

**UNIT 1 - Art Speaks – the basic elements of art are a language all artists use.**

“Every art changes inevitably in its manifestations as its creators develop, but less than one might think: it always keeps its simple, noble function, indispensable to man, which is to communicate.”

—Karel Kupka. *Dawn of Art*, 1965.

**The Big Questions:**

- How do artists use the same artistic elements (color, line, shape, space, and texture) to create different artworks with different meanings?
- How do finding similarities and differences in the artworks help to determine a shared theme between the works?

**Project Description:**

Inspired by a universal theme apparent in works of art, students create a multi-media artwork about what this theme means in their lives.

**Sequence:**

Each class involves an activity that will take 45-50 minutes:

<b>Class</b>	1	Introduction to the Elements of Art
	2	Comparing Works of Art
	3	Finding a Connecting Theme
	4	Finding Themes that Connect to Other Disciplines
	5–7	Creating a Thematic Multi-Media Work of Art
	8	Reflection

**Thinking Skills, Learning Goals and Assessment Criteria:**

**THINKING SKILL: Interpretation**

**1. Goal:** Student visually analyzes a work of art in order to interpret a meaning.

**Assess:** Student describes and explains how the artist used the elements of color, line, shape, space and texture to defend their interpretation of the work.

**THINKING SKILL: Analysis and Synthesis**

**2. Goal:** Student compares two works of art in order to determine a common theme communicated by both works.

**Assess:** Student identifies how the artists can use the art elements in different ways, but express a common big idea that goes beyond a specific time and place.

**THINKING SKILL: Connection**

**3. Goal:** Student connects two works in different art forms (literature, theater, music, etc.) through a shared theme.

**Assess:** Student shows how different artists use the elements of their art form for similar intentions.

**THINKING SKILL: Creation**

**4. Goal:** Student creates a personal multi-media response to this theme.

**Assess:** Student communicates what a theme means in their lives through a creative work that connects two of the following media: visual, written and/or oral.

## Instructional Strategies:

### **CLASS ONE - Introduction to the Elements of Art**



Monet, *The Mula Palace*, 1908

Monet, *The Grand Canal, Venice*, 1908

1. Lead a discussion on how artists communicate using the basic elements of art - color, line, shape, space and texture- similar to how writers use basic conventions of language to communicate in different ways.

2.. Project the images of the two Monet artworks or distribute color copies. Have half the class look closely at The Mula Palace, and the other half of the class look closely at The Grand Canal.



**Study Sheet 1:1** - Use the “Guided Looking Sheet” to ask students questions about how the artist has used and composed the art elements.

3. Ask students to compare their analyses of the two paintings. In the other column of the “Guided Looking Sheet” write down the observations of the students who analyzed the other painting. How has this artist used the elements of art in his two paintings? Does he use the elements in the same way in both paintings?

#### **Teacher Tip:**

If your students are not familiar with the elements of art, or how to look closely at a work of art in order to analyze the art elements, try some of the pre-visit activities at the DoubleTake website as a warm-up.

([www.doubletakeexhibit.org/education/index.asp?pg=cu](http://www.doubletakeexhibit.org/education/index.asp?pg=cu))

### **CLASS TWO - Comparing Works of Art**



Jan Brueghel the Younger, *The Five Senses: Sight*, ca. 1625

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Reader*, 1877

1. Now show two works of art that are more visually dissimilar.



**Study Sheet 1:2** - Hand out the “Artwork Comparison Chart” so that students can go through the visual analysis process on their own. Encourage students to hypothesize, just from what they see, what each work of art may be about. What meaning might the artist be communicating?

2. Discuss the students’ different interpretations of the paintings by Brueghel and Renoir. While exploring their interpretations, ask students, “What do you see that makes you think that?”

### CLASS THREE - Finding a Connecting Theme

1. Introduce the idea of finding a connecting theme between the two works. Start by discussing what a theme is: Brainstorm the criteria for something to be a theme/a big idea:
  - a. Universal – an idea that people all over the world encounter in their lives.
  - b. Timeliness – an idea that people have or are affected by throughout history.
  - c. Broad – an idea that can be supported by specific examples.
  - d. Shared idea – connects diverse elements together.
2. Brainstorm examples of themes used in other curriculum areas, such as themes the students are studying in literature (Man vs. Nature, Man vs. Man, etc. ) or themes in social studies (Rebellion, Migration, Justice, etc.).
3. Discuss (or pair share) why themes are important. Some answers could include:
  - a. Help to organize ideas or things
  - b. Make us feel connected to other people
  - c. Give us perspective of the world beyond our day-to-day life.
  - d. Make us feel connected to other periods in history and help us understand how we can learn from the past.
4. Return to the Brueghel and Renoir comparison and ask the students to determine a theme that connects the two works.



**Study Sheet 1:3** – Students can use the “Justifications for a Theme” sheet to write four reasons why they selected the theme that are based on what they see in both works of art.

### CLASS FOUR - Finding Themes Connecting to Other Disciplines

1. Now that students understand how to find connecting themes in diverse works of visual art, the next step is to practice seeing connections between visual arts and other fields of art: literature, film, music, drama, etc. Introduce to the students that finding a theme can help to connect different types of art together.
2. Present the class with a list of some universal themes and ask them to add to the list. Themes could include: Power, Nature, Alienation, Rebellion, Faith, Love, Class/Society, Identity, etc.

**Teacher Tip:**

These could be themes you are already studying in other curriculum areas such as social studies or language arts.

3. Students can start in many different places for this project. You can offer the students a choice of how to start, or you can determine the process that best fits your students' abilities.
- a. Start with an image from *DoubleTake* that is visually appealing to you, or intrigues you, or want to learn more about it. Complete one column of the "Art Work Comparison Chart" for the selected *DoubleTake* image. Examine the elements, subject matter, technique and composition of this image to determine its meaning. This meaning can lead you to an overall theme. Use this theme as a connector to another art form.

**Teacher Tip:**

A list of possible themes that can be drawn from the *Double Take* images is in the Appendix, but it is not recommended to give these to the students. They can be used by the teacher to get discussion started if necessary.

- b. Start with a theme that is important to you. Think about how you specifically deal with this theme in your life. Then select a work of visual art that you feel addresses the theme. Visually analyze the work of art and determine how the theme is supported by what you see.
- c. Start with another art form, a song you like, a movie, a book. Use the key theme of that work to initiate the comparison to an image from *DoubleTake*.

**Teacher Tip:**

Students may find they need to go back and forth to find appropriate and relevant connections. For example, there may not be an image in the *DoubleTake* exhibition that seems to fit the theme they are interested in exploring. This is an opportunity for students to learn to work creatively within limitations. Compare their thinking process to that of curator Paul Hayes Tucker's process of selecting the works of art for the exhibition. He needed to decide on the pairings based on what was available, but also what was interesting and not necessarily the most obvious ones to put together.



**Information Point:** Students can listen to Curator Paul Tucker's discussion of the pairing of the painting by Paul Gauguin, *Maternity (II)* and the photograph by Kenji Yanobe, *Atom Suit Project: Desert*. (See link in Resource Library). Ask the students to notice how Tucker compares the elements of art in each work to find similarities that support the larger theme of alienation and questioning society.

4. Show how to outline the connecting factors as well as the similarities and the differences between the two works. Encourage the students to use the Concept Map as a tool to put down all their ideas without editing them yet — recording a brainstorming session on paper. This is a good activity to do in pairs or small groups.

**Teacher Tip:**

More information on Concept Maps, how to construct them, and different kinds is available in the Resources section of the Appendix

5. Once students have decided on a common theme between two works in different art forms, ask them to compare how the artists expressed these themes.



**Study Sheet 1:4** – Students can use the “Art Forms Comparison Chart” to outline the similar and different ways that artists express a theme. (i.e. colors used to express emotions in visual arts; tempo to express emotions in music.)

**CLASSES FIVE to SEVEN- Creating a Thematic Multi-Media Work of Art.**

1. Challenge the students to now express the same theme they found by comparing different art forms in their own work of art. Ask them to link two different media. This can involve the combination of two media, such as audio and visual (music video or text incorporated into a painting), or where one media can inspire a reflection in another media (a poem inspired by a painting, etc.)
2. Some suggested ways that the students can combine media to express a theme include:
  - a. music video with songs and images
  - b. comic strip with images and text
  - c. song with lyrics that evoke visual imagery
  - d. story about a place in a painting
  - e. illustrated story inspired by science fiction
  - f. rock poster evoking the lyrics and mood of a song
  - g. poem inspired by a painting
  - h. movie titles with images and music around a theme.
  - i. a letter to someone or something in a work of art. Create a character that has some kind of relationship to this person.
3. Students write one-three paragraphs about how their use of the art elements helped to express their themes.

## CLASS EIGHT - Reflection

1. Lead a class reflection. Use the same analysis of art elements that was used when looking at the works of art from the *DoubleTake* exhibition. Ask students to explain how they supported their theme through color, shape, space, line and texture or the corresponding elements in their chosen field of creativity.



**Study Sheet 1:5** – Students can use the “Reflection” sheet to describe someone else’s work and then check with the artist about whether his/her intentions were successfully understood.

### Next Steps:

- Display the students’ works in an exhibition, with artist statements analyzing how the different media are connected and communicate their theme.
- Use the activity as a jumping off point into a larger unit on selected themes.
- Examine other visual ways to communicate — what are other visual languages, such as pictographs, symbols, and notations in music, dance, science, and math?
- Examine other auditory ways to communicate besides song and speech.



## **APPENDIX:**

### **National Education Standards:**

NA-VA. 9-12.1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes

- Conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques and processes they use.

NA-VA 9-12.5 Reflecting upon and assessing the characteristics and merits of their work and the work of others.

- Reflect analytically on various interpretations as a means for understanding and evaluating works of visual art.

NA-VA. 9-12.6 Making connections between visual arts and other disciplines.

- Compare characteristics of visual arts within a particular historical period or style with ideas, issues, or themes in the humanities or sciences.
- Synthesize the creative and analytical principles and techniques of the visual arts and selected other arts disciplines, the humanities, or the sciences.

NA-M.9-12.6 Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.

- Analyze aural examples of a varied repertoire of music, representing diverse genres and cultures, by describing the uses of elements of music and expressive techniques.

NA-M. 9-12.8 Understanding relationship between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.

- Explain ways in which the principles and subject matter of various disciplines outside the arts are interrelated with those of music.

NL-ENG.K-12.2 Understanding the Human Experience

- Read (a wide range) of literature from many periods in many genres to build and understanding of the many dimensions of human experience.

## Resources:

### **Art Elements and How to Look at Art:**

Taylor, Joshua C. *Learning to Look: A Handbook for the Visual Arts*. 2nd Ed. University of Chicago Press, 1981. ISBN 0226791548. This guide moves from how to visually analyze specific works to a consideration of broad principles and technical matters.

Yenawine, Philip. *How to Look at Modern Art*. Harry N. Abrams, 1991, ISBN 0810924854. Yenawine promotes learning from direct observation rather than from acquiring background information. His methodology aligns with the process of describing and analyzing art elements to discern meaning. Themes in modern art addressed include challenges to conventions; the importance of personal vision and ideas over objects; and the relationship between art and popular culture.

### **Information on Concept-Maps:**

#### **University of Tennessee at Chattanooga**

<http://www.utc.edu/Administration/WalkerTeachingResourceCenter/FacultyDevelopment/ConceptMapping/index.html>

#### **Support4Learning**

[http://www.support4learning.org.uk/education/concept\\_maps\\_and\\_mind\\_maps.cfm](http://www.support4learning.org.uk/education/concept_maps_and_mind_maps.cfm)

#### **Concept Mapping and Assessments**

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/content/cntareas/science/sc7conc.htm>

**Study Sheet 1:1**

**Guided Looking Questions Sheet**

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher name: \_\_\_\_\_

The following questions can help you analyze the art elements of ANY work of art. You will then be asked to connect what you see in the work to what you think the work of art might mean. Feel free to write or draw your answers.

<b>COLORS</b>	<b>Monet, <i>Mula Palace</i></b>	<b>Monet, <i>View of Venice</i></b>
What COLORS do you see in this work of art? Use the most specific terms you can to describe the COLORS		
Are they WARM or COOL COLORS, or both?		
Do you see areas of CONTRASTING COLORS?		
Where do the colors LEAD YOUR EYE?		

**Study Sheet 1:1 (contd.)**

<b>SHAPES</b>	<b>Monet, <i>Mula Palace</i></b>	<b>Monet, <i>View of Venice</i></b>
What SHAPES do you see? Are they organic (shapes seen in nature) or geometric (man-made shapes?)		
How are they SHAPES arranged? Do they create a sense of ORDER or DISORDER in their arrangement?		
How is the SPACE divided in the picture? Along HORIZONTAL lines or VERTICAL lines or both directions?		
Are there some spaces that seem EMPTY and some spaces that look more DETAILED?		
Does the space seem BALANCED or UNBALANCED?		
Where has the artist place himself in the space? Where is his POINT OF VIEW?		

**Study Sheet 1:1** (contd.)

<b>LINES</b>	<b>Monet, <i>Mula Palace</i></b>	<b>Monet, <i>View of Venice</i></b>
What kinds of LINES do you see? Draw or describe the lines as specifically as possible.		
What kinds of MOVEMENT do the lines create?		
Do the lines create a sense of ORDER or DISORDER?		
Where do the lines LEAD YOUR EYE?		
Which lines are EMPHASIZED and which seem to FADE into the background?		

**Study Sheet 1:1** (contd.)

<b>TEXTURE</b>	<b>Monet, <i>Mula Palace</i></b>	<b>Monet, <i>View of Venice</i></b>
If you were to touch this picture how would the TEXTURE feel?		
How has the TECHNIQUE that the artist has used to paint this picture contributed to the sense of TEXTURE?		
How does the TEXTURE relate to the subject of the painting? Is it the kind of texture you would expect for what you see depicted?		
<b>INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>Monet, <i>Mula Palace</i></b>	<b>Monet, <i>View of Venice</i></b>
What do you think was the artist's INTENTION in creating this work		
What does this work COMMUNICATE to you?		
What is the MEANING of the work?		
How can you defend your interpretation based on WHAT YOU SEE? How has the artist used color, shape, space, line, and texture to support your idea of what the work means?		

**Study Sheet 1:2 - Artwork Comparison Chart**

<p><b>Your Name:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Teacher Name:</b> _____</p>	<p>Artist: _____</p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Media: _____</p>	<p>Artist: _____</p> <p>Title: _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p>Media: _____</p>
<p><b>Elements of Art</b>            Color, line, shape, texture, space</p>		
<p><b>Subject</b>            What is this image about and            “What do you see that makes            you think that?”</p>		
<p><b>Technique</b>            Media and how it was used</p>		
<p><b>Composition</b>            Where is the emphasis? What art            elements does the artist use to            lead your eye? How are these art            elements organized?</p>		
<p><b>Meaning / Interpretation</b>            Use the information you have            gathered above to decide what the            artist is trying to communicate.</p>		

**Study Sheet 1:3 - Justification for a Theme**

	Work of Art #1	Work of Art #2
<b>Your name:</b> _____  <b>Teacher name:</b> _____	Artist: _____  Title: _____  Date: _____  Media: _____	Artist: _____  Title: _____  Date: _____  Media: _____
Connecting Theme:		
Four things I see that support my choice of theme:	1. _____  2. _____  3. _____  4. _____	1. _____  2. _____  3. _____  4. _____

**Study Sheet 1:4 - Art Forms Comparison Chart**

Art Form - select two art forms to compare	Visual Arts	Music	Literature
What THEME is being expressed by the works of art?	<hr/>		
What the ART ELEMENTS are used to create this work?			
How are the works put together and ORGANIZED?			
What TECHNIQUES does the artist use to express the theme?			

**Study Sheet 1:5 - Reflection Sheet**

I looked at the work by \_\_\_\_\_, who expressed the theme of \_\_\_\_\_.

The parts of the work that most successfully communicated the theme were: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

My suggestions to the artist to express the theme even more clearly are: \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Suggested *DoubleTake* works and their possible themes:**

### **1. Alienation**

Kenji Yanobe, *Atom Suit Project: Desert 1*, 1998

Paul Gauguin, *Maternity (II)*, 1899

Paul Gauguin, *Autumn at Pont-Aven*, 1888

### **2. Illusion vs. Reality**

Claude Monet, *The Mula Palace*, 1908

Jasper Johns, *Numbers*, 1963-78

Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral. Façade (Afternoon Effect)*, 1894

### **3. Identity**

Eric Fischl, *Krefeld Project, Bedroom #6 (Surviving the Fall Meant Using You for Handholds)*, 2004

Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *The Reader*, 1877

Edgar-Germain Hilaire Degas, *The Woman Seated in Front of a Piano*, 1882-85

### **4. Nature or Sense of Place**

Paul Cezanne, *Mt. Saint Victoire*, 1888-90

Claude Monet, *Rouen Cathedral. Façade (Afternoon Effect)*, 1894

### **5. Technological Innovations**

Jasper Johns, *Numbers*, 1963-78

Paul Signac, *Concarneau, Opus 219 (Larghetto)*, 1891