First Americans Museum
OKLAHOMA

Describe and Doodle

Activity Length: 5–10 minutes
Recommended Ages: Five and up
Key Content Areas: Visual Arts

Activity Description:
This simple activity encourages close observation and analysis of works of art. Can be used as a gallery activity during a museum visit or a bell ringer in a classroom.

Supplies Needed:

- Pencil and paper
- Clipboard
- Work of art in a gallery or reproduced on a screen or poster



Image courtesy of FAM. In background: Tony Tiger, *Grand Weaver* (2014).

Instructions:

1. The leader sits with their back facing the work of art or reproduction, facing the larger group.
2. The leader announces that they are unfamiliar with the work of art and that the group will need to describe it to them in careful detail. The leader will then draw the work of art based on their description.
3. One at a time, members of the group will share their observations with the leader.
4. The leader may paraphrase each observation back to the group, allowing an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary. Clarifying questions are encouraged. The group may not see the drawing in progress.
5. One the drawing is complete, reveal the drawing to the group. Compare the drawing with the actual object.
6. Share information about the object relevant to the group's observations.

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Describe and Doodle, cont.

Key Concepts:

- Close observation of works of art is an important skill to develop.
- The materials, subject matter, and techniques used by First American artists and makers reveals insights into their cultures and communities.

Adaptation/Extension Ideas:

- Following a group discussion, you may separate learners in small groups or pairs to encourage further discussion of new objects.
- This activity can be used as a prelude to sketching or notebooking, priming learners to more closely observe works of art and attend to small details than they might have otherwise.
- This activity may also be a helpful formative assessment tool to determine who might prior knowledge your learners may have about First American cultures or works of art.

Special Notes:

- If you are using this activity in a museum exhibition or art gallery, first confirm which kinds of writing utensils are permitted. Many institutions do not allow pens or markers in the galleries.
- Choose an object that is large enough for the group to see and that it has enough visual "information" for your age level to easier observe and describe.
- Avoid outdated and harmful language to describe Native works of art (such as "primitive") or cultures (such as describing Native regalia as a "costume").
- Be prepared to answer student questions about the work of art following a drawing session. Use a trustworthy resource, such as a museum label or gallery catalogue, to learn more about the object prior to the activity.