
Unit 7 Chapter 7 The Arts

Unit Overview:

The aim of this chapter is to examine what kind of knowledge can be found within artwork of various sorts. This chapter also focuses upon what makes up this knowledge as well as knowledge issues involved when someone claims to that there is knowledge within art. There is an examination of the differences between subjective knowledge and objective knowledge. The role of interpretation in creating knowledge in art is also examined. The student's impressions are at the forefront in this chapter and there are many activities and exercises for them to do. The chapter also focuses on art from different times and places to examine the knowledge in art from another perspective.

Lesson 7:1 There is an Immensity of Knowledge in Art

Objective(s):

- The intention with this lesson is to let the students experience artwork and reflect upon it as they may have never done before. By doing so, they begin to see that there is knowledge to be found in artwork. They also examine what type of knowledge this is.

Homework:

- Preparatory reading of next section as deemed necessary.

Vocabulary:

- Knowledge
- Art as cultural expression

Lecture Support:

This is primarily a student-activity based lesson where the students examine artwork and respond to it using the worksheets which are included. However, before doing so it is advisable to go over the points made at the beginning of the lesson with the students in lecture format. These points will help set the stage for the discussion that follows. These points, along with the worksheets, are included in the teacher and student version of the student activity book. Suggested answers to the second worksheet are found in the teacher version.

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Procedure for Student Activity:

For this first lesson, let the students examine the following painting by Raphael. The painting *Disputa* (Debate on the Holy Sacrament), is found at the Stanza della Segnatura, in the Vatican in Rome. The idea is to let them examine the painting first without telling them anything about it. The painting is below, followed by ideas for conducting the lesson.



Raphael, *Disputa* (Debate on the Holy Sacrament),
1509-1511. Fresco, Stanza della Segnatura, Vatican, Rome
(A proper image is found in the PowerPoint or on the CD version of this lesson in section 7:1)

If possible, the most successful way of doing this lesson is to use a computer projector to project the image of *Disputa* up on a screen so all of the class can see it. This way, the students will be able to more successfully talk with one another about certain aspects of the piece and get up to look at from different angles and distances. The painting is obviously very detailed so being able to look at it closely and in high detail is advantageous.

If this possibility does not exist, then the students do have the image in their student handbooks and each group can examine the painting in the handbook to come up with the things they want to say about it.

Another option is to make a color overhead film of the image. This option is better than none at all and would work fine in combination with the student handbooks. Very often however, the finer details in paintings do not transfer very well to the OH film since printer capacity is generally limited. The image very often becomes grainy and the colors a bit untrue. Nevertheless, an overhead should be good enough to get the main points across if that is the only option.

Here is what to do:

Step 1

Split the class up into groups of five or so and direct each group to the corresponding worksheet in the student handbook. The worksheet is named “Worksheet 1 First Impressions.” The worksheet is also included at the end of this section in the teacher version you are reading. On this sheet instruct the different groups to write down their responses.

After putting the image up on the screen (or whatever option is chosen) simply let the students look at the painting. Do not tell them anything about it. Let them examine it and think about it then write down whatever comes to their mind. What message does the painting communicate to them? Ask them to come up with at least 10 things each (more would be better). The process of coming up with things to say might take a little time, but do not rush the process.

After each of the groups has written down their responses, let each group present their perceptions. Remarkably, many of the responses among the groups will be similar. The same types of thoughts and considerations will have been evoked by the painting.

Ask the students to explain this phenomenon. Why can something which is viewed and appreciated from a subjective vantage point wake the same types of thoughts and feelings in different people? Does this mean there is some type of underlying knowledge within the painting?

This is an interesting line of questioning, because it starts getting at the heart of the question of whether or not there is knowledge in art. If art were completely subjective, then it seems likely that the responses and feelings people have when looking at a piece of artwork would be very dissimilar. What is it about the artwork which causes people to think and feel the way they do?

Step 2

The above exercise is useful to start the process of thinking about art, but step two is a deeper study of some of the types of knowledge that are gained from art. This chapter will later look in depth at several different elements of art, but for this first lesson the central concepts are the responses from the students and the process that leads them into thinking about artwork from a different standpoint than they may have previously held.

This second step consists of three different questions. The questions are intended to work for many different types of art, but for this exercise they focus upon the *Disputa* (they will be written in a more generic form for the next lesson). Let the class answer the questions one at a time in the same groups they worked in earlier. Be sure to give them about 5-10 minutes

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to discuss and think about their responses for each of the questions. After each of the questions are answered in the groups, again let some or all of the groups present and explain their responses. This is a bit time consuming, but the points that are brought up are often excellent points which generate discussion.

The three questions are:

- What can *Disputa* tell you about the cosmological views [view of the universal order] of the culture from which the painting emerged?
- What historical knowledge can *Disputa* give us about the culture from which it emerged?
- For what reasons do you think this piece of artwork was created? What motivated the creation? What can this process tell you about the value system of the culture from which this artwork emerged?

Suggested Teaching Strategies:

To do this lesson properly, it is important to be able to show a fairly high quality image of Raphael's *Disputa*. The **PowerPoint** (7:1) is the easiest way to do this.

Lesson 7:2 Themes from which Artwork can be examined to gain Knowledge

Objective(s):

- To activate the students by getting them to examine and think about knowledge in artwork through different themes

Homework:

- Preparatory reading of next section as deemed necessary.
- Assignment of student activity questions if preferred.

Lecture Support:

This is a lecture and student-activity based lesson.

The body of this lesson is found in the corresponding section of the teacher version of the student activity book. *Lesson 7:2 Themes from which Artwork can be examined to gain Knowledge*. The students have the same material in their version of the activity book. It would be a good idea for the students to have the material accessible during the lecture for this lesson.

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The point of this lesson is to activate the students by getting them to examine and think about knowledge in artwork through different themes. The images included here should be at the center of the discussion and examined well. If possible, project the images up on the screen when discussing them. This procedure makes teaching the lesson easier since all the students are looking at the same image.

At the end of this lesson there is a student activity which is similar to the student activity in lesson 7:1 of this section, but this time the students are asked to look at a painting by Uffizi and examine it using the themes discussed in this lesson.

Suggested Teaching Strategies:

Spend a fair amount of time on the lecture for this lesson. It is important that the students understand the points that are being made. Furthermore, by doing so, they will have concrete examples for their essay if they choose to write on art.

Lesson 7:3 Poetry and Knowledge

Objective(s):

- To examine the type of knowledge which can be found within the field of literature.
- To further illustrate the importance of subjective knowledge.

Homework:

- Answering the discussion questions for any one or all three of the poems included in the student activity.

Lecture Support:

Poems for this lesson and questions for discussion are found in the teacher and student version of the student activity book. *Lesson 7:3 Poetry and Knowledge*.

The concept presented in this lesson is the examination of the type of knowledge which can be found within the field of literature. Literature offers the unique opportunity to get in direct contact with the psyche of another human being. In this sense literature provides the opportunity to travel over both time and distance. It allows us to engage in the thoughts of people from near and distant places who live now or that have lived hundreds and even thousands of years ago. Literature also allows the reader to transcend language. Of course, trying to relay a message across languages poses special problems of its own, but still, translation often does succeed in communicating the most important themes and ideas despite the language barrier.