

PITZHANGER

MANOR & GALLERY

GRAYSON PERRY

The Vanity of Small Differences

Teacher's Activity Pack

Aims

1. To explore the Grayson Perry exhibition
2. Offer activities to complete in the classroom
3. Provide opportunities for meaningful reflections on the exhibition

Exhibition Description

Grayson Perry is a contemporary artist who makes cool art with all sorts of materials! He made a special group of artworks called "The Vanity of Small Differences" to show how similar people can like very different things. He went around England, met all sorts of people, and saw how their lives differed in how they thought or connected with objects around them. Then, he made six giant colourful tapestries to tell the stories of what he saw. He got the idea from another artist named William Hogarth, who made a series of prints about a man who made terrible choices. Perry's tapestries are like a modern version of that story, but they're all about how people show off who they are through the things they like.

Key Words/Glossary

Tapestry:

A traditional form of textile art made from thread, often depicting a story by weaving coloured weft threads through plain warp threads, that are then stretched on a loom.

Composition:

The putting together or arrangement of elements in an artwork.

Figurative:

Style of art that has strong references to the real world, particularly to the human figure. Perry uses many references to historical and religious art in the exhibition.

Abstract:

Style of art that doesn't look exactly like something from real life and it comes from artist's imagination. Abstract art uses shapes, gestures, forms, lines, and colours to represent different ideas and emotions.

Imagination:

The ability to form images and ideas in the mind without any immediate input of the senses (such as seeing or hearing).



Self-Guided Gallery Worksheet

This worksheet will take you through a few activities that you can do together with your group inside the Gallery space.

Before your visit

On the way to the gallery, remind the students where they are going, discuss the key words from page 2 and ask below questions:

- Discuss with students if they have been to a gallery or a museum before.
- Set out your behaviour expectations of your students and remind them not to touch the artwork or run in the gallery.



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During your visit

- Ask pupils to go and stand beside the tapestry they like the best. Ask them to respond to the objects and environment in the tapestry in terms of what interests or appeals to them. Pupils could make drawings in sketchbooks of the objects they are drawn to. Observe how pupils group themselves. Invite each group to talk about and note down what they like in the tapestry they've chosen. Do their choices link them in some way? What words would they use to describe the world depicted in the tapestry they've chosen?
- Ask pupils to find and sketch all the different facial expressions that can be found in the tapestries. Pupils could be asked to annotate these drawings with words describing the emotions and/or personalities of the people they've sketched. Ask them to make speech bubbles and thought bubbles telling more of what they think is going on in the minds of the people represented in the tapestries.
- Ask pupils to choose one of the tapestries and create their own story idea from it. Ask them to identify what style of story the tapestry might suggest. Get them to think about title, characters and plot. They could be challenged to tell an improvised story on the spot, or they could tell a story by going round the group and adding a sentence each.



Activity 1: Discussion

See, Feel, Think, Wonder

When looking at the tapestries in the gallery, you may find these suggestions for general discussion points and activities useful.

What do you see?

Use the sentence stem 'I can see...' to invite pupils to look really carefully into the detail of each of the tapestries. Challenge pupils to keep finding more and more detail. (This starting point is good for developing the powers of careful observation.)

What do you feel?

Use the sentence stem 'I feel...' to invite pupils to share their emotional reactions to one or more of the tapestries. (This starting point is good for encouraging pupils to acknowledge their felt response and express their own responses.)

What do you think?

Use the sentence stem 'I think...' to invite pupils to share their ideas about the tapestries. (This starting point is good for encouraging pupils to express their opinions and ideas about art works and how and why they were made.)

What do you wonder?

Use the sentence stem 'I wonder...' to invite pupils to pose questions about the tapestries. Support pupils by suggesting question words they could use such as 'where...', 'how...', 'who...', 'why...', etc. (This starting point is good for encouraging curiosity and further research.)

Activity 2: Hands-on Ways of Seeing

'Ways of Seeing' uses drawing games to connect the students with the art. The class should select one figure in a tapestry as a focus to draw. Use the same figure for each experiment — the more you draw them, the more you'll see and feel.

Materials

- Paper
- Pencils
- Clipboards (If available)
- Timer (The teacher can use the timer app on their phone)

Introduction:

Remind the students of the key words on page 2, and start your conversation as below:

'In art, portraits can look "real" or like they do in person, we call that FIGURATIVE, or they can look completely different to reality. When they look different and are inspired by the artist's imagination, we call that ABSTRACT. As you try each experiment, ask yourself — does my drawing look "real" or "abstract"?'





Activity 2: Hands-on Ways of Seeing

Experiment 1

Change drawing hands! You have two minutes on the clock. You can draw the figure any way you like — however, you have to change drawing hands. If you're right-handed use your left hand, if you're left-handed use your right. When you're done, share your work with others — what does it look like?

Experiment 2

Drawing with your eyes closed! You have two minutes on the clock. You can draw the figure any way you like, you can use your regular drawing hand, however... it has to be from memory, with your eyes closed. Take one final look, then shut your eyes and draw — no looking or your time is up! When you're done, share with others — what does it look like?

Experiment 3

OK, you can look again! And you can use your regular drawing hand. Much easier, right? However... this time, you only have ten seconds on the clock! When you're done, share with others — what does it look like?

Experiment 4

You can have the two minutes back, what a relief! You can look and use your regular drawing hand and draw any way you like. Seems easier? However, this time you have to draw without lifting the pencil off the paper — it has to be one continuous line. How will you do this? When you're done, share with others — what does it look like?

Extras

- Pupils could be asked to bring in an object that has a particular value for them (such as an old teddy bear or a special birthday present). Can this be curated as a mini exhibition together? They could draw the objects and write about the stories and associations that give this object value for them.
- Pupils could research the tribal traditions of a particular country, including contemporary and ancient practices. How do people across the world denote their sense of belonging? They could work in groups focusing on different themes such as dress, shoes, jewellery, body markings or make-up.

Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences runs from 10 July to December 2024

Self-guided visits for school groups are available free of charge to all Ealing schools.

Book your place now using our [online booking form](#), or contact the Learning team at learning@pitzhanger.org.uk to find out more.

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now!**

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