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A QUESTIONING STRATEGY FOR AESTHETIC SCANNING

Gloria Hewett

This paper describes the rationale, background, and development of a questioning strategy for aesthetic scanning. The questioning strategy is designed to alleviate problems that will develop during the art criticism component of discipline-based art education. Aesthetic scanning is a pre-criticism process that is used to introduce students to talk about art. Talk about art can be effective when it promotes the aesthetic understanding of works of art and other objects.

Broudy's (1972) aesthetic scanning process is one of the fundamental elements of discipline-based art education. It is a pre-criticism process for introducing students to observe and respond to the sensory, formal, expressive, and technical properties of works of art and other objects.

Greer (1984) adopted aesthetic scanning for us in The Getty Institutes for Educators on the Visual Arts. Aesthetic scanning also forms the basis for The Helping Education Through Arts Resources for Teachers (HEART) program in Decatur, Illinois, public schools (Getty, 1985). As an integral part of discipline-based art education, aesthetic scanning was chosen to combine with a questioning strategy.

Questions will increase students' verbal participation when interacting with art or other objects. The purpose of questioning is the facilitation of student participation in learning; language becomes a path for learning about visual art. The questioning strategy presented in this paper is usable with other approaches to art talk besides aesthetic scanning.

The questioning strategy is a foundation tool for teachers to build on individually. The strategy is flexible; questions and reactions can be arranged and phrased several ways depending on the goals of individual teachers. Questions prepared by the teacher will become core questions; reactions and responses during discussions about art will elicit additional, unplanned questions. The questioning strategy will not stifle new ideas and questions as they arise spontaneously, but it will curb unstructured talk that does not have relevancy.

Aesthetic scanning is limited by the ability of the individual teacher. A teacher with a solid understanding of art will be capable of providing richer experiences for students than a teacher whose art knowledge is limited. Aesthetic scanning, however, functions as a starting point for talk about art or other objects; no matter how extensive or how limited the background of the teacher, aesthetic scanning is always a workable and useful process.

The development of the questioning strategy involved combining information from several sources discovered during a review of the literature. The questioning strategy is set up as a grid with a horizontal and vertical axis (see Figures 1 & 2). The basic framework for conducting a discussion revolves

around question types, responses, and reaction types (Human, 1970).

Question types are concerned with the questions the teacher asks students to answer (Hyman, 1979). There are three basic question types, each directed toward eliciting different responses. The question types serve as a way of formulating questions, not as a strict guideline for the sequencing of questions. The strategy follows a general hierarchy of difficulty based on the arrangement of the three categories and on the arrangement of divisions within each of those categories.

Definitions		Aesthetic Scanning Sensory, Formal, Expressive, and Technical Properties	
Question Types	Response Clue	Leading	Questions that lead students to agree or disagree.
		Parallel Terms	Questions that ask students to give more information about the same topic.
		Cited Terms	Questions that have a framework for the response.
		Excluded Terms	Questions that tell students what not to include in their responses.
		Wh-words	Questions that clue student to answer in terms of time, reasons, people, and number.
	Information-Process	Yes/No	Questions that ask students to answer either yes or no.
		Selection	Questions that ask students to choose from two or more given alternatives.
		Construction	Questions that ask students to construct their own responses.
	Production	Productive	Questions that ask students to produce their own information.
		Reproductive	Questions that ask students to reproduce information obtained earlier from the teacher or a book.

Figure 1 Definitions of Question Types

The first division of the question types is called **response clue**. Response clue includes wh-words, parallel terms, cited terms, excluded terms, and leading. The response clue section provides clues within the initial questions for students to use in constructing their answers.

Wh-words such as how, when, who, what, and why clue students to respond in terms of number, people, time, and reasons. Parallel terms indicate to the student that the response is similar to a previous response. Cited term questions offer a framework for response by including a specific descriptor in the question such as: "In terms of shape, can you explain the contrast in this painting?" Excluded terms tell students what not to include in their responses, for example, "besides color, what else works to unify this painting?" Leading questions lead students to agree or disagree with the question, for example,

"The red and green contrast sharply, don't they?"

The second division of question types is labeled **information-process activity**. There are three different processes under this heading: yes or no, selection, and construction. The yes or no activity asks for a direct yes or no answer from students. The selection activity offers alternative answers within the question itself for students to choose from. This type of question narrows available choices for the students, for example, "Is the organic shape large, small, or tiny?"

The construction activity requires students to construct their own responses, such as "How would you explain your position on political art?" The process is open because no hints or clues are included in the question; students are required to construct a complete answer on their own.

The third division of question types is called **production**. There are two types of production questions: productive and reproductive. Productive questions ask students to produce their own information without relying on past knowledge. Reproductive questions ask students to reproduce an answer from information acquired earlier.

The question types overlap in several places. The variety of question types allows teachers a chance to discriminate between the abilities of their students. Variety can be used to achieve greater overall participation among students.

Students and teachers are not predictable to the extent that specific responses can be developed for specific questions. The strength of the strategy, therefore, lies in the way the teacher reacts to student responses (see Figure 2).

Definitions		Aesthetic Scanning Sensory, Formal, Expressive, and Technical Properties
Reaction Types	Correct	Reactions that provide positive reinforcement for correct answers.
	Redirect	Reactions that direct the same question to other students after the first has responded appropriately.
	Rephrase	Reactions that reword an unsatisfactory initial question to clarify its meaning.
	Prompt	Reactions that employ clues or hints to help students with weak, incomplete, or incorrect answers.
	Clarification	Reactions used to amplify partially acceptable answers.
	Elaborate	Reactions used to extend yes/no answers and other short answers.

Figure 2 Definitions of Reaction Types

A reaction can follow a question, a response, or another reaction. A question is used to elicit a response and the reactions are then used to guide, probe, redirect, or clarify the initial response until a strong response has been constructed (Gall, 1970; Hensen, 1981; Hyman, 1970; Laurence, 1975; Sharp, 1981).

The division labeled **correct** constitutes a positive reaction to a correct student response. The reaction labeled **redirect** can be used when an answer is correct and the teacher wants to direct the same question to other students.

The reaction clue labeled **rephrase** has a couple of purposes. The teacher can use this reaction before the initial question has been answered because it was unclear from the start, for example, "The wording of my question is vague. Let me ask the question in another way." A second way to use the rephrase reaction clue is to rephrase a question because the student misunderstood the question and answered incorrectly.

Prompting is the reaction clue used when a student is unsure and needs help starting, when the student has started answering and feels hesitant continuing, and when an answer is wrong or inappropriate. The reaction clue labeled clarification is used to clarify a student's response. The reaction clue labeled **elaborate** is used when a student answers with a simple, short answer that can be elaborated or extended.

Talk about art needs to be structured at this time because art talk has been spurious in the past and the discipline-based approach demonstrates the necessity of informed talk about art if art is to be viewed as a serious subject of study. The art teacher can plan for the understanding to be gained from art work by structuring the kinds of questions asked about the work of art. The questioning strategy is applicable to both the elementary and secondary level, although the difference in question content will need to be considered in relationship to grade level.

Art can be taught seriously and effectively to students. Questions will develop an ability to critically examine art and other objects to discover expression and meaning. Reactions will develop the initial responses and ideas to create well thought out concepts and relationships. Together, the questioning strategy and aesthetic scanning will increase opportunities for informed aesthetic responses in the classroom.

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