

GUIDE TO DEVELOPING DESCRIPTIVE SKILLS IN ESL STUDENTS USING ART EXAMPLES IN ESL CLASSES

B2+/C1 - LEVELS

Competences:

- To develop the students' conversation/writing skills
- To develop the students' ability to talk about/write reviews on art
- To develop the students' ability to critique paintings
- To develop the students' vocabulary

1. Lead-in:

- Start by introducing the painting and providing some basic information about it. Mention the artist's name, the title of the painting, and the date it was created.

2. Setting the Scene:

- Describe the setting of the painting. Is it indoors or outdoors? What is the overall atmosphere or mood? Are there any specific elements in the background that contribute to the setting?

3. Subject Matter:

- Describe the main subject(s) of the painting. Is it a landscape, a portrait, or a still life? What objects, people, or animals are depicted? Talk about their positions, gestures, and interactions.

4. Colours and Lighting:

- Discuss the colours used in the painting. Are they vibrant or muted? Do they create a particular mood or convey an emotion? Talk about the lighting in the painting and how it affects the overall composition.

5. Composition and Perspective:

- Analyze the composition of the painting. Are there any specific lines, shapes, or patterns that stand out? Discuss the use of perspective and how it creates a sense of depth or distance.

6. Details and Techniques:

- Point out any noteworthy details in the painting. Are there any specific textures, brushstrokes, or techniques used by the artist? Discuss how these details enhance the overall visual experience.

7. Interpretation and Symbolism:

- Offer your interpretation of the painting and discuss any potential symbolism. What message or emotions do you think the artist is trying to convey? Encourage students to share their own interpretations and discuss different perspectives.

8. Personal Response:

- Allow students to share their personal response to the painting. How does it make them feel? Do they like or dislike it? Encourage them to explain their reasons and support their opinions.

9. Vocabulary and Language Practice:

- Throughout the discussion, introduce and practice relevant vocabulary related to art and painting. This could include words like "brushstroke," "palette," "composition," "contrast," "foreground," etc. Encourage students to use these words while describing the painting. (see *the Activity worksheet*)

10. Round-up:

- Summarize the main points discussed about the painting, highlighting its key features and the students' interpretations. Encourage further exploration of the artist's other works or similar art movements/styles if time allows.

Remember to provide ample opportunities for students to ask questions, express their opinions, and engage in discussions. Visual aids, such as showing a high-quality image of the painting, can also be helpful to facilitate understanding and appreciation. A high quality resource is any art museum website.

Practice:

Describe this painting, following the guide provided above:

Caspar David Friedrich - Wanderer above the sea of fog



Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wanderer_above_the_Sea_of_Fog#/media/File:Caspar_David_Friedrich_-_Wanderer_above_the_sea_of_fog.jpg

Worksheet

1. Word Matching:

- Prepare a list of art-related vocabulary words and their definitions. Have students match the words with their corresponding definitions. Refer to this source for specifics extra vocabulary:

<https://artmuseum.arizona.edu/vocabulary-art-terms>

For example:

- **Brushstroke:** The mark made by a brush when applying paint.
- **Palette:** A flat board or surface where an artist mixes colours.
- **Composition:** The arrangement of elements in a painting.
- **Contrast:** The difference between light and dark areas in a painting.
- **Foreground:** The part of a painting that appears closest to the viewer.

2. Fill in the Blanks:

- Provide students with a gapped paragraph describing a painting. Have them fill in the blanks with the appropriate vocabulary words. Refer to specialised sites in order to expose students to authentic resources.

<https://artmuseum.arizona.edu/artwrite>

<https://artanddesigninspiration.com/painter-of-light-and-shadow-doubt-and-wonder/>

For example: "The artist used bold _____ to create texture and movement in the painting. The _____ of the painting is well-balanced, with the main subject placed in the _____. The artist also employed a strong _____ between the vibrant colours in the foreground and the softer tones in the background."

3. Sentence Completion:

- Give students incomplete sentences related to painting description, and ask them to complete them using the appropriate vocabulary words. For example:

- "The artist's use of _____ in this painting creates a sense of..."
- "The _____ of the composition draws the viewer's attention to..."
- "The artist's choice of _____ contributes to the overall mood of the painting, which is..."