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The Purpose of Displaying the Art Pieces

Displaying the works of the current artist being studied is a simple and effective way to create interest in that artist and in art as a whole. The display can be arranged on a bulletin board, wall, easel or other designated area before any lesson work has begun with that particular artist. The art pieces are always readily available to be viewed. Daily views of the art pieces allow children an opportunity to examine a piece and then examine it again with a new perspective or approach, just as they are able to consider one work on one day and a different one by the same artist on another day. Display each piece only as they have been studied. The final display will then hold all of the artist's works.

General Approach to an Artist Study

1. Choose an artist and then 5-8 art pieces of that artist, with 6 as a good goal. I try to include a self-portrait as often as I am able. This gives the students a visual of the artist.
2. Gather books about the artist or research suggested books that could be checked from the library.
3. Print the art pieces in color or mark them in a book. You may wish to find an article which explains or provides more information about each specific art piece but these articles are merely meant to be supportive to you as the teacher.
4. Display the art pieces on an easel, bulletin board, wall space or other designated area with labels for each piece.
5. At least once a year, have a discussion about art. Why do we study art? Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?
6. Read at least one biography of the artist. Usually a short book such as one by Diane Stanley or Mike Venezia will work, but books with short or chapter biographies of artists work as well.

7. After reading the biography, study one of the six chosen pictures. It would be helpful, although not required, for each student to have their own copy of a picture. The first lesson will focus on reading the biography, introducing the artist and one picture study. The subsequent lessons will focus on one of the remaining selected art pieces. Each study of a piece will be followed by an art study narration.

8. Quick sketches of the general outline of the art pieces are introduced in the next level, but if your child is particularly keen to do this or if you have slightly older children joining younger children, then you may wish to allow a brief sketch for just one selection per term. Allow your student to choose their favorite piece from those selected for the term and sketch the leading lines for this one. Continue this until these children are ready to move to Level 2.

Why Do We Study Art?

Note: While this discussion is helpful to have at the beginning of each year, please feel free to adapt as needed to prevent too much repetition. Also, while this discussion begins the year, feel free to incorporate the ideas behind it throughout the year.

Level One

Discuss the purpose of art study. Why do we study art? Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?

Discuss how art is a method of expression for man. When we draw or paint a picture what do we feel while creating our art? How do we feel when it is finished? How would our feelings affect our art work? What would our art look like if we painted or drew or sculpted while happy (or angry or sad)? Have you seen art work that caused you feel happy, peaceful, sad, angry or scared?

Level Two

Why do we study art? Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?

Discuss how artists are influenced by their feelings and the times in which they live. Would an artist's feelings or thoughts be reflected in her art work? Think of an example. Would the time in which she lives be reflected in her art work? Think of an example. What inspires an artist? What would inspire you to create art? How does art represent history?

Level Three

Discuss the purpose of art study. Why do artists paint, sculpt, draw or build? What do we, as humans, learn about ourselves when viewing art?

Read the PNEU article “Picture Talks” ([Resources, The Arts](#)). From the article, discuss how art is man's means of expressing himself. Art is composed of a precise language and poetical thoughts. How is this art a reflection of the artist's ideas, thoughts and feelings? If art is a reflection of an individual's ideas, thoughts or feelings, what does this tell us about our response to their art?

Should art be beautiful? Who defines beauty? How would different peoples define art?
How might this influence their ideas of beauty?

Do artists try to convey a message or illicit our own message? Distinguish between
these two ideas. Think of an example for each.

Picture Study

Picture Study is meant to be kept simple, keeping the focus on the actual work itself. It would not be necessary for the teacher to spend a lot of time going over specific art details at this level. A simple introduction to the work itself and perhaps a relevant point about the artist is all that is needed initially. The student would have already listened to a light introductory story about the artist at the beginning of the art study, so only a point or two related or pertinent to the specific picture being studied would be needed.

The picture study approach described below is the one generally used by those who follow the methods of Charlotte Mason and how it was handled in her schools as well. I offer a second approach. It is very similar but has a few minor alterations. These alterations will require a little more additional time to the overall lesson, but I feel it offers some advantages. Please follow whichever method you prefer. Large families may benefit from the original approach as this helps keep the lesson combined and more efficient. I would call the original method a group approach and my altered method a private and then group approach.

Group Method

1. In general, the children should have some time to study the piece in quiet concentration. Each child having his/her own copy really helps make this happen. It's a lot harder for young children sharing a picture together to be able to uphold the quiet concentration part, but a careful teacher could certainly make this work too.
2. After careful study, the picture is taken away or turned over and the children tell all they can about the picture. They should describe it in great detail and spend time wondering about what they see and discussing what that might mean. In a group picture narration, allow one child to begin the narration, stop this narration after a minute or two and then allow the next child to continue with the narration, repeating this pattern until each child has narrated. Be sure to teach the children to listen well enough so as not to repeat what has already been said about the piece, otherwise this may feel repetitive. Also, be careful to alternate which child narrates first and also encourage children to continue to look intently enough to find something different to share. This approach to narrating can cause some children to refrain from sharing because they may feel that what they wanted to share has already been said.

3. Now the picture is brought back out or turned back over. The children then discuss what they might have missed in their description narration. It is at after the children have had time to discover for themselves what they might have missed that the teacher might pose a question or two, directing them towards something of which they might not have considered. Use the notes on the art piece to share the dimensions of the work and, in some cases, show your students what this size “looks” like in reality. Sometimes these selections are much larger or much smaller than was thought.

According to “Picture Talks” by Miss K. R. Hammond, the overall focus should remain on instilling a sense of beauty and a deep appreciation for art. Her ideas of picture study are encapsulated with this summary: “To sum up, then: In accordance with the root-idea of our Picture Talks, in these lessons we aim at giving ideas of three classes, concerning-- (1) the meaning of the picture; (2) the beauty with which that meaning is expressed; (3) the personality of the artist--where this is clearly felt in his works” (Hammond).

It is expressed by Miss Hammond that the teacher should provide some guidance and support during a picture study, but should not spend time lecturing about the work, particularly at this level. She stated, “The teacher will probably find she has a very small role to play, her part being merely to secure attention for some point that the child is inclined to overlook, and to explain in a very few simple words those problems that the child cannot solve for himself. Definite teaching is out of the question; suitable ideas are easily given, and a thoughtful love of Art inspired by simple natural talk over the picture at which the child is looking” (Hammond).

Private-Group Approach

1. Have your student study the art selection, quietly and independently.
2. After studying it, remove or turn the picture over, and then have your student describe the art piece in great detail without looking at it. Students narrate to you privately, keeping the words and ideas of siblings and friends from having an influence on their own. Jot down some of these thoughts or points in a quick list as they narrate. Each child would meet with the teacher for a private narration.
3. Now you will come together as a group for a shared discussion. Share with your group the points which the students had in common about the piece, writing them on

a board or large sheet of paper if you wish, and allow each student to offer at least one unique perspective as well.

Several advantages arise from this approach, such as keeping students from influencing one another about what they see and what that might mean, allowing students who are more reserved their own separate voice and demonstrating in the shared group discussion that while some aspects and meanings of a work are revealed to most of us, others are not.

For those students who are interested or are older, wait until all selections from the artist study has been completed and at that time have your student make a quick sketch of their favorite piece, drawing only the main outline points of it. **Remember, this is a quick sketch and not meant to replicate it.** Label the picture with their name of the work, date and artist's name on the back.

Level 2- Both Approaches

Add these steps to the previous set of steps for both the Group and the Private-Group Approach as described previously.

4. Have your students write a narration.

Depending on their age and writing abilities, include some of the following to these written narrations:

- Name of art piece, date of art piece and the name of the artist
- Background information about the artist
- Detailed description of the piece
- Personal thoughts about the picture

5. Have your students create a quick sketch of the picture, focusing on just the leading lines of the art piece, and add color to it. Alternatively, wait until the study has been completed and have your student make a quick sketch for their favorite piece.

Remember this is a quick outline sketch and the student should not feel pressured to replicate the work of a famous artist.

Level 3- Both Approaches

Add these steps to the previous set of steps for both the Group and the Private-Group Approach as described previously.

When applicable, show students other works by this same artist, perhaps when focusing on a particular technique or show students works by other artists to make comparisons in theme or technique.

How is the artist himself seen in his work? Discuss how this art piece reflects the artist's character, life or times in which she lives. Often these narrations will build better after discussing these ideas together.

As students reach the upper years, their narrations should include more art terminology when describing and sharing their thoughts about the art pieces. At this level, students can include commentary on light, shadow, color, line, perspective, etc.

Scaffolding the Art Study Narrations

- A much younger student might use a sheet of story paper (half page blank for picture and half with lines for some writing) and on this page would sketch the piece and add color to it. They would add the name of the art piece, the date of the piece and by whom and then a couple of sentences describing it.
- The following year they might add personal comments to this same format.
- The following year you may wish to have them make their sketch on a separate sheet of paper or their sketch book and use a fully lined page for a narration which includes all of the previous years' information and then add background information about the artist.
- Each year you would increase the level of detail and expectations in writing.

Supportive Picture Study Questions

General Background Information- only as needed

Tell the children about the historical time period of which the work expresses.

Tell the children about the literary or historical significance of the work.

Note: You may wish to read an excerpt from the book or poem for which the work illustrates. Treat this excerpt like a story and have the children narrate it afterwards. Let them see if they can find which scene in the story the picture is portraying.

Tell the children just a little bit about the artist.

Note: This is generally well-covered in the artist biography which is read at the very beginning of each new artist study. You may only need to remind your students of something that was learned earlier that has particular relevance with the specific work they are currently studying.

General Questions

What do you see in this picture? Describe this picture as if you are helping someone who cannot see it.

What colors are used? What do you think of these colors? What do these color choices make you feel?

If you could step inside of this painting, then how would you feel?

Is it night or day? How do we know this? Do you think it might be morning, noon or evening? How does the color used by the artist help us to know this? Does the artist show us light? Where is the light in the picture? Does the artist show us shadows? Where are these?

Is there any movement captured in this work? Who or what is moving?

Which parts of the picture seem nearer to you? Which ones seem farther away?

Why do you think the artist created this work? What might the artist want us to see, know or learn? How does the artist help us see this?

What is beautiful about this work—is the meaning or message we've learned from the work beautiful or just the artistic rendering of it?

What helps us to know that this work is by this artist? What part of whom the artist is as a person shows in the work?

What expressions are on the people's faces? Tell how you think each one might be feeling.

If you could step inside this picture and just listen and look quietly, then what do you imagine these people might say or do next?