
Overview:

Mike Deetsch, Director of Education and Engagement at the Toledo Museum of Art, discusses “Visual Literacy” at Lourdes University with a focus on the cognitive processes that support it.

Summary:

Mike Deetsch claims that seeing and comprehending lead to visual literacy. This excerpt, “Applying Visual Literacy to Everyday Life,” provides a way to understand visual and emotional perspectives of others. Deetsch discusses two distinct cognitive routines for examining art and the physical world including thinking about and comprehending art and the physical world.

ODE 9-12 STANDARD: *English; Strand, Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects; Topic 1, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, RH.11-12.7 integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to address a question or solve a problem*

Discussion Questions:

According to Deetsch, the first step is *Thinking*. This means looking, or taking a general survey of visual information and selecting important details. Seeing allows the viewer to observe the object actually before them in its entirety. Deetsch’s second step is *Comprehending*. This includes describing what is seen in an understandable manner, analyzing the object’s use and implications, and interpretation which reveals personal experience and opinions.

Based on this process, answer the following questions:

1. What do you think the difference is between looking and seeing?
2. Why don’t we all see objects the same way?
3. Can visual literacy be applied to more than just works of art?
4. Why is it important to understand that everyone interprets pictures and symbols differently? What does being visually literate teach us?

Activity:

Young woman/old woman illusion: <http://www.optical-illusionist.com/illusions/young-lady-or-old-woman-illusion>

1. Students take turns telling the class what they see (young woman or old woman) by following Deetsch’s steps: Thinking (consisting of looking, observing, and seeing) and Comprehending (consisting of describing, analysis, and interpretation).
2. Students explain their interpretations by pointing to parts of the artwork that support their claims.
3. How is this an exercise in personal perspective (interpretation and opinion)? How does this exercise relate to the visual literacy method in the video?

Resources:

Toledo Museum of Art: Visual Literacy: <http://www.toledomuseum.org/education/visual-literacy/why-visual-literacy>

