

Colors, Shapes, Lines

A routine for encouraging detailed observation of artwork.

Look at the artwork or object for a moment.

- What colors do you see?
- What shapes do you see?
- What lines do you see?

PURPOSE

What kind of thinking does this routine encourage?

This routine helps students make detailed observations by drawing their attention to the forms in an artwork or an object and giving them specific categories of things to look for

APPLICATION

When and where can I use it?

The routine can be used with any kind of visual art or non-art images or objects. Like the “Looking: Ten Times Two” routine, students can use this routine on its own, or as preparation for discussing an artwork using a different routine. It is especially useful before a writing activity because it helps students develop descriptive language.

LAUNCH

What are some tips for starting and using this routine?

You can begin using this routine by simply building a broad inventory with students: list colors, then shapes, then lines. You can have students write down their own lists first before sharing and discussing them with partners, small groups, or the whole class. Alternatively, you might use this routine to guide a whole group discussion, with you or a student serving as notetaker to capture the whole group’s descriptions. Documentation can either be done by individual students or by a notetaker for the whole class. Such documentation provides a useful tool to support revisiting and reflecting on the group’s initial observations at a later point during the lesson or unit of instruction. You might consider using this question as you facilitate a later reflection on their initial observations: What might students be able to add that they didn’t notice in their initial observations?

This thinking routine was developed as part of the Artful Thinking project at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Explore the full PZ Thinking Routine Toolbox at pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines.