

## Looking Carefully: Squares Picture Puzzler

Whether looking at a work of art or reading a text, students often rush over the images or words to make quick decisions about what they see and what is going on. This lesson plan challenges students to look carefully at small squares of a picture that has been cut up to slowly make inferences/predictions about what the work of art might look like. Students start from their single square of the picture and then team up with other students to build their understanding as more squares and parts of the picture are revealed.

### Curricular Areas

Language Arts, Visual Arts – Aesthetic Response

### Grade Level

Grades 4–9

### Common Core Academic State Standards

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.7.1](#)
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.b](#)

### National Visual Arts Standards

- Artistic Process – Responding: Understanding and evaluating how the arts convey meaning

### Art Images Required

Click on the titles below to view high-resolution photographs on the Philadelphia Museum of Art website. Images that are also available in the Artstor Digital Library are indicated by an ID number or search phrase.

- [The Peaceable Kingdom](#), 1826, by Edward Hicks  
Artstor search: 1956-59-1
- [Breaking Home Ties](#), 1890, by Thomas Hovenden  
Artstor search: 1942-60-1
- [Winter Coast](#), 1890, by Winslow Homer  
Artstor search: cat. 1004 coast
- [Railroad Bridge, Argenteuil](#), 1874, by Claude Monet  
Artstor search: cat. 1050 bridge



*Railroad Bridge*, 1874  
Claude Monet (French)  
Oil on canvas  
21 3/8 x 28 7/8 inches (54.3 x 73.3 cm)  
Frame: 33 3/4 x 41 3/8 x 5 inches (85.7 x 105.1 x 12.7 cm)  
John G. Johnson Collection, 1917  
Cat. 1050

### Lesson Process

1. For this lesson, try to find an image that can remain somewhat mysterious when it is divided into squares. You've been provided with four that should do well for this activity. Choose one work of art and print it onto cardstock. Next, cut the image up into squares. Make sure there are enough squares for every student to have one. If possible, have a few extra so that you can hold onto a few key squares.
2. Give each student one square to work with. Be sure to reserve a couple of key squares of the image that might give the picture away. Ask them to look carefully at their square and notice as much as they can about it. Can they make any predictions about what the rest of the picture might look like?
3. Have students pair up and share their squares. Can they make any guesses about how their two pieces fit together? What new information do they have about the picture? What questions would they like to answer?

If you would like a little extra scaffolding for your students, provide them with a note-taking sheet numbered 1, 2, 4, and 8, with spaces for writing in between. Have them write their observations and thoughts down as they continue to see more squares.

4. Have two pairs get together. What do they know now that there are four pieces of the picture?
5. Have two foursomes get together. What more do they know now that there are eight pieces? What predictions are holding true? What ones do they need to discard? What questions from earlier were answered and what new ones have arisen?
6. Bring all of the groups together and have them share their predictions.
7. Then let students put all of their pieces together to see as much of the image as they can. What do students know now? Do they need to change their predictions? What could be in the spaces that are still blank?
8. View a digital image or reproduction of the artwork. What are their reactions or thoughts about the artwork now that they can view and discuss the entire image?

### Assessment

1. Younger students: How is this activity similar to meeting people and making new friends? Do you make "first impressions" about people before you get to see the "whole picture?" Write about a time when you have formed a first impression that turned out to be incorrect or incomplete—or when an unfair first impression was made about you.
2. Older students: What kinds of ideas arose in your group discussions, and how did the conversation change as the group became larger? Write a paragraph describing this process, highlighting examples of clues that resulted in specific conclusions. Include some explanation of the importance of context in decision-making.
3. As an extension discussion: How is the process you just completed similar to what you do to understand a text you are reading, a math problem you are solving, or a science experiment?