

**LESSON TITLE:** Art Criticism

**GRADE/AGE LEVEL:** High School—Intermediate to Advanced

**TIME FRAME:** 3 90 minute class periods

**DESCRIPTION:** Following a class discussion about how to describe and critique their work, students will reflect on their painting project and create an artist statement. After completing their statements, students will practice observing and discussing an artwork using the look, describe, think, discover, respond model. Students will then meet in partners to analyze each other's work and conduct short interviews to gain further insight. Following the interviews, students will present their partner's work to the class.

**OBJECTIVES/STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

*Students will be able to:*

- Reflect meaningfully on their own artwork
- Create an artist statement that communicates their artistic intentions.
- Describe and interpret work of another artist
- Give an oral presentation about an artwork

**FOCUS ARTWORKS:**



*Las Dos Fridas*, 1939, oil on canvas  
Frida Kahlo



*The Lost Boys*, 1993, Acrylic and collage on canvas  
Kerry James Marshall



Artwork example



Artwork example

## **INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES:**

- Artist Statement examples
  - Additional web resources:
    - <https://www.gyst-ink.com/artist-statement-guidelines>
    - <https://thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-write-an-artist-statement/>
- Artist statement flowchart
- Focus artwork images
- Elements of Art/Principles of Design vocabulary reference (also in Visual Literacy Lesson)
- LOOK, DESCRIBE, THINK, DISCOVER, RESPOND (LDTDR) handout
- journal/sketchbooks

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **Day 1**

#### Anticipatory Set

- Instructor will ask students to think about why personal reflection is important for artists, and encourage them to share ideas to begin the class discussion

#### Direct Instruction

- Instructor will review comments from the previous lesson about artist statements and discuss their purpose in an art practice
- Instructor will ask students to suggest what might be components of a good artist statement.
- Instructor will provide handout of artist statement examples (see attached samples) and have students read aloud selections aloud for discussion. Instructor may project digital images of the artworks for reference. Students will share their reactions to the samples and discuss whether/how the statement place the works in context.
- Instructor introduces assignment to create a 1/2-1 page artist statement for their culture/identity project painting and distributes Artist Statement Flow Chart handout. Instructor can also review material from web resources (links above) or provided links to students for independent reference.
- Instructor will direct student to review their journal/sketchbook entries, and project notes to assist them in gathering ideas for their artist statements

#### Guided Practice

- Students will use their project notes and flowchart handout to begin writing drafts of their artist statements. Instructor will monitor the room, addressing questions and meeting with students individually as needed.
- Any student finishing their draft will be encouraged to share them with a partner for feedback.

### Independent Practice

- Students will complete their artist statement as homework to submit the following class. Instructor will encourage students to have at least one other person proofread their statement before submitting.

## **Day 2**

### Closure on Artist Statement

- Instructor will collect artist statements and ask students to share any challenges/experiences with the assignment.

### Anticipatory Set

- Instructor will ask students about their experiences with art criticism, encouraging them to share ideas about what makes a successful critique (and self critique).

### Direct Instruction

- Instructor will review concepts about looking at and interpreting artwork covered in the visual literacy lesson
- Instructor will introduce the Look, Describe, Think, Discover, Respond (LDTDR) approach to discussing artwork, and how it can be used to interpret and assess works for meaning and effect. Instructor will distribute LDTDR handout/worksheet.
- Instructor will show or distribute images of focus/example artworks and guide students through the process.
  - At the Discover step, Instructor can ask students to think of questions they might have about the work, or look up information about the work online (individually or as a class group).
- When students seem to have mastered the approach, Instructor will introduce the interview assignment. Instructor will break students into partners. Each student will consider their partner's painting and complete the handout using the LDTDR approach.
  - At the Discover step, students will write a list of questions they have about the artwork and process to use for their interview.
  - Instructor will remind students to reference the Elements of Art/Principles of Design vocabulary sheet when describing and responding to their partner's work.
  - Following their assessments, partners will take turns interviewing each other, making notes about what they will present to the class about their partner's work.
- Instructor will review the proper etiquette for partner work and critique, if necessary. Students may suggest ideas about rules for respectful interview questions and responses, which can be written on the board.

### Guided Practice

- Students will meet with their partners to assess and learn about each other's work, taking notes to prepare for their presentations. The instructor will monitor the room, addressing any questions about the assignment individually or collectively, as needed.

- When completing their interviews, student may use the remaining class time to write their responses to their partner's work and outline their presentations.

#### Direct Instruction

- Instructor may reconvene class and demonstrate an effective presentation, using one of the focus or example artworks.

#### Independent Practice

- Students who did not complete the LDTDR handout can finish as homework before submitting the following class. Students may also prepare their notes for their presentations

### **Day 3**

#### Anticipatory Set

- Instructor will ask students about any last questions or concerns with the presentations and review classroom presentation procedures/etiquette, if necessary.
- Instructor may give students 5 minutes to review their notes.

#### Guided Practice

- Students take turns presenting their partner's work and their response to it to the class.

#### Closure

- Instructor and students discuss the value of reflection and art criticism as a class. If class time permits, Instructor and students may also discuss ways in which they might exhibit their projects for other groups (for example: a hallway display of artwork and statements or a mini classroom exhibition for students for other classes)

### **VOCABULARY:**

*Art Criticism:* an organized approach for studying works of art

*Artist Statement:* an artist's written description of their work. The brief verbal representation is for, and in support of, his or her own work to give the viewer understanding.

*Interpretation:* an explanation or way of explaining

*Visual Thinking:* a way to organize your thoughts and improve your ability to think and communicate. It's a great way to convey complex or potentially confusing information.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS and/or MODIFICATIONS:**

*English Language Learner:* an ELL student can be provided with a LDTDR handout and an Elements of Art/Principles of Design vocabulary reference sheet written in both their native language and English to assist them with their interview and statement. If possible, an ELL

should be partnered with a bilingual student who speaks English and the ELLs native language for the interview.

*Challenged Writer:* Students requiring extra assistance with their written statements can submit multiple drafts to the instructor for feedback and editing, submitting the final draft at the close of the unit/or at the student exhibition.

**CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT:**

*Did Students:*

- Create an artist statement that reflected meaningfully on their own artwork?
- Complete the LDTDR worksheet, successfully describing and interpreting the work of another artist?
- Give an effective presentation about their partner's work?

**METHOD OF ASSESSMENT:**

Instructor will check for concept and activity comprehension by monitoring students as they work during class time, meeting with students individually as needed to assess progress with the artist statement or partner presentations. Instructor will clarify concepts or expectations as needed, providing examples for student observation and reference (formative assessment). The artist statements, LDTDR worksheet, and oral presentations will be marked for participation, and evaluated for understanding about effective art critique and self reflection (summative assessment).

## **Sample Artist Statements**

The attached artist statements represent well-written statements from Native artists who participated in a juried art exhibition co-sponsored by the Longhouse.

The statements are short, creative and touch on many of the elements important to a variety of Native artists in trying to describe their art works.

**All rights reserved by the artists for images and statements**

The following artists are represented:

### **Jeffery Veregge, Port Gamble S'Klallam**

- Alien
- Cybertron Copper

### **Misty Kalama-Archer, Puyallup**

- Salish Woman of Wealth High Class Robe
- Chief's Lightning Regalia

### **Heather Johnson-Jock, Jamestown S'Klallam**

- Gifts of the Forest

### **Kelli Palmer, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs**

- Wasco Turtle Cornhusk

## Sample Artist Statements

### Alien

In 1979 Director Ridley Scott introduced true horror in outer space. His film “Alien” and the creature design based of of H.R Gigers illustrations gave us the Xenomorph, a monster that still to this day can still make me jump. I decided to create an image that was inspired by the films, because even though the being is intimidating, it is also sleek and has forms that are very pleasing to the eye. In our Native culture we see many animals that are known to hunt and kill man, yet when portrayed in art are quite beautiful. It was my goal to take this fictional creature of death and attempt to give it both beauty and at the same time, an underling menace in my artistic interpretation of the Xenomorph.



### Title: Cybertron Copper

“Autobots Roll Out” every boy that grew up in the 80’s knows this phrase and although it has since been solidified in the minds of the mainstream, I have always been a fan of the “Transformers”. In my first attempt to take my style and give it dimension I choose the heroic Autobot Leader and my personal favorite Optimus Prime as my subject. I also wanted to make sure that both the design & the execution would work in harmony. As when we see Form-line transfer to carvings, the wood simply enhances the art and never distracts but adds to the overall feeling. I want my art to do the same; I realize as my subject material is from the Geek world that I need to both try and honor the traditional and yet be relevant to what I do. The Potlatch Copper was my inspiration for shape and what I thought could inspire as far a look goes for: a Metal look. I also wanted to add something I love about the old art, that we see in museums. The wear, aging and distress.



Borrowing from George Lucas & the Transformer films, I wanted that “used future” feeling. The end result: Cybertron Copper

### **‘Salish Woman of Wealth’ High Class Robe**

Dream memory of the old high class robes of my ancestors influenced the creation of this traditional Salish woven art piece named ‘Salish Woman of Wealth’. Some place between sleeping and waking, her vision came to me and I created her. She dazzled me with interwoven dancing colors and geometric designs. In my Salish culture, people of high class including chiefs and leaders wear robes woven with wool that symbolize great wealth. ‘Salish Woman of Wealth’ robe is high class and wants to be seen, heard, worn, and acknowledged.



### **Chief’s Lightning’ Regalia**

The teachings I received from Subiyay (Bruce Miller) influenced the creation of this Salish woven art piece named ‘Chief’s Lightning’ Regalia. I began to question deeply: What does it mean to carry chiefly attributes? What makes a good leader? As I wove this regalia, I meditated on Subiyay’s teachings about how a chief is someone who takes care of his family and the people in a humble way with compassion, and leads by example. ‘Chief’s Lightning’ Regalia personifies these teachings. For, it is the chiefs and high class people who wear regalia woven of wool during special occasions such as ceremonies and potlatches!



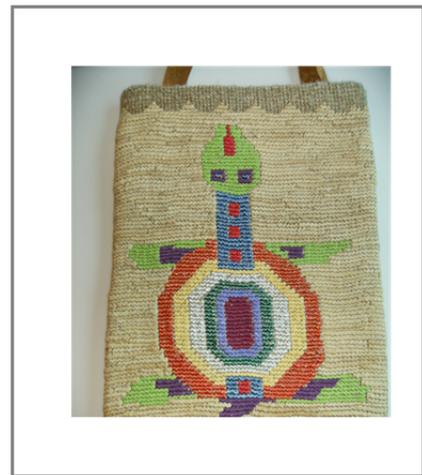
## Gifts of the Forest

In creating this Salish robe, I chose to represent our connection to the forest in weaving this piece. As Salish people, so many of the gifts we create as artists are first gifts of the forest. Therefore I was inspired to honor this "original gift", and honor the splendor and beauty of the forest, through weaving patterns representing the forest in its complexity, interconnectedness, and depth.



## Wasco Turtle Cornhusk

My uncle came to my mom a few summers ago and asked her to give one last Native cornhusk basket class for him before her hands gave out to arthritis. I wanted to give it a try and learn as much as I could from my mom while I could. To my surprise I enjoyed working with cornhusk. I made miniature baskets one right after the other, and continued practicing to hone my weaving skills.



The rest of the summer I worked on my cornhusk baskets and read books researching from the large storage baskets to the show purses that were made in the past. Inspired by the baskets I read about and saw in our local museum, I decided I wanted to make a large basket at least once. I cut my strings, mapped out my design and started. To my horror some of my strings turned out short! But I was determined to finish my project so I recounted my designs and ended with my little, sort, fat, colorful turtle. It taught me that baskets often take you in a new direction and you must find the beauty in the art you do.

# Artist Statement Flow Chart

Use this chart to help you construct an artist statement about your artwork.

Start Here

**1** Describe your artwork.

Some questions to consider: What does your artwork look like? What is the subject matter? What is the title of your work? What elements or principles are most obvious in your work?

Some questions to consider: What media is your artwork made from? What tools, techniques or processes did you use to create your artwork?

**2** How did you create your art?

**3** What is the *big idea* behind your artwork?

Some questions to consider: What or who inspired your artwork? Does your work express a personal or social issue? What emotions did you try to show in your artwork?

Some questions to consider: What are your goals as an artist? Did this piece help you reach your goals? Why or why not?

**4** What were your *goals* for this artwork?

**5** What are your overall *thoughts* of your artwork?

Some questions to consider: What did you learn in creating this artwork? Is the final piece what you imagined? How so? How will this piece influence your future artworks?

Way to go! You just wrote a reflective artist statement.

Please edit your statement for spelling and grammar.

Ask a friend to read it through and share their thoughts on your artist statement.

## ARTIST STATEMENT:

My piece for this project is an acrylic painting on paper called *St Francis and the Tree of Life*, measuring 20cm x 20cm. I was inspired by the small icon paintings that I've often seen hanging in kitchens or hallways and serving as personal/familial emblems of devotion and reverence. Though I did not come from a religious home, my family culture was deeply informed by many previous generations of Catholicism, as well as deep, pagan-is devotion to the Earth. While we would occasionally observe a Catholic ritual or attend mass, my sisters and I were raised with the idea that God was Nature and Nature was our church.

I wanted to make an icon for this particular blend of faiths. I've worn for years a medallion of St. Francis of Assisi, who is symbolic of ecology and animals (as well as Italy and stowaways—all things that I love). I've painted him in this work as part of a Tree of Life, a folk motif that exists in many cultures, often representing growth, strength and the eternal cycle of being. Combining these two symbols is meant to illustrate the two things that most strongly informed the spiritual philosophy in which I grew up, and which continues to inspire me to this day.

Stylistically, I looked to images of Celtic folk art and cloisonne decorative works, which I have always been fascinated by. I used a color scheme of warm yellow and orange (to suggest the sun) with natural greens, grey and browns (the colors of the earth and things growing). I drew a careful, folk-inspired illustration and filled in the forms with saturated, simple colors. This is a departure from my usual style, which is much looser and larger, but I wanted the project to evoke the more refined look of small icon paintings. Though it was challenging, the finished work did resonate with me. I would like to use this painting to create a more detailed and developed version of the same subject, perhaps painted on wood and with decorative embellishments.



**NAME:**

**TITLE OF ARTWORK:**

**ARTIST:**

**LOOK**

*Consider the artwork silently for a few moments. Notice the visual characteristics of the work.*

**DESCRIBE**

*What do you see? What did you first notice? Use art/design vocabulary to describe your observations*

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**THINK**

*What do you think about what you observe in the work? What do your observations tell you about the narrative, theme, emotion, or mood of the work?*

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## VOCABULARY

**ELEMENTS OF ART:** The visual components of color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value.

<b>Line</b>	An element of art defined by a point moving in space. Line may be two-or three-dimensional, descriptive, implied, or abstract.
<b>Shape</b>	An element of art that is two-dimensional, flat, or limited to height and width.
<b>Form</b>	An element of art that is three-dimensional and encloses volume; includes height, width AND depth (as in a cube, a sphere, a pyramid, or a cylinder). Form may also be free flowing.
<b>Value</b>	The lightness or darkness of tones or colors. White is the lightest value; black is the darkest. The value halfway between these extremes is called middle gray.
<b>Space</b>	An element of art by which positive and negative areas are defined or a sense of depth achieved in a work of art .
<b>Color</b>	An element of art made up of three properties: hue, value, and intensity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hue: name of color</li><li>• Value: hue's lightness and darkness (a color's value changes when white or black is added)</li><li>• Intensity: quality of brightness and purity (high intensity= color is strong and bright; low intensity= color is faint and dull)</li></ul>
<b>Texture</b>	An element of art that refers to the way things feel, or look as if they might feel if touched.

**PRINCIPLES OF ART:** Balance, emphasis, movement, proportion, rhythm, unity, and variety; the means an artist uses to organize elements within a work of art.

<b>Rhythm</b>	A principle of design that indicates movement, created by the careful placement of repeated elements in a work of art to cause a visual tempo or beat.
<b>Balance</b>	A way of combining elements to add a feeling of equilibrium or stability to a work of art. Major types are symmetrical <i>and asymmetrical</i> .
<b>Emphasis (contrast)</b>	A way of combining elements to stress the differences between those elements.
<b>Proportion</b>	A principle of design that refers to the relationship of certain elements to the whole and to each other.
<b>Gradation</b>	A way of combining elements by using a series of gradual changes in those elements. (large shapes to small shapes, dark hue to light hue, etc)
<b>Harmony</b>	A way of combining similar elements in an artwork to accent their similarities (achieved through use of repetitions and subtle gradual changes)
<b>Variety</b>	A principle of design concerned with diversity or contrast. Variety is achieved by using different shapes, sizes, and/or colors in a work of art.
<b>Movement</b>	A principle of design used to create the look and feeling of action and to guide the viewer's eye throughout the work of art.