

## Visual Thinking Strategies

VTS teaches thinking, communication skills, and visual literacy by providing opportunities for students to look at art, respond to questions, and participate in discussions. Complex ideas can be discussed equitably among students of all reading levels.

### Asking Questions

- VTS is a process of **discovery and exploration**.
- **Questions provoke many thoughtful responses** to what is seen in the images.
- The **questions develop critical thinking** by asking students to focus, become reflective and to question.
- Multiple The **questions acknowledge art's ambiguity** and its multiple and shaded meanings. Answering the questions in this context is **safe** (no one is going to be wrong)

### *What's going on in this picture?*

This question presents an image as riddle or puzzle to be solved and implies that it is “about” something. This specific question opens thinking and makes space for students to connect with or comment about colors, feelings, information, personal connections, etc.

### *What do you see that makes you say that?*

Students look more closely, and gather evidence to support their interpretations in concrete visual data.

### *What more can we find?*

This question brings in complexity and rigor. Details that might be missed are found when students are urged to look for more. The habit of making thorough examinations is encouraged and students engage in rich academic discourse about their observations.

### Facilitation tips:

#### Prompt feedback

Acknowledge every response in a neutral way, point and be precise about observations but avoid agreeing or assigning value to comments. If you can't point to what a student is observing, invite them to come point to what they see. Responses intended to be silly are treated the same as the most serious comment, “What do you see that makes you say that?” followed up by “What more can we find?”

#### Timing

Approximately fifteen to twenty minutes per image may be appropriate. Allow for silence and pauses. Manage time based on student engagement and the quality of their responses.

#### Closure

“Wrapping up” an open reflective process is counterproductive and unnecessary.

Celebrate students for how carefully they listened, or how they persevered in studying an image to end the lesson. Invite students to talk about what they learned or enjoyed with someone outside of class.