Analyzing Visuals

Objectives
Students will analyze art for poetic elements, including symbolism.

Preteach

Connect to the Literary Skill
- Tell students that poets use imagery, symbolism, and repetition to draw the reader's attention to a subject or idea.
- Then, explain that students will analyze a painting that uses similar techniques to present an ordinary subject—a cat—in a unique way.

Direct Teach

Guided Practice
Analyzing a Painting
- Tell students that **Malcah Zeldis** (1931–) is an American painter who never received any formal artistic training. Zeldis is known as a folk artist because she is self-taught and because her art celebrates her cultural background.
- Explain that Zeldis often paints domestic, or household, scenes. Point out that *Black Cat* is an example of a domestic subject because it is set in a living room or parlor.

Analyzing Visuals

How Can You Find Poetic Elements in a Painting?

You have just learned some of the elements that go into creating a poem. While poetry and painting are very different media, they use some of the same elements, although in different ways. Poems create **imagery** through words, while paintings use color, line, shape, and perspective. Both may include **symbols**—things that have meaning in themselves but also stand for something else beyond—and **repetition**. They both also use these elements to present their subject in an original way.

Analyzing a Painting

Use these guidelines to analyze poetic elements in a painting.

1. Focus on the subject of the painting. Is the representation realistic or fanciful? somber or cheerful? What is the artist trying to convey by showing the subject in this way?
2. Consider the "language" of the painting—that is, its color, line, imagery, and perspective. What tone and mood are suggested by this "language"?
3. What details does the artist include or repeat? Are any details in the painting symbolic of something else?
4. How do the artist's visual choices relate to the subject? How do visual and poetic elements combine to create a fresh idea about the painting's subject?

Your Turn Write About Poetic Elements in Art

Find a piece of art in this textbook that appeals to you. Then, write a description of the artwork's poetic elements. Do you find any symbolism in its subject matter? What senses do its images appeal to? How does repetition of color, shape, line, or pattern contribute to the work's mood? How do all these elements contribute to the message of the piece?

SKILLS FOCUS pp. 674–675

Literary Skills
- Understand symbolism.

Resources

Analyzing Visuals Transparencies, Collection 7

Teacher One Stop™, on-level lesson plans and all print resources

Differentiating Instruction

English-Language Learners/ Readers Gaining Proficiency

To help students understand the guidelines for analyzing a painting, introduce them to the following words.

- Write on the board the words *realistic, fanciful, somber,* and *cheerful.* Guide students in defining each word. [*lifelike, imaginary, serious, joyful*]
- Have students listen for these words as you model using the guidelines for analyzing a painting. For example, you might say, "This painting is fanciful because it does not portray objects

1. Malcah Zeldis has painted historic subjects as well as domestic scenes. What might this painting be saying about daily life?

2. What does Zeldis's use of repetition of color, shape, and other details add to the meaning of this painting?

3. Think of the size and placement of the cat. What do you think this cat may symbolize?



Black Cat (1981) by Malcah Zeldis (1931–).
© 2007 Malcah Zeldis/Artist Rights Society (ARS). New York.

as they appear in life. The bright colors and bold patterns are cheerful."

- Tell students to use these words when they complete the Your Turn activity.

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Have students work in pairs to research depictions of a domestic or wild animal throughout history. Suggest that students find examples from different media, including painting, sculpture, and photography. Remind students to look for works of art that use symbolism or repetition. Then, have students share their research in a class discussion about the various and changing roles of animals in art.

Guided Practice

Analyzing a Painting

Work with students to answer the guided questions.

Possible responses:

1. *Zeldis's painting might be saying that daily life is an important subject worthy of being captured in a painting.*
2. *Zeldis's repetition of color, shape, and details such as the paintings hanging on the wall create a uniform background against which the figure of the cat clearly stands out.*
3. *The cat is placed in the center of the painting and is very large in proportion to the other objects in the room. This cat may symbolize the important role that pets play in people's everyday lives.*

Assess

Independent Practice

Your Turn

Alternative Listening and Speaking Assignment

- Have students work in pairs to find another painting in the textbook that includes some of the poetic elements Zeldis uses in *Black Cat*. Tell students to use the guidelines for analyzing a painting to compare and contrast poetic elements in the two paintings.
- Then, have students share their responses with the class.