

# Analysing Artwork

FOR **YEARS 9-13** | ART HISTORY, VISUAL ARTS, ENGLISH, HISTORY

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Observe, describe and compare and contrast the formal elements of artworks

Explain the connection between elements of the artworks/visual texts and meanings communicated

Describe the social, political or geographic context of the artist and artwork/visual text

Synthesise understandings about the artwork/visual text to form a personal evaluation

## ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

This worksheet will support students working towards:

**ART HISTORY** 1/2/3.1, 1/2/3.2, 1/2/3.3, 1/2/3.4

**VISUAL ARTS** 1/2/3.1

**ENGLISH** 1/2/3.2, 1.7, 2/3.6, 1.11, 2.10, 3.9

**HISTORY** 1/2/3.3

## ACHIEVEMENT OBJECTIVES

**Arts** Research and analyse how artworks are constructed and presented to communicate meanings.

Use critical analysis to interpret and respond to artworks.

Research and analyse the influence of contexts on the characteristics and production of artworks.

**English** Show a discriminating understanding of how language features are used for effect within and across texts.

**History** Understand how historical forces and movements have influenced the causes and consequences of events of significance to New Zealanders.



## Before you start

This worksheet can be used in conjunction with a visit to the Gallery, either in class as a pre- or post-visit activity, or in the Gallery as part of a self-guided visit.

Many of the artworks are also available to view on our website. It may be helpful for students to practise observing and describing artworks before doing these exercises. There is a word cards worksheet on the website for your use.

Students should be encouraged to read the artwork labels, wall text and other accompanying contextual information to get a sense of the ideas, issues and themes the artworks and exhibition addresses. Some of this is also available on our website.

## CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Observe and Describe

Compare and Contrast

Personal Interpretation

Explain

Summarise

Synthesise

Evaluate

## TIP

### Some suggestions to facilitate this exercise

- Model an example yourself to the whole group. Ask students what they might find difficult, or if there could be more than one correct answer.
- Explain to students how long they will have, and where this exercise fits in with their programme. If they are in the Gallery, why are they visiting? What do they expect the experience to be like?
- After observing, students can begin the process at any of the three entry points, depending on the work and their area of expertise, finishing with the synthesise and evaluation exercises.
- Decide whether students will work in small groups or independently. Students may appreciate the support of peers particularly with the more unfamiliar activities and in connecting the ideas together.

 **1. Observe the artwork**

1. Look closely at the work; ask yourself 'What do I notice?'

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2. Choose a small section of the work and draw the details.

3. What else do you notice?

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**Now continue with #2 a, b & c in whatever order you wish, finishing with #3**

**> 2a. Object – The Artwork Itself (Remember to look at the labels for more information)**

1. Describe the formal elements. Choose 2–3 words for each from the word bank

Colour \_\_\_\_\_

Scale \_\_\_\_\_

Composition \_\_\_\_\_

Technique \_\_\_\_\_

2. Compare and contrast formal elements with another artwork

Work 1

Work 2

Colour \_\_\_\_\_

Scale \_\_\_\_\_

Composition \_\_\_\_\_

Technique \_\_\_\_\_

3. What does the colour, scale, composition or technique remind you of?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Which element is most important in this work?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



**2b. Subject – The Story & Ideas** (Remember to look at the labels for more information)

1. Describe the subject. Choose 2–3 words for each

Mood \_\_\_\_\_

Theme \_\_\_\_\_

Setting if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

Character if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

2. Choose one word to summarise the main ideas. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Compare and contrast to another artwork.

Work 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Work 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Setting \_\_\_\_\_

Character \_\_\_\_\_

Mood \_\_\_\_\_

Theme \_\_\_\_\_

 **2c. Context – The Surrounding World** (Remember to look at the labels for more information)

1. Describe the context. Choose 2–3 words for each from the word bank

Time period \_\_\_\_\_

Place \_\_\_\_\_

Social and Political \_\_\_\_\_

Artistic \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of these contexts is the most relevant and why?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**> 3. Combine Understandings About the Artwork to Form a Personal Evaluation.**

1 Explain the connections between the object, subject and context

**What do the elements  
tell you about the  
subject?**

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**How does the  
context affect the  
elements?**

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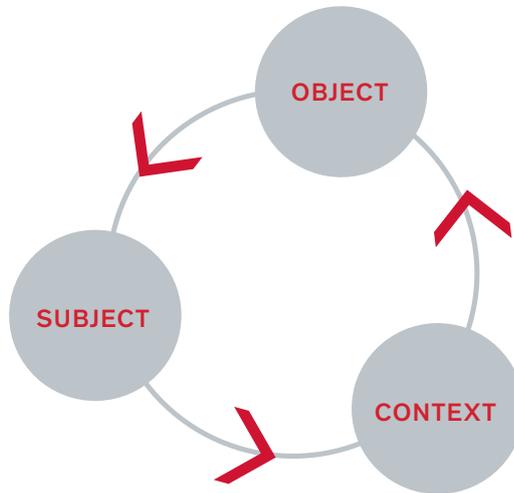
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**How does the  
subject reflect  
the context?**

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2. With this evidence in mind, what do you consider to be the intention of the artist?

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3. How successful is the artwork in relation to this intention?

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 **Word Bank**

Select from these words in the first exercise of numbers 2a,b &c

simple	exciting	gentle
shiny	calm	smooth
bumpy	dangerous	floating
hard	safe	soft
complicated	natural	repetitive
loose	free	structured
powerful	weak	fragile
rhythmic	futuristic	tense
organic	mysterious	ordered
bold	smooth	broken
monochromatic	minimal	bright
dark	overwhelming	intense
flat	balanced	gestural
busy	warm	neutral
comforting	energetic	static
subdued	nurturing	spontaneous