Global Perspectives: Museums as a Resource
Fostering Visual Literacy
The Pyramid of Inquiry

Observation

Evidence-based Inferences

Interpretation
The Pyramid of Inquiry

- What do you see?
- What do you infer about the figures, events...? Why?
- What big themes/ideas does this work surface?
Warm Up: Collaborative Annotation

Observations

Inferences

Questions
Collaborative Annotation

Silently:
• Write observations in the inner circle.
• Write inferences in the middle circle.
• Write questions you have that can not be answered by looking alone in the outer circle.

Tips:
• You can comment on the work of art, as well as other’s comments.
• You are encouraged to draw lines to the area(s) of the work of art your comment references.
• Ensure all members contribute equally!
Buddha

- Sculptors may employ visual metaphors when depicting deities or royalty.

- Common traits for a depiction of Buddha include:
  - elongated earlobes
  - taut skin
  - webbed fingers and toes
  - strong shoulders
  - a leonine body
  - peaceful facial expression

- This hand gesture (mudra) may be referred to as: “abhaya,” or “gesture of fearlessness.”
Plaque: Equestrian Oba and Attendants

- Artists may use the size and position of figures to represent rank and authority. In this case the Oba (king) is in the middle.

- Portugal made contact with Benin in the late 15th century. Through trade with the Portuguese, Benin received the coral beads worn by the Oba, and even the brass that makes up this plaque.

- About 900 similar plaques were used to decorate the façade of the royal palace.

Date: 1550–1680
Geography: Nigeria, Court of Benin
Culture: Edo peoples
Medium: Brass
Dimensions: H. 19 7/16 x W. 16 1/2 x D. 4 1/2 in. (49.5 x 41.9 x 11.4 cm)
Classification: Metal-Sculpture
Accession Number: 1978.412.309
The Last Moments of John Brown

- John Brown was an abolitionist who led a raid on a federal armory in Virginia (now West Virginia), intending to arm enslaved African Americans.

- Brown had come to believe that the only way to end slavery in America was through bloodshed.

- Brown was sentenced to die by hanging. His hasty trial electrified the nation, and a sensational newspaper account reported how he paused on his way to the scaffold to kiss a baby.
Relief panel, Palace of Ashurnasirpal II

- This relief depicts Ashurnasirpal II, king of Assyria from 883 – 859 BC, and an attendant.

- The king is identifiable by his crown. He is also recognizable by his luxuriant beard, and in the relief’s original, pigmented state would have been further distinguished by his clothing, more elaborately embroidered than that of any other figure.

- This panel is actually a wall; one part of an immense receiving room within the palace.

Period: Neo-Assyrian
Date: ca. 883–859 B.C.
Geography: Mesopotamia, Nimrud (ancient Kalhu)
Culture: Assyrian
Medium: Gypsum alabaster
Dimensions: 92 1/4 x 92 x 4 1/2 in. (234.3 x 233.7 x 11.4 cm)
Classification: Stone-Reliefs-Inscribed
Accession Number: 32.143.4