



Academic Activity Guide

A Learning Resource for Mentors and Mentees

ANNOTATED VERSION: ARTS FOCUS



Friends
for
Youth MENTORING INSTITUTE



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101 Simple Academic Activities

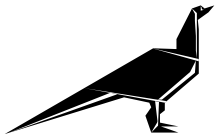
Read through these simple activities and select ones that interest you. Use them to spark other ideas, too!

ART

55. Find out about exhibits in local museums. Do some background research on a topic that interests you. Then, take a field trip to the museum.

56. Pick a painter that you like. You might want to go to a local art museum or check out a book from the library on art or art history. Then, create a painting in the style of the painter. Experiment with color. Try mixing primary colors (red, yellow, blue) in order to see what secondary colors you can make.

57. Create a collage describing yourself. Think about the things that make you who you are. Consider family, friends, interests, likes, dislikes, where you're from, your community, hopes and dreams. Share your masterpieces with each other.



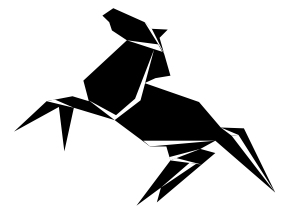
58. Do a photography project. If either knows something about photography or has a camera, share your expertise. If not, you can purchase a disposable camera and start experimenting! Take photos of your lives and the people in them and share with each other. You may even want to put these in an album or book. Also, consider looking at some of the wonderful work done in the field of documentary photography. If you have a hand-held tape recorder, try creating "audio portraits" of your lives.

59. Be an architect. Using a bird's eye view (view from above), draw a floor plan of your home (or any other place you know well). Use a ruler to make straight lines and right angles. Include things like where doors and windows are located. You can also include furniture, if you like. Next, try drawing your dream house or clubhouse. Let your imagination wander. You can include a slide from the backdoor that empties into a pool, an elevator that encircles your house, or a spiral staircase that leads to a rooftop garden!

60. Learn the art of Japanese paper-folding, origami. Find out the stories behind many of the designs by doing research at the library or on the Internet.

61. Find out about the history of your favorite type of dance. From what culture and when did it first originate? Teach your favorite dances to each other.

62. Create a sculpture with clay or with play dough. Try making your own batch of playdough together. Combine this with a trip to a local sculpture exhibit or look through an art book featuring sculpture.



63. Make or decorate an article of clothing. Learn how to knit, crochet, embroider, sew, weave, or dye fabric (you can make tie-dye with old t-shirts or cloth).

64. Draw a picture or write a story inspired by a piece of music you like or feel strongly about. Listen to the music while you paint or draw. After you are finished, look at your creation. What feelings do you have? Does it convey some of the same feelings that the music inspires for you?

ACTIVITIES



LANGUAGE AND ART

What goes through your head
when you stare at a blank space?
Nothing to write about, you may say.
Nothing to write for.
If you think, you can write.
If you live, you can write.
If you think nothing, write nothing.
If you do live, then spell with your heart.

Paul Slattery

STORY COLLAGE

Introduction

A collage is an artistic work created out of many pieces of other things arranged in a pattern. Similarly, stories are collages composed of many words arranged in a pattern. This activity uses the concept of a collage to write a story.

Purpose

- Increase vocabulary and learn new words
- Work on writing skills

Time

Can be done in one meeting (approximately 45 to 75 minutes) Allow at least 20-30 minutes to hunt for words, and another 30-45 minutes to write up stories and share.

Materials

- Old magazines or newspapers
- Glue
- Scissors
- Paper
- Pens/pencils
- Dictionary

Development of Activity

1. Using old newspapers or magazines, search for new or interesting words and cut them out. Make sure to include different parts of speech in your batch of words and group with other like parts of speech.
 - Include nouns (a person, place or thing or idea- words like toe, hippopotamus, and freedom)
 - Verbs (“doing” or action words- like dive, squirm, sleep)
 - Adjectives (words that describe things- like flat, purple, juicy)

Hint: the more out of the ordinary and interesting the words you choose, the more wild, funny, and unique your stories will be.
2. Once you have your different piles of words (aim for 10-25 words, depending on how long you want your story), discuss their meanings and how each word is used.
3. (Optional) Next, brainstorm titles for stories. Come up with a list of at least five story titles. Examples: “The Mysterious Lemon Yellow Shoes”, “A Day in the Life of a Dog”, or “The Perfect Summer Vacation”.
4. Now you are ready to write your stories! With all the story titles face down, select one. This will be the title of your story. Making sure all the words are face down in their separate piles (nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc.), draw 3-5 from each pile. You can either select your own words to use (and look at them secretly without your mentee/mentor seeing), or you can choose one batch of words to share. Either way, you must incorporate all the words you have selected in some part of your story.
5. After you both finish writing your stories, read them aloud to one another. If you used the same batch of words, discuss how you used the same words differently. Although your stories have the same title, they are probably very different stories (if they are very similar, you should discuss why this may be.)
6. If you like, try writing another story by either switching words with one another, drawing a new group of words, or a new title.

Suggestions

- To simplify this activity, don't break up words into different parts of speech piles. You can still review what parts of speech different words are if you like, but keep all words in one general pile.
- For more advanced story writing or complexity, can also discuss and look for:

Proper nouns: *names of people, places and things; words like Bermuda, Nelson Mandela, Nike.*

Adverbs: *words that describe actions, words that end in "ly" like sluggishly, perfectly, shyly*

Compound words: *words made up of two different words/nouns to form a new word, like grandparent, milkshake, cliffhanger*

- If you speak another language, try doing this exercise in that language, or you can work on learning or improving another language you may be studying.
- Create an art collage with the cut-out words after writing your story. Glue words on a sheet of paper. Include pictures from magazines, scraps of colored paper, ticket stubs, dried beans or leaves, pressed flowers, or anything else that strikes your fancy.

POETRY: WRITING HAIKU

Introduction

Haiku is a type of poetry from Japan. Like most forms of poetry, haiku has a specific form which you will learn about and do in this activity. This is a chance to add to your writer's toolbox while also expressing yourself.

Purpose

- Learn to see poetry as a form of expression
- Learn about a specific type of poetry, haiku, through writing your own
- Branch out into exploring other types of word art!

Time

Flexible, can be done in one session of at least 30 minutes (at least ten minutes of background and then at least 20 minutes to write a poem)

Materials

- Pen/pencil and paper
- Art supplies (pens, crayons, paint) to draw an accompanying picture, if you like
- Recording device (if you want to record yourself reading your poem)
- (optional) Dictionary/thesaurus

Development of Activity

1. Begin with a discussion about poetry. What is your experience with poetry? Do you like to read it? Write it? What do you think is purpose of poetry? Share some of your favorite poems or discover some new work.
2. Haiku is a certain type of poetry, originating in Japan. Traditional Japanese haikus are usually about things that occur in daily life, and about nature. The poems attempt to capture first impressions of things. Haiku has a specific structure. The type of haiku that we are writing contains three lines made up of 17 syllables. Usually, lines are divided into a set number of syllables: 5,7,5. (In other words, the first line

contains 5 syllables, the second is 7, and the last is 5 syllables.)

Discuss the term syllable if it is not familiar. You can practice counting syllables by clapping out words (i.e. wa-ter-mel-on).

3. After reading some of the sample haikus (and any others you find), try writing your own haiku. After you are finished, share what you have written with each other. You can illustrate your poem if you like.

Suggestions

- When you are full of haikus, try exploring another type of poetry. Better yet, experience live poetry in your community. Attend a poetry slam, or a poetry reading (see resource section for more ideas.) These are often held in local coffee shops, libraries or community centers.
- Learn about a type of poetry or language art form from your own ethnic or cultural background.

Resources

- www.toyomasu.com/haiku - web resource on how to write haiku
- Slamnews.com - provides news on upcoming slams and schedules
- Check out "Poetic License"- a documentary on youth poetry slams
- Salting the Ocean: 100 Poems by Young Poets, selected by Naomi Shihab Nye

Notice these haikus do not follow the 5-7-5 syllable structure because they were originally written in Japanese and then translated into English.

An old pond!
A frog jumps in-
The sound of water.
-*Basho, famous 17th century Japanese poet*

No sky
No earth- but still
Snowflakes fall
-*Hashin*

A lovely thing to see:
through the paper window's hole,
the Galaxy.
-*Issa*

Haikus by Youth

Sun dancing on waves
Silence beneath the water
My breath echoing
-*Michael O'Keefe*

I love numbers best
They end at infinity
Letters run out fast
-*Gemma Godden*
(www.worldhaikureview.org/pages/whchaikujunior4.shtml)

Rehab is like an
Old withered tree grown again;
We sprout and re-live
-*Thomas, Texas Youth Commission*
(www.tyc.state.tx.us/programs/youth_haiku2.html)

ART IS EVERYWHERE

Introduction

Art is found all over the world and through all different times. Human cultures have always expressed themselves through art, represented on walls, through stonework, textiles and fabrics, pottery, metal and paper. Yet, how do we decide what is considered art and what is not? Does it have to do with the walls of a museum? A frame? A price tag? A famous name?

Purpose

- Explore some of the concepts of artistic expression and debates around the definition of art
- Learn about a specific artist and his or her work, or about artists in your own community

Time

This project is best-suited as two separate outings. For the first outing, allow 1-2 hours to visit an art museum, gallery or exhibit in your area (if there's not an art museum nearby, there are often art exhibits at libraries, airports, coffee shops, community centers). The second meeting can be dedicated to exploring art in your own community.

Materials

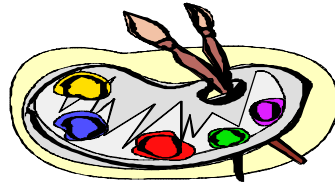
Since this is more of a field trip, you won't need many materials. Although, it might be nice to have:

- A book on art or on a particular artist whose work you are seeing
- Paper (to record thoughts)
- Camera *Note that you are usually not allowed to take photographs in art museums or galleries.*

Development of Activity

1. Begin by discussing:

- What is art? What do you like? What do you not like? How does it make you feel? Where can you find art?



2. Visit an art exhibition. Discuss reflection questions:

- How does this art make you feel? What do you think about it?
- Can you tell anything about the artist or the time the artist lived from the pieces?
- How does knowing a title of a work affect your feelings about a piece of art? Does it change them?
- How about the order of the pieces? Knowing about the life of the artist?

3. Now, explore art outside of museums and art galleries. With an artist's eye, walk around your community. Take note of what you see. Are there any statues, murals, or public art displays? How about sidewalk drawings or graffiti? Do you notice any window displays in front of stores? What do you see in people's yards or garden. Discuss reflection questions:

- Are these things outside of for instance, art museums, considered art?
- Does this differ from what you see in the art gallery/museum? Is it similar? How so?

Suggestions

This activity addresses some sophisticated ideas. Gauge the activity to suit your needs. An idea for a simplified version could entail making an afternoon adventure of simply walking around your own neighborhood and discussing, photographing, and noting what you think is art and why. Try starting with more obvious things like murals, statues, and sculptures, and then move to less obvious artifacts (i.e. window displays, sidewalk art, gardens...)

Resources

- Select a book about a particular artist of interest. There are also many books available about art written especially for youth. Check out your local library, bookstore or even an art gallery shop.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art's site: www.metmuseum.org/explore/index.asp (The "Explore and Learn" section includes games, art history timeline, and information about artists and objects of art)
- National Gallery of Art Kid's page: www.nga.gov/kids/kids.htm (includes games)