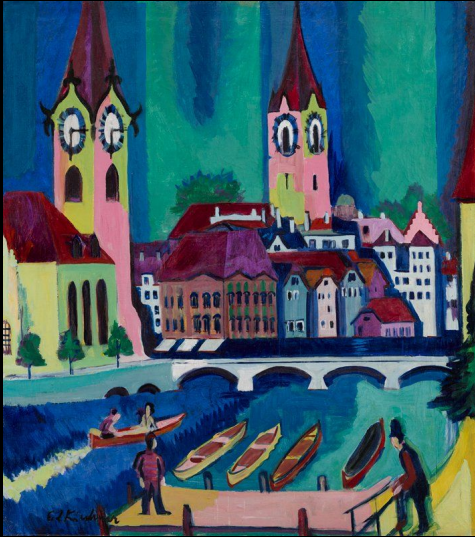


Brown Bag: Developing a tour theme



Mia

You've been assigned a tour topic for which you want to develop a theme. What is the difference between a topic and a theme?

Topic: Arts of Native America

Very broad; usually it identifies a part of the collection

Theme: Tradition and Innovation

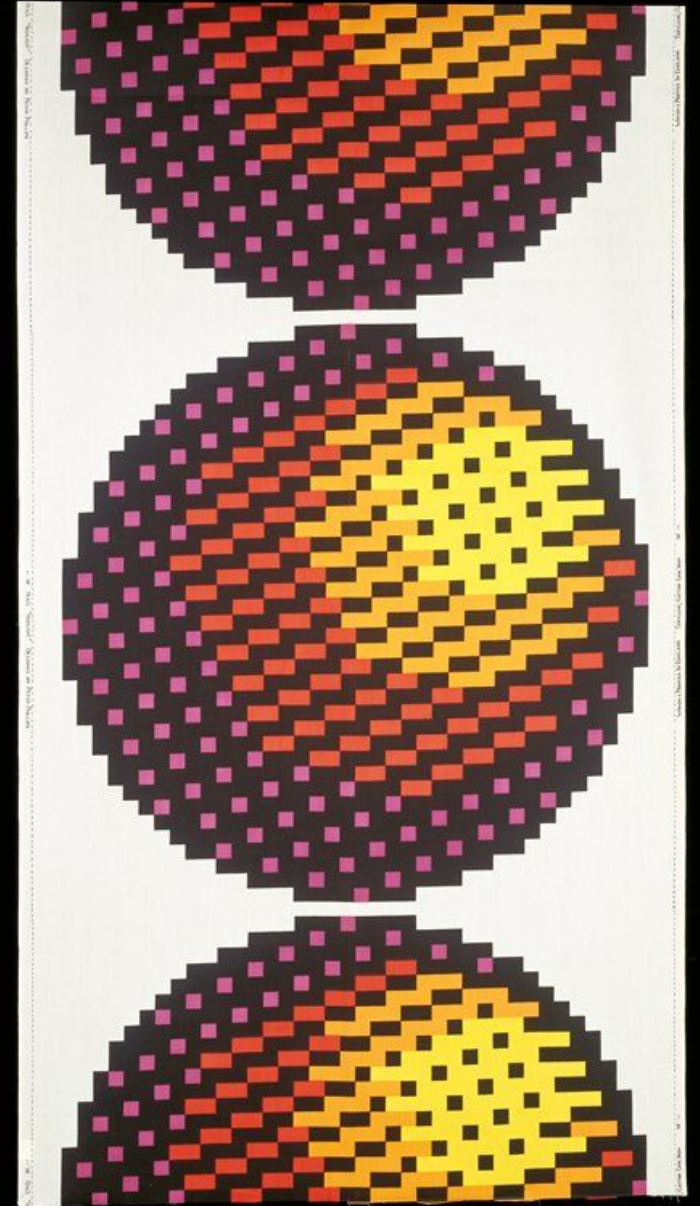
Provides the glue/big idea that holds the tour together



Highlights of Mia is the most popular school tour topic! It is very broad!

A Highlights tour is YOUR tour; you can pick anything you want to use (with the caveat that you include the teacher's requests, when possible).

You will connect the works you have selected through the theme.



Why is a theme important?

A theme is a connecting thread you weave through your tour. For your audience, a theme provides a framework to the tour, assisting them in processing the information received and their own impressions of the artworks. In effect, you are creating a lens through which to view the art and imbuing the art with additional meaning.



Why is a theme important?

- Provides focus
- Provides context
- Keeps everyone on track
- Jogs the memory

State your theme clearly, so your group knows *why* you are looking together at this collection of artworks!



Keep the theme in mind...

As you are touring, touch back to your theme through the information given, the questions asked, and the transitions. When the theme is kept alive through the tour, it keeps the framework present in the students' minds.



Themes can be broad.

For example, Art Adventure sets have very broad themes, allowing you to substitute other works easily if a work in the set goes off view. Sources of Strength has 4 artworks on view. What are 2 good subs?



Themes can be focused.

For a Highlights tour with younger students, a theme could be focused on insects, perhaps titled “Crawling with Bugs,” where you could look at the symbolism of insects in art as well as materials used (such as silk and dye).



Having a focus to your tour is an important part of developing an inclusive experience. How or why do you think that helps with inclusion?

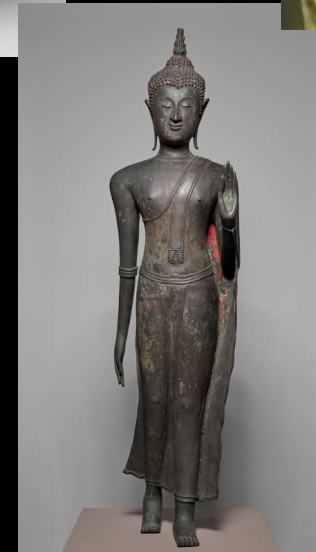
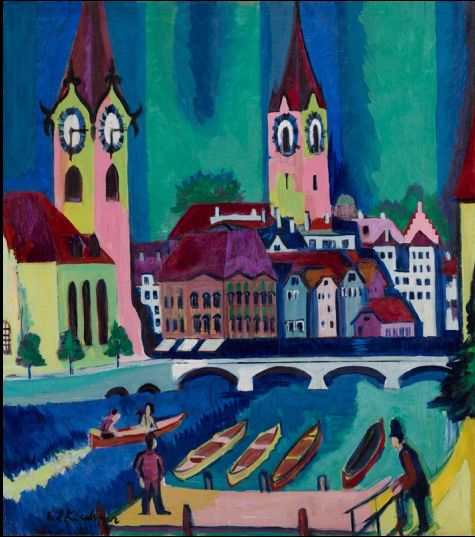


Everyone is entering into the tour with a unique set of personal expectations, and a theme helps create a shared expectation, such as “Today we’ll be exploring how modern artists were inspired by the natural world.”

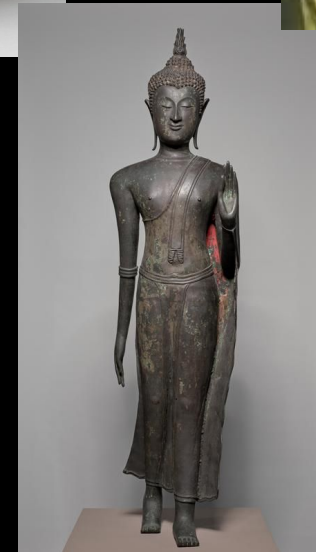
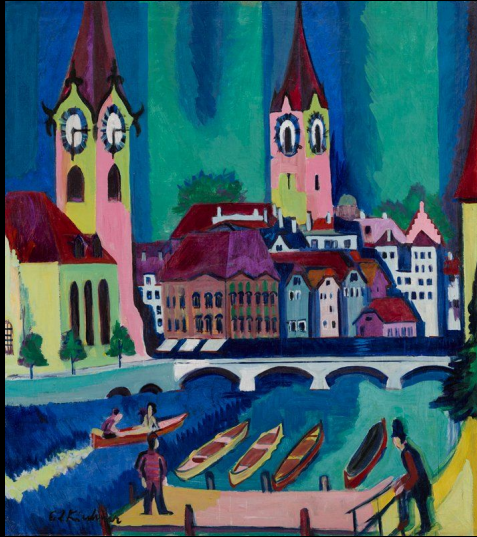
At each stop, students will think of ways to make connections to that theme; following the visit, the theme helps kids recall the group’s discussion and artwork information.



In developing a theme, some guides first think of the artworks they would like to include, then try to find a common thread between those works.



In developing a theme, start with artworks you know. Then add artworks new to you as you are able. Keep diversity in mind: cultures/perspectives/media.



Other guides think first of the theme, then find the art to fit within it.

Some examples of themes for general topic tours:

- Mysteries in the Museum
- The Sound of Music
- Animals in Art, Animals on the Move
- Celebrations

No matter which way you develop your tour, keep the theme focused and clear for setting that shared expectation.

When you develop a theme, refer to the teacher's input or direction in your selections.

Maybe the students are studying the American Revolution. Maybe the teacher is a Van Gogh superfan and wants to share Olive Trees with their students. Maybe the students are learning about geography. As best you can, meet those requests.

What are other teacher requests you have received?

Theme idea shared for school tours:

- Behind the scenes at Mia (Kate Christianson)

Theme idea shared for teen tours (Ginny Wheeler):

Mia is creating a new brochure for xxxx and needs one art work to use for the cover.

Example: “What is a Masterpiece?” or “Issues Facing Teenagers Today.” During the tour, the students vote after seeing a few objects. Which one should be on the cover? After the vote, we discuss why the winning image is the best representative for our theme. Then on to the next object; the vote then is between our top pick and the new object. It’s fun to vote and simply ask, why this object? There are no right answers so students aren’t afraid to participate. I use thumbs left or right.

Activity idea shared for teen tours (Ginny Wheeler):

Let Me Tell You a Story (an image tells a story)

Partners choose a painting in a gallery ... 323 works great....for the cover of a book and come up with what the book would be about...the description inside the cover. Propose a romance, an adventure, sci fi, a mystery, a tragedy, magical realism, etc. so the kids are ready. Then they share. After that, I share ONE thing about the artist or artwork they chose...trying to find connections, of course, to something they used in their story. It helps to know the works in the gallery.

- Keep sharing ideas with each other on great themes that have worked well on your tours!

[Google Doc of Tour Theme Ideas](#) (open access so everyone can add their ideas)

- Reminder: Information on tour topics (suggested artworks, key ideas and questions) are posted on the guide website ([link](#)) under School Guides on the main menu.

The screenshot shows the main menu of the Mia Guides website. The top navigation bar includes links for 'Mia Guides', 'Customize', '13', '0', 'New', 'Edit Page', and 'Caching'. The user's name 'Howdy, Kara ZumBahlen' is visible in the top right. The main menu features three large circular images: a horse sculpture, a colorful abstract sculpture, and a yellow textured sculpture. Below these images are three menu items: 'Calendars' (with an 'Edit' button), 'Peer Sharing' (with an 'Edit' button), and 'Help' (with an 'Edit' button). A dropdown menu is open on the right side, listing various categories. The 'School Guides' category is highlighted with a red circle, and the 'Topics for school tours' option within it is also highlighted with a red circle. Other options in the dropdown include 'Calendars', 'Guide Training and CE', 'AAG Sets', 'Forms and Procedures (School Tours)', 'Youth Book Tours', 'Adult/Multigenerational Guides', 'Forms and Procedures (Adult Tours)', 'Book Tours', 'Mia Guide Newsletter', 'Art Cart', 'Manuals and Inventory Forms', 'Art Cart Policies and Procedures', and 'Touring Procedures'.

- If assigned a tour that is new to you, check out the resources on the guide website, reach out to fellow guides with experience touring the topic, and contact Kara or Debbi to discuss the tour and do a walkthrough.
- Help is always available, so just reach out!

Egon Schiele, Austria, Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh, 1918, Oil on canvas, 54.30



Questions?



Thank you!

Please feel free to share your theme ideas and tour outlines, to post on the guide website.