

LITERACY WORKS FOR
Visual Arts

BOOK 2

Grammar and writing

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subject areas

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Syllabus links: Advice on writing

This book supports explicit teaching of writing, as recommended in the document NSW Visual Arts 7-10 (2024) - Advice on writing.

This document recommends a pedagogy for teaching writing as outlined below.

Strategies for supporting writing

Strategies for the explicit teaching of writing should be selected based on the learning needs of each student, which might include:

- **building the context or field** – reading, viewing, listening to a range of short texts to engage with key concepts, relevant background information, content and vocabulary that build knowledge and understanding, including:
 - group discussion and/or debate around key ideas and issues to prompt personal engagement
 - analysis of selected examples and case studies, including note-making and annotation
 - guided and independent research
- **modelling** – engaging with the writing demands of model texts to deepen understanding, including:
 - analysis and annotation of model texts, such as sample and exemplar responses, to familiarise students with the features of texts
 - co-development of writing plan and/or scaffold using success criteria
 - provision of support materials, such as word banks, graphic organisers, sentence-starters and writing prompts, to target the use of key language and ideas
 - joint construction of sample responses to model processes and decision-making
- **independent practice** – applying knowledge, understanding and skills to develop independent writing, including:
 - planning, monitoring, revising and reflecting in recursive phases
 - seeking, evaluating and implementing feedback.

NESA. (2024). *Visual Arts 7-10 (2024): Stages 4 and 5 - Advice on writing*, p10. <https://curriculum.nsw.edu.au/learning-areas/creative-arts/visual-arts-7-10-2024/teaching-and-learning>

Literacy Works for Visual Arts Book 2 is designed to support this approach to writing. The book provides:

- many model texts and model paragraphs for common writing purposes (genres) in Visual Arts including recounts, reports, interpretations and arguments.
- opportunities for joint construction (teacher writing with students)
- scaffolded activities for understanding the features of texts for different purposes
- independent writing activities.

Syllabus links: Visual Arts 7-10 (2024)

This book relates to outcomes, content and teaching advice in the NSW syllabus for Visual Arts 7-10 2024 for implementation in 2027.

TOPIC Stage 4	Stage 5
Art critical and historical studies: Artworld concepts	
<p>A student explains Artworld concepts in Art critical and historical studies VA4-CHC-01</p> <p>Content</p> <p>Artist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the roles and work of selected artists, including groups of artists in different times, places and contexts Describe and explain how and why artists represent their ideas and intentions in their artworks Identify the contribution of artists in different cultures and contexts, including Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Artists <p>Artwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore different art forms considering their representational properties Explain how artworks are constructed to convey meaning to audiences Interpret the meaning of artworks across historical and contemporary eras, art movements, art periods and contexts <p>World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore how the world is a source of ideas and interests for artists in art making Explain how and why artists represent the world in different times and places in artworks <p>Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the roles and functions of audiences in different times, places and contexts Explain how audiences make judgements when interpreting the meaning of an artwork <p>Teaching advice</p> <p>Artists and artworks</p> <p>In Stage 4 consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the diverse roles of artists across different times, places and cultures by considering their significance and contribution encouraging students to consider the types of art forms, conventions, media and techniques that artists choose to support their intentions explaining how art forms have different representational properties, such as texture, colour, scale, light or interactive elements. explicitly teaching students to recognise the conventions and traditions of an artwork to understand its historical context and to indicate its provenance, including its association with specific eras, art periods, art movements, art styles and/or cultures. using specific examples and key questions to guide students to interpret an artwork's meaning and context. 	<p>A student analyses and interprets Artworld concepts and their relationships in Art critical and historical studies VA5-CHC-01</p> <p>Content</p> <p>Artist</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate and interpret the roles and work of artists, including groups of artists in different times, places and contexts Interpret how and why artists' choices inform their representation of ideas and intentions in their artworks Respond to the significance and contribution of artists in different cultures and contexts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Artists <p>Artwork</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse different forms of artworks, considering the role and function of their representational properties Explain how and why artworks are intentionally constructed to convey meaning for audiences Construct responses about the meaning and significance of artworks across historical and contemporary eras, art movements, art periods and contexts Respond to representations of Cultural identity, Spirituality and connections to Country and/or Place in artworks by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Artists <p>World</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interpret how the world is a source of ideas and interests for artists in art making Explain and justify how and why artists represent the world in different times and places in artworks <p>Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain and justify the roles and functions of audiences in different times, places and contexts Explain how audiences adopt different points of view when interpreting meanings of artworks <p>Teaching advice</p> <p>Artists and artworks</p> <p>In Stage 5 consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explaining the varied roles and significant contributions of artists, such as designers, ceramicists, architects and filmmakers across times, places and cultures explaining how artists convey layered meanings through the use of materials, properties, techniques and procedures when they conceptualise and create their artworks, artefacts or sites supporting students to understand how artworks, artefacts or sites can represent varied perspectives, including personal responses, symbolic interpretations, or cultural, social or critical perspectives

Syllabus links: Visual Arts 7-10 (2024)

This book relates to outcomes, content and teaching advice in the NSW syllabus for Visual Arts 7-10 2024 for implementation in 2027.

TOPIC Stage 4

Stage 5

Art critical and historical studies: Viewpoints

A student explains meaning in artworks and the artworld using Viewpoints VA4-CHV-01

Content

Structural

- Investigate how artworks represent systems of signs, symbols, codes and forms of visual and/or multisensory language to structure and communicate meaning

Subjective

- Investigate how artists express ideas and meanings about aspects of the world in artworks shaped by individual experiences, intuition, emotion, feeling and imagination
- Explain how artists and audiences can respond to and understand artworks from personal perspectives, experiences and associations

Cultural

- Investigate how artworks reflect social values, conditions and shared understandings in communities and societies
- Explain how artists and audiences understand artworks using cultural, community and social perspectives at different times and in different contexts

Contemporary

- Investigate how artworks challenge, critique or reimagine accepted narratives or conventions using current and emerging theories

A student interprets meaning and significance of artworks and the artworld using Viewpoints VA5-CHV-01

Content

Structural

- Investigate how artworks represent systems of signs, symbols, codes and forms of visual and/or multisensory language to structure and communicate meanings
- Interpret and explain how artworld practitioners and audiences decode and understand artworks as images or texts at different times, cultures or contexts

Subjective

- Investigate how artists express ideas and meanings about aspects of the world in artworks shaped by individual experiences, intuition, emotion, feeling and imagination
- Interpret and explain how artworld practitioners and audiences respond to and understand artworks from personal perspectives, experiences and associations

Cultural

- Investigate how artworks reflect social ideologies, beliefs, values, conditions and shared understandings in communities and societies
- Examine art critical and historical accounts to understand the significance of how artworks represent social and cultural perspectives

Contemporary

- Investigate how artworks challenge, critique or reimagine accepted narratives and conventions using current and emerging theories
- Examine how art critical and historical accounts critique or reconstruct accepted ideas and provoke new ways of understanding the world

Art critical and historical practice

A student explains aspects of Practice to represent Art critical and historical perspectives VA4-CHP-01

Content

- Investigate and explain the role and work of artworld practitioners and how they represent their intentions
- Explore artistic practices, conventions and procedures that are informed by different times, places and cultures
- Use different viewpoints to explain the meaning and intentions of artists and artworks
- Create written texts to identify intentions, choices and actions as an art critic and art historian
- Use subject-specific language to communicate Artworld concepts and Viewpoints

A student investigates and interprets aspects of Practice to represent Art critical and historical perspectives VA5-CHP-01

Content

- Research and explain the value and significance of artistic practices, conventions and procedures that are informed by different times, places and cultures
- Interpret artworks using different viewpoints to explain the meaning and intentions of artists, artworld practitioners and artworks
- Create written texts to represent intentions, choices and actions as an art critic and art historian
- Use subject-specific language to communicate and represent Artworld concepts and Viewpoints



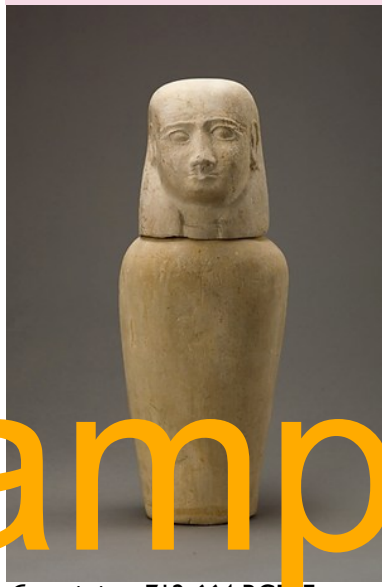
About the artwork

Canopic jars had special ritual significance for ancient Egyptians when preparing bodies for mummification. Canopic jars were often used in sets of four. The canopic jar on the student page is Duamutef, with a jackal head. A jackal is a wild dog. This jar contained the stomach organs. The images of four gods on these jars are the sons of Horus (the God who looks like a horse). The sons of Horus also represent compass points: Hapi is north, Imsety is south, Qebehsenuef is west and Duamutef is east.

This canopic jar shows Hapi, the baboon-headed god who held the lungs.



The human head on this canopic jar represents Imsety who held the liver.



The falcon-headed god Qebehsenuef contained intestines.



sample

Canopic jars, 712-664 BCE, Egypt.

CC0. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1928, www.metmuseum.org.



Answers

- 1 The canopic jar in the picture above _____ from ancient Egypt. Canopic jars were made ☒ came ☐ come from clay or carved from stone.
- 2 Most people have _____ images of Egyptian mummies on television. ☐ saw ☒ seen
- 3 Ancient Egyptians _____ many rituals to create the mummies. ☒ did ☐ done
- 4 Priests _____ canopic jars to the deceased body and put the body organs inside. ☐ brung ☒ brought
- 5 The priests _____ special rituals to preserve the organs in the canopic jars. ☒ did ☐ done
- 6 The ancient Egyptians _____ some animals as gods. ☐ seen ☒ saw
- 7 The jackal headed god, called Duamutef, was one of the sons of the god Horus. The jackal canopic jar _____ the job of holding the stomach and upper intestines. ☒ did ☐ done
- 8 Other god shapes and symbols were _____ on canopic jars for other body parts. ☐ saw ☒ seen
- 9 Canopic jars were buried with the mummies in the pyramids and tombs. According to Egyptian beliefs, the canopic jars _____ to the afterlife with the deceased person. ☒ came ☐ come
- 10 In the 1800s, European explorers _____ to Egypt and explored the pyramids and tombs. ☐ come ☒ came
- 11 They _____ the canopic jars inside the pyramids. ☐ seen ☒ saw
- 12 They _____ the canopic jars to museums around the world where you can see them today. ☐ brung ☒ brought

Canopic jars



Canopic jar, 712-664 BCE, Egypt.
CC0. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Rogers Fund, 1928, www.metmuseum.org.

Common verb mistakes

Here are some common verb mistakes:

- did done** The student **did** the assignment. ✓
The student **done** the assignment. ✗
done needs a helping verb e.g. The teacher **has done** the marking.
- came come** The artist **came** to our school. ✓
The artist **come** to our school. ✗
come needs a helping verb e.g. The artist **has come** to our school.
- saw seen** We **saw** the jars. ✓
We **seen** the jars. ✗
seen needs a helping verb. e.g. We **have seen** the jars.
- brought brung** We **brought** the clay to the bench. ✓
We **brung** the clay to the bench. ✗ (brung is not a correct word)

 Colour in the circle next to the correct verb that should go on the line in each sentence.

1	The canopic jar in the picture above _____ from ancient Egypt. Canopic jars were made from clay _____ from _____.	<input type="radio"/> came <input type="radio"/> come
2	Most people have _____ images of Egyptian mummies on television.	<input type="radio"/> saw <input type="radio"/> seen
3	Ancient Egyptians _____ many rituals to create the mummies.	<input type="radio"/> did <input type="radio"/> done
4	Priests _____ canopic jars to the deceased body and put the body organs inside.	<input type="radio"/> brung <input type="radio"/> brought
5	The priests _____ special rituals to preserve the organs in the canopic jars.	<input type="radio"/> did <input type="radio"/> done
6	The ancient Egyptians _____ some animals as gods.	<input type="radio"/> seen <input type="radio"/> saw
7	The jackal headed god, called Duamutef, was one of the sons of the god Horus. The jackal canopic jar _____ the job of holding the stomach and upper intestines.	<input type="radio"/> did <input type="radio"/> done
8	Other god shapes and symbols were _____ on canopic jars for other body parts.	<input type="radio"/> saw <input type="radio"/> seen
9	Canopic jars were buried with the mummies in the pyramids and tombs. According to Egyptian beliefs, the canopic jars _____ to the afterlife with the deceased person.	<input type="radio"/> came <input type="radio"/> come
10	In the 1800s, European explorers _____ to Egypt and explored the pyramids and tombs.	<input type="radio"/> come <input type="radio"/> came
11	They _____ the canopic jars inside the pyramids.	<input type="radio"/> seen <input type="radio"/> saw
12	They _____ the canopic jars to museums around the world where you can see them today.	<input type="radio"/> brung <input type="radio"/> brought

Ceramic pinch pots



CC0 public domain. bptakoma. Flickr

Homophones

There are many words in English which sound the same but have different spelling and meanings. These words are called homophones. For example **too** and **two** are homophones.

too: The clay was **too** dry.

two: I made two **pinch** pots.



Read this procedure about how to make a pinch pot. Then draw a line through the incorrect homophones.

A pinch pot is a simple form of hand maid/made pottery produced in many cultures, from ancient times two/too/to the present.

Take a piece/peace of clay about the size of a tennis ball. Roll/role the clay into a round ball and make shore/sure it is moist. Hold the ball of clay in the palm of you're/your hand. Next, gently press your/you're thumb down threw/through the centre of the ball too/to/two create an opening. Leaf/leave at least some/sum clay at the bottom, about won/one centimetre, to/two/too form the base/bass of the pot. Then use your fingers and thumbs to thin out the walls of the pot with gentle pinching motions. If you accidentally pinch through/threw the base of the pot, roll the clay into a ball again and start again. Then check for breaks/brakes or floors/flaws. Smooth out the surfaces and rims of the pot. Leave/leaf the pot to dry on a board/bored in the air/heir before firing it in a kiln or painting it.



Draw a line to match homophones - pairs of words that sound the same.

scene	whose
allowed	aloud
guest	here
hear	serial
cereal	write
tide	seen
right	seam
some	male
who's	guessed
seem	tied
mail	sum



Write one or two sentences that use both homophones correctly.

1	here hear	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
2	it's its	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
3	whether weather	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
4	queue cue	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Purposes for writing in Visual Arts

This table shows some of the main purposes for writing in Visual Arts. The **genre** relates to the purpose of the text (e.g. to describe or to respond). Usually a genre is a family of different texts that all have a similar purpose. This table also shows some of the common genre families, sub-types as well as some sample assignment questions and instructions. On the next page, you will practise matching questions and instructions with purposes.



Purpose for writing	Genre	Sub-types	Sample questions
To retell events in sequence	Recount	Biographical recount	Provide a biography of the life of your chosen artist
		Procedural recount	Record your artmaking process
To describe the features or characteristics of something	Report	Descriptive report	Describe the qualities of your artwork. What are the characteristics of Islamic Art?
		Compare and contrast report	Compare and contrast two artworks
		Research report	Complete a report to answer several different questions or instructions
Interpret the message or meaning of an artwork (and evaluate it)	Response	Interpretation	Investigate how some artists have used their artworks to make social and/or political comments. From a contemporary viewpoint, how is appropriation used in this artwork?
		Review/Evaluation	Review an exhibition Evaluate how the artwork is displayed
To take a position on an issue; to present arguments for or against a point of view	Argument	Exposition	'The function of the audience is to determine the meaning of an artwork.' Discuss in relation to your chosen artist. Outline the significance of this artwork and its impact on contemporary art.

Biographical recount: Picasso

A **biographical recount** of an artist retells the life of an artist. It can help us to understand the influences on an artist and how the artist lived in the world. A biography can help us understand the significance of the artist, that is, how important they are. A biography can also help us understand their artworks.

Pablo Picasso, January 1962.
Revista Vea y Lea. CC0. Creative Commons



The first time you mention an artist, use **first name and surname**. After that, use the surname only.

Introduction to person

Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was one of the most famous and influential artists of the twentieth century. He was a painter and sculpture but also made prints, ceramics and stage designs.

general statement about their art

Key events

Picasso was born in 1881 in Spain. His father was a painter and art teacher, and he encouraged his young son to draw and then to undertake formal art training. During his teenage years, Picasso was obsessed with drawing and painting.

Each paragraph covers a stage of the person's life

childhood and early life

early career

When he was 19 years old, Picasso moved to Paris where he became part of a poor but hardworking artistic community. During his time in Paris, Picasso created many paintings, in a mostly realist style, using inspiration from the poor area where he was living.

Starting in 1907, Picasso became heavily influenced by African art. From this inspiration, Picasso's artwork became less realistic and more abstract. This led to his development of a new genre of painting:

mid career

Cubism. Picasso and his colleague Georges Braque **developed** Cubism, a style where subjects and objects are broken up into parts and then rearranged in an abstract way. Picasso and other Cubist painters **held** exhibitions and **started** to achieve fame. Their work **influenced** many other artists and other art movements.

past tense verbs in bold

During World War I, from 1914-1918, Picasso lived in France, and he continued to paint. After the war, Picasso moved on from Cubist styles to more symbolic styles of painting. He created his most famous painting, *Guernica*, at this time. *Guernica* (1937) is a huge symbolic painting that expresses Picasso's horror at the Spanish civil war. During World War II, Picasso lived in Paris and continued to create stunning artworks including sculptures and ceramics.

1914-1945

text connectives and time adverbials help to show the sequence of events (underlined)

In his later years, Picasso created artworks in many styles. He created many daring and expressive artworks, including large sculptures. He died in 1973 in France.

late career

Significance of the person

Picasso has an enormous impact on the history of art. He created a vast catalogue of paintings and sculptures in a wide range of styles and he is remembered as the inventor of Cubism. He influenced every artist who followed him, and even today, he is one of the most famous and inspiring artists in the world.

What is he famous for?
Who did he influence?

Types of reports in Visual Arts

This module contains three of the main types of reports that students might be required to write: descriptive report, compare and contrast report and research report. The main purposes and examples are shown in the table below.

Type of report	Purpose	Examples
Descriptive report	to describe the features and characteristics of one thing (one artwork or one style etc)	Describe an artwork; Describe an art style or art movement (pp 58-66)
Compare and contrast report	to compare and contrast the features and characteristics of two (or more) artworks	Compare and contrast two artworks (see pp 67-72)
Research report	to answer a series of questions or instructions with different purposes; each section has a different purpose	Research report with several different sections (see pp 73-78)

Reports show the features and characteristics of something. In Visual Arts, descriptions are the basics.

In Visual Arts, description is a foundation activity, not the end goal of learning. For example, students are often required to describe an artwork as the beginning stage of a longer report involving interpretation or response. Or they may be asked to describe artworks at the start of Year 7, moving into more sophisticated interpretations and responses later.

We know that description is not enough on its own and that students need to develop far more sophisticated abilities to interpret and respond to artworks and artists.

However, describing the key features or characteristics of an artwork is a foundational skill. If students do not understand how to describe something, they are less able to interpret and respond to it.

This book covers the basics of reports, as well as the more sophisticated purposes of interpreting and responding.



For more on visual conventions, elements and principles of visual arts and design, see Book 1.

For responses and interpretations, see pages 79-128 in this book.

Complete a descriptive report

This artwork is called *Central Park in 1903* by a Canadian painter, Maurice Brazil Prendergast. It was painted in 1914.



The description below has some sections missing. Finish the sentences to complete the description.

Right *Central Park in 1903*, M. Brazil Prendergast, 1914.
CC0. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund, 1950, www.metmuseum.org.



Description
subject

The artwork shows _____ In the foreground, there are _____
The middle ground shows _____
_____ In the background, _____
_____ The people are wearing _____
_____ that would have been typical in 1903.

elements
colour
shape

The colours in the artwork are _____

There are some realistic shapes like _____

line

Some of the shapes of the figures are a little blurry and abstract and some are made from blobs of colour, such as _____

There are many _____ lines in the painting created by the path, the seats and the carriage track in the background. There are also _____ lines created by the tall trees.

principles

(Choose two principles to write about. You could choose contrast, balance, repetition, emphasis, rhythm and movement or any other principle that is interesting in this artwork.)

Practise comparing and contrasting

 The two artworks below are both still life artworks of fruit and everyday objects on a table but created at different times. Make notes in the table below to describe each.



Still Life, G. Flegel, 1625.


CC0. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Dr. W. Bopp, 1921

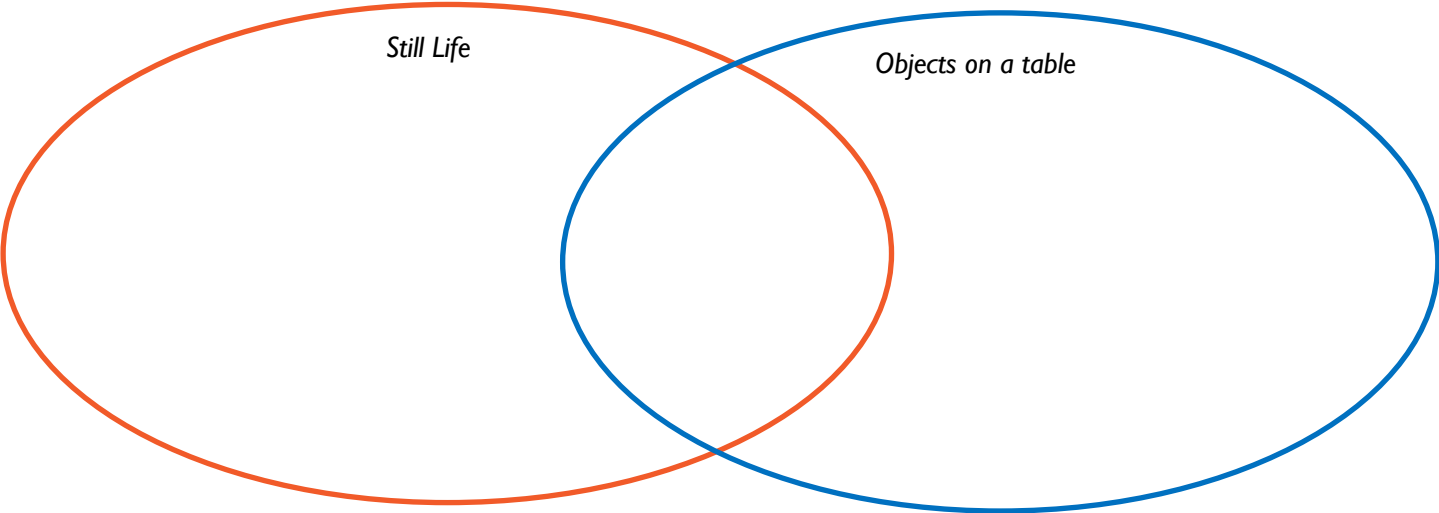


Objects on a table, P. H. Bruce. 1920.

CC0. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, George A. Hearn Fund 1961

		Still Life	Objects on a Table
1	Describe the subject matter of each artwork. What objects can you see and how are they arranged?		
2	Describe the use of colour in each artwork e.g. primary, complementary, muted, bright, dull etc. Name the main colours.		
3	Describe the use of shape in the artwork (e.g. organic, geometric etc). Name the main shapes.		
4	Describe the use of perspective in each artwork (e.g. linear, multiple, flat perspective, overlapping)		
5	Describe any other features you notice in each artwork.		

 In the oval on the left, describe the qualities that are **ONLY** in *Still Life*. The oval on the right is for qualities that are **ONLY** in *Objects on a Table*. The overlapping area is for qualities that are similar or the same in both artworks.



Types of responses in Visual Arts

Responses are a very important genre in Visual Arts. Responses interpret the message or meaning of an artwork. In the response family of genres, this book focuses on two types of responses: interpretations and evaluations/reviews. These are not the only kinds of responses that students might need to do, but they are common for Visual Arts in Years 7-10. This book has not included the **personal response** genre as it is a more basic response that is not typically required in secondary schooling. Personal responses are the person's own opinion about an artwork or artist.

Type of response	Purpose	Examples
Interpretation	to interpret the message or meaning of an artwork	Interpretation of themes (e.g. violence) Interpretation of viewpoints Interpretation of art styles/movements Interpretation of indigenous perspectives
Evaluation / review	to interpret the message or meaning of an artwork AND to evaluate or give a judgement on it	Evaluate an exhibition Evaluate a peer's artwork and own artwork



Teaching suggestions



The metaphor of coloured glasses could be useful for your students. The syllabus specifies the use of viewpoints to help students understand multiple perspectives in Visual Arts.

Coloured glasses or lenses might be a useful teaching tool. Teachers could use a particular coloured lens for each perspective or viewpoint that is being taught. For example, students could get to know that yellow means contemporary or blue is subjective. This might help to focus students' attention and help them understand different perspectives and viewpoints.

Teachers could ask students to organise an group the lenses shown on the page under these headings: structural, subjective, cultural and contemporary

Structural viewpoint Interpreting artworks as forms of visual and multimodal language. How does the display of the artwork enhance the relationship between the artist and audience? How did the artist use forms and visual conventions to create the artworks? What are the meanings of symbols used in the artwork?

Subjective viewpoint Interpreting artworks as expressions of deeply personal and emotive perspectives, experiences and associations. What are my personal opinions and feelings about the artworks? How did the artist express their own personal experiences?

Cultural viewpoint Interpreting artworks that reflect social ideologies, beliefs, values conditions and shared understandings in specific communities or societies. What movement or style does this artwork represent? What beliefs and norms in a society or culture are being shown in this artwork? How does the artwork reveal indigenous perspectives?

Contemporary viewpoint Interpreting artworks that reflect current and emerging art theories and innovative practices. How has the artist challenged ideas from the past? How has the artist reimagined accepted ideas or assumptions to engage the audience?

Interpretation: viewpoints

Artworks can be interpreted through different viewpoints. This page gives an example of how to interpret artworks and write notes about different perspectives. The artwork is called *Collins St, 5pm* by John Brack, painted in 1955. Collins Street is one of the main streets in Melbourne.

The subjective viewpoint

Interpreting artworks as expressions of personal and emotive perspectives, experiences and associations

Key questions to answer

What is my impression and emotional reaction? What emotions does the artist want to express? How does the artist show their personal experience? How does the audience respond?

Notes - I like all the different faces. I think it's funny the way people are all walking in the same direction, like robots. The mood is quite melancholy because of the dull and boring colours. The people are not smiling or interacting.

The cultural viewpoint

Interpreting artworks that reflect social ideologies, beliefs, values, conditions and shared understandings in specific communities or societies

Key questions to answer

How was the artist influenced by culture, gender, religion, class, the time, nationality and politics? What is the artist showing about society or a community?

Notes: Brack was a modernist painter who was interested in the values of modern life. Before the 1950s, most Australian art was based on scenes of the bush or outback. Brack was trying to show urban life and the values of city workers.



Left

John Brack.
Collins St, 5pm.
1955.

National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased, 1956
(3302-4)
© National Gallery of Victoria

The structural viewpoint

Interpreting artworks as forms of visual and multimodal language; elements, principles, conventions, materials and symbols in the artwork

Key questions to answer

How are the elements of art used (line, shape, colour etc)? What style or art movement is involved? What materials have been used? What are the symbols in the artwork? What are they trying to communicate about the world?

Notes - Brack built up layers of paint to give the surface a rich quality. Monochromatic colours (brown and yellow) evoke a solemn mood and the idea of a dull, colourless life. Repetitive shapes in the buildings and forms of people walking in the same direction mean people conform. Sharp angles and hard surfaces show that life is difficult.

The contemporary viewpoint

Interpreting artworks that reflect current and emerging art theories and innovative practices

Key questions to answer

What ideas or customs or values are challenged in this artwork? How has the artist reimagined accepted ideas or assumptions to engage the audience?

Notes - Brack is mocking work values and corporate culture. All the workers go home from work at the same time (5pm) and life in the city is dull and lacking colour. He is parodying life in the city with cartoon-like images of urban people. Unique facial expressions on the people in the foreground are quite humorous, showing his sympathy for individuals.

Write an interpretation: John Brack

 Write an interpretation of urban life in John Brack's painting *Collins St, 5pm*. Consider the painting from four viewpoints (subjective, structural, cultural and contemporary). Some parts of the interpretation have been provided and there are hints in the column on the right.

Statement of meanings

Collins St, 5pm by John Brack (1955) is a famous Australian artwork that expresses meanings about _____. At the time it was painted, the artwork challenged stereotypes of Australian bush landscapes and people but even now it is relevant to urban life.

What are the themes in the artwork?

Interpretation of meanings

viewpoint 1:
subjective

From a subjective viewpoint, it seems to me that the painting shows

Give your opinions about the painting's meaning - you can use the ideas in the notes or your own views

viewpoint 2:
structural

Brack's technique was to build up multiple layers of paint _____. The _____ colour palette

Describe the colour palette and its meanings

viewpoint 3:
cultural

The painting provides a social commentary on life in the city in the 1950s. Brack was a modernist painter who was interested in the values of modern life. _____

Describe the shapes, angles, repetition and their meanings

Describe the artist's view of urban life

viewpoint 4:
contemporary

Even while being critical of city life, this painting was also quite radical for the time, as it was different from _____

State how this painting was a change from previous stereotypes of bush and outback scenes

Brack's artwork about urban life challenged and _____ accepted values of _____

Explain what Brack was challenging and mocking. What do the individual expressions on faces show? Is his viewpoint relevant today?

Restatement of meanings

Brack's painting, *Collins St, 5pm*, is an important Australian artwork that expresses meanings about _____

Restate the meanings of Brack's artwork.

sample

Contemporary Chinese art

Contemporary Chinese art reflects many influences, including Chinese Socialist Realism. The artwork on the right is a contemporary poster. It is a **satire** which means that it is mocking or laughing at something, and also judging it negatively. What do you think this contemporary artwork is making fun of? What similarities does it share with Chinese Socialist Realist art?



Anonymous Chinese cartoon. 2018.



Write an interpretation of this artwork. Use your knowledge of Chinese Socialist Realism and also viewpoints for interpreting art.

Statement of meanings

Interpretation of meanings

viewpoint 1:
subjective

viewpoint 2:
structural

viewpoint 3:
cultural

viewpoint 4:
contemporary

Restatement of meanings

sample

Interpret what the artwork is expressing

Share your opinions about the artwork's meaning and how it makes you feel.

Describe the elements, principles conventions, materials and symbols in the artwork.


Interpret the cultural and social meanings in the artwork.

Interpret how the artwork challenges and reimagines ideas. How is the artwork relevant today?

Restate the meanings in this artwork

Evaluation words for Visual Arts

Evaluating means judging someone or something. In Visual Arts, you may be asked to write a review of an exhibition or of a series of works by an artist. Reviews by amateurs or students in Visual Arts do not use too much emotion or strong personal opinions. Instead, reviews are mostly positive and respectful of the artist and artworks. You are entitled to your personal opinions but this is only one perspective on art.

 **Sort the words below into two categories: positive evaluations and negative evaluations. Some of the words depend on the context, but you can decide if the word would usually relate to a positive judgement or a negative judgement.**

Word Box					
interesting	engaging	dull	stereotypical	unique	trivial
challenging	unsophisticated	successful	important	boring	
original	insignificant	unsuccessful	significant	limited	




positive	negative



sample

In the box below, you will find positive evaluation words that relate to different things being evaluated:

- the audience’s reactions or feelings (e.g. amusing)
- the artist’s skill and talent (e.g. skilful)
- the relationship of the artwork with the world (e.g. important).

 **Sort the words in the correct box to show what they are evaluating**

Word box

fascinating masterful timely clever
appealing emotional talented
thrilling relevant brilliant
surprising satirical important
significant dazzling

How the audience reacts

Relationships with the world

The artist’s talent and skill

References

The resources on this page are references for this book and also useful further reading on Literacy in Visual Arts.

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