

Symbols: Expression by association...?



Activity page for:

Image 16: Lovis Corinth, *Der Künstler und der Tod II/The Artist and The Death II*, 1916

Image 23: Lovis Corinth, *Mother and Child*, 1911

Expressive qualities can be emphasized in art through the use of symbols and associations. A symbol might be used to express an emotion or an idea. That emotion or idea could then be used to emphasize the artist's intent...



Think about it:

Discuss the following questions with a partner. Refer to gallery notes for more information.

1. What words come to mind when you see an image of a skeleton? How does Lovis Corinth's inclusion of a skeleton in *The Artist and The Death II* emphasize the expressive qualities/mood/theme of this portrait?
2. Compare *The Artist and Death II* with *Mother and Child*. Think about the moods and feelings evoked through each scene. Now, attempt to grasp the powerful expressive quality of symbolism by mentally exchanging the image of the skeleton with the image of the child. Imagine how these 'symbolic objects' would affect the expressive qualities of the reverse images in which they have been placed. New titles required?

Try this:

Make your own expressive self-portrait. Start by thinking of an object that might be used to represent you. It could be an object that represents a theme with which you would identify yourself. It could also be an object that represents a strong feeling or emotion with which you might identify your character or personality. Most importantly, it should be an object that expresses *you*, in some form or another, by representing an idea or emotion that is important to you.

Then, using an image of yourself as a starting point, create a composition in which you and your chosen object are paired in a scene (note: you might try a collage or Photoshop approach if you are less inclined to draw or paint).

Ask yourself: Is the use of symbolism the *only* way that Lovis Corinth has tried to convey a mood? How else do these pieces communicate expressive qualities? As in Lovis Corinth's pieces, see if you can make use of some other compositional elements to enhance the idea or emotion conveyed by your choice symbol.