

Tools for Teachers

A Guide for Teaching with Sculpture

Welcome to the Nasher Sculpture Center!

In an effort to make your students' experience more meaningful, we've created this guide to help you **look at**, **talk about** and **respond to** the works of art on view. Enjoy!



Looking at Sculpture

Take Your Time

When you approach a sculpture, move around the work slowly and take mental notes about what you see. Try looking at the artwork for a full minute without speaking.

Change Your Perspective

Look at each artwork from multiple sides.

- From each point of view, consider the object. **What do you notice about its shape, mass, surface or color?**
- **What materials were used** to make this artwork? What do you see that gives you clues about the material?
- **Look at sculpture from far away and up close.** From a distance, you will notice the entire work and its surroundings. Up close, you will notice details about surface, and how it was made.

Consider

After looking at the sculpture, ask yourself:

- How does the artwork make me **feel**?
- Does it spark anything in my **imagination**?
- What might the artist be **communicating**?
- Does the work reflect the **time period** in which it was made? If so, how?
- What are the **similarities and differences** between this sculpture and the artworks around it?

Talking about Sculpture

Question

As a starting point, ask students some basic questions¹ that encourage them to examine the artwork.

- **What do you see?**
- **What makes you say that?**
- **What else can you find?**

An alternate starting point is to ask students to complete the following three sentences² while looking at the sculpture:

- **I see** _____.
- **I think** _____.
- **I wonder** _____.

Read the wall text or brochure to find helpful information about the artist and the artwork, including the title, date and materials. Use this information to expand upon students' ideas and continue the conversation.

Discuss

Use these activities to encourage dialogue in a group setting:

- **Pair and Share:** Pair up and discuss the artwork before sharing with the entire group.
- **Compare and Contrast:** Look at two artworks installed near one another, then try to find similarities and differences between the artworks. Draw a Venn diagram with two overlapping circles to organize the artworks' similar and different qualities.
- **Title It:** Create a new title for an artwork on view. Share the title with the group along with the reasons for your choice.
- **Context:** Does the sculpture relate to a historical event or time period? A literary work? Mathematical or scientific principles? Investigate how the artwork might have been influenced by its context. Share those connections with the group.

¹ Adapted from the Visual Thinking Strategies method developed by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine.

² Adapted from Harvard Project Zero.

Responding to Sculpture

Gallery activities such as writing and drawing can help students gain a better understanding of the process or inspiration behind an artwork.

Write

- Find a sculpture that reminds you of a person or an animal. Fill in the blanks in the paragraph below:
 - **I am a(n)** _____. **I can** _____. **I dream about** _____. **I hope to** _____. **I am a(n)** _____.
- Write a story about an artwork using one of the following prompts:
 - **Last night I had the strangest dream...**
 - **Did I ever tell you about the time I...**
 - **Once upon a time in a land far, far away...**
- Write an **acrostic poem**. First choose a word that describes the artwork, then spell the word down the left side of a sheet of paper. Think of a word that begins with each letter to describe the artwork's color, size, subject, material or texture.

Draw

- **Draw a map** that records your movement through the gallery or garden. Include memorable features you noticed in the architecture or artworks.
- **Imagine what this sculpture would become if it started to grow and change.** Make a quick sketch of what you think this sculpture might turn into.
- **Spend one minute making a sketch of a sculpture from the front.** Then, move around the sculpture to make a **one-minute sketch from the left side, then the back, then the right side.** What did you notice as you looked from different angles?
- Sketch an artwork that includes a human or animal figure. **Add a background that shows the environment where this figure might live.**
- **Turn and face the gallery wall and create a sketch while another student describes an artwork that they can see.** Compare the drawing with the artwork and discuss the differences.