Use this guide to prepare for your self-guided visit to the Metropolitan Museum with your students.
This guide will help you prepare for your self-guided visit to the Metropolitan Museum with your students. Use the links to the Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History, curatorial departments, and other areas on the Museum’s website to access descriptions of works of art and relevant thematic essays and resources.

Introduction

In 2004, The Metropolitan Museum of Art combined its nineteenth-century European painting, modern art, and contemporary art departments. This reorganization, in part, underscores the need to understand modern art as a continuum beginning in the nineteenth century. At the Metropolitan Museum, modern art includes works made as early as about 1900 through to 1970, and contemporary art, works made after 1970.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, artists and critics alike began to resist long-held tenets of Academic art such as the hierarchy of genres, which deemed history painting most important, followed by portraiture, genre painting, landscapes, and still life. The concurrent rise of an art market and art galleries meant that the protocol and requirements of elite patrons no longer exclusively determined the production of art. Conveniences and goods made available through industrialization and mechanization, and massive population shifts to urban centers, are also of great importance when thinking about modern art; photography and film, certain forms of printmaking, world’s fairs, and New York City’s Central Park are all examples of nineteenth-century forms that have contributed to a culture we now know as modern.

In the twentieth century, abstraction—generally understood to mean nonrepresentational art—was a major development in modern art, though certainly not the only one. A common thread in the history of modern art is the conscious desire on the part of artists to give visual expression to subjective experience or knowledge. With contemporary art, a number of artists move away from abstract modes of expression and the notion that a given work of art can be understood through purely formal issues and analysis. Contemporary art is a wide field that encompasses new media and technologies, such as video and computer-generated art, as well as performance art, architecture, and site-specific work.
The Galleries

The Metropolitan’s collection of modern and contemporary art is located in the southwest corner of the building. Much of the modern collection is on the first and second floors of the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing, with contemporary art displayed in the mezzanine galleries. The art on view (including works in special exhibitions) includes a wide variety of media: paintings and sculpture, decorative arts, mixed-media works, textiles, collage, installation art, and sometimes video or film shorts. Rotations of contemporary art are often exhibited in the first-floor gallery located between the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing and the Lila Acheson Wallace Wing, and photography exhibitions are presented in the Joyce and Robert Menschel Hall for Modern Photography on the second floor. From May to October (weather permitting), an exhibition of contemporary sculpture is installed in the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Roof Garden, accessible by an elevator from the first floor. Selected works from the Nineteenth-Century European Paintings and Sculpture galleries (see also the pre-visit guide to Nineteenth-Century European Paintings), as well as the Galleries for Drawings, Prints, and Photographs, can complement a visit to the modern and contemporary art collections.
Planning a Tour

When visiting the Metropolitan Museum with your students, prepare your tour with the following in mind:

• Less is more. Select five or six works of art to discuss over the course of an hour in the galleries.
• Choose works that are located away from doorways and areas that are heavily traversed by visitors.
• Include works that are visible to all students in your group for purposes of discussion and viewing.
• Make sure that there are enough chaperones in your group to divide the students into smaller groups for gallery discussions.
• While touring the galleries, please give priority to lecturers wearing Museum IDs who are guiding groups. If they are discussing a work that you would like your students to see, please select another work to view and discuss in the interim.

Please Note: Although most of the suggested works in this guide will be on view when you visit the Museum, some gallery installations may be subject to change. We recommend that you use Search the Collections online or come to the Museum to verify that the objects you want to discuss are on display prior to bringing your group.

Questions for Discussion in the Galleries

• Look closely at the work of art. What materials has the artist selected, and how has he or she used them?
• Describe any imagery that you see. Is the work naturalistic, abstract, or a combination of both?
• How has the artist used color?
• Describe the size and scale of the work of art. How does the work’s size relate to the imagery presented?
• What are some words that come to mind as you look at the work of art? What do you notice in the work that causes you to choose those words?

The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s school tour program is made possible by the generosity of Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman.
Suggested Works of Art to Explore

Please note that titles, dates, and other object information on the website and on gallery signage may vary as the result of ongoing research. The images below are details. Use the links to view the works in full.

**The Seine at Chatou**, 1906
Maurice de Vlaminck (French, 1876–1958)
Oil on canvas; 32 1/2 x 40 1/8 in. (82.6 x 101.9 cm)
Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection, 1998 (1999.363.84)

**Unique Forms of Continuity in Space**, 1913
Umberto Boccioni (Italian, 1882–1916)
Bronze; 48 x 15 1/2 x 36 in. (121.9 x 39.4 x 91.4 cm)
Bequest of Lydia Winston Malbin, 1989 (1990.38.3)

**Portrait of a German Officer**, 1914
Marsden Hartley (American, 1877–1943)
Oil on canvas; 68 1/4 x 41 3/8 in. (173.4 x 105.1 cm)
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.70.42)

**The Marketplace, Vitebsk**, 1917
Marc Chagall (French, born in Russia, 1887–1985)
Oil on canvas; 26 1/8 x 38 1/4 in. (66.4 x 97.2 cm)
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1982 (1984.433.6)
**Bird in Space**, 1923
Constantin Brancusi (French, born in Romania, 1876–1957)
Marble; H. (with base) 56 3/4 in. (144.1 cm), Diam. 6 1/2 in. (16.5 cm)
Bequest of Florene M. Schoenborn, 1995 (1996.403.7ab)

**The Figure 5 in Gold**, 1928
Charles Demuth (American, 1883–1935)
Oil on cardboard; 35 1/2 x 30 in. (90.2 x 76.2 cm)
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.59.1)

**Cow’s Skull: Red, White, and Blue**, 1931
Georgia O’Keeffe (American, 1887–1986)
Oil on canvas; 39 7/8 x 35 7/8 in. (101.3 x 91.1 cm)
Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1952 (52.203)

*Learn more about Georgia O’Keeffe (1887–1986).*

**The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere**, 1931
Grant Wood (American, 1892–1942)
Oil on Masonite; 30 x 40 in. (76.2 x 101.6 cm)
Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1950 (50.117)
© Estate of Grant Wood/Licensed VAGA, New York, NY
Report from Rockport, 1940
Stuart Davis (American, 1892–1964)
Oil on canvas; 24 x 30 in. (61 x 76.2 cm)
© Estate of Stuart Davis/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Kouros, 1944–45
Isamu Noguchi (American, 1904–1988)
Marble; H. 117 in. (297.2 cm); base: W. 42 in. (106.7 cm), D. 34 1/8 in. (86.7 cm),
Fletcher Fund, 1953 (53.87a-i)
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Three Men Walking II, 1949
Alberto Giacometti (Swiss, 1901–1966)
Bronze; 30 1/8 x 13 x 12 3/4 in. (76.5 x 33 x 32.4 cm)

Reading at a Table, 1934
Pablo Picasso (Spanish, 1881–1973)
Oil on canvas; 63 7/8 x 51 3/8 in. (162.2 x 130.5 cm)
Bequest of Florene M. Schoenborn, in honor of William S. Lieberman, 1995 (1996.403.1)
© 1999 Estate of Pablo Picasso/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
Learn more about Pablo Picasso (1881–1973).
**Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)**, 1950  
Jackson Pollock (American, 1912–1956)  
Enamel on canvas; 105 x 207 in. (266.7 x 525.8 cm)  
George A. Hearn Fund, 1957 (57.92)  
© 1999 Pollock-Krasner Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

**Blue Green Red**, 1962–63  
Ellsworth Kelly (American, born 1923)  
Oil on canvas; 91 x 82 in. (231.1 x 208.3 cm)  
Arthur Hoppock Hearn Fund, 1963 (63.73)  
© Ellsworth Kelly

**Becca**, 1965  
David Smith (American, 1906–1965)  
Stainless steel; 113 1/4 x 123 x 30 1/2 in. (287.7 x 312.4 x 77.5 cm)  
© Estate of David Smith/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

**Bohemia Lies by the Sea**, 1996  
Anselm Kiefer (German, born 1945)  
Oil, emulsion, shellac, charcoal, and powdered paint on burlap;  
Overall: 75 1/4 x 221 in. (191.1 x 561.3 cm); 2 panels, each: 75 1/4 x 110 1/2 in. (191.1 x 280.7 cm)  
Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace Gift and Joseph H. Hazen Foundation Purchase Fund, 1997 (1997.4ab)  

Learn more about Anselm Kiefer (born 1945).
Themes to Consider

Abstract Expressionism
Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) and His Circle
Fauvism
Precisionism
School of Paris
Surrealism

Selected Resources

These and many more resources are available in Nolen Library in the Ruth and Harold D. Uris Center for Education.


Romare Bearden: *Let’s Walk The Block*


Elementary Students


Middle School Students


High School Students


DVD and VHS

(Part of the circulating collection available to educators in Nolen Library)

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