

JIGSAW METHOD

ORGANIZING AND ANALYZING BACKGROUND INFORMATION AROUND A PIECE OF ARTWORK.

The Jigsaw Method contextualizes many different elements of the artist's life, the piece of artwork, and the historical period the artwork was created in. As an extension to the Close Read, it provides students with a much deeper understanding of the artwork and encourages greater content connections. In this way, the piece of art becomes a primary source document to be used in core curriculum instruction.

Step 1

Identify a piece of artwork that supports your lesson.

Step 2

Research and read articles, books, and publications connected to the artwork. Summarize the most important information (in light of the subject you teach) about the artist's life, the work of art, and the historical context in which it was made. The collection of these materials will be used to develop an art history presentation to be sequenced into your lesson.

Step 3

As you read, keep a list of key vocabulary you come across as well as any questions that occur to you or that you anticipate your students having. As you are organizing and analyzing background information, it is important to consider how well the piece of art work connects to your lesson.

KEY TERMS/VOCABULARY

Guiding questions

- Are there key terms from the text that are specific to the artist or artwork?
- Are there any words that you or your students would need definitions for?
- Please list them.

THEMATIC QUESTIONS

Guiding questions

- What questions do you have about the work of art, the artist or the historical context?
- What questions might your students have?
- Please list them.

MAJOR THEMES/IDEAS

Guiding questions

- What are 2-4 big ideas, themes or concepts represented by this work of art?
- Please list them.

Step 4

Look for answers to the guiding questions provided below. If appropriate for your grade level, have your students engage in this process as much as possible. From your research, provide students with the most relevant articles and ask them to respond to the following questions. Students can be grouped into research teams (artist, artwork, and historical context).

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Guiding questions

- When did the artist live?
- Where did he/she work most of the time?
- What about the artist's life experiences might have influenced or inspired him/her to make the work of art?
- What was happening in the artist's life when he/she made the work?
- Where was he/she?
- What is the artist known for (what subjects or processes for example)?
- What was he/she most interested in exploring as an artist?
- Are there quotes from the artist that help explain this?

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

Guiding questions

- What does the work depict or represent?
- What is the subject?
- What visual strategies did the artist use to get his/her ideas across?
- Did the artist write about the work?
- Is he/she quoted as saying anything about it?
- What did critics or art historians say about it (add relevant quotes)?
- In what ways is the work a reflection of society or a product of its time?

- Was the artwork made for or commissioned by somebody?
- Why does the artwork look the way it does?
- What expectations was the artist responding to?

ABOUT THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Guiding questions

- Around the time the artwork was made, what was happening in history, society, and politics that the artist was probably responding to?
- Are there primary source documents that shed light on the question above?
- If so, include excerpts from them.

Step 5

Integrate the information you have obtained from the Jigsaw Method to revisit the "Close Read" strategy. Your students will now be prepared to dive further into observation, inference and contextualization.

Step 6

Make curricular connections. Now that you have this background information, how does it help your students better understand historical events, science concepts, literary works, the fine arts, etc.?