

School Group Gallery Talks

The Clark's collections connect with many areas of study for all ages and class levels. Gallery talks can enhance student learning in general by helping students develop skills such as observation, analysis, reasoning, and appreciating perspective and ambiguity. Gallery talks also support specific areas of the curriculum; we tailor each gallery talk in collaboration with classroom teachers. Our approach involves in-depth conversation around a few works of art rather than a tour-like visit with many objects from our collection. Below are some popular themes supported by our collection that enhance typical areas of study. We also offer themes to complement our special exhibitions.

Featured Gallery Talks (Spring 2018)

Featured Talk: Portraiture

Students will discuss what we can and can't tell from the physical appearance of people. The goal of the gallery talk is to build empathy and a nuanced understanding of identity and its presentation. This talk is sure to raise more questions than it answers, such as: How do we make assumptions about people based on how they look and are portrayed—or present themselves? Does our interpretation change with knowledge? How has the way we think about portraits changed over time and with technology? Younger grades can focus on the idea of body language, how to read it, and the validity of first impressions.

This gallery talk is suitable for all ages.

Featured Talk: Art & Human Nature

Humans are complicated, but art can help us understand the complexity of human nature and experience. In this gallery talk, students will consider works of art that demonstrate aspects of our shared humanity—our base instincts, tendencies, and pitfalls as well as our ideals and aspirations. Through discussions about art, students will have the opportunity to reflect on their individual agency examine their assumptions about others, exploring dynamics between people and reinforcing the importance of empathy and respect for one another.

This talk can be adapted for all ages and tailored to meet particular curricular goals or standards.

Suggested Themes

Exploring Art

Students will be introduced to a variety of works in the collection and will learn how to think about and talk about art in general. First-time visitors will be introduced to basic concepts such as artists' intentions and subject matter, and will consider the dynamics of looking carefully. More experienced students can focus on more advanced concepts such as how and why different artists employ different materials and techniques or how an artist uses light. Classes studying photography, drawing and printmaking can arrange to visit our Manton Study Center for Works on Paper. All students will consider how the arts can enrich human understanding. Suitable for all grade levels; each talk will be tailored for each group.

Art and the Language Arts

Looking at works of art offers a wonderful opportunity to think about people—the artists, the subjects in their pictures, their personal stories, and ourselves. Some works of art illustrate specific narratives, while others may offer excellent starting points for students to create their own stories. Students at any grade level can enjoy exploring different types of writing using works of art as a starting point. Many of our works of art relate to mythology and the classics as well as other literary periods, or to different genres of writing such as poetry and a talk can be tailored to enhance a particular unit of study. Suitable for all grade levels; each talk will be tailored for each group.

Art and Society

Works of art reflect the period in which they were made and can be used as evidence of how people lived and thought about life in different places and times. While the Clark's collection is not encyclopedic, it relates to many different cultures, historical periods and human concerns both universal and idiosyncratic. Younger grades can focus on general themes such as families, communities, diversity and conceptual ideas like change. For older students, a talk can be shaped to explore systems of belief and dynamics of social justice with topics such as cultural elitism, the status of women, racism, and violence. Each talk will be tailored for each group.

French Art and Culture

The Clark is famous for its collection of French Art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. French Art and Culture gallery talks will focus on these works, France's central position in Western art at the time, and the rapid and radical changes in French and European society during this time period. Depending on their education level, students can discuss the works of art in French or in a mixture of English and French with direction from a French-speaking educator. Best suited for middle and high school grade levels. Each talk will be tailored for each group.

Identity and the United States

Art often conveys personal or national identities and can illustrate particular social customs. The Clark's new Henry Morris and Elizabeth H. Burrows Gallery and Lauzon Glass Study Gallery feature silver, glass objects, furnishings, and portraiture from Colonial America and the Federalist period, while the Manton Study Center for Works on Paper allows students to investigate imagery from these times, including nineteenth-century magazine illustrations and early photography. Along with paintings in the permanent collection galleries, these new displays help students consider what life was like in the early days of the United States and reveal evolving ideas about national identity. Each talk will be tailored for each group.

Art and Nature

Inspired by our 140-acre campus, this theme embraces one of the Clark's most treasured relationships: art and nature. Talks can include both an outside experience and a gallery experience and can explore a variety of topics, such as the differences and similarities between art and nature; the Clark's sustainability efforts and ethics as the Institute grows; the relationship between human beings and the environment; a focus on water; and the idea of aesthetic experience. By engaging with landscape paintings in our galleries, students may also discuss how artists throughout time have interacted with the natural world. Suitable for all ages and can be tailored to complement a particular area of the curriculum.