**Good Art: Who Decides?**

This is the first of 3 sessions exploring what art means to your group and what or who influences our thinking about what is valuable or good in the context of visual art.

The times given for each part are just a suggestion – you can adapt to suit your group.

**Session 1 What is good art?**

**Session 2 Shapes as art**

**Session 3 Who decides?**

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| **Session 1** | |
| **Description** | Session 1 focuses on what makes good art.  It encourages students to consider what art is, to listen to other opinions, to rank images, think about what makes good art and formulate reasons to support their viewpoints. |
| **Key Question** | What is good art?  This is the central thematic question of the session but treat it as a guide. Your group might well take you in a different direction, but this should be a good place to start. |
| **Session outline** | **Introduction**  What is philosophical inquiry / set expectations. 5 mins  **Part 1**  Notice art around you 10 mins  Watch a short video “Making sense of art” & discuss 10 mins  **Part 2**  Rank images provided from favourite to least favourite 20-30 mins  Philosophical inquiry: which image is the best?  EITHER as a group discussion OR carousel activity 15-20 mins  **Part 3**  Socratic dialogue reflecting on the discussion 5-10 mins |
| **Resources** | Print out 5-10 of the images provided for each group. |

**Introduction**

Use this introduction to explore what philosophy is and how you will be doing philosophy together.

Set expectations:

* Three things that I want you to do: Think, talk, listen
* It’s about working out what makes sense - so you’re listening to your groups’ views, and your own ideas, and thinking ‘Does this make sense’?
* Not like maths – there’s no specific answer that we’re looking for.
* We’re exploring ideas together.
* Tell them a little about what respectful dialogue is - listening to others/ no interruption.
* If there is disagreement, then disagree with ideas respectfully using reasons, don’t laugh at people or say they’re stupid.
* This discussion will help with the Socratic circle at the end of this session.

**Part 1 What is art?**

1. Ask the group to list all the types of art they can see around them in the room. Encourage them to consider – their clothes, jewellery, hairstyles, computer devices, phones, furniture, the architecture, as well as any pictures, signage, or 3D objects in the room. All of these have been designed by an artist / designer / craftsperson. Are they all art?
2. Ask students to watch this video of young people and artists talking about art. While they watch, ask them to consider if they agree or disagree with any of these opinions about art.

Making Sense of Art (5 minutes 48 seconds) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPebEFj9VNA>

Do you agree or disagree with anything that is said in the video? Why?

1. Give students time to chat to each other in small groups, then repeat as a whole class discussion.

You might ask these questions to prompt further discussion:

Can the stars in the sky be art?

How do you feel when you make art?

Have you ever been to a gallery?

How do you feel when you look at art?

**Part 2 Favourites**

1. Get the students into groups of about 4.
2. Give each group print outs of 5-10 of the images provides. Tell them they will see a variety of images (6 are by the artist Barbara Hepworth).
3. Ask them to put the images in order on their table, from favourite to least favourite. Ask them to discuss within their group their reasons. You can encourage them to create pyramid, diamond or line shapes to show their ranking.
4. Optional extra: Ask them to rank again, this time from most to least original / memorable / funny / thought-provoking.
5. EITHER: Group discussion OR Carousel activity: ask students ‘Which image is the best art?’. Explain that they can share their personal opinion OR the group decision.

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| **Group discussion** | **Carousel activity** |
| * Write their reasons as a list on the board (e.g. they might say things like X is the best because the artist put effort into/ X is colourful and is more alive/ X is a painting and painting is art) * Ask students to talk in pairs for two minutes about whether they disagree with any of the reasons on the board. * Have a whole group discussion about the disagreements, try to focus on one particular idea and have a more detailed discussion about that by asking students to explain their ideas and ‘iffing’ the question or checking for consistency e.g. ‘If a sculpture/photo takes as long to make and as much effort as a painting, is it good art? or ‘if the paintings are good art because they are colourful is every black and white image bad?’ | * One representative from each group visits other groups, taking with them their group’s most and least favourite. * Ask the representative to explain to each group what their group chose and why. Announce the next rotation every 3– 5 minutes. |

You might ask these questions to prompt further discussion:

What is the difference between art and photography?

Is painting better than photography?

Does the material that art is made from matter?

Does an artwork get better the longer the artist spends making it?

Does good art require:

* Details
* The artist spending lots of time on it
* The artist using lots of effort to make it
* Being unique / colourful / memorable / funny
* An interesting idea
* That it’s made by humans/without a machine
* That it makes you think / feel / ask questions / wonder/ see things differently?
* Somebody paid a lot of money for it?

### **Philosophical Inquiry**

* *After asking a question, allow students the time and space to reflect on their responses.*
* *First, give them 30 seconds of individual thinking time.*
* *Then, give them 2 minutes to discuss with the person next to them before opening up the discussion to the group.*

## **Part 3 Socratic circle**

The Socratic Dialogue is a metacognitive tool exploring how the discussion went from ‘outside’ the circle.

1. Ask students: do you think the group was good at having that discussion?
2. Ask them to make a drawing/painting showing their feelings about good art. Encourage them to consider which colours and marks could help show how they feel.
3. If there is time, you can ask a few students whether they want to show and explain their work.