



TEACHERS' GUIDE TO ART MUSEUM RESOURCES

PALOMA LÓPEZ

Integrating art into formal curricula

TEACHING WITH ART

“...art integration allows students the opportunity to construct meaning for themselves and play an active role in their own educations.”

Art Integration

In an era of extreme academic competitiveness and high stakes standardized testing, art is often the first subject cut from national curricula. Increased focus on common core subjects and test taking, however, has resulted in very little improvement in student achievement nationwide. Despite this fact, teaching practices have been slow to change. It's time to try another approach, one that will provide students the experiences they need to engage with the material and make connections to subject matter across all content areas. In addition to helping them embrace learning and retain knowledge, art integration allows students the opportunity to construct meaning for themselves and play an active role in their own educations.

Benefits of Teaching with Art

There are many reasons to integrate art into your teaching practices. Apart from contributing to happier, more engaged, students, using art in your curriculum has many transferable benefits such as:

- Increasing critical thinking skills
- Helping students develop creative problem-solving skills
- Giving teachers a way to present difficult concepts visually, making them easier to understand
- Building students' confidence
- Reaching students who might otherwise not be engaged in classwork
- Giving students an outlet for their thoughts and feelings
- And connecting students with cultures and perspectives from around the world

Art integration lends itself well to constructivist methods of learning such as object- and inquiry-based learning. Object- and inquiry-based learning are forms of active learning that inspire wonder, awe, and curiosity in students, helping them to create a more profound educational experience and develop the skills they need to use discovery as a tool for learning.



GETTING STARTED

You don't need to be an art teacher or an expert in art history to use museum resources in your class or to integrate art into your curriculum. Integrating art into core subjects adds variety to classroom activities, motivates students be more engaged, and reinforces concepts that you're already teaching. You can explore art museum educational resources for ready-made lesson plans and activities (see resources below), or begin by integrating art into your own lessons by following three simple steps:

1 Select a work of art to complement your lesson

- Choose artwork that relates to a topic or theme from your curriculum. Explore museum websites and digitized collections to find a work of art that connects with your lesson plan and will spark your students' curiosity. In choosing your artwork, ask yourself three questions:
 1. Do I find this artwork interesting?
 2. How does it relate to my students' lives and experiences?
 3. How does it relate to my curriculum?

2 Get to know the artwork

- Teaching with art doesn't require specialized knowledge of the field, but learning basic information about your chosen artwork and artist will help you facilitate meaningful discussion with your students. Learning more about the artwork will also make it easier to find connections to both your curriculum and your students' lives and experiences.

3 Develop open-ended questions for Active Viewing

- Engaging with art in a meaningful way takes practice; help guide your students in their exploration and interpretation by developing open-ended questions for each stage of the Active Viewing exercise.
- There is no "correct" answer to open-ended questions. Open-ended inquiry promotes creativity and critical thinking and helps affirm students' unique points of view while teaching them the value of diverse perspectives.



ACTIVE VIEWING

Active Viewing is an inquiry-based practice of looking at art that encourages learners to make personal connections with works of art through observation and inquiry and promotes critical thinking. Engaging in Active Viewing provides students the opportunity to direct and construct their own learning experiences.

- 1 Look.** Slow down to take in the entire work of art, pay close attention to details. Take note of the visual elements of the piece: medium, colors, composition, subject matter etc.
- 2 Think/Feel.** Use your observations from step one to make evidence-based inferences. What do you think the work of art is about? Why do you think the artist created it? How does it make you feel?
- 3 Question.** Ask questions that will help expand your understanding of, and engagement with, the artwork. What do you wonder about the piece and/or artist? What more do you want to know?
- 4 Connect.** Relate what you see, think, and feel to your own life and experiences. Do you connect with the artwork in anyway? If so, how? If not, can you connect the artwork to other works of art you have seen or subjects you are learning about in class?

Provide information about the art and/or artist throughout the exercise to add context and deepen perspective. Ask students to consider how this new information fits into or changes their interpretations; it should not provide a “correct” interpretation. Ask students to record their thoughts and ideas in a graphic organizer, or, develop further activities to explore each step so students can engage more fully with the artwork. See the [Museum of Fine Arts, Houston](#) or the [Toledo Museum of Art](#) for similar exercises.



RESOURCES

Discover online educational resources from art museums across the United States that feature collections representative of art and artists from Latin American and Iberian regions.

The Hispanic Museum & Library – New York, NY

The Hispanic Museum & Library offers online access to a selection of art dating from the Paleolithic to the 20th century from their permanent collection, as well as several lessons and activities. Click [here](#) to learn more about The Hispanic Museum & Library.

The Mexic-Arte Museum– Austin, TX

The Mexic-Arte Museum offers online resources related to past exhibitions and supplemental gallery guides for teachers. Click [here](#) to visit the Mexic-Arte Museum website, available in English and Spanish.

El Museo del Barrio – New York, NY

EL Museo del Barrio has a variety of incredible online offerings including virtual tours, online exhibitions, teacher resource guides and lesson plans for at home exploration of museum exhibits, and much more. Click [here](#) to begin exploring all El Museo has to offer.

The Museum of Latin American Art – Long Beach, CA

The Museum of Latin American Art's online resources include virtual tours, online exhibits with interpretive materials in English and Spanish, bilingual teacher resource packets and lesson plans for students of all ages, and interviews with artists. In additions, selections from MOLAA's permanent collection are digitized and available through Google Arts and Culture. Click [here](#) to explore MOLAA's incredible resources.



RESOURCES

The National Hispanic Cultural Center – Albuquerque, NM

The National Hispanic Cultural Center's online offerings include: activities and lesson plans in English and Spanish for students of all ages, virtual exhibits, and various other programs. Click [here](#) to visit the NHCC's website.

The National Museum of Mexican Art – Chicago, IL

The National Museum of Mexican art offers virtual tours and access to a selection of photographs by Mexican artists from their permanent collection, as well as a variety of activities and lesson plans for students grades Pre K-6. Click [here](#) to discover what else the National Museum of Mexican art has to offer.

The Perez Art Museum Miami – Miami, FL

The Perez Art Museum Miami's Digital Museum provides access to virtual tours, online art talks, art inquiry guides based on artwork from their permanent collection, and lesson plans for students of all ages among other resources. Click [here](#) to find out more about what PAMM has to offer.

The Smithsonian Latino Center – Washington DC

The Smithsonian Latino Center provides online resources for teachers and students of all ages in both English and Spanish including activities, lesson plans, and teachers' guides. Click [here](#) to learn more about the Smithsonian Latino Center or visit [The Smithsonian Latino Virtual Museum](#).



NOTES

Giardina, Nicloa. “5 Tips For Teaching With Art In Any Subject Area.” Accessed June 5, 2021. <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/5-tips-for-teaching-with-art-in-any-subject-area/>

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. “Practice Looking at Art.” Accessed January 9, 2021. <https://www.mfah.org/education/practice-looking-art>.

Riley, Susan. “Use Art Integration to Enhance Common Core.” November 30, 2012. <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/core-practices-arts-integration-susan-riley>

Seneca Academy. “Arts Integration in School: 10 reasons why.” Accessed June 5, 2021. <https://www.senecaacademy.org/10-reasons-why-integrating-art-is-important-in-school/>.

Toledo Museum of Art. “Visual Literacy.” Accessed January 9, 2021. <https://www.toledomuseum.org/education/visual-literacy/art-seeing-art>.

University of Miami. “Object-Based Learning.” Accessed June 5, 2021. <https://academictechnologies.it.miami.edu/explore-technologies/technology-summaries/object-based-learning/index.html>

Upper Elementary Snapshots. “Incorporating Art in the Classroom.” Accessed June 5, 2021. <https://www.upperelementarysnapshots.com/2016/06/incorporating-art-in-classroom.html>

Cover page photo by [Artem Maltsev](#) on [Unsplash](#)
Footer banner photo by [Kelli Tungay](#) on [Unsplash](#)

