

# WHAT'S GOING ON IN THIS PAINTING?

DISCUSSING ART USING  
VISUAL THINKING STRATEGIES

## SUPPLY LINE LESSON PLAN

### OVERVIEW

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

### GRADE LEVELS:

Kindergarten to grade 12, Kindergarten 1 to Secondary 5 in Quebec

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS:

Social Studies; History; Language Arts; Media Arts; Fine Art

### ESTIMATED TIME:

30 minutes

### OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Examine a reproduction of a painting from the First World War;
- Develop new vocabulary;
- Develop confidence in oral expression;
- Appreciate that people will observe different things in the same artwork and that sharing these observations leads to a more complete interpretation of the work.

### MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The reproduction of the painting *The Stretcher-Bearer Party* by Cyril Barraud
- Method for hanging the painting – magnets, pins, etc.
- Interactive whiteboard (optional)

### Important:

The First World War discovery box includes both authentic artifacts from the First World War (about 100 years old) and high quality reproductions of objects from the First World War (made more recently). All objects, whether authentic or reproduction, should be treated with care.



## LESSON

### PART A - INTRODUCTION

At the start of the first class, introduce VTS: it allows students to examine art, think, contribute observations and ideas, listen, and build understanding together. The same approach can be used regardless of the grade level.

Display the painting for the class. Have students sit closer or approach the canvas for a closer look. Always give students a moment to look in silence before inviting them to speak.

Do not give the students the name of the painting. Rather, allow them to begin their observation with an open mind.

### PART B – ASKING QUESTIONS

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

Whenever students make an inference (comments drawing conclusions based on observations), respond first by paraphrasing, and then ask, **What do you see that makes you say that?**

In order to keep students searching for more observations, frequently ask, **What more can you/we find?**

#### **Tips for effective teacher facilitation:**

**Listen** carefully to students, making sure that you hear all of what they say and that you understand it accurately.

**Point** to what they observe in the image, pinpointing precisely, even if the observations are not new. Use encouraging body language and facial expressions to nurture participation.

**Paraphrase** each comment. Change the wording, but not the meaning of what is said. In rephrasing, demonstrate proper sentence structure and vocabulary to assist students with language development.

**Accept** each comment neutrally. Remember that this process emphasizes a useful pattern of thinking, not right 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** answers that relate, including both agreements and disagreements. Show how the students' thinking evolves, how some observations and ideas stimulate others, how opinions change and build.

## PART D – 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.

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

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

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

- This exercise can be repeated on a regular basis. The following paintings have been identified as suitable choices for a VTS discussion.

### *The Stretcher-Bearer Party*

Painted by Lieutenant Cyril Henry Barraud  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
CWM 19710261-0019





*No. 3 Canadian Stationary Hospital at Doullens*  
Painted by Gerald Edward Moira  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
CWM 19710261-0427





*Land Girls Hoeing*

Painted by Manley Edward MacDonald

Beaverbrook Collection of War Art

CWM 19710261-0370



*Olympic with Returned Soldiers*  
Painted by Arthur Lismer  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art  
CWM 19710261-0343

