

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

LESSON PLAN ONE (a)

IMAGINATION STATION: AN INQUIRY-BASED INTRODUCTION TO DALÍ

In this lesson, students first watch the *Get Surreal With Salvador Dalí* video which familiarizes them with Dalí and Surrealism and why the two are significant (more of this will be developed in Lessons 2 & 3). More importantly for this lesson, however, students begin interacting with the paintings themselves and begin exploring how one might respond to a piece of art. In what should be a lively classroom discussion, they have a chance to express their own reactions to the work, ask questions of the paintings, and compare their responses to other students in class. For homework—or for further activity if there is time in class—they have the chance to create a piece of writing or artwork that dialogues with, or responds to, one of the paintings they’ve been looking at and talking about.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- *Get Surreal With Salvador Dalí*. (On loan for free from the Salvador Dalí Museum)
- Reproductions/posters of six paintings: *Port of Cadaques (Night)*; *Still Life: Sandia*; *The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition*; *Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)*; *The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory*; *The Hallucinogenic Toreador*

ACTIVITY

1. Post-Movie Discussion (In class)

Whereas Lesson Plan One (b) begins a study of Dalí that is rooted in reading and writing for a particular social studies-based content, Lesson Plan One (a) offers a more inquiry-based way of encountering Dalí and his work. This lesson stresses the asking of questions and the formation of personal responses.

After the movie, re-cap with your students some of the more memorable aspects of Dalí’s character and art: his moustache, his outrageous accent, obsessions with bread, etc. Dalí’s own craziness bridges nicely to the apparent craziness of Surrealism, so ask your students to remember a bit of what Surrealism is like and what it stems from: dreams, the imagination, and the unconscious.

Responding to Dalí means exercising the imagination. Using any of the six paintings listed above, ask your students to begin responding to them. (It may be easier to focus on one or two paintings in particular, letting your students investigate them in depth.) As they talk, make sure to ask your students to explain their answers. You might wish to use some of the following questions as discussion prompts:

Port of Cadaques (Night)

- What time of day is it?
- What is the weather like?
- If there were people in the painting, what would they be doing?
- What would you do if you were in the painting?
- Where would you hang this picture in your house?
- Have you seen any paintings like this before?
- How does this painting make you feel?

Still Life: Sandia

- What is this a picture of?
- What objects can you identify?
- How does this painting make you feel?
- What time of year does this scene suggest?
- Where would you hang this picture in your house?
- If you had one word to describe this painting, what would it be?
- If you could add something to this painting, what would you add?

The Weaning of Furniture-Nutrition

- What is unusual about this painting?
- How is it similar to or different from *Port of Cadaques (Night)*?
- Where is this person, and what is this person doing?
- Is the person a man or a woman?
- What does the shape in this person's back look like?
- What do you feel like when you look at this person?
- What time of day/year is it?
- What type of furniture is this?
- If you could walk into the painting, what would you do?
- Why do you think Dalí painted a crutch holding this person up?
- Why is there a smaller piece of furniture cut out of the larger one?
- Did Dalí like or dislike the person in this painting?
- Why aren't there any other people in this painting? Where are they?
- Where would you hang this picture in your house?
- If you could take something away from this painting, what would you take?

Old Age, Adolescence, Infancy (The Three Ages)

Note: You may wish to inform your students that Dalí may have been responding to the Sphinx's famous riddle: What creature walks on four legs in the morning, two legs in the afternoon, and three legs at night? The answer? Human beings who crawl as babies (in

the mornings of their lives), who walk as adults, and who use canes as the days of their lives come to a close.

- Can you see the faces hidden in the painting? Where are they?
- Which face is Old Age? Adolescence? Infancy?
- What is the mood of this painting?
- Does this painting remind you of any of the other paintings?
- What is the weather like?
- How many people can you find?
- What do the clouds look like?
- If you had to put pictures of your family in this painting, where would they go?
- If you could ask Dalí a question about this painting, what would it be?

The Disintegration of the Persistence of Memory

- How does this painting make you feel?
- What time of day/year is it?
- What do melting/soft clocks mean to you?
- Can you find the face? Who do you think it is?
- Why do you think the tree is all cut up?
- Why aren't the tree's pieces falling down?
- What do all the rectangles remind you of?
- Where would you hang this painting in your house?
- Why do you think the watches are falling apart?
- Where does this painting take place?
- Why is the ocean being pulled up in the upper left-hand corner?

The Hallucinogenic Toreador

- Can you find the toreador (bullfighter) and bull?
- Can you find the dalmation?
- Can you find the body of water?
- Is there anything in here that reminds you of other paintings by Dalí?
- Who is the boy in the lower right-hand corner? Why is he there?
- Who is the woman looking down from the upper left corner?
- How many statues can you find?
- Why are there flies in the painting?
- Where is this painting taking place?
- Why are there so many flies?
- If you could ask Dalí one question about this painting, what would it be?
- How big do you think this painting is in real life?
- Why did Dalí paint this?
- Where would you hang this picture in your house?

2. Personal written or artistic response (In class or as homework)

We spent a lot of time talking about Dalí's paintings in class today. Thinking back on what you thought and said, and considering what your classmates said, and remembering Get Surreal With Salvador Dalí, create your own personal response to one of the paintings. You may choose to write (a poem, a story, a description), or you may choose to do visual art (a drawing, painting, a collage), or you may choose to do a short performance (a song, a dance, etc.). Take some time to think about why you want to respond in this way. Are you responding to an entire painting, to part of a painting, or to several of the paintings at the same time? Are you responding to an image or an idea? Be prepared to share your written or artistic response in class.