



## Walk the Walk! Role Playing Suggestions

It's been said that practice makes perfect. No one expects your students to be perfect during their museum visit, but here are a few ideas you can use to practice being good museum guests.

### **Create a Classroom Art Museum**

Collect some posters, magazine pictures, or books with large images of artworks. You could also use artworks created by your students for this activity, alone or with the other images. Display the art around the room—on the walls, on desks and countertops, etc., and explain that your classroom is now an art museum. Have the students view the artworks, practicing the behaviors below and others you may think of. The “Museum Manners” quiz in this guide may be helpful for this activity.

- During your museum visit, the students will probably view some artworks as a whole group and some in smaller groups. Take the time to practice both.
- Remind the students that they won't be allowed to touch the artworks. Have them practice what to do with their hands to help them remember. They might put them behind their backs or in their pockets, for example.
- If your students will be using clipboards for sketching, note taking, or other activities, have them practice that. Remember that only pencils can be used in the Museum.
- Help students develop “crowd sense”. Sometimes they will need to wait to get a good look at an artwork, and sometimes they'll need to move to allow others to look.
- This is a good time to practice discussing art. Students can gain experience expressing their observations and opinions as well as listening to those of others. Setting expectations for respectful discussion is very important to help everyone feel safe in expressing thoughts. Help them understand that opinions are not right or wrong, only substantiated or unsupported. If you'll be serving as the tour guide for your visit, this is also a good time for you to practice leading the discussion! Find some tips here .
- Remind your students that they will enjoy some of the artworks more than others but that it's important to keep an open mind. Just as we usually like a person better after we get to know him or her, we tend to like pieces of art better after learning a little more about them or spending more time with them.
- Point out the differences between original works of art and reproductions. (You may be using both in this role play.) At the Museum, all the artworks they see will be originals.
- Take some time to provide details about your trip. You will all be more likely to enjoy the outing if the expectations are clear, and it's a great opportunity to build their excitement.



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### **Bring Art and Music Together**

In 1874, Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky wrote a piece of music about a visit to an art gallery, which is called *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Modest's artist friend Viktor Hartmann had died suddenly the year before. A collection of Viktor's drawings and paintings was put on display, and Mussorgsky was inspired to write this musical work as a response. *Pictures at an Exhibition* is a suite, which is a collection of short pieces with a unifying theme (like the famous *Nutcracker Suite* by Tchaikovsky).

*Pictures* opens with a piece called "Promenade", which suggests walking, and this walking tune returns between several other short pieces, which have names like "The Gnome", "The Old Castle", and "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks" - each one suggested by one of Hartmann's artworks. In other words, the whole suite is something of a soundtrack for a thirty-minute visit to an art exhibit - an exhibit which now exists only in our imagination. It simulates walking from artwork to artwork, pausing to look at and think about each artwork.

The music is easily accessible online at YouTube, iTunes, etc., and additional information can be found using a search engine. There is also an excellent picture book with the same title by Anna Harwell Celenza depicting the music and its story; it includes a CD of the suite performed by an orchestra.

Consider using some or all of this piece of music with your students as you prepare to visit the Museum. Sharing the picture book with them would be one way. You might also use the "Promenade" in the role play activity described above as a signal to move from one artwork to another. For a more in-depth experience, play a few of the other selections from the suite and have students create artworks inspired by the titles and the music, which can then serve as the artworks in your role play activity.