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| **Unit plan: convince me it’s art** |
| **What?** In this unit, students learn about knowledge in the arts. The lessons place a particular emphasis on what makes a good explanation and/or interpretation in the arts. **Why?**Students sometimes limit their TOK explorations of this AOK to aesthetics, mere subjectivity or “personal taste” in art. By doing so they omit *how* the arts might convey knowledge and what counts as a good or valid *interpretation* and *explanation* in the arts. This set of lessons aim to steer students away from non-TOK discussions of works of art.**How?**A hands-on activity (*Convince me it’s art*) is embedded within a lesson on what art is all about, and a lesson exploring interpretation and explanation in the arts. |

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| KEY terms: | Beauty, knowledge, art, explanation, interpretation, evidence, truth, imagination. |
| ATL:Learner profile/internationalism | CreativityCollaborationCommunicationThinkers, reflective.Art forms around the world |
| CONNECTIONS: | Other areas of knowledge (choice). |

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| TOK concepts |  | Assessment link  |
| Explanation, interpretation |  | Preparing for the assessed essay. |

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| **Lesson 1** | **Lesson 2** | **lessonS 3 and 4** |
| Just pretty pictures? Think again. | Convince me it’s art! | Explanation and interpretation in the arts. |
| *Main ideas* | *Main ideas* | *Main ideas* |
| Exploring a range of different art forms, what kind of knowledge each might convey, and what art is all about. | What makes art (good/convincing) art. | What makes an interpretation valid? What makes an explanation good? Comparing the arts with other areas of knowledge. |
| *linked resources* | *linked resources* | *linked resources* |
| Powerpoint 1, What is art for?: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn0bDD4gXrE>https://tok2022.weebly.com/the-arts.html | Powerpoint 2https://tok2022.weebly.com/the-arts.html | Powerpoint 3, Student handout: explanaton and interpretation in the artsGreat art explained: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCePDFpCr78\_qmVtpoB1Axawhttps://tok2022.weebly.com/the-arts.html |

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| Lesson progression and suggested activities |
|  **Lesson 1: Just pretty pictures? Thinking again. (see linked powerpoint 1)*****This lesson explores what art is and what it is for.***1. **Warm-up activity: students write down as many art forms as they can think of. (ppt slides 2-3)**

TIP: To ensure students consider a wide range of art forms (rather than just visual art), you can make this into a small “competition” (those who can think of the most art forms win). Possible art forms are: music, graffiti, literature, dance, performance art, photography, film, architecture,…1. C**ollaborative brainstorming: the arts** *(groups of 4/5- then whole class).* **(ppt slides 4-5-6)**
* Divide the class in groups of 4/5 students
* Provide each group with large paper to write on, or writable desk spaces.
* Write “The Arts” in the middle of the writing space.
* Students brainstorm vocabulary and concepts related to the arts
* Tell students to look the explorations of other groups and, if desired, add words to their own reflections.
* Then ask each group to select the most significant words (highlight/circle/underline).
* Ask each group to use as many of these words within their own definition of what the arts is.
* Finally, each team presents their definition on the larger whiteboard. Unpack and explore the definitions as a class.
* It could look a bit like this:

Creativity**entertainment**beautyImaginationharmonyessionfeelingsDeeper meaningSkillexpressioncreationideas*TIP: When unpacking possible definitions, try to emphasise the importance of the transmission of an idea, or a deeper meaning. This will then lead to the explorations of knowledge in the arts during subsequent lessons.*Although students should create their own definition, it might be useful to keep the following definition in mind: “something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings” (Merriam Webster).1. **Expression of ideas and feelings. (ppt slides 7-9)**

Explain to students that you will now unpack a first aspect of the more standard definition of art, i.e. “the expression of ideas and/or feelings”.* Show students four artistic representations of, for instance, landscapes: one [photograph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landscape_photography), one [realistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matin_%C3%A0_Villeneuve) painting, one [impressionist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_Lilies_%28Monet_series%29), and one from the [expressionist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/View_of_Toledo) movement. Then ask students which one is the most expressive and why. Or, use the paintings on slide 8.
* Go back to the initial exploration of the range of art forms (warm up). Ask students whether (and how) the art form may affect how knowledge and ideas are conveyed. Are some art forms better suited to express ideas? Are others better at expressing beauty as such?

TIP: students may juxtapose the beauty of one art form with the expressiveness of another. Use this as a hook to explore the second aspect of the definition of the arts: beauty (point 4).* Ask students which art form/medium/style they would use to express their life as an IBDP student and why.
1. **Beauty and truth. (ppt slides 10-14)**

  Explain to students that you will now unpack the second aspect of the more standard definition of art, i.e. “beauty”.* Ask students why/if beauty matters. (slide 11)
* Ask students how we might describe beauty and whether we could come up with a mathematical or scientific “formula” for beauty. (slide 12)

 *TIP: Check the following link for further research/explanation: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/is-beauty-truth-and-truth/** Let students explore the last lines from “[Ode to a Grecian Urn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode_on_a_Grecian_Urn)”, and question what the connection between beauty and truth might be. (slide 13)

Explain that Keats’s poem “Ode to a Grecian Urn” centres around a poet addressing a beautiful Greek urn (vase). At the end of the poem, the poem images that the poem would say to him: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all Ye know on earth and all ye need to know”. Ask students what these lines might be about and how/why truth and beauty could be the same things. For more background information about the poem, check this link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode\_on\_a\_Grecian\_Urn*TIP: “One way to paraphrase the line "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is to say that****art conveys human knowledge and insights better than any other conveyance of meaning****(better than science, perhaps, or better than music).” (www.enotes.com)** Optional: Show the following video: <https://www.ted.com/talks/murray_gell_mann_beauty_truth_and_physics?language=en> (slide 14)

**“**Armed with a sense of humor and laypeople's terms, Nobel winner Murray Gell-Mann drops some knowledge on TEDsters about particle physics, asking questions like, ‘Are elegant equations more likely to be right than inelegant ones?” **(TED.com)**1. **Imagination and skill (ppt slides 15-18)**

 Explain to students that you will now unpack a third aspect of the more standard definition of art, i.e. “imagination and skill”.Start with the banana examples: a banana with a face carved in (a), a banana stuck on the wall with duct tape (b) (slides 15-16). Which one require more skill? Which one more imagination? Then explain how an artist sold the duct tape banana for 120 000 dollar.<https://www.huffpost.com/entry/banana-duct-tape-art-basel_n_5deaab59e4b0913e6f8fd0b8> Possible further questions:* Ask student if art that mimics reality is still art. Show an example of a realistic painting to trigger discussion. Most likely, students will say yes, because of the skill, perspective and, albeit subtle, imagination (eg selecting the scene) involved.
* Ask students if an exact copy of a painting still has monetary, or artistic value.
* Ask students how we might draw the line between art and craft. (slide 17).

 Discussion of knowledge question (slide 18) Ask students how the arts, through imagination, can give use knowledge about things that reality hides.TIP: to guide the discussion of this knowledge question, let students consider novels they read at IBDP (eg 1984), television programmes (eg Black Mirror, Squid Game), protest songs, … and explore how these art forms might give us knowledge about human nature.TIP: This can be extended to a written (research) task (assessment practice).1. **Plenary discussion: what is art for? (ppt slide 19)**
* Show students this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn0bDD4gXrE>
* Then ask them to reflect upon more pointers as to what art is for (think/write/pair/share Or use apps such as Jamboard).

**Lesson 2: Convince me it’s art! (see linked powerpoint 2)*****This “hands-on” lesson gives student a tangible experience of what art is all about.***1. **Warm-up: link to previous lesson: what kinds of art forms/disciplines within art exist?(Ppt slides 2-3 )***Think-pair-share.*
2. **What makes a good work of art? (ppt slide 4)** (review of the definition aspects of art, quick recall, whole class).
3. **Core activity: Convince me it’s art. (ppt slides 5-7)**
* Tell students they will have to create a mock artwork in a limited time frame. Explain that it is meant to be a fun task, and that actual quality of the work of art is not really that important for the purpose of the lesson. Encourage a humouristic, tongue-in-cheek approach.
* Students can use anything they find in their immediate environment to create this work of art. (classroom/school/home: depending on the setting in which the lesson is taught).
* Encourage students to explore a range of artistic disciplines and/or media (eg dance, sound poetry, performance art, installation art, music…).
* Students should give each artwork a title.
* Students should be prepared to say what the work of art is about
* Explain that the aim of the task is not to create a work of art that will pass the IBDP art exam criteria, but instead, that it aims to convince the class/audience that the work is truly worthy of artistic recognition.
* Each student will get 1 to 2 minutes to present their work of art to the class.
* The audience will vote the winner (=most convincing artwork).
* Tell students that they will present their work of art at the start of the next lesson. Less confident students might create a video recording of their art and/or explanation.
* If desired/suitable, this activity can be completed in small groups.

TIP: The following examples created by students of might help guide your students: A bizarre expressive dance about the pressures of life at IBDP, sound poetry, a photo of undone dishes during lockdown, a still life made of rationed food items, food haikus, abstract paintings, installation art etc 1. **Plenary (ppt slide 8):** remind students that they should be ready to present their work of art, including the title, at the start of next lesson. They get 1-2 minutes to convince the audience (aka the investors) that their work is really a work of art, worthy of recognition and/or investment.
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**Lesson 3: Explanation and Interpretation in “The Arts”. (see linked powerpoint 3 and student handout)**

***This plenary lesson links concepts such as explanation and interpretation to the practical applications of the previous lesson (convince me it’s art).***

* 1. **Warm-up and link to previous lessons (ppt slides 2-4):**
* Students present their work of art and get one minute to convince the class that their work is really a work of art.
* Students vote “the winner” (i.e the most convincing explanation). *TIP: Tell them that they cannot vote for their own work.*
* Ask students WHY they have chosen a particular winner (what made their explanation/artwork so convincing?).

 Optional further reading: <https://emptyeasel.com/2006/11/18/how-to-judge-art-five-qualities-you-can-critique/>

* 1. **Recall of the TOK concepts (ppt slides 5-6)**
* Ask students the following question: Do you remember any of the 12 TOK concepts? (see concept reminder on slide 6)
* Ask students which concepts seem particularly relevant to “The Arts” (and why).
* Explain that you will now focus on explanation and interpretation.
	1. **Interpretation and explanation in the arts: collaborative exploration. (ppt slide 7, student handout)**
* Share the collaborative student handout with the whole class. To enable collaboration, either convert to the handout to a Google dock (give everyone editing rights at the same time), OR use the lay-out of the handout to structure the whiteboard, OR use tools such as Jamboard
* Ask students first to consider what makes a good interpretation in the arts. Refer back to the “convince me it’s art” activity, and let students consider what might count as a convincing interpretation/explanation when analyzing literature for an (IBDP) English exam.
* Ask if “anything goes” or whether we need certain elements/criteria to make an explanation/interpretation convincing.
* Then ask students to consider another are of knowledge (eg “the natural sciences”) and explore the same question.
* Interestingly, there will be quite a few overlaps (eg “evidence”). Highlight concepts we see in both AOKs. Then explore how these overlapping concepts might be different, depending on the AOK.
	1. **Plenary (see ppt slide 8): mini essay preparation.**

 Students write a 500-word response to the following knowledge question (taken from the TOK guide/knowledge framework):

 What are the justifications for and implications of claiming that there are absolute standards for “good art”?