Lesson Plan

Grades 3–6

Subject: Art, Science

Time: 60–120 min.

Overview

In this lesson, students will step into the shoes of an art conservator. They will assess the condition of an artwork and then create and execute a treatment plan to mimic the restoration process.

Objectives

By the end of the lesson students will be able to

- Understand the role and thought process of art conservators
- Think critically to assess the restoration needs of an artwork
- Create and execute a treatment plan
Materials

- Crayons, colored pencils, and/or markers
- Printed condition reports (one per group)
- Printed treatment plans (one per group)
- “Damaged” artworks to “restore”

Procedure

1. Before the lesson, create artworks with “cracks” for your students to “restore.” This can be done by superimposing white marks onto works of art with a scanner or image editing software and printing them out. See the examples on the last page.
2. Give students an overview of the role and methods of art conservators with the pre-activity lesson.
3. Split students into groups. Each group will need coloring utensils, one “damaged” artwork, one condition report, and one treatment plan worksheet.
4. Instruct students to begin by examining their piece and filling out the condition report.
5. Students will then use their knowledge from the pre-activity lesson and observations from step four to create a treatment plan.
6. Students will execute their treatment plan by conducting a “color matching” process: using their coloring utensils, they will fill in the cracks with the missing colors.

Pre-Activity Lesson

What is an art conservator?

A museum professional who uses scientific techniques to study, preserve, and restore artworks. They are a scientist, artist, and historian all wrapped into one.
What do art conservators do?

A major part of a conservator’s job is to restore artworks. Because a lot of paintings and sculptures are very old, they get damaged or change naturally over time. Conservators help to make the art look as good as new! To restore a piece, art conservators start by examining it very closely to see if there are cracks, tears, or flakes. Often, they will use different kinds of technology and run lots of tests to find out information about a painting that they can’t see with their eyes. They record their observations in a Condition Report. Based on what they find, conservators will then create a Treatment Plan where they write out, step-by-step, how they plan to repair the artwork.

What methods do conservators use to repair art?

- **Paint stabilization**: if paint is flaking off, conservators will use adhesives (like glue) to reattach it.
- **Color matching and infilling**: if paint is cracked or lost completely, they will find a paint color that closely matches the missing color and they will *infill*, or paint over the empty space, to restore it. Conservators only paint areas that are missing paint—they never unnecessarily paint over historic artworks!
- **Varnishing**: varnishes can be brushed on top of a painting to protect it from future damage and help to preserve the colors.
Condition Report

Name of artwork:

Description of artwork:

What do you first notice about the painting?

Are there any...

Cracks?  Yes  No

Flakes?  Yes  No

Stains?  Yes  No

Tears?  Yes  No

What might have caused the damage?

Does the artwork need repair?  Yes  No
Treatment Plan Worksheet

What damages are you trying to repair? Describe the severity and placement of each:

Which restoration procedure(s) will you use?

What materials will you use?

How long will the restoration take?

Map out the steps you will take to treat the painting:
Artwork Examples

Johannes Vermeer. *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, c. 1665

Source: Arte a Scuola