

the warhol: resources & lessons

Unit Lesson Plans / Critical Thinking / Aesthetics / Lesson 4 / Handout 4.3

Aesthetics Handout 4.3 Aesthetic Theories Writing Prompts

Use set one while viewing Andy Warhol's *Electric Chair* print.

Use set two with **any** work of art.

I. Prompts:

Representation

Explain or construct an argument for Andy Warhol's *Electric Chair* as being good art based solely on its ability to show reality and to mirror the world

Expressionism

Construct an argument that the inner emotions, feelings, moods, and mental states of Andy Warhol are made clear in the *Electric Chair* painting and that his expression is what makes the art.

Formalism

Based solely upon the lines, shapes, colors, and textures used in this piece, construct an argument for why the *Electric Chair* is art.

Communication of Moral or Religious Ideas

Construct an argument that supports the *Electric Chair's* merit as art in its ability to "infect" the viewer with important moral ideas.

Linguistic Theories or Symbolic (nonverbal) Communication:

Construct an argument that supports the *Electric Chair's* merit as art in its symbolism and ability to communicate nonverbally.

Instrumentalism

Argue for or against Andy Warhol's *Electric Chair* as an instrument for change in contemporary American culture. Explain how this artwork is or is not significant in its capacity to change peoples' thoughts, beliefs, or actions.

Institutionalist Theory

Create a case for Andy Warhol's *Electric Chair* as being art or not being art based upon the cultural environment of The Andy Warhol Museum and the art world.



Andy Warhol, *Electric Chair*, 1971, Published Edition, 137/250, screenprint on paper, 35 1/2 x 48 in. © AWF

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II. Prompts:

What makes this a work of art? Is there one true definition of art? Are interpretations of art true? What do we learn from art? What value does art have?

Representation

How true to life is this painting? How much does this painting look like the subject it is trying to display?

Expressionism

Does the form of the painting convey specific emotions? Which and how? What was the artist feeling when they made this painting?

Formalism

How do the colors, shapes, and lines interact? Where on the canvas is your eye drawn? How are the objects in the painting arranged and how does that affect the overall aesthetic?

Moral

Does the painting make you question your ideas or actions? Does it pose any specific moral questions or dilemmas?

Non-Verbal Symbolism

What symbols or objects are present in the painting? How do they interact or work against each other? What do they suggest to you?

Instrumentalism

How will you think or act differently, now that you have seen this painting? Do you think other people will experience a similar change after having seen this painting?

Institutionalist Theory

How would your feelings about this painting change if it were the background for a magazine ad? If it were on sale at a flea market? If it were protected by armed guards?

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