



# Discussing Art Using Visual Thinking Strategies

## Overview

This lesson uses a method of interpretation known as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which encourages students to pause and examine art then share their observations with the group. The goal of VTS is to develop patterns of thinking, rather than specific answers about works of art.

## Grade Levels

Kindergarten to Grade 12, kindergarten to Secondary 5 in Quebec

## Estimated Time

30 minutes

## Curriculum Connections

Social studies, history, language, media arts, fine art

## Historical Thinking Concepts

- **Evaluating Evidence:** What can we tell about how people lived by examining the clues they left behind? What questions remain?
- **Historical Significance:** How do we decide which and whose stories to tell? What evidence do we use? What evidence do we leave out?

## Objectives

- Examine a reproduction of a painting from the Second World War
- Develop new vocabulary
- Develop confidence in verbal expression
- Appreciate that people will see different things in the same work of art and that sharing our observations gives everyone a more complete interpretation of the work

## Materials Required

- Reproduction of the painting *Maintenance Jobs in the Hangar*, by Paraskeva Clark
- Magnets, pins or other means of hanging the painting
- Alternatively, you may choose to project a digital version of the painting, available at [www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline](http://www.warmuseum.ca/supplyline) or on the USB key in the Discovery Box.
- Interactive whiteboard (optional)

## Handling the Objects

Some of the objects in the Second World War Discovery Box were made or used during the war, more than 75 years ago. Others are reproductions made recently, based on actual items from that time.

You and your students are free to touch and examine all the objects and try on the clothing. Remember, however, that the objects, whether authentic artifacts or reproductions, are valuable and breakable.

**Please handle them with care.**

## Part A: Introduction

At the start of the class, introduce Visual Thinking Strategies. These strategies allow students to examine art, think, contribute observations and ideas, listen, and build understanding together. This approach works for all grade levels.

Display the painting using either the physical canvas in the Discovery Box or a projection of the digital image. Have students approach the canvas for a closer look. Always give them time to look in silence before inviting them to speak.

Do not give the students the name of the painting. Instead, allow them to begin their study of the work with an open mind.

## Part B: Asking Questions

After they have examined the image, ask them:  
**What's going on in the picture?**

Whenever students make an inference (a comment that draws conclusions based on observations), respond first by paraphrasing, then ask: **What do you see that makes you say that?**

To encourage students to make more observations, frequently ask: **What more can you/we find?**

### Tips for Effective Teacher Facilitation

**Listen** carefully, making sure you hear everything students say and that you understand it accurately.

**Point** precisely to what they observe in the image, even if the observation is not new. Use supportive body language and facial expressions to encourage participation.

**Paraphrase** each comment by changing the wording, but not the meaning. Be sure to use proper sentence structure and vocabulary to help students enhance their language skills.

**Accept** each comment neutrally. Remember that this process emphasizes a pattern of thinking, rather than correct answers. Students are learning to make detailed observations, sorting out and applying what they know. Articulating their thoughts leads to growth, even when they make mistakes.

**Link** related answers, including both agreements and disagreements. Show students how thinking evolves, how observations and ideas can stimulate others, and how opinions can change and build.

## Part C: Concluding the Lesson

Thank students for their participation. Tell them what you particularly enjoyed. Encourage them to think of viewing art as an ongoing, open-ended process. Avoid summaries; linking throughout is enough to show how conversations build.

This exercise can be repeated on a regular basis. The paintings included in the appendix have been identified as suitable choices for a Visual Thinking Strategies discussion.

For more information on Visual Thinking Strategies, please visit: [visualthinkingstrategies.org](http://visualthinkingstrategies.org)

### Suggestions for Assessment

There is no assessment for this lesson. The objective of the exercise is to encourage observation, discussion and vocabulary building. It should be a rewarding experience for all participants.

### Extension Activities

- Have students develop and perform scripts inspired by the characters in the paintings. Have them use objects in the Discovery Box as costumes or props.
- As you explore the paintings, how many Discovery Box objects can you identify?

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[warmuseum.ca/supplyline](http://warmuseum.ca/supplyline)



## Appendix: Selected Second World War Paintings

Display these images in the classroom or distribute printed copies to students.

1. *Private Roy*, Molly Lamb Bobak
2. *Mine Destruction*, Donald Cameron Mackay
3. *Quaicker Girls*, Paraskeva Clark
4. *Posted to Newfie*, Paul Goranson
5. *D-Day – The Assault*, Orville Fisher
6. *Performing One Half of the Operation Known as ‘Applying the Tracks’ to a Valentine Tank*, Frederick B. Taylor
7. *Gas Drill*, Molly Lamb Bobak
8. *Royal Canadian Air Force Briefing before Kiska*, Paul Goranson
9. *Night Target, Germany*, Miller Brittain



*Private Roy*  
Painted by Molly Lamb Bobak in 1946  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710261-1626



*Mine Destruction*

Painted by Donald Cameron Mackay around 1943

Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

Canadian War Museum 19710261-4238



*Quicker Girls*

Painted by Paraskeva Clark in 1946  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710261-5680



*Posted to Newfie*  
Painted by Paul Goranson in 1942  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710261-3199



*D-Day – The Assault*  
Painted by Orville Fisher in 1945  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710261-6231



*Performing One Half of the Operation Known as 'Applying the Tracks' to a Valentine Tank*  
Painted by Frederick B. Taylor in 1942  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710256-201



*Gas Drill*

Painted by Molly Lamb Bobak in 1944  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710261-1603



*Royal Canadian Air Force Briefing before Kiska*  
Painted by Paul Goranson around 1944  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
Canadian War Museum 19710261-3205



*Night Target, Germany*

Painted by Miller Brittain in 1946

Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

Canadian War Museum 19710261-1436