

# ***Do You See What I See?***

## ***- a Lesson on Art Criticism***

*(Created and submitted by Deborah Ling)*

### **Teacher's Guide**

#### **Description:**

This activity focuses on teaching the difference between "critical viewing" and "looking at" an artwork. It encourages students to *slow down* and pay attention to the details in a piece of art. It also challenges them to take on the artist's lenses when approaching any visual arts. By applying the same skills and principles to other situations in life, students will learn to become more aware of their surroundings; engage with them and interact with them.

*Note: Teachers have the option of combining elements from this lesson with that of Our Land, Our Story which has a curricular connection to the Grade 2 and 4 Social Studies topics.*

#### **Grades:**

- 4 - 6

#### **Define Understanding:**

- Students will understand that the process of "slowing down" is integral to art criticism.
- Students will learn Feldman's Method of Art Criticism and be able to apply these critical viewing skills when approaching art.

#### **Curriculum:**

##### *Art*

- Component I: Reflection - analysis, assessment and appreciation.

#### **Artwork:**

- Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket by James Nicoll (1892-1986)
- Prairie School Days by Nigel Lawrence (1901-1990)

#### **Background Information:**

##### Biography

For biographical information on James Nicoll (1892-1986) and his wife Marion Nicoll, visit the following link:

[http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainResults.aspx?XC=/search/archivesMainResults.aspx&TN=MAINCAT&AC=QBE\\_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DL=0&RL=0&NP=255&MF=WPEngMsg.ini&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=Main%20entry%2B|%2BTitle&QI0=Marion%20and%20Jim%20Nicoll%20fonds](http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainResults.aspx?XC=/search/archivesMainResults.aspx&TN=MAINCAT&AC=QBE_QUERY&RF=WebResults&DL=0&RL=0&NP=255&MF=WPEngMsg.ini&MR=5&QB0=AND&QF0=Main%20entry%2B|%2BTitle&QI0=Marion%20and%20Jim%20Nicoll%20fonds)

For biographical information on Nigel Lawrence (1901-1990), visit the following link:

<http://www.albertaonrecord.ca/nigel-lawrence-fonds>

### Feldman's Method of Art Criticism:

1. *Description* - Simply put, this step involves taking note of what is there or what you see. It focuses on "the fact"; therefore, it is objective, without an interpretation. Some questions may include:

- What is the name of the artwork?
- What is the medium used?
- Who is the artist?
- When was the artwork created?

2. *Formal Analysis* - This step takes the students to a deeper level of description where they examine the use of colour, shape, line, texture, etc. and the role these elements play in this artwork.

3. *Interpretation* - This step focuses on "what is the artwork about?" Students may express their own opinion but at the same time, try to support their opinion with some evidence found in the artwork.

4. *Judgment* - This step involves students judging the artwork based on certain criteria such as its emotional content or principles of design; in other words, it is an "informed" judgment. They may also compare this artwork with similar works.

### Activity:

(Refer to Powerpoint Slideshow Do You See What I See?)

1. Accessing background knowledge: ask students *What is art criticism?*
2. Based on the students' input, try to write a definition for the term "art criticism." Compare it with the one from Encyclopaedia Britannica.
3. Explain that there are many different methods of art criticism but one specific method is being used here, i.e. Feldman's Method of Art Criticism. Introduce the four steps in this method.
4. Using *Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket* as an example, walk through the four steps as a class activity.
5. Working in pairs or small groups, students will apply the same steps when studying Example 2, *Prairie School Days*.
6. Student sharing time.
7. *Debriefing the process*: Students briefly comment on how the process supported their learning.

# Bibliography

AFA Art House, eMuseum  
[www.alberta.emuseum.com](http://www.alberta.emuseum.com)

Alberta on Record  
<http://www.albertaonrecord.ca/>

Implementing the Open Minds Education Concept in Your Community – a Guide  
[http://btcn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/OpenMinds\\_Handbook.pdf](http://btcn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/OpenMinds_Handbook.pdf)

# *Do You See What I See?*

*A Lesson on Art Criticism*

*Grades 4 - 6*



What is art criticism?

# What is art criticism?

*“Art criticism is the analysis and evaluation of works of art. More subtly, art criticism is often tied to theory; it is interpretive, involving the effort to understand a particular work of art from a theoretical perspective and to establish its significance in the history of art.”*

*~ Encyclopaedia Britannica*

# Edmund Feldman's Method of Art Criticism

**Description** - take note of what is there - focus on facts / no interpretation

- What medium is used?
- What is the name of the artwork?
- Who is the artist?
- When was the artwork created?

# Description



*Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket*  
James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)  
Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts



# Edmund Feldman's Method of Art Criticism

**Formal Analysis** – a deeper level of description. Examine the use of colour, line, shape, texture, etc.

- What colours do you see?
- What types of lines do you see?
- What shapes do you see?
- What objects do you see?

# Formal Analysis



*Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket*

James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

# Edmund Feldman's Method of Art Criticism

**Interpretation** – focus on “What is the artwork about?”

- Students express their options, which are supported with evidence found in the artwork

# Interpretation



*Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket*

James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

# Edmund Feldman's Method of Art Criticism

**Judgment** – judge the artwork based on its design / emotional content

- Students make and “informed” judgment
- Students may compare this artwork with similar works

# Judgment



*Prairie Homestead/Carrying Bucket*

James Nicoll (1892 - 1986)

Collection of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts

## Activity 2:

Using Feldman's method of art criticism, you will work in small groups to critique an Artwork by Nigel Lawrence titled, *Prairie School Days*

- Description – what is the title, who is the artist, etc.
- Analysis – what colours, line, shapes, etc. do you see
- Interpretation – what is the artwork about
- Judgment – why did the artist create this work

## Example 2



*Prairie School Days*  
Nigel Lawrence (1901 – 1990)



# Debriefing:

- Does this method of art criticism help you gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the artworks? If so, how?
- How is this way of viewing the art different from how you have looked at art before?

## Extention:

Students go to computer lab and search the AFA collection at: <http://alberta.emuseum.com>

Students select an artwork and use Feldman's Method of Art Criticism to analyse it

Students present their findings to their class