

**ARTFUL THINKING  
AMERICAN ART SAMPLER (AAS)**

**BILLBOARD, GRACE HARTIGAN, AMERICAN, 1957 (G375)**

1. See/Think/Wonder

Once seated, have students close their eyes for five seconds and then open them. What is the first thing that they see? What do they think about that? What do they wonder? This is a good segue into a discussion of what message the artist wanted to convey to us.

2. Claim/Support/Question

Claim: The artist painted *Billboard* while living in New York City, which is a very large city with lots of people and activity. With *Billboard* she was telling us that NYC is a joyful place. What do you see that supports my statement?

Or, with older students, explain the concept of “consumerism.” (In our country, we buy a lot of stuff. We use it and often throw it away. We are “consumers” and live in a “consumer” society.) Claim: With this painting, the artist was trying to tell us that consumerism is a good thing (or “bad” or “okay”). What do you see in this painting that supports this claim? Our AAS booklet says that Hartigan intended no social commentary with her painting. So the message is that we can interpret the art however we want (no right or wrong answers), and we don’t know the artist’s message was unless they have told us.

3. Creative Comparisons

If this painting were a musical instrument, what would it be? Explain three ways in which it compares to a musical instrument. (Other options: toy, body part, plant, city, etc.)

**PORTRAIT OF GEORGE WASHINGTON, THOMAS SULLY, AMERICAN 1820 (G332)**

1. Claim/Support/Question

Claim: George Washington was an important person in US history. What do you see that supports this claim? Ask them to turn to the person to their right and tell them one thing they see that supports this claim. Then go around and have everyone state what they (or their neighbor) saw. You can transition to a discussion about what the painting *does not* tell us about Washington.

2. Think/Puzzle/Explore

So what do we know about George Washington? First president, military man, drafter of the Constitution, etc. What don’t we know about him (puzzles)? Did he have a wife and children? What did he do in his spare time? Was he a “regular” guy who walked his dog? What is his body language telling us about him? What more do you want to know about him and his life?

### **SHARECROPPER, ELIZABETH CATLETT, AMERICAN, 1957-68 (off view)**

1. Colors/Shapes/Lines  
What colors do you see? Shapes? Lines? Describe them. This discussion provides a transition into discussing how the artwork was made (linocut). Why a linocut versus a painting?
2. Beginning/Middle/End  
If this painting is the middle of a story, what happened before and what happens next? Use this routine to explore what the sharecropper's life might be like.
3. Claim/Support/Question  
Claim: If this woman is an example, the life of a sharecropper is hard. What do you see that supports my claim? What don't we know about her and the life of a sharecropper? What do you want to learn more about?

### **REMINISCENCES OF 1865, JOHN F. PETO, AMERICAN, AFTER 1900 (G323)**

1. Step Inside  
Imagine that you are the door in this painting and this door can think and feel. What are you (as the door) thinking right now? How are you feeling? Why are you green? Why do you have a photo of Abraham Lincoln on you? What might this door care about? What's on the other side?
2. Headlines  
If you wrote a headline that captures what is really important about this painting, what would it be? How does this headline compare to one you might have written about the *Portrait of George Washington*?

### **MILL POND AT MINNEAPOLIS, ALEXIS JEAN FOURNIER, AMERICAN, 1888 (G303)**

1. The Elaboration Game  
Explain that the painting has three sections: foreground, middle ground and background. Have one person describe what he/she sees in the foreground. Then another person elaborates on the first person's observations by adding more details. Do the same for the middle ground and the background. Use this routine to discuss natural vs. man-made.
2. Claim/Support/Question  
Claim: The artist' message is that he preferred nature over man-made things (or industrialization). Or, he preferred man-made things over nature...  
  
Claim: There are actually dozens of people in this painting. What do you see that supports this statement? This should lead to a discussion about where people are that we don't see (in the flour mill, saw mill, buildings in the distance, etc.). They are responsible for all that is man-made. What do you think their lives were like? How were their lives similar/dissimilar to our lives today?

3. Beginning/Middle/End  
Use any of these questions: If this painting is the beginning of a story, what happens next? If this painting is the middle of a story, what happened before and what happens next? If this painting is the end of a story, what might the story be?
4. See/Think/Wonder  
Use this routine to facilitate a discussion of what life was like in our city over a century ago.

### **WINTER COUNT, LAKOTA, 1900s (G261)**

1. Claim/Support/Question  
Claim: Horses are highly valued by the Lakota peoples.  
Claim: Elders play an important role in Lakota life.
2. Beginning/Middle/End  
This Winter Count tells the story of the Lakota peoples for over 100 years. What do you think happens next? This can lead to a discussion of the rise of written language (and therefore the demise of winter counts) and the forced move onto the reservations.
3. Headlines  
If you wrote a headline that captures what is really important about this painting, what would it be?
4. I used to think...now I think  
Example: I used to think the Lakota people led a hard (or easy) life. Now I think... This could segue into a discussion of what was hard about their lives (climate, constant search for food, protection from enemies, etc.) and the positives (extended family/community relationships, natural environment, rituals, etc.). How do their lives compare to ours today? What are some of the positives and negatives of how we live today?