

Visual Thinking Strategies

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➤ **What is it?**

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is a way of helping beginner and less experienced viewers grow in both confidence and the ability to derive meaning from art. It is based upon careful looking and facilitated group discussions in the galleries.

VTS is a process that allows students to examine art, to think, to contribute observations and ideas, to listen, and to build understandings together.

➤ **How to use this strategy.**

Select one artwork to spend time with

Give students a moment to look in silence before you invite them to speak.

Asking the questions

After they have examined the image, ask the question, "**What's going on in this picture?**" Once students have learned this question, use variations.

Whenever students make a comment that involves an interpretation (a comment that goes beyond identification and literal description), respond first by paraphrasing, and then ask, "**What do you see that makes you say that?**"

In order to keep students searching for further observations, frequently ask them, "**What else can you we find?**"

Responding to students' comments

Listen carefully to students, making sure that you hear all of what they say and that you understand it accurately.

Point to what they mention in the artwork. Be precise, even when it is a comment that has been repeated.

Use **encouraging** body language and facial expressions to nurture participation.

Paraphrase each comment. Change the wording, but not the meaning of what is said. In rephrasing, demonstrate the use of proper sentence construction and rich vocabulary to assist students with language.

Accept each comment neutrally. Remember that this process emphasizes a useful pattern of thinking, not right answers. Students are learning to make detailed observations,

sorting out and applying what they know. Articulating their thoughts leads to growth even when they make mistakes.

Link answers that relate even when there are disagreements. Show how the students' thinking evolves, how some observations and ideas stimulate others, how opinions change and build.

Conclusion

Thank students for their participation. Tell them what you particularly enjoyed. Encourage them to think of viewing art as an ongoing, open-ended process. Avoid summaries; linking throughout is enough to show how conversations build.