

MASTER *the Art of* READING

Set your sights on the work of the great masters of art, but with a twist! Young readers can feast their eyes and tickle their funny bones with this theme that entices visual learners and invites creativity.

SETTING THE SCENE

Museum Reading Room: Create an inspiring reading area for young art aficionados. Make several fancy, museum-style picture frames in various sizes and shapes from cardboard or tagboard. Most computer graphics programs have frames you can simply print and mount on card stock. To start, fill each frame with a caption reading “Your Masterpiece Here.” Mount them on the wall around a corner of the library, interspersed with Upstart’s “Master the Art of Reading” posters. You might make free-standing cardboard classical columns or even an archway to mark the entrance to your reading room, and define the space with large planters or horizontal crepe paper streamers between your columns and the wall. Cushioned benches or comfy floor pillows complete the effect. Place students’ masterpieces in the frames as they are completed and add appropriate wall text for each.

Artist’s Studio: Create a small working studio. Set up a free-standing easel and perhaps a small drafting table and stool. If you can’t incorporate a real window, make a poster board window, showing an interesting view, to mount on the wall. Provide paper, crayons, colored pencils, and washable markers. Place paint smocks, jars of brushes, a few blank canvases, and a beret or two artfully around the area. Set up a bowl of fruit, just waiting to be the subject of a still-life painting. Upstart’s “Master the Art of Reading” posters would add panache. Encourage students to create art inspired by their favorite books.



Bulletin Board: Create a bulletin board display to complement Upstart’s “Master the Art of Reading” posters. Back it with a natural canvas-tone fabric and make a border of inexpensive paintbrushes at jaunty angles. Add prints of the famous paintings featured in the posters and covers from art books in your collection. Complete the effect with colorful paper “paint splashes.”

Book Display: Use drafting tables, easels, or pedestal tables, placed under posters from the “Master the Art of Reading” series, to display books related to the posters. You might set up one such arrangement, and change the poster and related books periodically while you explore this theme. For example, under Munch’s *Scream*, you could display horror books. *American Gothic* might suggest biographies or rural life; *Sunflowers* would complement a display of gardening books.

Master the Art of Reading

Look the Part: How do you picture an artist, hard at work in his or her studio? Wearing a paint smock and beret, and carrying a palette and brushes? Try dressing the part for programs or activities around this theme. Invite students to come dressed as their favorite artists, and guess who they are.



GAMES

The Shape Game: You'll need paper and crayons, markers, or colored pencils. Read *The Shape Game*. Then pair students with a buddy and play the game, in which one person draws a squiggly, irregular shape and the other uses the shape as the starting point for a picture of something recognizable. Trade off roles and share results.

Look Closer. Try any or all of these games, designed to encourage students to look closer at works of art via hands-on interaction. You might put materials and instructions for all three activities at a learning center.

- Have students find specific details in paintings and other works of art. *Can You Find It? Search and Discover More than 150 Details in 19 Works of Art* and the companion volume, *Can You Find It, Too?*, by Judith Cressy, do exactly that. Or display items from your collection of art prints and create your own lists of small details for students to find. Small, hand-held magnifying glasses might be useful and fun to use. *I Spy Shapes in Art* invites a similar activity for use with preschoolers just learning shapes.
- Make art print jigsaw puzzles by color copying reprints onto card stock and cutting them into irregular shapes. Make puzzles with large, medium, or small pieces for varied levels of difficulty. Keep each puzzle in its own envelope. Label each envelope with the title of the work, the artist's name, and when the work was created. Add a reference to a picture of the work in one of your library's art books, so students can learn more about it.
- Invite students to focus on small parts of large works of art by providing "viewfinders" in the form of napkin rings or two- to three-inch sections of cardboard tubing. Make available large art prints, and challenge kids to

use the viewfinders to look for details of line, shape, pattern, contrast, shades of color, and texture in the overall composition of the work.

RECIPES

"Starving Artist" Snacks: Many famous artists experienced periods of poverty before they were able to make a living through their art. *Lives of the Artists* mentions Hokusai eating rice cakes and tea, Frida Kahlo eating applesauce and cheese, Picasso limited to fried potatoes and beans for a time, Matisse eating only rice and struggling not to eat the fruit he bought to paint, and Van Gogh living on bread and cheese. Try a smorgasbord of snack foods, identified with the name of the "starving artist" who ate each, as part of an arts-related program.

Edible Art Supplies: Make edible artist's palettes to serve at programs.

- Make a round cake. Cut out a notch to make the traditional palette shape. Frost with white icing, then make paint blotches with different colored gel icings. For an added treat, wrap strips of fruit leather around one end of licorice twists, and fringe the bottoms of the leather to make edible paintbrushes.
- Cut notches from round sugar cookies. Frost them in white and add gumdrops or M&Ms for the paint colors.
- For a less-sweet version, use round or oval snack crackers spread with cream cheese, and bits of colored fruit for the paints.



Arts Eats. Find pictures of artworks featuring food in your collection. Choose one or two that picture food you could arrange in a manner similar to the picture and serve as snacks in your library. Some paintings that might work well are *Still Life: Fruit, Bird, and Dwarf Pear Tree* by Charles V. Bond; *Still Life with Figs and Bread* by Luis Melendez; or *Cakes* by Wayne Thiebaud. All these can be found on the National Gallery Web site, www.nga.gov.

ARTS/CRAFTS

Recommended Books

Bouquet. Show the Upstart “Master the Art of Reading” poster that features Van Gogh’s *Sunflowers*. Invite students to create pictures or sculptures of “flower arrangements” of their favorite books—art books or otherwise. In sculptures, “books” can be made of cardboard with appropriate title, author, and cover art pictured in crayon or marker. Florists’ plastic card holders, or even plastic forks, could be used as “stems” for the featured books. Display the creations under the poster in your library.



Working with Texture. Choose the time and place for this one carefully—it can get messy! Provide paper, scissors, glue, and a wide variety of textured art materials. You might include sand in several colors; raw rice, pasta, or dried beans; string and yarn; fabric scraps; buttons, beads, and sequins; wallpaper scraps; and small bits of colored paper. Display examples of mosaics and mixed media collages. Then let the creativity flow, as young artists explore the richness of texture.

Self-Portraits. Have a self-portrait workshop. Display several famous artists’ self-portraits, done in a variety of styles and media. Then challenge students to create their own self-portraits. Provide materials for students to try their hands at drawing, painting, cut paper mosaic, caricature, mixed media collage, etc. A good resource for this is *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists*.



SPECIAL EVENTS

“What’s Art?” Storytime: Students, and many adults, can be intimidated by the notion of fine art, and bewildered by specific works of art. The more abstract the work, the more puzzling it can be. Acknowledge and celebrate the challenging wonder of fine art with a storytime using books like *Dot*, *The Shape Game*, and *Seen Art?* Public libraries might try this as a family storytime, and throw in booktalks for other favorite art books in your collection.

Artist Visit: Invite a local artist to show some of his or her work and give an age-appropriate gallery talk. If possible, follow up with a hands-on workshop, led by the artist, exploring that artist’s preferred medium or style.

Juried Art Exhibition: Feature your kids’ masterpieces, complete with wall text. Invite one or two local artists or art teachers to judge the entries. Ensure lots of winners by including many different categories, as appropriate to the pieces you have: Best self-portrait, best use of color, best still life, best landscape, best abstract, and of course, best of show. Give prizes to participants and winners. Possible prizes include art books, art supplies, or bookmarks or note cards from Upstart’s “Master the Art of Reading” theme.



WRITING PROJECTS

Words from Pictures: In *Under the Spell of the Moon*, artists create pictures inspired by the words of poems or stories. Try the reverse! Set out art books that provide a wide variety of artistic media and styles, and invite students to write poems based on a particular work of art that interests them.

Master the Art of Reading

Step into the Picture: Share the wordless picture book *Picturescape* in a display, or read aloud *Katie's Sunday Afternoon* or another of Mayhew's Katie books. Have students choose a painting from a book of famous artwork and write their own stories that put them "in the picture."

CONTEST

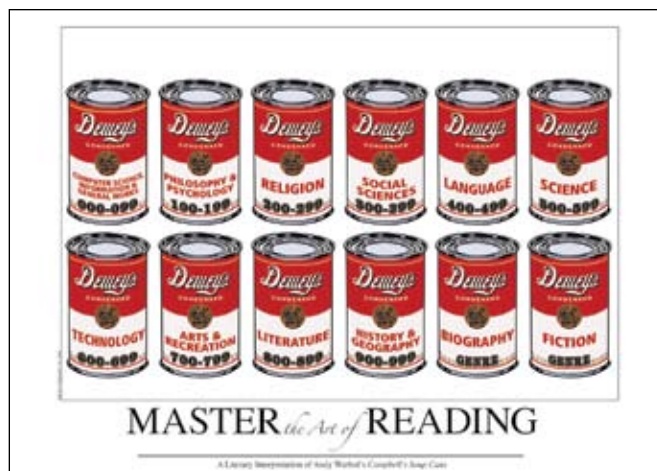
Art Scavenger Hunt: Use the reproducible worksheet, or make your own to suit your collection and goals. Send students off individually or in teams to search the library or classroom for specific items—biographies of artists, pictures of famous masterpieces in books, works from your library's art collection, art supply items, etc. Set a time limit. The student or team that has found the most items when the time is up wins a small prize, like simple art supplies or a bookmark from Upstart's "Master the Art of Reading" theme.



INTERNET ACTIVITIES

The @rtroom: www.arts.ufl.edu/art/rt_room/index.html. This fun art site offers exciting information, projects, and challenges for kids in about grade 2 and up. Design an "artrageous" artist's hat, read the story of how Grant Wood came to paint *American Gothic*, draw a picture from a cat's perspective, and more.

NGA Kids: www.nga.gov/kids. Kids can enjoy an animated, narrated story of Lizzie and Gordon as they tour the National Gallery's sculpture garden to complete a homework assignment. They can also create a colorful jungle or explore a Dutch dollhouse as interactive art activities. Delightful!



MATH/SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

Math-terpieces: Tang's *Math-terpieces* lets students practice addition and grouping skills with problems inspired by masterpiece paintings. Try it with a group of five- to seven-year-olds.

Color! Here's a simple way to encourage kids to experiment with color, mixing colors, and shading. Mount a sheet of heavy white paper on the wall near a table. Gather three flashlights and colored transparency sheets in red, blue, yellow, and gray. Cut circles from each primary color to cover the lens of one of the flashlights. Secure the colors in place with tape. Put the flashlights and the gray transparency sheet on the table. Invite students, individually or in small groups, to shine the flashlights, in different combinations, onto the white paper in overlapping circles to make different colors. Then try making shades of colors by holding the gray sheet in front of different flashlights or in front of the paper.



MASTERFUL ART BOOKS

- *The Art Box* by Gail Gibbons. Holiday House, 2000. ISBN 0823415562. K–3.
- *The Art of Reading: Forty Illustrators Celebrate RIF's 40th Anniversary*. Dutton Books, 2005. ISBN 0525474846. 3+.
- *Art Fraud Detective* by Anna Nilsen. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. ISBN 0753453088. 4–6.
- *Can You Find It? Search and Discover More than 150 Details in 19 Works of Art* by Judith Cressy. Harry N. Abrams, 2002. ISBN 0810932792. 2–5.
- *Chasing Vermeer* by Blue Balliett. Scholastic, 2004. ISBN 0439372941. 4–6.
- *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds. Candlewick Press, 2003. ISBN 0763619612. K–4.
- *Ed Emberley's Drawing Book: Make a World* by Ed Emberley. Little, Brown and Company, 2006. ISBN 0316789720. K–3.
- *Framed* by Frank Cottrell Boyce. HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 033043425X. 4–6.
- *The Great Googlestein Museum Mystery* by Jean Van Leeuwen. Dial, 2003. ISBN 0803727658. 3–5.
- *I Spy Shapes in Art* by Lucy Mickelthwait. Greenwillow Books, 2004. ISBN 0060731931. Pre K–1.
- *Just Like Me: Stories and Self-Portraits by Fourteen Artists* edited by Harriet Rohmer. Children's Book Press, 1997. ISBN 0892391499. K–4.
- *Katie's Sunday Afternoon* by James Mayhew. Orchard Books, 2005. ISBN 0439606780. K–3.
- *Lives of the Artists: Masterpieces, Messes (and What the Neighbors Thought)* by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Kathryn Hewitt. Harcourt, 1995. ISBN 0152001034. 3–6.
- *The Magic Paintbrush* by Laurence Yep. HarperCollins, 2003. ISBN 0064408523. 3–5.
- *Mary Cassatt—American Impressionist. Devine Entertainment*, 2002 (DVD feature film). ASIN B000F9UEFM. 2–6. Check out other titles from “The Artists’ Specials” series as well.



- *Math-terpieces: The Art of Problem-Solving* by Greg Tang, illustrated by Greg Paprocki. Scholastic, 2003. ISBN 0439443881. K–3.
- *Moony B. Finch, Fastest Draw in the West* by David McPhail. Random House, 1994. ISBN 0307175545. K–3.
- *My Name is Georgia* by Jeanette Winter. Harcourt, 2003. ISBN 015204597X. 2–5.
- *Norman Rockwell: Storyteller with a Brush* by Beverly Gherman. Atheneum, 2000. ISBN 0689820011. 3–6.
- *Picturescape* by Elisa Gutierrez. Simply Read Books, 2005. ISBN 1894965248. K–3.
- *Pieces of Georgia* by Jen Bryant. Alfred A. Knopf, 2006. ISBN 0375932593. 5+.
- *Seen Art?* by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith. Viking, 2005. ISBN 0670059862. 3+.
- *The Shape Game* by Anthony Browne. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. ISBN 0374367647. 1–4.
- *Tom Miller: Can a Coal Scuttle Fly?* by Camay Calloway Murphy, illustrated by Tom Miller. Maryland Historical Society, 1996. ISBN 0938420550. 2–5.
- *Under the Spell of the Moon: Art for Children from the World's Great Illustrators* edited by Patricia Aldana. Groundwood Books, 2004. ISBN 0888995598. K–6.

MASTER *the art of* READING SCAVENGER HUNT

Find as many of these items as you can in the time allowed. Write down where you found each item
(location in the room, book title and page, etc.).

Item	Where I Found It	Check Off
A print of da Vinci's Mona Lisa in a book		
An actual paintbrush hidden in an unlikely place		
A biography of Georgia O'Keefe		
A picture of a work of art that shows dogs		
An actual framed work of art		
A kinetic sculpture (a mobile) or a picture of one		
A blank canvas waiting for paint		
A picture of a work of abstract art by Picasso		
A picture of a painting that looks good enough to eat!		
Three different things you can use to draw		
A picture of a work of art with all three primary colors (red, blue, yellow) in it		
A picture of a work of art that shows something make-believe		
A picture of a person with an interesting face you'd like to draw		
A picture of a work of art that makes you happy		
A picture of a work of art that makes you sad		
An art book you'd like to check out and take home		