

School Group Gallery Talks

The Clark's collections connect with many areas of study for all ages and class levels. All our gallery talks enhance student learning by helping them develop and exercise critical and creative thinking skills. Our talks can support specific areas of the curriculum as well as state education standards; we tailor each gallery talk in collaboration with classroom teachers and their goals for the visit. Our approach involves in-depth conversation around a few works of art rather than a tour-like visit covering many objects.

Signature Talks

The Clark's Signature Talks are designed to demonstrate the power of art and its ability to offer important perspectives on human dynamics, and in particular, an awareness and appreciation of the concept of humanity—our own, each other's, and in general. These talks can be adapted for any grade or developmental level. *Check back soon as new Signature Talks are under development.*

Curating a Culture of Respect (CCR)

CCR encourages students to think about what it means to be a human being, to trust and learn from their own inner experience, and to consider that they have choices about how to live their lives as they journey towards adulthood. We recommend CCR as a full-grade experience as the focus can help to set a class culture of shared respect. This talk is designed with middle school aged students in mind but can be adapted for any grade or developmental level.

A pre-visit activity will be shared with teachers in advance of a CCR visit and a complementary activity of making t-shirts that express Art/I/We Can Change the World can be included at the end of a visit. Plan for at least two hours for this program.

CCR is a joint initiative between three museum education departments in Northern Berkshire County. Please contact the education departments at the Williams College Museum of Art to explore opportunities to learn about Art and the Power of the Individual and at MASS MoCA to explore Art and Social Justice with your students.

Please see Suggested Themes on next page for general gallery talk topics. Suggested Themes talks, like our Signature Talks, are offered year-round!

Suggested Themes

Exploring Art

This talk is designed to share the joys and value of engaging with art. Students will be introduced to a variety of works in the collection and will learn how to think about and talk about art in general. More experienced art classes can focus on particular concepts or ideas that they may be studying. Classes studying photography, drawing, and printmaking can arrange to visit our Manton Study Center for Works on Paper. All students will consider how the arts can enrich human understanding. Suitable for all ages. This talk can be tailored for different grades and learning goals.

Art and the Language Arts

Students at all grade levels can use works of art to explore different types of writing. Some works of art illustrate specific narratives or relate directly to mythology, literature, and poetry, while others may offer excellent starting points for students to create their own stories, essays, or poems. Looking at art offers a wonderful opportunity to think about people—the artists, the subjects in their pictures, and ourselves—and to gather inspiration for creative or expository writing. Writing activities for students may be incorporated into a gallery talk or independent writing time can be organized before or after a talk. Suitable for all ages. This talk can be tailored for different grades and learning goals.

Art and Society

Works of art reflect the period in which they were made and can be used as evidence of how people lived and thought about life in different places and times. While the Clark's collection is not encyclopedic, it relates to many different cultures, historical periods, and human concerns both universal and idiosyncratic. Younger grades can focus on general themes such as families, communities, diversity, and conceptual ideas like change. For older students, a talk can be shaped to explore systems of belief, cultural values, assumptions, and even bias. This talk can be tailored for different grades and learning goals.

French Art and Culture

The Clark is famous for its collection of French Art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. French Art and Culture gallery talks will focus on these works, France's central position in Western art, and the rapid and radical changes in French and European society during this time period. This talk can be tailored for different grades and learning goals.

Identity and the United States

Art often conveys personal or national identities and can illustrate particular social customs. The Clark's Henry Morris and Elizabeth H. Burrows Gallery and Lauzon Glass Study Gallery feature silver, glass objects, furnishings, and portraiture from Colonial America and the Federalist period, while the Manton Study Center for Works on Paper allows students to investigate imagery from these times, including nineteenth-century magazine illustrations and early photography. Along with paintings in the permanent collection galleries, these displays help students consider what life was like in the early days of the United States and reveal evolving ideas about national identity. This talk can be tailored for different grades and learning goals.

Art and Nature

Inspired by our 140-acre campus as well as our collection, this theme embraces one of the Clark's most treasured relationships: art and nature. Talks can include both an outside experience and a gallery experience and can connect to a variety of topics and curricula, from a philosophical and contemplative query exploring the relationship between nature and human beings to a focus on specific STEM learning objectives. View landscape paintings in the galleries and consider how artists have interacted with the natural world. Learn about the Clark's sustainability efforts and ethics as the Institute grows, and how the three-tiered reflecting pool is part of an advanced water management system. This talk can be tailored for different grades and learning goals.