

Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

VTS is a practice that originated at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MOMA) in 1991 as a way to promote visual literacy through critical visual analysis of works of art. The practice of VTS will help students notice details, ask probing questions (research skills), use evidentiary reasoning (promotes context clues), question their own biases/assumptions (enhances background knowledge), and listen and respond respectfully to their peers

INSTRUCTIONS:

A group of individuals are directed to look at an *picture/image/artwork/object/item for 1 minute, or longer depending on the group's age range, in silence. **"Please look at the *picture silently and think about what you see. What's going on in the *picture?"**

A question is then posed: **"What is going on in the *picture?"** *The verbiage of this question is intentionally designed to invite any and all responses.*

While a response is given, the facilitator points to any visual elements of the object that are explicitly referenced. The facilitator then, restates the observations that were made and asks for explanations of any unsubstantiated interpretations by asking **"What do you see that makes you say that...?"** *This prompts the individual to analyze and give observational evidence for their thought process. This also is the time when other individuals are to be silent and listening to the speaker.*

After listening to the follow up and restating the second response, the facilitator prompts more responses from the group by asking **"What more can we find?"** *This question is intentionally structured in a way that does not validate or invalidate previous responses.*

The discussion goes on until students have shared all they can about the picture.

The facilitator then summarizes what the group has said and thanks them for their cooperation and observations.

NOTE: This is important: the positionality of the facilitator is that of **mediator, not expert**. *Facilitators must respond impartially*. Professors often find this concept problematic, but allow me to reframe this for you. VTS is not intended to give students the right answers – rather it gives them the tools to find those answers on their own.

TIP: VTS is a great way to bring in more art & culture into lessons by beginning a unit with an image/photo/painting or by handing out “art cards” with small works of art printed on them as a break activity!

VTS prepares students to perform their own research; It trains them to identify a question and consider all potential outcomes.

In Our Catalogue: <https://tccl.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S63C3376674>

SOURCES:

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/visual-thinking-strategies-improved-comprehension>

<https://sites.coloradocollege.edu/facacademicengagementblog/2019/01/23/what-is-visual-thinking-strategies/>

Image used was from the Smithsonian Open Access-

<https://www.si.edu/openaccess/faq>



Object Details

Artist, H. Lyman Sayen, born Philadelphia, PA 1875-died Philadelphia, PA 1918

Credit Line, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of H. Lyman Sayen to his nation 1915

Object number,1967.6.18

Restrictions & Rights, CC0 Type, Painting Medium, oil on canvas

Dimensions, 30 1/8 x 36 1/8 in. (76.5 x 91.8 cm.) **Department,** Painting and Sculpture
Smithsonian American Art Museum

Topic, Still life\other\vase Abstract Still life\flower Still life\furniture\table

Record ID, saam_1967.6.18

Metadata Usage (text), CC0

GUID (Link to Original Record)

<http://n2t.net/ark:/65665/vk74c330787-0a35-4917-ae34-86c6bcd7f1d6>