Produced by light of various wavelengths, and when light strikes an object and reflects back to the eyes.

**VALUE** Luminance or luminosity—the lightness or darkness of a color.

**LINE** A mark with length and direction.

**SHAPE** An enclosed space defined and determined by other art elements such as line, color, value, and texture.

**FORM** The shape or configuration aside from color or texture.

**TEXTURE** The surface quality or "feel" of an object, its smoothness, roughness, softness, etc. They may be actual or simulated.

**SPACE** The illusion of depth on a two-dimensional surface.
**PRINCIPLES OF ART AND DESIGN**

Certain qualities inherent in the choice and arrangement of elements of art in the production of a work of art.

**UNITY** The quality of wholeness or oneness that is achieved through the effective use of the elements and principles of design.

**INTENSITY** The brightness or dullness of a hue or color.

**AXIS** An imaginary straight line which indicates movement and the direction of movement.

**DESIGN** A plan, or to plan. The organization or composition of a work; the skilled arrangement of its parts.

**BALANCE** A feeling of stability; a pleasing or harmonious arrangement or proportion of parts or composition.

**EMPHASIS** Any forcefulness that gives importance or dominance (weight) to some feature or features of an artwork; something singled out, stressed, or drawn attention to by means of contrast, anomaly, or counterpoint for aesthetic impact.

**HARMONY** Agreement; accord. A union or blend of aesthetically compatible components.

**VARIETY** A way of combining elements of art to achieve intricate and complex relationships.
DIAMANTE POEM

L1 – a word that comes to mind, immediately
L2 – an action phrase based on something you see or sense in the work
L3 – a comparison, using like or as, between something in the art & something in the real world
L4 – a word that comes to mind, immediately

HAIKU

5 syllables
7 syllables
5 syllables

TONGUE TWISTER

Pick a letter
Using a piece of art as inspiration, write down
2 adjectives, 3 verbs, 2 adverbs, 3 nouns & 1 plural noun
Use these words to make a tongue twister
When there are landscape works present in an exhibition, there are five large flash cards that can be handed out, face down, to the students. Out loud, each student completes the sentence on their card.

The five cards say:

WHEN I VISIT THIS PLACE, I CAN SEE ..
WHEN I VISIT THIS PLACE, I HEAR ..
WHEN I VISIT THIS PLACE, I CAN FEEL ..
WHEN I VISIT THIS PLACE, I TASTE ..
WHEN I VISIT THIS PLACE, I SMELL ..
These flash cards are given to each student. They place one in front of a piece of art. When everyone has finished laying out their cards, we discuss the notion of value, “good art” and “bad art” and how we perceive these ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOU LOVE THIS ONE</th>
<th>YOU LIKE THIS ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Heart" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Smiley" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOU WANT THIS ONE IN YOUR HOME</th>
<th>THIS ONE DESERVES AN AWARD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="House" /></td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Award" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THIS ONE TOOK THE MOST TIME TO MAKE</th>
<th>YOU DO NOT LIKE THIS ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Clock" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="No Symbol" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THIS ONE IS CONFUSING</th>
<th>THIS WOULD BE EXPENSIVE TO BUY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Confused" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Money Bag" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>