

ANNA AT THE ART MUSEUM

by Hazel Hutchins & Gail Herbert • illustrated by Lil Crump

Genre: Picture book

Themes: exploration; art; art history; self-discovery; imagination; growth; painting;
art appreciation; creativity; museum; dance

Suitable for: Grades PreK–4

Guided Reading Level: L

Common Core standards: L.2.3,4,4a,4c,4d,5,5a,5b,6
RF.2.3,3d,4,4a,4c
SL.2.1,1b,1c,2,3,4,6
W.2.1,2,3,5,7,8
RL.2.1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10

Story elements: plot and character development, problem solving, art from different countries and eras, character growth, young female main character, person vs. person conflict, person vs. self conflict, humorous tone, art history and appreciation

Summary

Anna becomes bored and cranky during a visit to an art museum until she begins to identify with details in the paintings, which suddenly seem to come alive. Anna's experience with the art in the museum reflects the way art imitates life, and how life can inform the creation of art.

BEFORE STARTING THE BOOK

These activities build the context and introduce the topic of the book, and establish prior knowledge and interest.

1. Before reading *Anna at the Art Museum*, ask your students if they have ever had to go on an outing that they thought would be boring.

Questions to ask:

- Where did you go?
- Did the outing go as you had expected?
- Why or why not?

2. Give your students an opportunity to “read the cover” and predict what the book will be about.

Questions to ask:

- What is an art museum?
- Have you never been to one?
- What did you see there?
- Did you see anything you liked or disliked? Why?
- Do you think Anna will enjoy herself or not?

3. Finally, preview the following vocabulary words that might be new to students:

attendant

entertain

firm

gallery

grime

nook

NB: *Anna at the Art Museum* uses both the term “art museum” and “art gallery.” You can explain to students that both terms can be used interchangeably.

WHILE READING THE BOOK

These activities check on comprehension, stimulate interest, involve readers in reflection as they read, and encourage consideration of other readers’ reactions.

1. What creative ideas does Anna find to entertain herself? Are Anna’s actions appropriate for the setting of the art gallery? Why or why not? Where else could Anna do these same activities? This could lead to a discussion of how some actions and behaviours are appropriate in one setting, and who gets to set these rules.
2. What is the attendant’s job? Is he being mean, or simply doing his job? How are the attendant and Anna’s mother similar?
3. Why does Anna’s mother have so many rules? How does the attendant bend the rules? Why does he do this? This could lead to a discussion about the purpose of rules (to protect, to impose order, etc.), and when it’s important to follow rules and when it’s permissible to interpret or modify them.
4. When Anna reaches the top floor, what changes for her? How does this happen? After this change, how does she view the artwork differently? How does this impact how she views the world outside differently?

AFTER READING THE BOOK

These activities inspire continued reflection and response to the text, bring conclusion to the experience of reading this particular text, and stimulate further extensions.

1. After you have read the story once, look back at the illustrations to see if you can spot where the gallery art and Anna's life mirror each other. (Extra points go to the student who spots Annick Press's disguised logo on page 28!)
2. Have you ever seen a piece of art that has reminded you of something in real life? Write a journal entry or story about this. Depending on the age of your students, this story could be one or two sentences, or a couple of paragraphs.
3. There are many kinds of museums besides art museums, such as history museums, science museums, and archaeological museums. There are also some pretty strange museums, such as:
 - The Kansas Barbed Wire Museum in La Crosse, Kansas
www.rushcounty.org/BarbedWireMuseum
 - the Sulabh International Museum of Toilets in New Delhi, India
www.sulabhtoiletmuseum.org
 - The National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum in Milwaukee, Illinois
www.bobbleheadhall.com
 - The Cancun Underwater Museum of Art in Mexico
www.musamexico.org

If you had your own museum, what would you put in it? Draw a picture of something that might appear in your museum.

For more information on the artists and styles featured in *Anna at the Art Museum*, refer to pages 32–35.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

These activities are only a start. They are designed to support the goal of helping students explore the story and their own creativity.

MIXED MEDIA ARTWORK

Lil Crump, the illustrator of *Anna at the Art Museum*, incorporates textures and patterns from photographs and other sources into her illustrations. Students can create mixed media artwork of their own with found materials such as old magazines, discarded books, wallpaper samples, etc.

DANCE AND ART

“Anna danced patterns of her own. She felt color swirl around her.”

There are many ways to interact with art. Artists are often inspired by work in disciplines other than their own. The paintings on the third floor of Anna’s art museum inspire her to dance. In turn, some visual artists are inspired by dance or music. Show students a selection of artwork that feature dancers, such as the following examples:

- *Russian Dancer*, by Edgar Degas, 1899
<https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/436157>
- *The Dancer*, by Albert Alexander Smith, 1930
<https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/491392>
- *Dancer*, by Oishi Matora, 1827
<https://metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53997>
- Paintings and murals by Jerry Whitehead
<http://www.jerrywhitehead.com/jerry-whitehead-gallery/index.php>

STATUES

You can turn a game of statues into an exploration of art. In an open space, such as a gym or multipurpose room, play a selection of 30-second clips of music. It’s good to choose music in different styles and tempos. Instruct the students to stop in a dancer-like pose when the music stops. Later, students can draw a self-portrait of a favorite pose.

THE CLASSROOM AS ART MUSEUM

Display the artwork created in either of the two exercises above (or from another recent art project), on your classroom, library, or hallway walls to create an “exhibition.” What is the title of your class exhibition?

Students can frame their work with the template on page 5. Or they can create their own frame out of cardboard, sheets of 11” x 17” paper, or any other material. Encourage students to decorate their frames. This way it can be part of the artwork, like those by William Kurelek:
<https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/william-kurelek/key-works/reminiscences-of-youth>



MORE ABOUT THE ARTWORK

HEAD OF A WOMAN, circa 1650–1700, by Anonymous. French. Black chalk on grey paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

NUBIAN TRIBUTE PRESENTED TO THE KING, TOMB OF HUY, circa 1353–1327 BCE. Egyptian. Tempera facsimile by Charles K. Wilkinson, circa 1923–27. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

NEBAMUN SUPERVISING ESTATE ACTIVITIES, TOMB OF NEBAMUN, circa 1400–1352 BCE. Egyptian. Tempera facsimile by Charles K. Wilkinson, circa 1928. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

We don't always know who created a particular piece of artwork, especially if it is very old. The sketch of the woman above Anna and the murals from ancient Egypt are both by unknown, or anonymous, artists. Even though the two Egyptian murals are copies of the originals, they are still considered valuable for what they teach us about ancient Egyptian life. The original murals were probably painted by a team who worked under a master craftsman.

PANEL WITH STRIDING LION, circa 604–562 BCE. Babylonian from Mesopotamia (Modern Hillah). Glazed ceramic. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

In the ancient kingdom of Mesopotamia, stone was rare. In the city of Babylon, buildings were made of molded glazed brick, in white, black, blue, red, and yellow. The road to the temple was lined with panels of striding lions, because they were associated with the goddess of love and war. The lions were thought to protect the street.

THE THIRD ICHIKAWA YAOZŌ AS A DAIMYO STANDING UNDER A MAPLE TREE, circa 1783, by Katsukawa Shunshō. Japanese. Woodblock print on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

THE FIRST NAKAMURA NAKAZO AS A SAMURAI STANDING NEAR A WILLOW TREE, 1768 or 1769, by Katsukawa Shunshō. Japanese. Woodblock print on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

KABUKI ACTOR ICHIKAWA DANJŪRŌ V, 1774, by Katsukawa Shunshō. Japanese. Woodblock print on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

MOTHER AND CHILDREN AT THE NEW YEAR, 18th century, by Utagawa Toyoharu. Japanese. Ink and color on silk. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Katsukawa Shunshō (1726-1793) is known for his paintings and woodblock prints of actors. He was one of the first Japanese artists to capture the look of individual actors, rather than only the character they played. The scroll by Utagawa Toyoharu (1735–1814) shows a mother and her two children playing together during the New Year festival.

ADOLESCENCE, OR SISTERS, 1976, by Daphne Odjig. Canadian. Acrylic on Canvas. Private collection.

Daphne Odjig (1919–2016) was a well-known Odawa-Potawatomi-English artist. She came up with her own style which borrowed techniques from traditional Indigenous pictographs and First Nations art forms, as well as modern European styles and techniques. She was also a founding member of the “Indian Group of Seven.”

BROKEN EGGS, 1756, by Jean-Baptiste Greuze. French. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

The paintings of Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805) captured the emotions of his subjects, which were often regular people in real-life settings, a new idea at the time. His celebrity as an innovator grew, but his arguments with the well-established French Académie of artists eventually overshadowed his artistic accomplishments.

THE FOREST AT PONTAUBERT, 1881, by Georges Seurat. French. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Georges-Pierre Seurat (1859–1891) developed a new technique called pointillism, of painting tiny dots to form an image. His most famous painting, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, changed the course of painting in France at the time.

WESTERN FOREST, circa 1931, by Emily Carr. Canadian. Oil on canvas. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

Emily Carr (1871–1945) was one of the first Canadian painters to use the European Modernist and Post-Impressionist styles. She used these new techniques to capture the spirit of western Canada. Her favourite subjects were Indigenous villages and the temperate rainforests of British Columbia where she lived.

THE SUPPER AT EMMAUS, 1601, by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. Italian. Oil and tempera on canvas. National Gallery, London.

The paintings by Caravaggio (1571–1610) are both realistic and emotional. He contrasted dark shadows with highlights to create a dramatic mood and to focus on his subjects. His personal life was just as dramatic as his art, though some scholars believe this might be because he was poisoned by the lead in his paints.

DER SCHREI DER NATUR (THE SCREAM), circa 1893, by Edvard Munch. Norwegian. Tempera and crayon on cardboard. National Museum, Oslo.

Edvard Munch (1863–1944) was interested in capturing emotions, often in symbolic ways. At the time, his work was not popular. But now *The Scream* is one of the most recognizable pieces of art. He created many versions of the piece, both in painting and prints.

REGATTA AT SAINTE-ADRESSE, 1867, by Claude Monet. French. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

BRIDGE OVER A POND OF WATER LILIES, 1899, by Claude Monet. French. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

APPROACH TO VENICE, 1844, by J.M.W. Turner. British. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Both JMW Turner (1775–1851) and Claude Monet (1840–1926) were innovators who were passionately interested in capturing light in their paintings. Turner is considered a master of landscape painting and was one of Monet's many influences. Monet, in turn, was a founder of the French Impressionism, and liked to be outside when he painted his landscapes, rather than in a studio.

NATURALEZA MUERTA / STILL LIFE, 1908, by Diego Rivera. Mexican. Oil on canvas. Government of the State of Veracruz, Xalapa, Mexico.

STILL LIFE WITH ONIONS, JUG AND FRUIT, circa 1930-38, by William H. Johnson. American. Oil on burlap. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

Diego Rivera (1886–1957) is best known for his murals in cities in Mexico and the United States. His frescoes depicted Mexican society and history, including the revolution in 1910. But he also painted on canvas, such as the still life pictured to the left of Anna's mum.

THE PEPPERMINT BOTTLE, 1893/95, by Paul Cézanne. French. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

LITTLE GIRL IN A BLUE ARMCHAIR, 1878, by Mary Cassatt. American. Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

Mary Cassatt (1844–1926) was an American painter and printmaker who lived in France for most of her life. Women artists were rarely taken seriously at the time, but Cassatt found success when she joined the new group of Impressionists. She often painted scenes of the social and private lives of women and children.

GIRL IN A GREEN DRESS, 1930, by William H. Johnson. American. Oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

William Henry Johnson (1901–1970) was an African-American painter whose style ranged from Modern to Impressionistic to the “conscious naiveté” of folk art. Despite a long and brilliant career, ill health meant that he spent his last years in obscurity. Today, he is considered one of the most important African-American artists of his generation.

PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG WOMAN, late 18th century, unknown artist. Pastel. Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis.

WATER-MOON AVALOKITESHRAVA, first half of the 14th century, unidentified

THE SINGER IN GREEN, circa 1884, by Edgar Degas. French. Pastel on paper. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

A WOMAN SEATED BESIDE A VASE OF FLOWERS, 1865, by Edgar Degas. French. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

DANCERS, PINK AND GREEN, circa 1890, by Edgar Degas. French. Oil on canvas. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

TWO DANCERS AT REST OR, DANCERS IN BLUE, circa 1898, by Edgar Degas. French. Pastel on paper. Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Edgar Degas (1834–1917) is considered one of the first Impressionist artists, though he preferred to call himself a realist. He often showed women at work, especially dancers. In addition to painting, he was also a printmaker, sculptor, and photographer. He influenced many artists, including Mary Cassatt.

UNDER THE WAVE OFF KANAGAWA OR, THE GREAT WAVE, circa 1830-32, by Katsushika Hokusai. Japanese. Woodblock print. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

This print by Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) is considered one of the most recognizable pieces of Japanese art in the world. In it Mount Fuji, the largest mountain in Japan, looks tiny compared to a cresting wave. Originally about 5,000 copies were made but then the original woodblocks started to wear down. Today, few of those early impressions still survive.