

THINKING ROUTINES

VTS Discussion

Choose an image that invites careful looking, thinking, and discussion, and is open to interpretation.

1. First, invite viewers to look carefully and closely for at least 30 seconds before raising their hands.
2. Ask: *What's going on in this picture (or work of art, or with this creature, or objects, etc.)?*
3. Follow up with: *What do you see that makes you say that?* (the participant explains his/her thinking - gives evidence)
4. Paraphrase the comment (briefly and essentially)
5. Ask the group: *What more can we find?*

Thinking moves: look carefully and deeply, focus attention, develop mental stamina, listen carefully to others, consider multiple perspectives, provide evidential reasoning, and find metaphors and messages.

10 / 10 / 10 or 5 / 10 / 5

Can you find 10 (or 5) details in this piece of art (or visual stimulus) in the time it takes me to count to 10 slowly? Write them down or be ready to share orally.

Now look again, and find 10 (or 5) more.

Thinking moves: look carefully, observe small details (especially in a complicated image), look beyond the surface, develop stamina, build patience, focus attention, consider the parts of a whole, and look again, even more carefully and deeply

Classification Game

Look carefully - do you see objects, creatures, or other details that could be grouped together in one category? Can you make more than one category?

Find a category, create a list, and be ready to play the category game with another student:

PLAN A: You give the category - and your classmate finds the details that match the topic

PLAN B: You name the details, and your partner names the category

Thinking moves: look carefully, observe small details, classify or group by common elements, and give evidence for classification schema

The Connection Game

Look carefully - can you make connections? What is the relationship between two people, things, ideas or concepts in the image? What is the connection?

Thinking moves: make comparisons, think metaphorically, synthesize, discover the essence, find significance, and demonstrate evidential reasoning

Same, Same, but Different (1)

Look carefully at this image (or object). Can you find elements or details that are similar? In what ways are they alike? What is different? How are they different?

This routine is very similar to *The Connection Game*, but it requires the students to think more deeply about the connections, and to consider differences as well as similarities.

In this first example, participants look within a single image to find similarities and differences.

Thinking moves: compare/contrast, consider fine distinctions, get to the essence, find significance, and demonstrate evidential reasoning

Same, Same, but Different (2)

Look carefully at these 2 images (or objects). How are they similar? In what ways are they alike? How are they different?

In this example, participants compare/contrast two or more images or objects.

Thinking moves: compare/contrast, consider fine distinctions, get to the essence, find significance, and demonstrate evidential reasoning

Time Machine

Find an image (photograph, sketch, painting, etc.) of a scene from the past. Imagine the same location, scene, characters that you see in an image or painting (or in a story) - in contemporary time - TODAY! What would be different? What would be the same? Option: sketch, paint, or recreate the image or work of art yourself - a contemporary version.

Thinking moves: creative interpretation, compare and contrast, note details, change perspective, and demonstrate historical empathy

Talking Image(s)

Participants choose a person, animal, or thing in an image and imagine what she, he, or it would say. Verbalize or write down the character's or object's words. This is a creative routine -- make inferences, create a situation -- use the image as a jumping off point. The interpretation should be grounded in evidence, and other elements of the image should support the narrative.

Option: consider two different images or works of art. What would two people or objects in the images have to say to each other? Create a fictional conversation.

Thinking moves: creative interpretation, divergent thinking

Talking Objects

Like the *Circle of Viewpoints* and *Perceive, Know, Care About* routines, this thinking routine asks participants to consider all the objects or details in an image. Ask:

What details do you notice in this image? What might each element be thinking, feeling, saying? What is important about the object - important to whom? For what reason(s)? Write down or verbally share what this object might say about its importance, who it is important to, questions, it might have, etc.

Thinking moves: consider a situation from multiple perspectives, think creatively and divergently, and develop empathy

Perceive / Know About / Care About

When looking at a common image (or reading a common text), ask participants to look for people and objects, and to consider the following:

What can the person or thing PERCEIVE? What might the person or thing KNOW? What might the person or thing CARE ABOUT?

Thinking moves: consider multiple perspectives, think creatively and divergently, and develop empathy

Circle of Viewpoints

What different perspectives or feelings would various characters or people have - what is the situation from their point of view? What do they KNOW? What are they THINKING and FEELING? What might they SAY? What questions might they ask?

Or, when looking at a common image, ask: *What are different stances to consider? For example, what might a biologist think? An environmentalist? A developer? An anthropologist? An artist?*

A writer? A mother? A child? A grandparent? Consider the various viewpoints of many different people (relative to the common visual stimulus).

Thinking moves: consider other points of view, open mind to new perspectives, view a situation through another lens, take a different stance, and think and respond with empathy

One Word Story (or Summary)

If I ask you to come up with ONE WORD that summarizes the message of this image or work of art (or your response to it) what is that SINGLE WORD?

This routine asks participants to get to the essence - to find significance and theme. It is similar to the HEADLINES thinking routine, but requires participants to limit themselves to a single word.

Thinking moves: synthesize ideas and input, discover the essential message, think metaphorically, draw conclusions, and demonstrate evidential reasoning

Symbol Search (A Metaphor Game)

Can you find symbols - creatures, objects, colors, or other: details that might represent an idea, concept or emotion - in this image or work of art? What are they? What do they represent?

Thinking moves: think metaphorically, discover the essential message, find significance, make personal connections, think beyond what is presented in the visual stimulus, and demonstrate evidential reasoning

The Simile Game

This routine asks participants to look carefully at an image or object, and comparing things, ideas, subjects, themes, etc. to other things using "like" or "as - in other words - find the similes!

Examples:

The grapes look like wet beach balls, glistening in the sun.

The moon looks like a comma in the sky.

The twining vine looks like calligraphy.

The storm clouds look like a heavy, damp grey blanket that will smother the fire.

The leaf looks like my grandmother's hand- veined, dry, and delicate.

Thinking moves: compare, think metaphorically, and make connections

Story Box

Show students three or four images of people, places, and/or things, and invite them to create a story using these images as story elements. Consider setting, characters, and objects that are interesting and open to many narrative possibilities.

Thinking moves: creative composition, sequencing and building a narrative, generating and organizing ideas

10 Minutes Before /10 Minutes After

Look carefully at a painting or work of art, photograph, a video clip, or an image from a moment in history. What is going on exactly at that moment?

1. Next, consider (and speculate) what might have happened ten minutes **BEFORE** this scene.
2. What might have happened 10 minutes **AFTER** the scene?
3. Write(or tell) your ideas and share with others. Tell why you came to these conclusions.

Option: if there are two or more people in the scene, consider writing from different perspectives.

Thinking moves: imagine what precedes an event (causes), what happens after an event (effects or results), consider different perspectives, and think with empathy

Beginning, Middle, End

This routine is similar to the 10 Minutes Before / 10 Minutes After Routine, but invites the participant to imagine or write a complete narrative.

Look at an image - if this is the **BEGINNING** of a story, what will happen in the middle and the end?

If this is the **MIDDLE** of a story, what happened first, and what happens later?

If this is the **END** of the story, how did it start, and what happened in the middle of the story?

Be a Detective!

Look at a portrait or piece of art, a photograph, or any image, and use your observational skills to determine **WHO** the person is, and **WHAT** she/he is doing, etc. Consider everything - surroundings, objects in the background, other people, clothing, age, physical features, posture, attitude, expression - anything that might help you infer **WHO** this person is. Be prepared to

explain how you reached your conclusions.

Option: after completing this routine, create a narrative about this character

Thinking moves: look carefully, look beyond the surface, infer, and provide evidential reasoning

What I Will Remember

What is most significant, important or memorable feature, idea, or emotion in a work of art, image, or written piece? Consider all features and details and choose one. Tell WHY this is the most memorable element or object or character in the work.

Option: After listing or describing many details, write about what you will remember the most. This is a good invitation for writing poetry.

Thinking moves: find significance, and get to the essence

The Important Thing

This routine is inspired by *The Important Book*, a picture book by Margaret Wise Brown. After viewing an image, students recall many details or aspects, and then select the one most IMPORTANT thing. Encourage students to provide support for their selections.

Example (after viewing *Woman in Grey Aboard Ship, Gazing at the Sea*):

- She wears a pearl grey coat the color of the sky.
- She brought along her favorite things: a ribboned parasol, warm tartan blanket, a jaunty hat with pale pink and blue silk flowers, and soft leather gloves.
- She stands on the deck of a creaking, wooden ship, below ropes, riggings, and billowing white sails.
- She did not choose to journey on the sleek steam ship that retreats into the distance.
- Her passport tells that she is a woman who travels.
- Although the binoculars she carries rest against the railing, she is not using them
- But the important thing about the Lady in Grey is that she is looking ahead; she sees herself in a new life, in a new place;
- She is eager for the journey.

Thinking moves: Summarize, get to the essence, and discover significance

Think, Pair, Share

1. Ask students a question.

2. *Ask them to take a few minutes of thinking time ...*
3. *Turn to a nearby student to share their thoughts.*

One way to ensure that students listen to each other is to tell students that you will be calling on individuals to explain their partners thinking, as opposed to telling their own thoughts.

Thinking moves: think about something (such as a problem, question or topic), articulate thoughts, reason actively, explain, listen, share, and understand multiple perspectives

Think, Puzzle, Explore

1. *What do you think you know about this topic?*
2. *What questions or puzzles do you have?*
3. *How can you explore this topic?*

Thinking moves: connect to prior knowledge, ask questions, and begin the inquiry process

Connect, Extend, Challenge

CONNECT: *How are the ideas and information presented connected to what you already knew?*

EXTEND: *What new ideas did you get that extended or pushed your thinking in new directions?*

CHALLENGE: *What is still challenging or confusing for you to get your mind around? What questions, wonderings or puzzles do you now have?*

Thinking moves: make connections between new ideas and prior knowledge, take stock of ongoing questions, puzzles and difficulties, and reflect

I Used to Think ... But Now I Think

A routine for reflecting on how and why our thinking has changed

Remind students of the topic you want them to consider. Have students write a response using each of the sentence stems:

I used to think

But now, I think

Thinking moves: reflect on thinking about a topic or issue and explore how and why thinking changed; consolidate new learning and identify new understandings, opinions, and beliefs; develop reasoning abilities; and recognize cause and effect relationships

Plus and Minus

This routine invites students to consider the positive and negative sides of an experience or issue.

1. Students make a T-Chart for +'s and –'s
2. Students consider the positives and negatives of a situation and list them in the appropriate column
3. Option: have students put a star* by the point they feel is most important

Thinking moves: evaluate the positives and negatives of a situation

Four Quadrants (or Parts of a Whole)

For this routine, you need an image that has interest, messages, or action happening in various sections of the total work. Copy/paste the original image three additional times, and then crop each of the four sections.

Show the students one section at a time, gradually building to the whole image. As you reveal each focused section, ask participants, "What's going on in this section?" And "What do you see that makes you say that?" Decide on the sequence of each quadrant if you are revealing them one at a time.

Thinking moves: look carefully, hypothesize, provide evidence, and connect parts to a whole

No / No / Yes

Look carefully at an image, photograph, or work of art, or consider a character in a book or poem, and identify what a person, object, or event is NOT (or does not feel or believe) ---then, in contrast, record what the person, etc. IS - or does feel or believe).

Example (when viewing Gilbert Stuart's *Portrait of George Washington*):

You are NOT a king, dressed in satin and gold, sitting upon your throne;

You are NOT a young man, driven by ambition, seeking to make your place in the world; You ARE an old man with white hair and a steady gaze, looking out at your countrymen with calmness and confidence, humility, and acceptance willing to be what is asked of you: a general who has put aside his sword, a farmer who will leave his home and hearth, a president who must lead this new country.

Thinking moves: evaluate, value, identify, classify, consider form and function, think with empathy, and make personal connections

Despite / Despite / Yet

This routine is similar to NO, NO, YES, but has its own particular twist. When considering the conditions a subject or character enjoys OR is faced with, the responder steps inside the character's mind and heart. Despite either positive or negative conditions, the character (and yet) feels an opposing or contrasting emotion. Example:

Despite the heat of a humid July afternoon
that pressed down on the bearded man in the black coat like the heavy, steaming iron of his
friend, the tailor, despite the rough hardness of his stony bed,
despite the whispered conversation that interrupted his slumber with particular, repeated
words:

ghetto - they say - leave - not us - not here - not now,
the old man on the grey bricks
looked up at the clouds in the blue sky that floated by like little boats,
and let peace and pleasure wash over him like October's rain.

Thinking moves: evaluate, empathize, weigh positives and negatives

Claim Support Question

1. Make a **CLAIM** about the work of art
Claim: An explanation or interpretation of some aspect of the topic.
2. Identify **SUPPORT** for your claim
Support: Things you see, feel, and know that support your claim.
3. Ask a **QUESTION** related to your claim
Question: What's left hanging? What isn't explained? What new reasons does your claim raise?

Thinking moves: reason with evidence, and explore strategies for uncovering truth

What If?

This routine "cuts to the chase" - and quickly moves students from literal to inferential thinking. It can be used after a VTS discussion or after another Thinking Routine. Example:

What if I were to tell you this piece has a message. What do YOU think a possible message might be? (Follow up with: And what do you see that makes you say that?)

Or, suggest an idea for consideration. Example: *What if I told you this image has something to do with __, now what do you think?*

Thinking moves: shift perspective, get to the essence, find significance, demonstrate evidential reasoning, draw conclusions, and evaluate

Form and Function

Look carefully at an object or organism, and think about:

What are the parts of this object or creature or organism?

What is the function of each part and how do they work together?

What is it made of? Who made it?

What is it, how does it work, who would find it useful- to do what?

Thinking moves: look carefully and closely, consider parts of a whole, consider uses of various parts, consider how parts work together to perform a function, and understand how and why things work

What Is the Pattern?

Look or listen carefully. Where do things repeat? Is there a pattern? Record the pattern that you see or hear. Use letters of the alphabet, numbers, or symbols to record your pattern. Place objects in the pattern if possible, or find another way to visually record the pattern. Can you draw or illustrate the pattern? Create a key to help you.

Thinking moves: find a pattern, compare/contrast, and creatively represent a pattern using a key or symbols

A Playdate with the Elements of Art

*Look carefully at the piece of art. Imagine that the artist invited **Line, Shape, Color, and Texture** to "play together" (interact) in the artwork. Where do they each appear? How do they influence each other? Where are they combined? What does each element add to the whole piece?*

Thinking moves: look beyond the surface, relate parts to the whole, compare / contrast, interpret, synthesize

Posturing Possibilities

Look carefully at a work of art -a figure in a painting, a sculpture, etc.

Notice the stance or position of the subject's body or posture, and "try it on" - assume the position. How do you feel when you are in this pose? What emotions do you feel? How does this posture affect your understanding of the work of art?

Thinking moves: observing closely, responding with empathy, making inferences