

GENERALIST QUESTIONS FOR INVESTIGATION, K-12

With 1,200 years of Caetani family history to draw from, the Centre and the story of Sveva Caetani offers an extremely rich and inspiring nexus of cultural discourses to explore.

CONTENT AREAS

Art History, Art Instruction, History from Medieval Europe to Modern Canada, Psychology, Philosophy, Family, Economics, Immigration/Diaspora, Education, Math/Science (colour theory, geometry, spatiality), Religion/Theology, Literary Studies, Language Arts, Politics, Architecture

HEURISTICS

World-Community-Self, Deciphering symbols, Games, Home & Setting, Deciphering Place/Landscape, Symbolic Objects, Point of View, Colour & Mood, Storytelling, Daily Life, Abstraction, Fantasy/Realism, Social class, Personality Traits, Health & Well-being, Healing & Resiliency

WHAT TO WONDER, Art Museum

* Observe each exhibit carefully and slowly, read information surrounding the display.

Have students sketch their favorite exhibit.

Describe the colors and subjects of the artwork, the subjects in the display, or the context of the exhibit.

Compare two paintings, artists, or displays.

Pay attention to small details and use those as a lens to look at the exhibit as a whole.

* What is your initial reaction to the exhibit? What stands out to you? What can you learn from this exhibit? Why is the exhibit important enough to be put on display? Do you like these artworks? What do you like? What emotion do you think the artist is trying to express? Is the historic/scientific exhibit accurate and informative? Do you think it is interesting?

WHAT TO WONDER, Historic Site

* Describe the landmark and/or artefacts present at the site.

Observe the scenery and gardens at the site.

Compare seeing this site in person to looking at pictures online or reading about historic sites in books.

Explore students' prior knowledge. Share this information with the class. Together compile a list of questions the students will try to find answers to while touring the site.

Review relevant vocabulary and key terms: significant, landmark, preservation, historic

Research online for maps and information about the site and its role in the community.

* What parts or areas have been preserved? What happened here? When did it happen? Why did it happen? Why are these events historically significant? Do you think this site is worthy of being preserved as a historic site? Why or why not? Why is this site important to Vernon? To BC? To Canada?

ABSTRACT ART

Explain that abstract art should not look like things that we see around us, but instead should look like feelings, ideas, thoughts, or stories (if we could see them), by using colours, shapes and lines.

Ask students what they see in the painting, and what they think Sveva was thinking about or feeling when she painted. Emphasize that nothing is wrong when it comes to abstract art – the artist may have painted their picture to mean something, but when we look at a painting, we don't know that meaning, so to us, it can mean anything.

Demonstrate how feelings or stories could be made into an abstract piece of art on any large drawing surface (think about how you are feeling and what you have done during the day, and how these things might look if they were translated into colours, lines, or shapes).

Ex. Happiness could be expressed through the colour yellow, with quick, short lines. Or, if you had cereal for breakfast, you might draw circles to represent a cereal bowl.

Inform students that they will be creating their own abstract artworks, first by drawing onto paper, and then painting over the top of their drawing, encourage students to allow themselves to be led to whatever colour, shape, line, or idea that comes to their mind as they develop their piece, not dwelling too much on how it's looking, but rather what comes to mind.

1) Narrative

Take a moment to observe this painting.

Take turns sharing one word that comes to mind when viewing the painting. Once someone mentions a word, it cannot be repeated.

Why did you choose that word to describe the painting?

Make a "telescope" by rolling a piece of paper into a tube. Look closely at the painting through the "telescope" and notice the small details.

What is happening in this painting? What do you see that supports your ideas?

Turn to your own sketch of this scene. How is your interpretation of the scene similar to or different from the one created by this artist?

How has this artist interpreted the story? Why do you think the artist chose to paint this scene in this way?

2) Portraiture

Take a few minutes to look at this painting. What do you notice?

How is this similar to or different from other portraits you've seen?

Sometimes artists simplify or exaggerate the features of their subjects in order to communicate a mood or feeling. In painting this, Sveva wanted to create a representation of how she felt. How would you describe the mood of this painting? How do you think Sveva felt about her subject?

What decisions did Sveva make in representing her subject to communicate these ideas?

3) Shapes and Sounds

What do you notice?

Pick one object in this painting and think of a sound that could capture its shape and color. Share your sound with a partner and explain why you think it goes with your object.

Divide into two groups. Within each group, combine all your sounds together to create a soundscape. Artists often associate musical sounds with certain colors or shapes. How would changing certain shapes or colors in this piece affect the sounds you associate with it?

4) Personality Traits, Characters, People

What do you notice?

What can you guess about this person? On small post-it notes, write some words that you think describe their personality traits. Stick each post-it to the part of the image that made you choose that word.

Share your thoughts with the class.

What is being stated directly? What is being implied indirectly?

Why might Sveva have been interested in using characterization this way?

5) What Happens Next? Moods, Feelings, Stories

What do you notice?

What seems to be happening here? What do you see that makes you say that?

Imagine this scene as a single snapshot of a longer story. What might have happened right before this?

What will happen afterward? Write or draw your ideas.

6) Nature

What do you notice?

What shapes in the painting remind you of things you've seen before?

Sveva was interested in many things, such as music, art, politics, and science. Think about illustrations and imagery of microscopic organisms, insects, and embryos from scientific journals. Pick one thing in this painting that you think came from a scientific source. Why do you think that?

Explore color theory as it relates to Sveva's painting.

Discuss how Sveva's paintings develop an understanding of spatiality, geometry, numeracy?

7) Outer Me, Inner Me

a) Students are challenged to make a drawing of scribbles. It can be a drawing of something, or just scribble experiments, but they should see the variety of marks they can make. Students are challenged to fill an entire page of their sketchbook by drawing one line that never crossed itself. Students pair up, and draw each other's faces by blind contour. After each drawing exercise, students compare notes about what the experience was like—what was challenging and how they dealt with the challenge.

b) After looking at the way Sveva represents faces, students then practice drawing the parts of their faces in their sketchbooks and experiment with changing their expressions to see how the shapes change accordingly. Students then choose a mood they want to convey and draw their eyes, noses and mouths on separate pieces of paper. Finally, they collage these pieces together into a large self-portrait. After the work is complete, students pair up and guess what is in their partner's heads by looking at their portrait. SELF-PORTRAITS: How do we express who we are on the inside and on the outside? What do we include? What do we omit? Who is our viewer?

8) Abstraction vs. Realism

As a class, students define the difference between abstract and realistic paintings, noting that realistic paintings are pictures of things, while abstract paintings are pictures of lines, shapes, and colors.

Students are then challenged to create an abstract picture, using at least four colours and filling the entire page.

"If you aren't painting a picture of a thing, how did you know what to paint?"

Inspiration for creating: students examine works from other artists to determine if they are abstract or realistic and what moods they evoke. Students retrace their steps during the day, think of at least three feelings they have experienced, and write them in their sketchbooks. Students then create an abstract picture based on their three moods, using at least four colors and filling the entire page.

9) Expressing Our Memories

Discuss the difference between external and internal factors that make us who we are. After looking at memory's role in Sveva's work, students visualize something happening to them that will always be memorable. Students also visualize moments from their future, including hopes and dreams they have for themselves. Students draw these moments in their sketchbooks including the setting, the people involved, and evidence of what happens.

POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

To help reinforce the lessons your students have learned during their Museum program, you may want to consider some of these follow-up activities:

- Select other educational programs or activities available from [City of Vernon], and have your students learn more about First Peoples, the history of this region, the lives of early settlers, and other fascinating things to see and experience in and around the North Okanagan.
- Have students create their own paintings (or collaborative murals) using colours, symbols and other design motifs to express their understanding of a particular subject, then put their work on display and invite other students to offer their thoughts.
- Bring your students back to visit some of our special exhibitions.
- After your visit

What is the most interesting thing your group found out in the museum?

What is one question your group has after visiting the museum?

FOLLOW UP

Discuss: What is the importance of museums? Why are they important? What can we learn from them? Research one piece from the museum, whether a painting, historical time period, artefact. Research the history of the museum itself – how is it funded, from where do they receive artifacts, how many visitors does the museum receive?

Project: Create your own artwork from recycled products. Create your own art museum by displaying students' work and short summaries of the piece and artist's life. Create a Wall of Knowledge by asking each student to write 2-3 facts learned at the museum on a sticky and attaching it to a large poster.

Social Impact: Explore how museums can be a link between cultures, social groups

FOLLOW-UP

Discuss: the historical relevance of the events that took place at this site. How do these connect to other events in history?

Project: Choose a site from your past as your own historic site. Create a monument commemorating the event that took place there.

Research how this historic site is being preserved.

Social Impact: Write a letter to a government official persuading him/her to have a specific landmark or memorial erected at a historic site.

OTHER ASSORTED ACTIVITIES

- * Garden Explorations
- * Sveva Playhouse Games
- * Use a map to complete a museum scavenger hunt
- * Allow a painting to inspire a creative story
- * Enact a skit about the scene from a favorite painting
- * Sketch the creatures from an exhibition/painting
- * Write a journal entry from the point of view of someone in the painting
- * Back at school create your own museum exhibits with materials and information gathered from the site. Have students create discussion questions to ask each other about the exhibits.