UNIT 4: How to Study Art History

DESCRIPTION:
Art history is a vast subject studying everything from media to style to history. Below, we’ve summarized some of the key distinctions to make this complicated topic easier to understand.

National Arts Standards:
• Anchor Standard #4: Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.
• Anchor Standard #6: Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.
• Anchor Standard #7: Perceive and analyze artistic work.
• Anchor Standard #8: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.
• Anchor Standard #9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.
• Anchor Standard #11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

CURATED CONNECTIONS LIBRARY RESOURCES:

Lessons:
• How to Study Art History
• Classical Sculpture Lesson
• Impressionism Lesson

Activities and Resources:
• 82 Questions about Art
• Art History Student Study Guide
• TV Commercial Review Activity

Online Trainings and Videos:
• Online Training: What is Art History (Webinar Recording)
• How to Compare and Contrast Art to Teach Art History
• Video: How to Pick Learning Objectives for Art History Lessons
• Video: Teaching Art History without Cookie-Cutter Projects
• Lesson 3.2 of the Art Appreciation Master Class, What Makes Up a Work of Art

CURATE
The following artworks are good to include in a lesson on how to study art history, because they tie the meaning of the artwork directly to the values and beliefs of the time. When engaging these artworks with your students, encourage students to answer the question: What can you tell about the people who made this artwork? Encourage students to ponder the artist’s way of life and values and beliefs when discussing these works.
Good Artworks to Discuss
- Standard of Ur from the Royal Tombs at Ur (Lesson)
- Hannah Hoch, Da Dandy (Lesson)
- Kara Walker, Darkytown Rebellion (Lesson)
- Kehinde Wiley, Mary, Comforter of the Afflicted I (Lesson)
- Nkisi N’Kondi Power Figure (Lesson)
- Marshallese People, Marshallese Navigation Charts (Lesson)
- Maya culture, Presentation of Captives to a Maya Ruler (Lesson)

DISCUSS

Essential Questions:
- What is art history?
- Why is art history important to study?
- How does studying art history impact our own artmaking?
- How do we group art?
- What is style? How can you tell several works come from the same artist or time period?

Essential Questions to Ask about an Art Movement, Period, or Civilization:
- What was important to the people at the time?
- How are the values and beliefs of these people reflected in their art?
- What are some common images and themes in their artwork?
- What stylistic characteristics (conventions) did they use?
- What art techniques did these people use? What materials did they use to make their art?
- What was the function of their artwork?

ENGAGE
- Print or compile images from multiple art movements and periods. Ask students to create groups based on the conventions and characteristics of the artwork. Then ask students to describe what each group has in common.
  - See Classical Sculpture Lesson at the bottom of the page
- Put a slideshow of artworks from the same art movement or period on the screen. Have students make lists of what the artworks have in common.
  - See Impressionism Lesson
- See the How to Study Art History lesson in the Curated Connections Library for activities on civilization, period, and style for more ideas.
- Put an artwork on the screen and ask students what there is to know about the artwork. Create a web on the board with the students’ ideas. (Examples: Function, Story, Meaning, Context, etc.) After the list is made, assign each group of students to brainstorm hypothesis, then research.
EXTEND

- Create a poster about an artist or artwork designed around a social media page/post.
- **TV Commercial Review Activity**: In this activity, students use their art history knowledge to develop a product and create a tv commercial skit about their product. For example, you may have a funeral home commercial inspired by Ancient Egypt or a fertility clinic inspired by Prehistoric Venus figurines!
- **Art History Jigsaw**: Have students groups research different art movements and each create one page of visual notes with key info or have them fill out the **Art History Study Guide**. Then have students break into new groups. Each student in the new group then teaches the rest of the group about the art movement they studied. This works well as a review or introductory activity.
- Assign students an art history period or movement, then have them complete a creative project or response. (Examples: a shoe, chair, shoebox, etc.)