

Conversations through Art: EXPLORE and CREATE (Teacher Version)

With a partner, select a theme to explore. Using the VMFA Collections Search, explore works of art from different collections, places, or time periods. After exploring, each partner should select a work of art from a different collection, place, or time period. Using both the information from the VMFA Collections Search along with additional research, complete the chart below. Keep in mind that some pieces of art might have more information available than others.

Theme: [Childhood](#)

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| <i>Kids</i> | Title | <i>The Young Artist</i> |
| George Bellows | Artist | Joseph-Siffred Duplessis |
| American realist painter; focused on urban American life; Ashcan School (technique of depicting grim urban situations through rose-colored glasses) | Artist Background | French painter who painted many high society portraits; Rationalist approach of 18th century |
| 1906 | Year | 1760s |
| New York City | Location | France |
| Tenements and slums; working class children of different ages and genders; different style of clothing | Subject Matter | A young girl showing off her artistic ability, precocious |
| Dog, stroller, graffiti, fence | Symbols, Objects | Girl, table, sketch, art supplies, fine fashionable clothing |
| In the 20th century, "kids" meant working class children; the population was growing in NYC during the 1900s; growing working culture | Historical Context or Cultural Background | Acknowledgement that kids were unique; could foster abilities/invest in them; wealth |
| Lack of adult supervision; showing what life was like for children; shifting social changes; negative effects of industrialization and urbanization. Shows children as out of control. | Purpose/Meaning | Showed off the abilities of the child, emphasized the wealth in society; nurturing/growth |

Once you have completed the chart, think about what these two pieces would talk about if they could. What would they want to know about each other? What would they reveal about themselves? What common experiences might they share? Below are suggested conversation starters. Create a short dialogue between your shared pieces grounded in the information from your chart. This could either be written in the format of a conversation, text message, or be videotaped on fligrid.

Suggested Conversation Starters:

- What are your hopes or dreams?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What makes you happy? What makes you sad?
- What is something you wish you could do?
- What is something no one would guess about you?
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- What is something you like about yourself? What is something you don't like about yourself?
- Describe your perfect day.
- In what ways are you similar to me?
- What is your background, or family life like?

Sample Dialogue:

Characters:

The Young Artist: Marie (fictitious name)

Kids: Robert -- boy to the right, smoking (fictitious name)

Robert: Wow, you are dressed like you own an entire building. Where do you even get clothes like that?

Marie: Thank you. We do own a number of buildings. These clothes are made especially for me. Kind of you to notice.

Robert: I like to deface the sides of buildings and our living quarters are pretty tight and not fancy like that table you are drawing on.

Marie: With drawings? I like to draw too! My parents are nurturing my inherent ability to draw by giving me art lessons.

Robert: I wish my parents could pay for art lessons, they are too busy working in the factories all day while I'm usually on my own. Do you have any friends? You look like you are alone.

Maria: My parents are often busy as well but I am rarely on my own, with tutors, nannies, and maids. What do you hope to do in the future?

Robert: I want a different life than my parents. All they do is work and then come home and sleep, we never even get to talk anymore. I want to live comfortably and not have to go to bed hungry.

Maria: I want a more independent life than I or my mother have. Maybe my art will take me places.

Robert: I would invite you to hang out with me and my friends, but your mother would probably have me arrested.

Maria: How ghastly!