

Art Criticism: Feldman's Model

Art captures more than just visuals; it reflects the emotions, experiences, and cultural values of its time. *Halt on the March by a Stream at Nesle* (1918) by Alfred Munnings, painted during World War I, depicts cavalry soldiers and their horses resting amid the chaos of war, revealing deeper layers beyond its surface.

To explore this artwork, we will use Feldman's Four-Step Model of Art Criticism, which offers a structured approach to examining and discussing art. This model encourages viewers to observe details closely and form their own interpretations based on these observations.



Figure 1. Alfred Munnings, *Halt on the March by a Stream at Nesle*, 1918, oil on canvas, Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa.

In your sketchbook, divide the page into four quadrants, or use the provided worksheet to follow Feldman's Four Steps:

1. Look at the Painting: List only the things you see in the painting:

- **Describe** – What do you see? Identify objects, figures, the setting, and the mood without making assumptions or interpreting them.

2. Looking at the Elements of Art and Principles of Design definitions sheet:

- **Analyze** – How is it constructed? Consider the elements of art (line, colour, shape, texture) and the principles of design (balance, emphasis, rhythm, contrast). Look for any symbols or signs that may help decode the image.

3. Find any symbols or signs that may help decode the image:

- **Interpret** – What could it mean? Explore possible messages, emotions, or historical context. What is Munnings trying to convey about this moment in the war?

4. In your opinion, based on the information collected and what you have observed:

- **Evaluate** – Based on your observations and the information you have gathered, how effective is the artwork? Share your judgment on its success or emotional impact, supported by what you have observed and interpreted. Remember, there are no wrong answers.

Examining *Halt on the March by a Stream at Nesle* (1918) by Alfred Munnings provides an opportunity to think critically about how the artist combined technique and emotion to portray the realities of war.

Munnings did not depict scenes of violence; instead, through moments of stillness, he highlighted the bravery and hard work of the soldiers. This quiet pause amid the chaos invites us to reflect on themes of endurance, empathy, and the shared humanity of those who served.

Allow your observations to guide your questions and let your questions deepen your understanding.

USING FELDMAN'S CRITIQUE MODEL to Talk About Art

Feldman's Critique Model helps you break down and talk about artwork in a clear, thoughtful way.

It gives you a step-by-step method to help you look closely, think critically, and express your own ideas about what an artwork is doing and why it matters.

By following the four stages - Describe, Analyze, Interpret; and Evaluate--you'll be able to build stronger art vocabulary, make more meaningful connections, and explain your ideas with confidence.

1. Describe

What do I see?

- ✓ What's in the artwork? (People, objects, setting, materials?)
- ✓ What's happening in the image?
- ✓ What do I notice first?
- ✓ Have I written at least two clear, factual sentences without guessing or interpreting yet?

2. Analyze

How did the artist organize it?

- ✓ Which elements of art can I see? (Line, shape, color, value, texture, space, form)
- ✓ Which principles of design are being used? (Balance, contrast, movement, unity, rhythm, emphasis, pattern)
- ✓ How do these choices affect how the artwork looks and feels?

3. Interpret

What do I think it means?

- ✓ What mood, message, or story do I think the artist is trying to share?
- ✓ Are there any symbols or clues that help me understand the meaning?
- ✓ How does this artwork connect to bigger ideas, the world, or my own experiences?

4. Evaluate

What's my opinion?

- ✓ Do I think this artwork is effective or successful? Why?
- ✓ What stands out to me about how it's made or what it's saying?
- ✓ Do I think the artist achieved their goal or intention?
- ✓ Have I clearly explained my personal opinion with at least one reason?

Elements of Art and Principles of Design

Elements of Art

Element	Definition
Line	A path created by a moving point. It can be straight, curved, thick, thin, horizontal, vertical, or diagonal.
Shape	A two-dimensional, enclosed space. Shapes can be geometric (squares, circles) or organic (free-form, natural).
Form	A three-dimensional object or the illusion of three dimensions in a two-dimensional work. Includes height, width, and depth.
Color	The visual perception of light. Colour has hue (name), value (lightness/darkness), and intensity (brightness/dullness).
Value	The lightness or darkness of a colour or tone. It helps create contrast, depth, and mood.
Texture	How something feels or looks like it would feel. It can be actual (tactile) or implied (visual).
Space	The area around, between, or within objects. Artists use space to create a sense of depth or to emphasize elements.

Principles of Design

Principle	Definition
Balance	The visual distribution of weight. Can be symmetrical, asymmetrical, or radial.
Contrast	The difference between elements (light vs. dark, rough vs. smooth, large vs. small) to create visual interest.
Emphasis	Creating a focal point to draw the viewer's attention to the most important part of the work.
Movement	The path the viewer's eye takes through the artwork, often leading to focal areas.
Rhythm	A sense of visual tempo or beat is created by repeating elements to guide the viewer's eye.
Pattern	The repetition of specific visual elements such as lines, shapes, or colours.
Unity	A sense of harmony between all parts of the artwork creates a cohesive whole.
Variety	Using different elements to create visual interest and avoid monotony.
Proportion	The relative size and scale of elements in a work. It helps create a sense of realism or distortion for effect.

Art Criticism: Feldman's Model Worksheet

Describe:

Analyze:

Interpret:

Evaluate:



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