

Prompts for Observation/Museum Visit

Take this sheet on your museum visit. Use these questions, in any order, when looking at the object you have chosen for your first paper assignment. Not all of them may be pertinent to your object. You may choose the ones that will fit your essay best.

REMEMBER: **you are being graded on the quality of your close looking**, on what you can SEE at the museum, and how you contextualize your object through YOUR OWN observations.

Your museum experience:

1) Start taking notes from the moment your begin to see the museum as you walk up to from the street.

- What is the exterior like/interior like, and how does it relate to what you see inside?
- Who is attending the museum? What is the general atmosphere like?
- How are the galleries organized? Why do you think the galleries and exhibitions look the way they do? (Think about wall color, lighting, interior arrangement etc).
- How is your object(s) displayed? What other objects are they near to, and why?

2) Make a quick sketch or sketches of your object. (Keep these to hand in with your final paper.)

3) Stand in front of your object and ask yourself the following questions. Make detailed notes.

- What do you see?
- Read the label – what can we tell from the label? Artist's name, media/materials, when and where the piece was made, ETC.
- What about the composition? Is it balanced, symmetrical, asymmetrical? Why do you think the artist might have chosen to compose the object in this way?
- Where is the viewer meant to stand in relation to the work? Is there one viewpoint or multiple viewing points? How does this affect the viewing experience?
- How big is the work? How does size affect your reaction to the work? How does size affect the depiction of the subject?
- Where was it originally meant to have been seen, and how is the current context different? What might it have been like to view it in its original context?
- Identify the subject matter. Be certain to describe all of the components depicted. Is this artwork telling a story? Is it religious or mythological?
- Is the subject ideal or real? Is it abstract?
- Describe the style. Is the style of this work similar to styles we have studied, styles that you know, or is it completely new to you? Can you make any comparisons with things/styles that you already know?
- How does the artist use line, color, light and shadow?
- What is the material like? Why might the artist have used this material?
- Note textures and the quality of the surface of the work. What adjectives could you use throughout your analysis? Eg. shiny, dull, hard, soft, rough, smooth.
- What do you think was the artist trying to say about/with/through his or her subject?

- Describe why you selected this work. What do you like / dislike about it?
- Where is this work located? What other works are near it to the right and to the left (I just want the brief details/comparisons, not a full analysis). Does it relate to its surroundings at all?
- Is this work popular? Do other people stop and look at it? What are some of the reactions you overhear?
- Is there further information in the museum you can use to help you find out more about your object? Leaflets, plaques on the wall to find out who sponsored the gallery, museum guards, docents etc?

IMPORTANT:

Make sure that you are able to articulate the difference between mere description unconnected to any developing ideas in your essay (bad) and visual analysis that connects and deepens as your essay progresses (good). You must use CLAIM + EVIDENCE.

Eg. "This work is very beautiful. The sculpture has two arms, two legs and is covered by a long garment." NO

Eg. "The figure/sculpture is wearing a long garment that emphasizes the proportion and length of her body. In keeping with Hellenistic tradition, the effect makes the figure seem life-like, as if the clothing might move if you touched it or if the sculpture could walk. This is contradicted by the fact that the work is actually made from very beautiful, hard and immovable white marble." YES