

Aesthetics: what makes art. art?

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Goal: Get students to think critically about what makes something a work of “art” and whether an artist or their intentions are important to calling something a work of art or not. The first section will focus on what art is and what it’s not. The second will focus on the “artist” – must there be an artist to call something art and must they intend to create art, in order to create it?

Initial Activity

Today we’re going to talk about art. First things first: what is art?

- Ask students to write down 3 art forms in their journal – encourage them to be creative.
 - Write down their examples on the board. Move into discussion. (**Instructors:** make sure to contribute unorthodox examples like “a corner kick” or “philosophical writing” in case the student’s don’t.)

Discussion focus 1: what is art?

Can anything be art?

- What makes something a work of art?
 - Are there standards for what we refer to as “art”? What are they? (refer to list on board – point out commonalities and disconnects)
 - Can the way I drive my car be an art form?
 - Some people say “everything is art,” do you agree?

(**Instructors:** At the end of this section we want to have a clear concept of how the class is interpreting “art.” How wide or narrow is their concept of art? If it’s wide, we may want to ask them why art museums only feature a handful of mediums.)

Does art need to be beautiful? Or meaningful?

- Does art have to be beautiful to be considered art?
 - We may interpret beautiful to mean more than “pretty” and something more like “meaningful” or “humanistic.”
- Can art convey more than beauty? Should it?

Are all art forms equal?

- Is there a hierarchy of artistic mediums?

- Are some forms of art greater than others? Is a painting greater than a poem? Is a sculpture more artistic than a sandwich made by a culinary chef?

Activity #2: transition to discussion on intentionality

- Show them 4 pieces of art that are all famous – 1-2 more obviously famous than others, 1 is unintentional (maybe a picture of something beautiful/naturally occurring), and 1 made by a child.
 - Art is at bottom of the page
 - Tell them who the artist behind the pieces are and tell them what the intention behind the art is.
- Ask: are these all examples of artwork?

Discussion focus 2: does art need to be intentional?

- Can art exist without an artist?
 - Is the unintentional example, an example of art?
 - Is the child an artist? (They take themselves to be creating art, is that enough to be an artist? And if so, should we call what they have created art?)
 - Can anyone be an artist?
- Must art be intentional?
 - Naturally occurring example: When flowers bloom together in a shape of the flower, naturally without any person arranging the flowers in that way, are flowers an example of art?
 - What if I accidentally kicked a can of paint onto a white canvas. Is that art?

Discussion focus 4: digital art and NFTs

Does art need to be physical? NFT's are a digital representation of art (or just digital art). Are NFT's art? Is digital art, art?

- Is digital art, art?
 - What if it's a digital copy of the physical version?
- Are NFTs art?

Wrap up:

So today we talked about art! In section one we discussed how to define art. Take a second to jot down closing thoughts in your journal. We also talked about whether art needs to be created by an artist, intentionally. Go ahead and write down a couple closing thoughts on that too.

ACTIVITY 2:

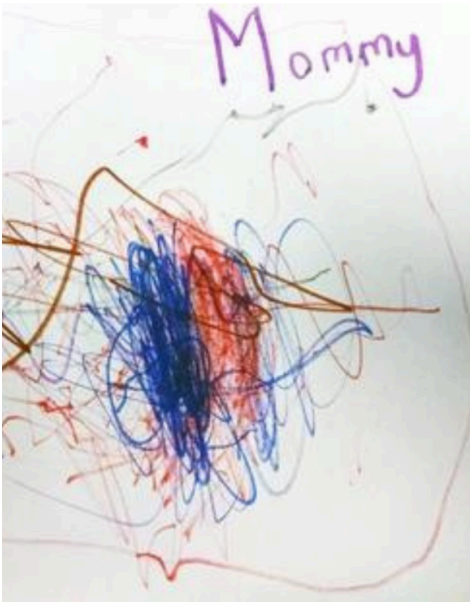
The Mona Lisa



Modern Art



5 year old drawing for Mother's Day



My sink after I cleaned my paint brush

