

Pre-Tour Classroom activities

These activities are intended to focus student attention on the skill of observation; this helps maximize their experience once in the museum. For students to have success and a richer experience we suggest as many of these activities as possible.

1. Point of View

Goal:

Look at an object from an unfamiliar angle increase observational skills.

Activity:

Draw an object from three different angles. This will encourage the children to look all around the object, rather than from one specific viewpoint.

Suggestions:

Find an object that looks different from different directions, for instance a bowl of fruit, chair, electric pencil sharpener, pouring pitcher, coffee mug.

*Don't forget to include above and below perspective.

2. One Minute Memory

Goal:

Focus student intent on details.

Activity:

Look at an object or a picture, or artwork for 1 minute. Try to remember as much about it as possible. After the minute, put it away and draw it from memory. When you have drawn it, look at the object again and see what you missed.

Suggestions:

Instead of giving time warnings ("You have 20 seconds left"), give suggestions that encourage full observation of the object such as, "Have you looked from above?" or "Imagine you're an ant crawling."

3. Focusing In

Goal:

Focus student intent on details.

Activity:

Using a magnifying glass, focus on one particular aspect of an object or a picture. Draw that part in as much detail as possible.

Suggestion:

If you are wondering where to find magnifying glasses, look in your science kits.

If available, you might consider viewing objects through alternatives such as, a bottle of water, a glass vase, and don't worry about distortion, this just adds a level of interest to the details.

4. Upside Down It

Goal:

Focus student intent on details, and avoiding preconception.

Activity:

Find a picture (this could be a famous painting, a photo or a picture from a magazine). Turn it upside down, and draw it.

Suggestion:

This activity may be more interesting for students if you chose an image that is familiar, a rock star, a sports icon, etc.

5. Cut Away

Goal:

Focusing on detail as part of a whole.

Activity:

Select an artwork or suitable image from a book, magazine or website. Using a color photocopy cut away a section of the scene and have students draw in the missing portion.

Suggestion:

Suggested websites for fine art imagery.

www.wga.hu, www.artchive.com

6. Memory Portrait

Goal:

Recalling details without visual prompts.

Activity:

Draw a picture of a friend or relative from memory.

Suggestion:

Be sure to give students a minute or two to really focus their memory on the person they want to draw. Have them close their eyes and give verbal prompts, such as, "What color is their hair?" "What is the shape of their nose?" "Think of what they look like when they speak."

For younger students or those hesitant to draw a person, you can have them imagine their bedroom, or a familiar space.

7. Looking Up

Goal:

Expand student awareness of physical surroundings.

Activity:

Sit under a tree, looking up and draw the tree from this viewpoint.

Suggestion:

Have students bring a clip board with a paper and pencil and have them lay on their backs for a specified amount of time (suggest two minutes), then have them roll over to draw. They may revisit the perspective as they draw, and encourage silence during this time.

8. Picture This!

Goal:

Using visual clues as springboard for deeper understanding of content.

Activity:

Find a picture in which two or more people are talking. Write down or discuss what you think they might be saying (looking elsewhere in the picture for clues, and also focusing on the expressions on the peoples' faces).

Suggestions:

Be sure to show an example first. Or do one as a class activity. When you have completed this activity, be sure to have students share their work.