

# Tips for Talking about Art

While your impulse may be to immediately begin “teaching”, more is gained in the long run if you take the time to help the children establish an emotional connection with the art. The questions below help kids find their own relevance in works of art, and thereby learn to value art as having something to do with their own lives.

## **What’s going on in this picture?**

### **What do you see that makes you say that?**

These simple questions work particularly well with artworks that have a narrative thread. You’ll notice this question is different than, “What do you see?” Instead of eliciting a list of things in the picture, “What’s going on?” invites a consideration of relationships and interactions and taps into children’s natural interest in stories. The question, “What do you see that makes you say that?” focuses comments on the evidence at hand and helps kids explain their assumptions.

## **How would you feel if you were “in” this work of art?**

What would-you-hear? How would something feel to touch? What path would you take through the picture? What do you see that makes you say that? Imagining the picture as an environment engages all the senses. The expressive qualities of a work become more concrete, easier to relate to.

## **How is this object like something you encounter in your life?**

What would you use this for? What do you see that makes you say that? Do you have anything like it? Why do you like to have pictures of yourself? Why do you buy postcards on vacation? Drawing parallels with children’s experiences gives them a hook on which to hang new information. Identifying similarities helps illuminate differences as well.

## **What person or object in this picture do you think was most important to the artist?**

What are the people looking at? What has a lot of details? Where are there bright colors? What is the biggest? Talking about what makes things seem important in a work of art can allow even a novice to address basic compositional principles.

## **How would the artwork seem different if you could make a change?**

What would happen if you changed a color? Made something bigger or smaller? Moved an object or person? Left something out? Added more details? Changed the quality of a line? Imagining changes helps identify visual elements and their contribution to the overall effect of the image.

## **How is this work of art like or different from another one you’ve seen?**

“Compare and contrast” is a staple of art historical thinking, but it can be done by anybody, at any level of thinking. Our collection allows you to select many provocative pairings.