

Program 1

What Is Art?

Description

Are there universal elements that distinguish what we call “art” from other objects or experiences? How can we recognize art when we see it?

In Program 1, you will:

- explore the nature of art by examining each of four art forms—theatre, music, dance, and visual art;
- begin to develop a definition for each of the art forms and consider how you might determine whether a particular item is art; and
- investigate how these art forms work together in a multi-arts performance piece.

The program includes five lessons, in which Learner Teams and students:

- use a game called “Hunter and Hunted” to demonstrate how theatre uses plot, characters, and imagery to involve an audience;
- listen to a variety of sounds to create their own definitions of music;
- use their bodies to create a dance by varying the elements of shape, space, and time;
- analyze an assortment of objects to determine whether they fit their own personal definitions of art; and
- view the opening sequence of *Quidam* and discuss how the four art forms are used in it.

In this session, you will reflect on these lessons as a group and begin to make connections among the four art forms.

Learning Objectives

- Engage in discussion and activities leading to the discovery of some basic characteristics of theatre.
- Investigate musical elements and create a basic definition of music.
- Experiment with movement and identify essential elements of dance.
- Formulate, discuss, and revise personal definitions of visual art.
- Examine ways in which fantasy impacts perceptions of reality in Cirque du Soleil’s *Quidam* and in everyday life.

Guiding Questions

The following are questions for your group to consider as you work through the session.

- What is art?
- How do the arts connect with each other?
- How can the arts be integrated into every classroom?

Key Concepts/Vocabulary

Theatre

Definitions of *theatre* include everything from a formal, staged production to a group improvisation conducted in school classrooms. However, there are three essential elements present in all forms of theatre: an actor, a story with a conflict, and an audience.

- *Acting*: the process of creating roles and characters in dramatic context
- *Audience*: one or more persons who observe actors in a scene or play
- *Conflict*: when the desires of two or more characters are opposed to each other
- *Costume*: an actor's stage clothing
- *Dialogue*: words spoken by the characters in a play to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and actions
- *Elements of drama*: according to Aristotle, these are plot, character, theme, dialogue, music, and spectacle
- *Plot*: the structure of the action of the play
- *Script*: the written dialogue, description, and directions provided by the playwright
- *Setting*: the time and place in which the dramatic action occurs
- *Theatre*: the imitation or representation of life, performed for other people; the performance of dramatic literature

Music

Music is organized sound created to communicate an idea, feeling, or process.

- *Articulation*: how individual notes are attacked
- *Design*: the arrangement of musical parts; the form of the music
- *Duration*: music in time; the length of the sounds
- *Dynamics*: loudness and softness in music
- *Expressive qualities*: variables within performance parameters
- *Melody*: a planned succession of pitches; the tune
- *Pitch*: the high and low qualities of music
- *Rhythm*: the patterns of sounds in relation to the steady beat
- *Steady beat*: the regular pulse of the music
- *Tempo*: the speed of the music
- *Timbre*: tone color; the distinctive quality of a given instrument, voice, or sound source
- *Tonality*: the combination of pitches as they function together

Dance

All dance—whether it is about a story, a culture, a specific style, a feeling, or movement for movement’s sake—involves a body in motion. All styles of dance communicate using the basic elements of shape, space, and time.

- *Chant*: singing or speaking that repeats itself
- *Choreographer*: person who creates the dance
- *Choreography*: the dance movements
- *Cue*: a signal
- *Freeze*: stopping all movement
- *Shape*: using the body to create lines
- *Space*: the locations occupied by the body; for example, low, middle, and high levels or negative and positive space
- *Time*: the cadence or meter that determines the motion; it can be slow, medium, or fast
- *Transition*: the passage among ideas, places, thoughts, and stages

Visual Art

This lesson models an approach to art called aesthetics. As the Learner Teams and students create their own definitions of art, they are engaging in philosophical inquiry. Definitions of visual art vary depending on cultural context and personal viewpoints. As students develop a personal understanding of art, it is important that they support their viewpoints with evidence.

- *Art*: the conscious production or arrangement of sounds, colors, forms, movements, or other elements in a manner that affects the sense of beauty
- *Composition*: design manipulation, including balance, repetition, movement, unity, and center of interest
- *Craftsmanship*: quality of design and technique
- *Elements of art*: components artists often manipulate—line, color, shape/form, value, texture, and space
- *Intent*: the mood, message, or meaning desired by the artist
- *Performance art*: a form of theatrical art in which thematically related works in a variety of media are presented simultaneously or successively to an audience
- *Technique*: materials and working methods used by artists

Workshop Session (On-Site)

Materials and Resources

- Videotape or broadcast of Program 1—What Is Art?
- Reading: Cirque du Soleil
- Reading: *Quidam*

Readings are available in the Appendix of this guide or on the workshop Web site.

Optional: Extended Session

Like all of the activities described in this guide, the activities described below are designed to guide participants in a two-hour workshop session. For a more in-depth experience of Program 1, explore the alternative Extended Session featured on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom. This four-hour extended session includes expanded on-site activities that will enhance significantly your understanding of the material presented in the workshop.

Facilitator: If you have elected to explore the Extended Session featured on the workshop Web site, do so now. Refer to the Web site for required materials, handouts, and instructions.

Getting Ready (15 minutes)

In this workshop session, you will explore the many ways that the arts can enhance the learning experience for your students. The following information will provide the structure for your professional development session as you view the program.

Discuss the question “What is art?” in your group or reflect and write down comments on your own.

Facilitator: Distribute copies of this workshop guide, in its entirety, to all participants. You can make photocopies or print out additional copies from the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom. Discuss your expectations of this professional development workshop. You can use the Guiding Questions for Program 1 as a starting place.

Watch the Workshop Program (60 minutes)

View Program 1—What Is Art?

As you watch the program, consider the following focus questions.

- How will you build on your previous awareness of the arts to develop your knowledge and skills in arts education?
- How will you assess your understanding of the concepts presented in these programs?

Workshop Session (On-Site), cont'd.

Suggested Activities and Discussion (45 minutes)

Discussion (30 minutes)

Explore the ideas in the first four lessons—What Is Theatre? What Is Music? What Is Dance? and What Is Visual Art?—using the following discussion questions.

- What are the similarities and differences among the art forms?
- How have the workshop leaders presented diverse styles and methods of instruction?
- Which activities challenged your thinking most? Why?
- What questions do you have about teaching the lessons you've seen in this program?
- What interdisciplinary connections can you make between these activities and your existing curriculum?

Share your findings with the group or keep a journal of your own ideas.

Reflection (15 minutes)

Explore the ideas in Combining the Art Forms, the last segment in this program, which introduces *Quidam* by Cirque du Soleil.

Think back about the opening three minutes of *Quidam* and discuss the following questions.

- In what ways did *Quidam* meet the expectations you formed from hearing it described? What surprised you?
- What kinds of movement did you see? Would you call this dance?
- How did the music communicate an idea, feeling, or process?
- How were dramatic and visual elements used to juxtapose reality and fantasy?
- What are some big questions that you have about this work?
- What is your understanding of the enduring idea/understanding that fantasy impacts our perception of reality?

Facilitator: First, share the following information with your group: Cirque du Soleil is a world-renowned organization known for its striking, dramatic mix of the circus arts and street entertainment, featuring fantastical costumes, magical lighting, and original music. Its production of *Quidam* is a surrealistic and highly theatrical circus event that has been performed worldwide since 1996.

Quidam is the story of Zoe, a young girl whose world is meaningless until a headless stranger invites her on a journey through a fantastic world where gravity is irrelevant and the impossible is possible. Like Alice's adventures in Wonderland and Dorothy's quest through Oz, Zoe's experiences with the strange and unreal change her everyday life, demonstrating the "enduring idea/understanding" for the unit modeled in Programs 1–4: Fantasy impacts our perception of reality.

Programs 2 and 3 will explore the topics of research, criticism, and historical precedents. You will discover how Cirque du Soleil has integrated the arts to create a unique contemporary art form all its own.

Between Sessions (On Your Own)

Homework Assignment

For a full understanding of *Quidam* and its role in this workshop, it is strongly recommended that you view the show in its entirety on videotape (see Materials Needed in this guide for suggestions on obtaining the tape). Look for examples of fantasy and reality and the interaction of theatre, music, dance, and visual art.

You can find the complete lesson plans and handouts for the *Quidam* unit on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom. Audio and video demonstration materials related to these lessons can be found on the Classroom Demonstration Materials videotape, which will be provided free to purchasers of the workshop tapes. For additional information on obtaining this tape, call 1-800-LEARNER or go to www.learner.org.

Based on the lesson plans and handouts for Program 1, think about how you might adapt these lessons in your own teaching. Write some notes in your journal.

Optional Activities

Other enrichment activities can boost your learning between workshop sessions. Consider the recommended activities below and choose those that best meet your needs. Time permitting, you might share what you find out before or after your next workshop session.

Watch some or all of these programs from *The Arts in Every Classroom: A Video Library, K-5*:

- What Is Arts Education?
- Teaching Music
- What Are the Arts?
- Teaching Theatre
- Teaching Dance
- Teaching Visual Art

To learn more about Cirque du Soleil and its many productions, including *Quidam*, visit the Cirque du Soleil Web site at www.cirquedusoleil.com.

Research reviews, feature articles, or other material on *Quidam* at your public library or on the Web.

Reading Assignment

To support your understanding of Program 1, review the following readings:

- Cirque du Soleil
- *Quidam*

To prepare for Program 2, study the following additional readings:

- Criticism
- Listening Map for *Quidam*
- *Parade*
- Listening Map for *Parade*
- Vaudeville
- Setting Up Your Discovery Stations

These readings can be found in the Appendix of this guide or on the workshop Web site at www.learner.org/channel/workshops/artsineveryclassroom.