



About Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS)

Developed first as a way to engage students in analyzing fine art, this technique uses “open-ended questioning and student-centered facilitation techniques, including strategies for listening and paraphrasing, to create student-driven and engaging group discussion environments.” It also engages “students in discourse . . . with an emphasis on providing evidence while considering and building off the contributions and perspectives of their peers.”

Learn more about VTS at <https://vtshome.org/>.

Directions for VTS

Give students time to observe the image individually and silently (1–2 minutes).

Question #1: “What is going on here?”

It is important to ask this question just as you see it written. Once a student volunteers to share what he or she sees, paraphrase his or her answer: “I hear you saying...”

You can also have a student expand on what he or she sees by asking:

Question #2: “What do you see that makes you say that?”

Again, paraphrase the best you can the student’s answer before moving on to the next student.

After about 5 minutes or so, if things start to become quiet, ask:

Question #3: “What more can you find?”

It is important to ask in this same way, as it doesn’t leave the observation to be only with the eyes (as in what more can you see), but opens it up to emotional and other senses also.

Again, paraphrase student answers before asking (if relevant):

Question #2: “What do you see that makes you say that?”

Plan on spending about 15 minutes discussing an image, and understand that there will be some silence as students think of what else they can find.