

Five Thinking Routines

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<https://thinkingmuseum.com/2022/02/17/5-new-thinking-routines-to-try-in-2022/>

Lens Thinking Routine:

- A. See: Look closely at the mural. What do you see? Make as many observations as possible.
- B. Choose a lens: Choose one lens and discuss how you might see or think about the mural through that lens. A lens is something we look through. Personal lens may be gender, race, ethnicity, economic background, where we live, what we do, our educational level, our roles in the family. Pick a lens then share your thoughts about the mural from that perspective. The others in the group listen carefully before asking questions to further understand your viewpoint.
- C. Reflection: What does it feel like to look at the mural through a particular lens.

Layers Thinking Routine:

- A. Narrative: Share some information about the mural such as a story of its creation, history of the artist, a message that the mural is conveying, etc.
- B. Aesthetic: Does the mural appeal to you? What, if anything, pulls you in to the mural, or perhaps describe the skill of the artist, what is new, different or unusual about this mural.
- C. Mechanical: Describe the form or structure of the mural, what methods were used by the artist to create this mural.
- D. Dynamic: What surprises you about this mural, what emotions are invoked, where is movement, tension, attractions.
- E. Connections: Make connections between the mural and another art work, or connections to your personal life, history, or different genres. Make connections between the mural and life.

Some layers may be more appropriate to use at a particular mural than other layers. Take some time to select what layers you will use to study the mural. Spend some time looking closely at the mural, observe and describe the mural, before deciding on the layers.

Creative Comparisons Thinking Routine:

- A. See: What do you see in the mural. Observe the mural's colors, its shapes, and its lines. Spend time on observations and descriptions.
- B. Compare: Choose a category. Any category will do - such as cities, parts of the human body, cars, famous buildings, plants, music, toys, animals, or famous people.
- C. Imagine: If this mural was a kind of _____ (category) what would it be.
- D. Explain: Describe three ways that the mural compares to the category.

Claim Support Question Thinking Routine:

- A. Claim: Make a claim about the mural.
- B. Support: Support your claim
- C. Question: What is left unanswered, what is not explained, what new questions does your claim raise.

Prior to starting this routine, discuss what you mean by a "claim".

The Elaboration Game Thinking Routine:

- A. First Person: One person identifies a specific section of the mural and describes what they see.
- B. Second Person: Elaborates on the first person's observations by adding more detail about the section.
- C. Third Person: Elaborates further by adding more detail, and so on. Continue until the mural has been completely dissected.

D. Interpretations: After all elaborations have been shared, ask questions regarding interpretations, such as “what is going on here, what messages are being conveyed”.

You can go around in a circle or ask if anyone wants to elaborate on the previous person’s observations. You may want to divide the mural into quadrants and have the group describe each quadrant in detail.

Thinking Routines in Action by Connie Powers:

The following are my examples of each thinking routine applied to a mural.

Lens Thinking Routine: Applied to the mural of Joey Salamon 2021 Untitled (Large Geometric Shapes/Colors)

See: Vibrant colors of reds, yellows, blues, circles, rays, triangles, arrows.

Lens: Using the lens of a 65+ year old woman who is concerned about aging and growing obsolete, I see a youthful, active mural. I see a mural full of movement, excitement and engagement. This mural dispels my fears of growing old. Looking through my “fear of old age” lens, I see a mural that is life affirming.

Reflection: I wonder how a child would view this mural, what would they focus on, would the mural make them feel old?

Layer Thinking Routine: Applied to the mural of Quizi (Louise Jones) 2020 Electrify’s AR Experience

The layers I choose are Aesthetic and Dynamic

Aesthetic: I love daisies. I am overwhelmed with the beauty and richness of this mural. The daisies are of varying sizes, differing positions, engaging perspectives, different colors. All spell life.

Dynamic: The movements of the daisies make me sing with joy!! The total surprise of finding a field of daisies downtown captures my heart.

Connections: I make connections between this mural and fields of daisies that I have seen, the joyful experiences of receiving daisies from friends and the beauty of nature.

Creative Comparisons Thinking Routine: Applied to the mural 2020 Live in Color

See: I see green parallel lines, green circle, orange steps, white background, white circle.

Compare: I choose music as my category.

Imagine: If this mural was music, it would be music from the movie Mary Poppins.

Explain: The stairs leading to the roof in the mural remind me of the stairs the chimney sweeps ascend in the “Step In Time” song, the green circle reminds me of the chalk picture on the sidewalk that the characters jump through to visit the fantasy park and the shape in the mural that looks like an open mouth reminds me of the song “A Spoon Full of Sugar”.

Claim Support Question Thinking Routine: Applied to the mural of Yen Azzaro Untitled

Claim: I claim that everyone who visits this mural will develop a burning desire to spend time outside.

Support: The mural is alive with a butterfly in flight, dancing bees, a tiptoeing ant, an antsy caterpillar, jagged claws and rich shades of yellows and greens. The mural is a celebration of nature. Visitors will be inspired by this mural to spend as much time as possible outdoors.

Questions: What are those shapes on the green mound? Why are they used and what do they represent? The bugs are oversized but the barn is minimized- why? What is the artist saying?

The Elaboration Game Thinking Routine: Applied to the mural by Taylor White 2020 Untitled

First Person: I see a hand, fingers, a wrist and shapes in the section of the mural on the north facade.

Second Person: (Someone other than me) Looking at the same portion of the north facade, the colors of the hand and fingers are rich shades of brown, the hand is bending down.

Third Person: (Looking at the same north facade) the hand is big, relaxed, and the fingers are thin, in varying positions.

Interpretation: This mural speaks of connections among human beings and connection to life. The hand in the mural is soft, gentle, shaped in a downward direction. The hand is non-threatening, welcoming and is present, available to everyone who passes by. I believe the mural is art of connection and unification.