

SEE – WONDER – THINK

WHY

See – Wonder – Think is a routine that teachers can use to frame discussions about a work of art. It is adapted from a thinking routine developed by Project Zero, an educational research group at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard University. Thinking routines, as defined by Project Zero, are “short, easy-to-learn procedures that help students enact thinking-dispositional behavior”

WHY

Project Zero’s original thinking routine, called See – Think – Wonder, comprises the following questions: What do you see? What do you think is going on? What does it make you wonder? Both See-Think-Wonder and See-Wonder-Think are designed to foster inquiry-based learning, to give students time to make careful observations, and to encourage curiosity and thoughtful interpretation. In both routines, close looking is the basis for interpretations that are grounded in visual evidence.

Our adaption gives students the opportunity to pose questions immediately after they spend time looking closely at a work of art. The educator allows students’ wonderings to guide discussion after they are shared. In this way, the group investigates some of the wonderings based on previous knowledge. Some of the wonderings are left lingering so that students can conduct further investigations and research.

WHEN

See-Wonder-Think is useful for piquing students’ interest in a work of art and for encouraging students to think carefully about why an artwork looks a certain way. The routine can also be adapted for use with any image, text, video or advertisement that is open to interpretation.

HOW

WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THIS WORK OF ART?

Begin by asking students to look silently at a work of art for some time. You could encourage prolonged looking by prompting students to look closely at different parts of the artwork, such as the foreground, middle ground, and

background. Next, have students share what they see. Remind students to focus only on what they observe rather than making inferences about what they think is happening. You may wish to have students share their observations with a partner. After each student pair discusses what they see, you can select individual students to share out and describe an observation made by their partner.

WHAT DOES THE WORK OF ART MAKE YOU WONDER?

Ask students to share what they are wondering about after spending time looking closely at the work. Document students’ wonderings by listing their questions on a large piece of paper. Group the questions into categories. For example, point out the questions that relate to the story that is depicted, those that relate to how a work of art is made, and those that pertain to the life of the artist. Select the category that relates to most of the groups’ wonderings. Inform students of the most popular category and tell them they will now investigate their own wonderings by thinking carefully about what they see in the work.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE SOME ANSWERS TO YOUR WONDERINGS, BASED ON WHAT YOU SEE?

Have students select a question that was posed and think about how they could answer the question by finding clues in the artwork. Students can discuss possible responses to the question with a partner. Encourage students to back up their ideas with evidence that they see in the work of art.

You may also wish to have students conduct further research or investigations independently or in groups to encourage ongoing thinking and wondering throughout the course of a unit of study.

Adapted from:

- Project Zero. “Thinking Routines.” *Artful Thinking*. <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/at/routines.cfm>.
- Ritchhart, Ron, Church, Mark, and Morrison, Karin. *Making Thinking Visible*. San Francisco: Koseey-Bass, 2011.
- Tishman, Shari, and Palmer, Patricia, *Artful Thinking: Final Report*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Graduate School of Education, November 2006.