

*Teachers' Orientation Pages to:*  
**Making Connections in Art  
Exhibit and Collection**

Currently the only objects from this online module on view in the Museum are the piano and the hair wreath. This online exhibit features works of art from other Museumlink art sub-modules and arranges them in groups. The groups are based on the idea of the viewers' tendencies to want to find connections among artworks and between artwork and their lives. The staff has arranged four sets of five artworks that are related to one another by a theme. The four themes are Coming of Age, Remembrance, Abundance, and Sense of Place. The five works in each theme may at first seem to be very disparate objects. By looking for similar uses, characteristics, content, or context, and using some 'lateral thinking', viewers can relate an artwork to others, and to their life experience or society or culture.



For example, a story of Helen Gilchrist is told in two objects in the Coming of Age section and its links. Helen was a teenager when she was sent from a farm in Illinois to a finishing school in New York. She made the bedcover and was given the piano to perfect her sewing and musical skills for her return to Illinois and subsequent life as a cultured wife. The most 'different' object in this section is the photograph of a young woman by Nathan Lerner, taken when he was seventeen. Coming of Age for him included, perhaps, fathoming the mysteries of love, or of women. The other two images are more straight forward, a hand-made portrait that celebrates a daughter's marriage, and a picture painted by a young lady learning a domestic skill. Consider these modules as practice before going out and finding your own connections among art works.

**Text and Grade Levels of Activities**

The questions for this section are meant to prompt your own discussion of how the image creates a Sense of Place or a Remembrance. There is no one way to interpret themes because each viewer brings his own experience and perception to each artwork. The best way to promote student interpretation of artworks is to present images to them for open-minded discussion and close looking using one or more questions from the DBAE Teacher's Orientation section. Once teachers and students are accustomed to trusting themselves to look carefully and find details and elements in artworks for themselves, the more comfortable and enjoyable the experience is. It is like any other skill that increases with practice.

## **Interdisciplinary Use**

Making Connections is a topic amenable to a **multicultural** approach. What images in various cultures and subcultures are similar in theme, or take a very different tack on one of these themes? The collage activity can be broadened to include images and items from many cultural origins coming together to represent classroom themes the students want to interpret.

Two images of people (e.g. Portrait of Kezia and Portrait of a Girl) could be the inspiration for a **written dialog** between two characters discussing their lives according to the theme of coming of age in their era (by students who have **researched the customs** of both eras). Other **historical research** could be done on jobs, sex roles, funeral customs, the role of children, fashions, entertainment, and other topics depicted in one or more of the images and connections made to the present through comparisons and contrasts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

## **Resources for Talking About Art**

<http://www.artsednet.getty.edu/> Philosophers Forum: Asking Questions about Art.

<http://www.utah.edu/umfa/hansen.html> Uses pairs of paintings to illustrate elements of art