Finding Meaning in the Museum
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Fun ways to engage your students in the art museum.

Writing
- Allows for personal engagement
- Gives kids space to think and respond without pressure
- When shared, writing promotes alternative ideas
- Pathway to easy success

**How to do it:**
Give your students simple starting points that make easy to succeed
Do it often (in the classroom as a warm up or exit activity) so it becomes natural and will grow in depth
Listen without correcting or criticizing- make the museum a place where all ideas are accepted
Make the reading moments special (full attention to the reader, silent audience, props, music, etc.)

**Examples:**
Do an “I am…” poem-have students select one person in a painting or photograph and put themselves in their shoes. Have them write 10 words that best finish the sentence “I am… right at the moment shown. Allow them to read their pieces and have others determine which voice they are sharing.

Have students study a painting or photograph and each student call out a sound they would hear if they were in the painting. Using the list, students will write a descriptive paragraph using at least 10 of the sounds. Students will find their descriptions to be much richer than if they had written them alone.

Debate
- Allows kids to freely express their opinions while requiring them to get visual evidence to back up their claims
- Aligns with free choice museum exploration
- Demonstrates the idea that personal life experiences shape our visual opinions-what is peaceful to one is scary to another

**How to do it:**
Don’t expect kids to have a wide variety of adjectives readily available-provide them with the descriptors and they can match it easily and effectively to art
Allow time for exploration-quality over quantity
Do short debates in the classroom so students will have the skills needed to find strong visual evidence

**Examples:**
Using a wide variety of adjectives select one and have students select any artwork within a given gallery that best matches. They must convince you or other students that their selection is best based on the evidence they provide.

Give students a wide variety of art prints and ask them to select a piece that would best fit within a collection. They must convince others that their choice is the most valid.

Make it Fun
- Remember not all kids are as excited about art or museums as you are-make it memorable
- Use props and dress up items
- Laugh
- Show students that you are learning too-you don’t have to know everything before you get to the museum!
- Let students choose what they want to explore-free choice is important and memorable

How to do it:
Let students become the art and compete via photos to see who is most effective
Shift authority and make the students the experts-they are now the curator or the artist on display
Make use of the space as if they are an active, valued member of the art community-this is their museum- (sit on the floor, get comfortable, allow voices to be heard, encourage them to speak to other museum visitors, have students lead a group discussion with visitors

Examples:
Challenge students to become the artist and speak to their classmates. They can provide a wide range of information such as a title for their artwork, their inspiration, what they would do differently next time, an explanation of why it is their greatest masterpiece, what it is worth, etc. The group will decide who is most believable and why.

Encourage students to become the art. You look at paintings and sculptures differently once you have tried to replicate them with your body!
Memorable, meaningful experiences are those that students will want to replicate on their own time and with their families and friends. Make the museum visit that type of experience.