

# Art Museums: How to Engage Young Children

## Try these approaches to help them explain what they see.

**Aesthetic Approach:** Accept the reactions of children. They have their own ideas and opinions. Ask open-ended questions such as,  
What does the painting remind you of? How does it make you feel? Why did the artist make it? How did the artist make it? Would you change anything?

**Historical Connections:** Compare styles of clothes, objects, furniture, etc.  
In decorative arts galleries and period rooms, use questions such as, How does this room compare to yours? What type of person sat in that chair? What objects do you recognize?  
Looking at portraiture, you might ask, Have you ever worn your hair in that style? Who was the portrait made for? What do you think this person would say to you? How is the person feeling?

**Telling stories:** Young children enjoy hearing stories. Select a painting they like, and make up a short story about it. You can even have the children imitate the poses in the painting.

**The Four Elements of Art:** With abstract art, discuss lines, color, textures, and shapes.  
How many shapes are there? How were the shapes made? How many variations of color do you see? Why are there light and dark colors? What types of lines do you see? Do you see other paintings with similar lines and shapes?

**Tips:** Don't try to see everything, take advantage of the programs for families, and avoid sharing too many facts.