

Building on Details with the Elaboration Game | *The Farm* by Joan Miró

Global Studies: Immigration and Identity

Adapted from Greg Landrigan, Sacred Heart School, Washington

Target Thinking Dispositions: Observing and Describing

Thinking Routine: The Elaboration Game

Work of Art: Joan Miró, *The Farm*, 1921-1922

Disciplines: Social Studies, Global Studies, History, English Language Arts, Art

Curricular Topics: Expressing the Individual/Identity, Immigration/Migration, Home

Grade Level/Age: Grades 6-8 or Ages 11-13 (adaptable for older or younger students)

Total Time: 55 minutes (adaptable for shorter time frames or two sessions)

Learning Objectives: Students will observe and describe a work of art, listen to and build elaborations based on each other's observations, interpret a work of art based on the details observed, and draw connections between the work of art and their own lives.

Materials Needed:

- Art reproduction of *The Farm* by Joan Miró (poster, digital image, or individual prints)
- The Elaboration Game templates, journals, or paper and pens/pencils (1 per student)
- Chart paper or whiteboard

The Elaboration Game

1. Observing:

~5 minutes

Introduce the work of art, the thinking goals, and curricular topic(s). Ask the students to look carefully at the painting and imagine the painting being divided into four quadrants, pointing out each quadrant. Ask them to divide their paper/journal page into four parts or distribute Elaboration Game templates. Invite them to silently observe each quadrant and write down a few observations in each corresponding quadrant. This exercise is performed individually.

2. Describing and Elaborating:

~25 minutes

Next, in a whole group discussion, have students share and collaborate by describing – naming as many details as possible in the work of art – and elaborating – expanding on those details. Model this process with the students once before beginning. For example:

Student: "I see footsteps in the bottom left quadrant."

Teacher responds: "If I were to elaborate on this, I would say I see footsteps that appear to be leading up a path, so I'm adding on a little bit to that observation."

Facilitate The Elaboration Game discussion with students:

- **One Quadrant, Four Students:** *One student* identifies a specific quadrant of the artwork and describes what s/he sees. *Another student* elaborates on the first student’s descriptions by adding more detail about the section. *A third person* elaborates further by adding even more detail, and *a fourth person* adds yet more. Remind students to describe only what they see and hold off giving their ideas about what is happening in the artwork until the last step of the routine. Optional: Document students’ responses on chart paper or a board.
- **Continue with Other Quadrants:** After four people have described a section in detail, someone else (or the teacher) identifies a new quadrant/section of the artwork and then the process starts over. Four more people take turns making increasingly detailed observations. This process repeats until everyone in the class has had a turn or all sections of the artwork have been described.

3. Interpreting

~10 minutes

Pose Explanations Together of What the Artwork Might Mean: Interpret the painting through discussing observations, elaborations, and ideas. For example:

“What do you think is going on?”

“What do you see that makes you say that?”

Optional: Tailor the question to your curriculum. For example, about identity:

“What might the artist Joan Miró be communicating about identity through this painting?”

Extending the Elaboration Game

Provide Background on the Artist and Artwork:

~2 minutes

Link the painting to a topic in the curriculum, such as identity, migration, or home, by sharing a brief story about the artist or the painting, in connection with the topic. For example:

“Joan Miró was born and raised in the Catalonia region of Spain. *The Farm* is based on his family’s farm there, his residence when he was a young man. He started painting this at the farm and finished it after immigrating to Paris. While it mostly describes aspects of his identity linked to Catalonia, there are clues that hint to his international identity, such as the French newspaper next to the watering can.”

Curriculum Connection – Why might it matter?

~15 minutes

Continue to focus on the curricular topic by posing an open-ended question to the whole group for discussion, such as, “Why might it matter...?,” For example:

“Why might it matter to think about dual identities related to the places people live?”

“How does thinking about Miró’s presentation of his dual identity help us think about our own identities?”

Wrap-Up:**~5 minutes**

Summarize the activity for students, highlighting linkages between the thinking routine (The Elaboration Game), key dispositions (observing and describing), and any relevant curriculum content. If time allows, reflect on the lesson together by having students write or discuss:

“What is one key idea you will remember from our lesson today?”

“What about today’s activities surprised you (or was difficult for you)?”

Additional Suggested Works of Art:

This lesson can be applied to other works of art, such as:

- Arshile Gorky, *The Artist and His Mother*, c. 1926 – c. 1942
- Romare Bearden, *Tomorrow I May Be Far Away*, 1967
- Charles Bird King, *Poor Artist’s Cupboard*, 1815

For more works of art related to the subject of migration, identity, and home, please refer to the Uncovering America resource on the National Gallery of Art website:

www.nga.gov/uncoveringamerica