

EXPLORING CIVIC POINTS OF VIEW WITH ART

An arc that surfaces civic points of view with works of art.

Long Version

NOTICE

Take a few minutes to silently explore the work.
What do you notice? (“I see...”)
Make lots of observations.

MAKE A CIVIC CONNECTION

Choose a civic topic that this artwork might connect with or speak to.
Don’t worry about figuring out what the artist wanted the work to be about.
Just choose a civic topic that you think the work *could* connect with.

[Civic topics can include broad themes such as justice and fairness, equality/inequality, power dynamics, and more specific themes like race and racism, gender identity, poverty, human impact on the environment, etc.]

(“This artwork might say something about the topic of...”)

What do you think this work might be saying about this topic?
(“This artwork might be saying that...”)

EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW

A civic point of view *is a position or opinion about a civic topic or issue.*

What are some possible points of view or positions on this civic topic?
("Someone could have the opinion or viewpoint that...
Another person could believe that...")

Where do points of view come from?

Brainstorm a list of the possible aspects of someone's life, identities, or background that might shape their point of view or opinion on this topic.
("A person's point of view can be affected by their age, where they grew up, etc..")

Do YOU have a point of view, or more than one point of view, on this topic?

If you do, what is it?
("I think/believe that...")
"I'm not sure what my point of view on this topic is because...")

REFLECT & REVISIT

What ideas did this activity surface that you had not considered before?
("I had not considered...")

What points of view on this topic would you like to continue to think more about?

Take a minute or two to look again at the artwork.
Do you have any new observations or questions?

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EXPLORE POINTS OF VIEW

A civic point of view is a position or opinion about a civic topic or issue.

Do YOU have a point of view, or more than one point of view, on this topic?

If you do, what is it?

(“I think/believe that...”)

(“I’m not sure what my point of view on this topic is because...”)

Look back at your thoughts on what the artwork might be saying about the topic. Does the artwork affect your thinking on this topic at all? If so, how? (“Now, I’m thinking about ...”)

REFLECT & REVISIT

Take a minute or two to look again at the artwork.

Do you have any new observations or questions?

Facilitator Notes

Exploring Civic POVs

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- **Choose an art work** that might speak to one or more civic themes - themes related to how we live together and how we aspire to live together. Civic topics may include issues such as climate and environmental change, migration, economic and other inequalities, gender and sexuality issues, race/racism, or any theme that addresses values, social conventions, power dynamics, institutions and systems that shape every level of community life, from the local to the global.
- **Consider candidate civic topics** that the artwork you chose *might* connect with, directly or indirectly. In step 2, Make a Civic Connection, students/participants are asked to find a civic connection and choose a civic topic to explore. As the instructions to students say, don't worry about figuring out what the artist wanted the work to be about. Still, this step might pose challenges. As the facilitator, you may want to choose the topic for students to explore, considering civic themes that are timely, connected to your class content, and/or especially relevant to your students. Both broad and specific themes are named as examples (e.g., equality/inequality, justice, race and racism, human impact on the environment). You may want to choose a theme and then zoom in on a targeted issue with distinct pro/con points of view.

FACILITATING THE ARC

- **A few points about points of view (POVs).** This learning arc uses art as a springboard for exploring different points of view or positions on a civic topic. The point(s) of view suggested by the artwork itself need not be clear-cut; the work can be ambiguous or open to multiple interpretations. The Explore Points of View section of the arc invites students to brainstorm possible POVs and where they come from (i.e., aspects of individuals' identities and biographies that may shape their POVs). Students may need prompting to consider a range of perspectives as well as additional information or background knowledge about those perspectives. As the facilitator, be prepared to raise perspectives that don't come up. Encourage students to name questions they have about perspectives that are unfamiliar or difficult to understand. You may want to share background information (for example, a news article about a civic topic that includes different, even opposing, views. Or two opinion pieces that argue for different sides of a civic issue).
- Students are also invited to consider whether they have a POV on the civic topic being discussed. Additional questions for reflection or discussion include: Where does your POV on this civic topic (or other civic topics) come from? What might

cause your perspective to change? Have you ever changed your perspective on a topic? How or why did you POV change?

- Facilitation. Class time needed for this arc can range from 20-40 minutes or even longer, depending on your facilitation choices. The steps in this arc can be done individually, in pairs or small groups, and/or as a whole class. Incorporating dialogue with others into some or all of the steps can surface different points of view, which is a key aim of the routine. *See Dialogue Moves for further ideas for deepening discussion. *See Viewing Moves for ideas to slow down and deepen looking at the artwork.
- Create, name, or revisit group norms. If your facilitation will involve discussion in pairs, small groups, or as a whole class, be sure to attend to group norms. Dialogue about civic topics can surface disagreements, which provide important opportunities for learning but can also trigger discomfort. While acknowledging that no set of norms will keep the conversation safe for everyone, naming and inviting suggestions for norms can support productive dialogue across difference. For example: “Listen for understanding. Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment.” “Make comments using “I” statements.” <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-strategies/contracting>
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