



WHAT IS ART

Learning about art through the philosophical work of Arthur Danto

Learning Objectives	The main learning objective of this lesson plan is to enable students to develop the skill of examining works of art and understanding their meaning through systematic observation. Additionally, the lesson aims to introduce students to Danto's perspective on artwork. By achieving these objectives, students will be better equipped to interpret works of art accurately and develop sensitivity towards important issues such as the environment and democracy, especially if they have an interest in these topics.
Subjects	Greek Language, Arts, History, Sociology
Recommended Age (10-12 or 12-14)	10-12
Number of students involved	Maximum of 20 students, divided into groups of 4 students per group.
Duration	90 minutes
Skills Developed	Critical thought, communication, cooperation, creativity, digital literacy, empathy, sensitivity.
Material Needed	Computer, online tools (web 2.0), notebooks and/or notepads.
Inclusion Best Practices	It is important to note that following this lesson plan students will observe various works of art that are meaningful to everybody and relate to up-to-date issues. Thus, the teacher should be supportive and facilitate the discussion of sensitive topics through art. The activities that are included in this lesson plan aim to be interactive and engaging for diverse groups of students.



Instructions for implementing the lesson plan

This lesson plan aims to introduce students to the ideas of Arthur Danto, regarding what constitutes a work of art. Students will be engaged in the process of observing various works of art to discuss Danto's definition of art, which states that something is considered to be a work of art when it refers to something and possesses its own distinct meaning. By exploring different artworks and understanding Danto's perspective, students will gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of artistic expression and the diverse ways in which art can be interpreted.

Step 1: Introduction to the philosophical topic (15 minutes)

The first part of the lesson plan is an introduction to Arthur Danto's philosophical work and to his basic ideas on; art; artistic representation; presenting a piece of art; and, the continuous development of art.

To introduce students to these topics, you can show them a short video:

Aesthetic Appreciation: Crash Course Philosophy #30 (CrashCourse, 2017). This video is in English, but there are embedded subtitles on YouTube.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ5duzln2wI>.

Once you show the video, you can ask your students to research and read about Danto's biography and philosophical work online.

One of the main sources they can use as introduction is Arthur Danto's profile page on Wikipedia. Link: [here](#).

Step 2: A role-playing activity (15 minutes)

After this short introduction to the philosophy of Arthur Danto, students will be able to answer some basic questions about Danto's life and his main viewpoints on art. To help your students engage with Danto's philosophy in more depth and advance their debating, communication and argumentation skills further, you can start a group discussion among your students.

Some guiding questions for the group discussion include:

- Where was Danto born?
- What was his main profession?
- Who played a crucial part in his life? Did they influence his philosophy?
- Which books did he write?
- What was his opinion on art? Do you agree?
- Should art pieces have titles?



To make this activity more interactive, you can divide your students into two groups. One group will be the 'journalists' and the other group will be 'Arthur Danto'. This role-playing activity will enhance the active participation of all students and it will help them advance their communication and teamwork skills further.

Step 3: A presentation on an art piece (50 minutes)

After the role-playing activity, you should divide your students into groups of 4 students (per group) and ask them to find one piece of art and create a short presentation on the artwork.

Students can choose a painting or any other form/piece of art they like. This can be digital art, a poem or even a song. Some examples include:

- **Guernica**, a famous Picasso painting.



(picture taken by Wikipedia, link: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica>).

- Earth Day, a poem by Jane Yolen.
Part of the poem:
*"I am the Earth
And the Earth is me"*.
Link to full poem: [here](#).

While creating their presentations, the students should include information on the following topics:

- What makes this piece an artwork?
- What do you understand by this artwork?
- Does it create any emotions for you?
- Is there a connection between this artwork and real-life?
- What title would you give to this piece, if you were the artist?

Students can create their presentations in the form of a PowerPoint or create a poster.



Step 4: Students become artists (10 minutes)

In this final stage, you should ask your students to work in groups (4 students per group) and create their own piece of art. Students can make a drawing, a painting, write a poem or express themselves in any other way they want.

You should ask your students to do this activity as homework. You could also organise an exhibition at your school, where your students can showcase their artwork.



References:

Youtube, Aesthetic Appreciation: Crash Course Philosophy #30, CrashCourse, <https://youtu.be/NZ5duzln2wl?si=5flvIQl6fV3X9x-F>.

Wikipedia, 'Arthur Danto', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Danto.

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Google Arts & Culture, 'Can you hear a painting?', <https://artsandculture.google.com/>.

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