

Using paintings and pictures as evidence

Questions to consider when looking at a painting or picture as evidence

Who is the artist?

When was it painted?

Who is in the picture?

Is there one sitter or is it a group portrait?

What words/thoughts come to mind when you first see the painting?

Why do you think it was painted?

Is there evidence of where or why it was painted?

Describe the setting.

Who might have seen it when it was first made?

What is the picture trying to tell us?

Describe the clothes the people in the painting are wearing. What does this tell us?

Describe the expressions of the people in the painting. What can we tell about these people from the painting?

Do you think the portrait is realistic?

What does the painting tell us about life at that time?

How can we find out if this is a true representation of life at that time?

What do you like about the painting? Is there any element of the painting you dislike?

If you met the artist what questions would you ask him/her?

If you met the people in the painting what questions would you ask them?

Activities based on paintings/drawings

We need to train children to observe features such as

- costume
- facial expression
- pose and gesture

- accessories

Depending on the painting children should be encouraged to look closely at particular elements of the painting such as clothes worn in the painting, buildings, types of transport, furniture, work people did, relationships in the painting and so on.

Pictures from memory

Children work in groups of 3 (each child within group has a number 1, 2 or 3.) Stick a painting/picture on the wall. 'Number 1' goes and looks at the picture on the wall for one minute , returns to group and draws the section of the picture that they can remember. Number 2 and 3 repeat this in turn. They compare their "complete "drawing to the original picture.

Cause and Effect

Distribute a picture and a number of captions (statements) to the children who are working in groups.. They must look at the picture and choose the three statements that they think most describe the 'effects' of an incident/event on a place/on people and their lives.

Putting yourself in the picture

Ask the children if they were having a portrait of themselves and their family painted, what would they include?

Points of view

Ask the children to consider the picture/painting from the point of view of

- the artist
- the person who commissioned it
- an observer at the time
- the person who received it.

It is important that we realise that a painting is one person's representation from their perspective. They may have had a particular purpose or agenda in mind, so questioning possible bias is very important here.

Captions

Children are divided into pairs and each pair receives a painting from a pack. They must examine the picture and create a caption/ description for it. Each pair then receives the actual description of their painting and compares this with their own description. The pictures, captions and descriptions are displayed around the classroom so that all children will have an opportunity to examine them.

Adjectives

Display a set of numbered pictures on the wall and encourage children to think of as many adjectives as they can about the paintings. Give each pair a sheet of paper with the numbers of the paintings on it and ask them to record next to the number the adjective or adjectives which they think are most appropriate. Discuss the choices. Was there a tendency to use the same words or different words about a picture? Did some paintings only have negative adjectives? Does anyone disagree with the labels given?

Attention to detail

Give a picture to a pair or small group. Within 60 seconds they have to name all the things they can see in the picture.

Questioning a painting

Place a picture/painting in the middle of the blackboard or in the middle of a large sheet of paper. Encourage the children to look at the painting and to think of questions they could ask about it. The questions are written around the picture with arrows pointing toward the area of the picture being questioned.

Sensory experience

Ask children to look at photographs using their senses.

What can I see?, What can I hear?, What can I smell?, What can I touch?

Unfreeze the “Pause” button – What do you think might have happened after this picture was painted?

Press the magic button - Now you are in the painting...”Imagine you are...”

Jigsaw pictures/paintings

Teacher chooses a photograph and has copied this number of times. Children are divided into groups of three. Each group is given a third of the photograph. They record on page information they can gather from the piece of the photo which they have received. They can also record what they would like to know more about. They then get the second jigsaw piece of the picture and follow the same procedure on the page. Repeat with the third and final jigsaw piece of the picture. Each time they ask themselves questions such as:

What is in this part of the picture?

What do you think is missing?

Now that you have more information, compare it to your guess.

Draw the part of the photo that you don't have. Compare it now with the real missing piece.

See pages 87 -98 History Teacher Guidelines for further ideas on ways to use photographs and paintings.