



## Talk the Talk! Glossary of Art Terms

These are some words you might hear at the Museum or use to describe an artwork.

### Elements of Art

*These are the sensory components used to create works of art—the ingredients, you might say. The elements of art are what artworks are made of.*

**Line** The continuous mark made on a surface by a moving point. It may be two-dimensional (a pencil mark on paper), or it may be three-dimensional (wire). It may also be implied by the edge of a shape or form; often it is an outline, contour, or silhouette.

Some **line** words: curved, straight, zigzag, horizontal, vertical, parallel, intersecting

**Color** An element of art described by three properties: hue (name of the color), intensity (brightness or dullness), and value (lightness or darkness)

Some **color** words: primary (red, yellow, and blue), secondary (green, orange, and purple), complementary (opposite on the color wheel), tint (lightened by adding white), shade (darkened by adding black), monochromatic, warm, cool

**Shape** An enclosed space defined by other elements (like lines). Shapes may appear to be two- or three-dimensional.

Some **shape** words: geometric (circle, square, triangle, etc.), organic (free-form)

**Form** A three-dimensional element that encloses volume, such as a cube, sphere, or cylinder.

**Texture** The surface quality or “feel” of an object, such as roughness, smoothness, or softness. Actual texture can be felt, while simulated textures are implied by the way the artist renders areas of the picture.

Some **texture** words: bumpy, smooth, soft, uneven, coarse

**Value** Describes the lightness or darkness of a color. Value is needed to express volume.

Some **value** words: light, dark, shade, highlight

**Space** The distance or area between, around, above, or within things. It can be a description for both two- and three-dimensional portrayals.

Some **space** words: foreground, middle ground, background, horizon, overlapping, depth, perspective, vanishing point, positive space, negative space

## Principles of Design

*These are the ways the elements of art are arranged or organized in an artwork. The principles of design put the elements to work.*

**Emphasis** Refers to points of interest intended to pull the viewer's eye to important parts of the artwork.

**Balance** A sense of visual stability in an artwork. It can be created by repeating some shapes and by creating a feeling of equal weight. **Formal balance** is achieved with equal or similar elements appearing on opposite sides of a central axis; with **informal balance**, unlike elements or objects have equal visual weight and give a sense of evenness.

Some **balance** words: symmetry (mirror images), asymmetry (another name for informal balance), radial (arranged around a central element)

**Harmony** A state achieved by using similar elements throughout an artwork, providing cohesion to the work.

**Variety** The differences found in an artwork, achieved by using different shapes, textures, and other elements.

**Contrast** Arranging very different examples of an element to call attention to their differences and add visual interest (light and dark colors, large and small shapes, or rough and smooth textures, for example).

**Movement** A sense of dynamics achieved by showing action and directing the viewer's eye around the artwork.

**Rhythm** A type of visual movement in drawing and painting. It is seen in the repetition of shapes, colors, and other elements. Alternating lights and darks also give a sense of rhythm.

**Proportion** Refers to the relationships of the size of objects in a body of work, giving a sense of size. Also called "scale".

**Unity** Seen when all the parts of an artwork equal a whole. The artwork should not appear disjointed or confusing.

**Composition** The arrangement of elements in a work of art.

Some **composition** terms: The Rule of Thirds, Nine-Zone Grid

## Other Art Terms

*Here are a few more terms that may come in handy when you visit the Museum with students. The list is by no means comprehensive—you will certainly be able to think of others!*

**Abstract art** Art that has no recognizable subject matter but focuses on shapes, colors, lines, etc. Also called “nonobjective”.

**Architecture** A building or structure; the art of designing and constructing buildings

**Cityscape** An artwork depicting an urban scene

**Collage** A two-dimensional artwork composed of pieces of paper, fabric, photos, etc.

**Collection** An accumulation of objects

**Docent** A volunteer tour guide

**Exhibit** A collection of objects on public display in a museum (also known as an exhibition)

**Gallery** A a room or building for the display (or sale) of art

**Label** A small sign that gives information about an artwork

**Landscape** An artwork depicting the countryside

**Medium** A material, such as paint or pastel, used to create art. (Media is the plural form.)

**Mood** An overall feeling or emotion, often equated with expression

**Portrait** An artistic depiction of a real person

**Sculpture** A three-dimensional artwork. It could be made of wood, stone, metal, clay, or another material, and could be carved, cast, modeled, etc.

**Seascape** An artwork depicting the sea and/or shore

**Still life** An artwork depicting an arrangement of common inanimate objects such as flowers, fruit, bowls, etc.



## Talk the Talk! Vocabulary Activities

Art has a language all its own. Here are some ways to help your students learn and use some art-related vocabulary.

### **Make a word wall**

Choose some of the key terms you want your students to learn, and create a display that features them. For example, you might design a wall that focuses on the elements of art: title each section of your wall with one of the elements, and have the students add other words, magazine pictures, and so on, to illustrate each word. The section about “Line” might include words like curved, and horizontal; it might have student illustrations of different types of lines; and it might include a photo from a magazine showing railroad tracks. Add a few items to the wall each day, and use the words often in the days just before and after your trip to the Museum.

### **Play a matching game**

Select a few terms for the game: four or five for younger students, eight to 10 for older ones. Write each term on a piece of heavy 9x12 paper and write each corresponding definition on a piece of heavy paper as well. Shuffle the pages and number the backs. To play the game, attach the pages to the board with magnets or tape in numerical order. Have a student choose two pages by their numbers and turn them over. If a term and its definition have been selected, remove the match from the game and call on another student to choose. When only two pages are left, have a student choose one to turn over and then predict what is on the other to make the match. This game can be played in teams or as a whole class. To play it in a small group, use index cards instead of 9x12 pages.

### **Ring a bell**

List on the board the art terms you’d like to spotlight, and have a small bell handy. Conduct a class discussion about an artwork, ringing the bell each time a student uses one of the focus terms in a meaningful way. The resource “Let’s Talk” (part of the Crocker All-Stars curriculum guide) has suggestions for talking about art with students.

### **Look at a book**

Many picture books are marvelous sources of art. Devote some read-aloud sessions to looking closely at some illustrations, identifying in them as many of the art terms as you and your students can find. You could also have students look at books in small groups and share their finds with each other. This could be a good activity for library day. Another activity is to have students first “read” the pictures in the book, then read the text.



## Talk the Talk! Vocabulary Activities

### **Make a book**

For each student, staple several sheets of paper together and include an art term at the top of each page. Students then complete the pages by adding illustrations and related words in a composition they create. Provide an appropriate title. For example, a book called "Types of Art" might include the pages landscape, portrait, still life, etc.; a book called "Art Parts" would include a page for each of the elements of art.

### **Do an activity page**

This resource guide includes several activities ready to print, copy, and use with your students.



## Talk the Talk! Word Sort

How “art smart” are you? Write the words from the word bank into the correct categories below. Some categories will contain more words than others.

Primary  
Horizontal  
Light  
Cylinder  
Bumpy

Geometric  
Foreground  
Curved  
Tint  
3-dimensional

Dark  
Perspective  
Organic  
Smooth  
Warm

Parallel  
Soft  
Circle  
Cube  
Depth

Line

Color

Shape

Form

Texture

Value

Space

Did you and a classmate list some words differently? You might both be correct! Talk about your choices to see another point of view.



## Talk the Talk! Acrostic Poem

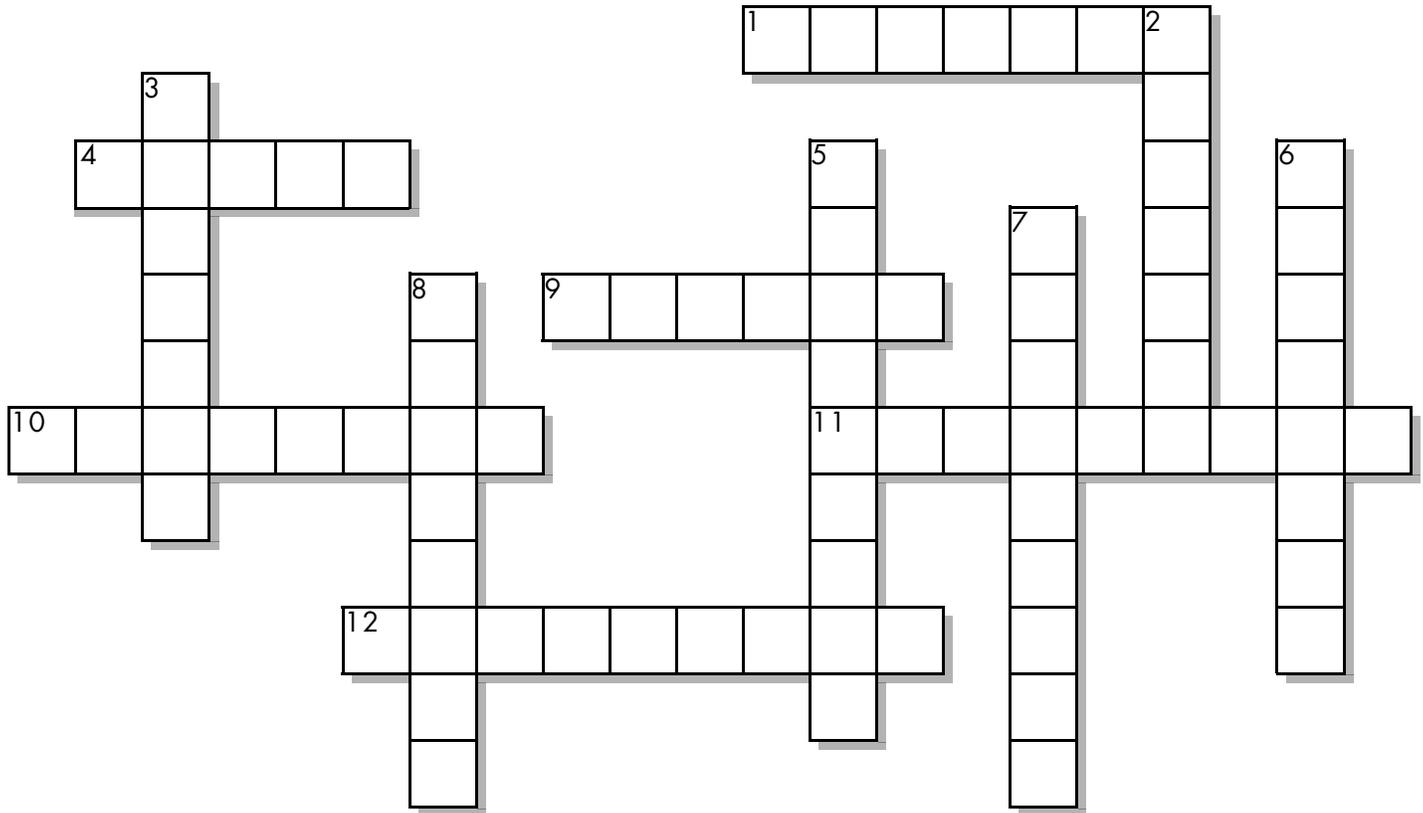
In an acrostic poem, a word is written vertically. Each line of the poem begins with one of the letters and describes the word. For example, an acrostic poem for the word “color” might look like this:

**C**omplementary colors  
**O**pposite on the color wheel  
**L**ight, dark, tint, hue  
**O**r just primary—  
**R**ed, yellow, and blue

Write an acrostic poem by following these steps:

1. Select a one-word subject for your poem and write the word vertically down the left side of the page.
2. On the back of the page, brainstorm some words, phrases, or sentences that describe your subject. Try to think of interesting, imaginative words. Use a dictionary or thesaurus for more ideas.
3. Match your ideas to the letters of your subject. Write the ones you like best on the appropriate lines.
4. Fill in the other lines to complete your poem. Read it over, and revise it as needed.
5. Illustrate your poem.
6. Share your poem with a friend.

### At the Museum Crossword



#### ACROSS

- 1. An artwork made from papers, fabrics, photos, etc.
- 4. A small sign that gives information about an artwork
- 9. A guide in a museum
- 10. A painting or photograph of a real person
- 11. A three-dimensional artwork that could be made from wood, clay, or metal
- 12. An artwork that shows a city scene

#### DOWN

- 2. A collection of artworks displayed in a museum
- 3. A room displaying artworks
- 5. A painting or photograph of an outdoor scene
- 6. A type of art that doesn't include objects you can recognize
- 7. A painting of objects like flowers, fruit, bowls, etc.
- 8. A flat artwork created with paints

At the Museum Crossword Answers

