

A Presentation Format: The Feldman Model

The following model was developed by Edmund Feldman, University Professor and influential Art Educator, as a format for helping children to find meaning in artwork. This format is used almost universally by art teachers and in art textbooks, as a strategy for talking about art with children. It encourages children to look closely at an artwork and to interpret it based on what they see. It is a model, which provides stepping stones for critical thinking and also encourages children to use art vocabulary. The model follows four general steps:

Begin by DESCRIBING the work: The essential question here is ‘*What do you see?*’

A description could include an inventory of things like the medium used, the size of the work, the subject matter and placement, and the details of how the subject matter is presented to the viewer. Art historical data related to the artist and the work could be included.

ANALYZE how the artist structured the work: The essential question here is ‘*How is this work organized?*’

Kids should be working towards identifying the main art elements and principles used in the work (see the art vocabulary section of handbook), and how the artist organized them to achieve certain effects, or feelings, and possibly, how they relate to a particular style of art.

INTERPRET the work: The essential question here is ‘*What is the artist trying to tell us?*’

Kids should be encouraged to identify the ‘feeling’ or ‘mood’ of the work, and any visual symbols the artist has chosen to include. Furthermore, you want them to look at how the artist achieved any expressive content in the work and what the ‘message’ might be behind the symbols used. Who was the audience for the work and what do you think was the artist’s purpose in creating it?

EVALUATE the work: The essential question here is ‘*Is this a successful work of art, and why or why not?*’

What makes it good or bad? Does the artwork communicate a message well? Is it technically a good piece of work? Does it tell us something about the life and times in which the artist lived? What is a good criterion for judging artwork?

Presentation Techniques

Students will remember the pictures more if they participate in the discussion each time. Some skillful questioning will afford them the opportunity to do so. The following are some suggestions and guidelines for questioning. Good questioning can also be considered a strategy to extend student thinking.

- Avoid questions with only one right answer
- Call on students randomly, not just those with raised hands
- Utilize think-pair-share, two minutes of individual think time, two minutes discussion with a partner, then open up the class discussion.
- Ask follow-ups. Why? Do you agree? Can you elaborate? Tell me more, can you give an example?
- Do not use questions that are too vague and open-ended, for example “what do you think of this picture?” Instead, having been told by a child that a particular painting gives them a spooky feeling, a good follow-up question might be to ask the group to find all the things in the picture that created the spooky feeling.
- Ask for a summary to promote active listening, “Could you please summarize John’s point?”
- Survey the class, “How many people agree with the artist?” (thumbs up, thumbs down)
- Allow for student calling, “Richard will you please call on someone else to respond?”
- Challenge the responses by requiring students to defend their reasoning against different points of view
- Ask students to reflect on their thinking,
- “Describe how you arrived at your answer.”
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- Consider letting the students develop their own questions.
- Compliment students for their answers after your presentation.