

THE EFFECTS OF FELDMAN'S CRITICAL
ANALYSIS ON THE ART PREFERENCES
OF FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADERS

By

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PREFACE

This study is concerned with the expansion of art preferences of fifth and sixth grade students. The primary objective is to determine if Feldman's Critical Analysis method will improve the art preference scores of fifth and sixth graders.

The author wishes to express her appreciation to her major adviser Dr. Audrey Eleanor Oaks, for her assistance and guidance throughout this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Michael Kerr, Mr. Richard Bivens, and Mrs. Nancy Wilkinson, for their assistance in the preparation of the final manuscript.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While teaching art in Oklahoma at Darnaby Elementary School in Tulsa; Stillwater Middle School in Stillwater; and Washington Elementary School in Ponca City, as well as in working with various children's art classes, the researcher observed student's preferences for certain kinds of art work. Research in human psychology has shown that an individual's evaluation of art is greatly influenced by actual experiences with works of art (2).

Our world is full of choices. Certain factors, such as experiences, knowledge and familiarity influence our preferences for certain things. These factors have also been proven to influence our preference for certain works of art (17). In Principles of Art Appreciation, Pepper (15) introduced the concept of habituation, which suggests that a student can overcome a negative feeling for a work of art and begin to acquire a positive attitude toward it merely by being exposed to the work over a period of time. In addition, earlier philosophers and educators have repeatedly discussed the merits of frequent exposure to works of art. Plato stated that an individual could learn a great deal about art just by continual association with it over time.

A current concern in art education is how the quality of art preferences can be expanded (4). Some educators believe that efforts toward developing awareness of and positive attitude toward art should

begin as soon as the child enters elementary school (15).

One main purpose of art education programs is to sharpen children's enjoyment of art and challenge their creative potential (6). The introduction of students to works of fine art provides a vital visual experience which can increase their enjoyment of art (5).

A recent approach to expanding the quality of art preferences can be observed in Feldman's (8) method for critically analyzing works of art. Feldman's Critical Analysis Method states that the main purpose of art criticism is in expanding one's pleasure and understanding. He felt that the viewer, while using his four-step critical analysis process, is able to gather information which is useful in understanding the work of art as well as develop a qualitative basis for art preferences.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine if instruction in Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art would expand the art preferences of fifth and sixth grade students.

H₁ Hypothesis

1. Students given instructions and practice in the use of Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art, will demonstrate a significant difference in art preferences.
2. Students given instruction and practice in the use of Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art will demonstrate a significant difference in art preferences due to sex.
3. Students given instruction and practice in the use of Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art will demonstrate a

significant difference in art preferences due to grade level.

H_0 hypothesis

1. Students given instruction and practice in the use of Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art, will demonstrate no significant difference in art preferences.

2. Students given instruction and practice in the use of Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art, will demonstrate no significant difference in art preferences due to sex.

3. Students given instruction and practice in the use of Feldman's method of critically analyzing a work of art, will demonstrate no significant difference in art preferences due to grade level.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature reveals that a great deal of research has been done on the art preferences of children. Reasons why a child might prefer a particular work of art and methods for developing positive attitudes toward works of fine art are two issues with which researchers have been concerned.

In 1964, Child (2), working in Connecticut, tested an entire elementary school population regarding their preferences for art works using a paired slide presentation approach. The results indicated that the children in the primary grades frequently selected the "poorer" art work and that aesthetic sensitivity improved with grade level. He also discovered that aesthetic sensitivity may be improved with experience and/or training.

In a study conducted by Barron (1) in 1963, groups were also tested regarding their preferences for works of art. He discovered that subjects could be divided into two different categories as a result of their scores. The more artistically inclined preferred complex asymmetrical figures and unusual, primitive or experimental examples while the less artistic subjects preferred simple, symmetrical works and rejected the unnatural and mysterious works. Barron is also well-known for having developed a test instrument known as the Barron-Welsh Art Scale for the purpose of measuring the "artistic" and "nonarstic"

reactions to figure preferences.

In the field of aesthetics and art education, Wilson (18) conducted an experimental study in 1966 designed to influence fifth and sixth grade student perceptions of paintings. Reactions to reproductions of 20 paintings were recorded prior to and following a series of lessons given on Picasso's painting entitled "Guernica." A control group, composed of fifth and sixth grade students, was not given similar instructions. A significant difference was found between the two groups. The treatment group had learned certain perceptual terms which helped them better understand the abstract nature of the painting. The students developed from concrete to abstract thinking when they became more aware of space and the objects within.

In 1980, Gilliatt (1) conducted an experimental study, using first, third, and fifth grade students, to test the effects of three theories in expanding art preferences following the pretesting of each group.

1. Habituation Theory - states that preferences for works of art can be expanded by exposing subjects to fine art works over a period of time.

2. Studio Activity Theory - is an approach which suggests that students are more likely to expand their art preferences by learning to produce art by different methods.

3. Critical Analysis Theory - is a four-step procedure for discussing a work of art which includes:

- a. Description - involves the process of taking inventory of observable items found in the work of art. Example:
In the painting, what is the subject matter? What kind of background or setting is seen in the painting?

- b. Formal Analysis - requires the observer to determine relationships among the things found in the work of art through a knowledge of art elements and principles of design.
- Example: Are the colors in the painting dull or bright?
Is a certain object repeated in the painting?
- c. Interpretation - requires the observer to determine what the artist was trying to convey in the work of art.
- Example: Does the painting make you feel happy or sad?
- d. Judgment - involves making a decision concerning the degree of artistic merit in the work based upon information discovered during the previous steps of description, analysis and interpretation. Example: Do you like the work? Would you display this work of art in your room?

The test recorded the students' preferences for 24 slides of fine art prints. Results showed that the combined methods of Feldman/Habituation showed a significant difference in art preference scores for all grades tested.

Plummer (16) stated that there is beginning to emerge proof that exposure to art does improve art appreciation. The problem is in determining what method should be used.

Mittler (14) observed that most instruction in art appreciation given at the elementary school level is not adequate. "Their lack of success may be attributed to the same shortcoming noted in studio activities, that is, they fail to involve and motivate the learner" (p. 16).

Most art appreciation programs deal with a chronological survey of a series of art works representing certain times in history. These

types of programs only allow the students to admire the works, but does not give them the opportunity to critically evaluate the works for themselves (14).

In his book, Children's Art Judgment, Plummer (16) noted that:

Most children have very meager knowledge and information on which to form opinions of 'good' art. Their opinions, frequently, are derived from what they see in magazines, on calendars, in advertising, and the like. Television has increased awareness, but 'quality' experiences, for the most part, are still limited to the educational or public broadcast channels. Teachers have a responsibility to guide the development of taste (p. 11).

Many methods have been devised and studied. All of them seem to have one element in common, their goal is to create some kind of dialogue about the work reviewed (16).

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Subjects

Three intact fifth grade classes and three intact sixth grade classes at Darnaby Elementary located in Tulsa, Oklahoma were selected to participate in the study. This elementary school is located in the affluent southeast suburb of Tulsa, estimated population 367,000. The area is a fast-growing, upper-middle class community. A total of 136 students were involved, with approximately 22 students in each class. Three intact classes were randomly selected from the six, fifth and sixth grade classes to Group A, the treatment group, and the remaining three classes were placed in Group B, the control group.

Prior to the beginning of the study, students were asked to indicate art experiences which they had been involved in outside of a formal school setting (Table I). In treatment Group A, 53 of the 68 students had been involved in some type of informal art experiences. In the control Group B, 48 out of 68 students were involved in some type of art experience. Some of these experiences included art classes, visits to museums, instruction from relatives, and crafts done in scouting. The majority of students had experienced informal art activities outside of the school environment and their exposure to art was not limited to that provided in formal school settings.

TABLE I
 PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO HAD ART
 EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

	Visited Museums	Instructed by Relatives	Art Lessons at Home, School	Art in Clubs	NO Experience
Group A (Treatment)	50%	9%	41%	8%	15%
Group B (Control)	49%	24%	28%	9%	29%

Procedure

A pretest containing seven pairs of pre-selected art reproductions was administered to all students in both groups (Appendix A). In each pair, one picture was a fine art print and the other picture was of a "non-aesthetic" art type reproduction. Both pictures in each pair were of or close to the same subject matter, such as still life, portrait, landscape, animal or a particular theme. The students were asked to individually select the print which they preferred and mark the choice on an answer sheet. The criteria for selection was left up to the student.

When the students were seated and quiet answer sheets (Appendix D) and pencils were passed out, each group was read the following questionnaire instructions:

Students please do not talk while you fill out this questionnaire. Put your name and homeroom teacher's name on your paper where indicated. I will be showing you seven pairs or sets of pictures. On each picture you will find a letter. Look at both pictures closely and put an "A" on the line following the number, on the answer sheet, of the picture that you like best. Please do not discuss your answers with your neighbor. Turn your paper face down when you are finished.

The presentation of Feldman's Critical Analysis practice took place over a four-week period. For 10 minutes each week, during the regularly scheduled art class children were involved in participating in one of the stages of Feldman's Critical Analysis exercise. Fine art prints not used either in the pretest or posttest were employed during each of the practice sessions (see Appendix C).

The stages of the process are:

1. Description,
2. Formal Analysis,

3. Interpretation,

4. Judgment.

During the first week, students practiced the Description stage for a ten minute period. The students took an inventory of the subject matter or described what they saw. For example, in "The Gleaners" a painting done by Millet, students described the subjects in the painting as workers or slaves, the animals they saw were horses and birds, and the setting which was a hay field.

During the second week, the students reviewed the Description stage. They then analyzed the painting "Bedroom at Arles" done by Van Gogh. The formal analysis stage involves the process of determining how a work of art is organized or put together. This involves a knowledge of art elements and principles of design. Students pointed out that the Van Gogh painting was representationally done, using bright colors and a thick application of paint.

During the third week, after reviewing the stages of Description and Formal Analysis, students were introduced to the stage of Interpretation. They were asked to determine the possible feelings, moods, or ideas communicated by the artist in the work of art. In the painting, "American Gothic" by Wood, students interpreted a feeling of boredom, depression, and loneliness.

During the fourth and last week of instruction, the students reviewed the preceding three states of Description, Formal Analysis, and Interpretation. Taking all of these stages into account, the students then made their own personal judgment of the painting, "The Three Musicians" done by Picasso.

Group B, the control group, was given no treatment during the four weeks.

After Feldman's Critical Analysis exercises were completed, a post-test was given to both Group A and Group B using the same procedure as used on the pretest, but employing different art reproductions (see Appendix B). Differences between pretest scores and post-test scores were calculated for the purpose of analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

An analysis of variance showed no significant difference in the scores of the treatment and control groups. Pre- and post-test means scores were computed by sex, by grade, and for the total groups (Tables II and III). Although the post-test mean scores of treatment groups of fifth grade males and sixth grade females were better than the control groups of the same grade and sex, the post-test mean scores of the fifth grade females and sixth grade males in the control groups were better than those of the same grade and sex in the treatment group.

Table IV shows the AOV data for the post-test. The total post-test mean score of treatment Group A was 2.337 while that of Group B was 2.179. This indicates that the treatment group did not score significantly better than the control group.

Comparisons between and within the two groups were made. The use of Feldman's Critical Analysis did not significantly improve the scores of students in the treatment group. In comparing treatment group and control group using grade and group, and group and sex, there was no difference in the scores.

TABLE II
MEAN SCORES OF PRETEST

Group A (Treatment)	N	\bar{X}	Group B (Control)	N	\bar{X}
5th, male	27	4.370	5th, male	10	3.600
5th, female	18	3.611	5th, female	12	4.333
6th, male	12	5.000	6th, male	22	3.636
6th, female	11	3.636	6th, female	24	3.875
Total	68	4.154		68	3.861

TABLE III
MEAN SCORES OF POSTTEST

Group A (Treatment)	N	\bar{X}	Group B (Control)	N	\bar{X}
5th, male	27	1.994	5th, male	10	1.385
5th, female	18	2.416	5th, female	12	2.678
6th, male	12	1.952	6th, male	22	2.168
6th, female	11	2.948	6th, female	24	2.485
Total	68	2.337		68	2.179

TABLE IV
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

Variables	SS	df	X	F	p
Group	.738	1	.738	.54	.462
Grade	2.324	1	2.324	1.71	.193
Sex	17.352	1	17.352	12.77	.000
Grade, Group	.007	1	.007	.01	.942
Grade, Sex	.244	1	.244	.18	.671
Group, Sex	.041	1	.041	.03	.086
Grade, Group Sex	4.700	1	4.700	3.46	.065

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to determine if the quality of art preferences of fifth and sixth grade students would improve as a result of experiences with Feldman's Critical Analysis Method. A pre-test/post-test design was used, and an analysis of variance was employed to analyze the data. It was found that there was no significant difference between the art preference scores of the treatment and control groups.

Despite the results, studies have shown that Feldman's Critical Analysis, as well as other art preference exercises do help to improve the quality of art preferences made by students. The method which will be most effective depends not only on the group, but also on the materials available, the environment, and the teacher (15).

Conclusions

While Feldman's Critical Analysis exercises did not make a significant difference, in this study, in the art appreciation level of the experimental groups, there are several factors which may have influenced the test results. The experimental groups practiced each aspect of the Feldman Critical Analysis exercises only once during the four week experiment for a total of ten minutes exercises. The treatment may have been more effective if the sessions were extended over a longer period of time and more time was used in explaining and practicing

each stage.

Recommendations

While there are many different ways to teach art appreciation in schools, the decision of which method to use must be made by the teacher. Since one of the chief goals of art criticism is understanding, teachers need to find ways to teach students objective methods of observing and judging works of art in order to obtain knowledge (7). As art educators we know that children are interested in art and want to discover more about it. Given appropriate instruction in art appreciation, children will be able to make more intelligent judgments (15).

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

REPRODUCTIONS SELECTED FOR PRE-TEST



1.a.
BOY AND DOG
AT WORK
by Mary Ann
Riverdahl
Wendroff



1.b.
IN THE MOWING
by Winslow Homer



2.a.
SUNFLOWERS
by Vincent
Van Gogh



2.b.
MAY



3.a.
NO TIME FOR TEARS
by Michael Meketi



3.b.
GIRL WITH BROOM
by Rembrandt
Harmenszohn Van
Rijn



4.a.
TENNIS



4.b.
LADY AT THE PIANO
by Pierre Auguste
Renoir



5.a.
THE WATERFALL
by Henri Rousseau



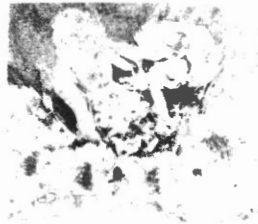
5.b.
DEBBIE DEER
by August Holland



6.a.
PILGRIMS GOING
by George Goughton



6.b.
THANKSGIVING



7.a.
GIRL PICKING FLOWERS
by Kathryn Bachman



7.b.
ON THE TERRACE
by Pierre Auguste
Renoir

APPENDIX B

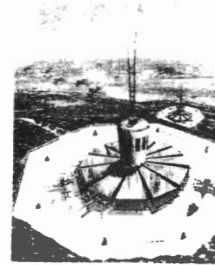
REPRODUCTIONS SELECTED FOR POST-TEST



1.a.
THE BEACH AT
SAINTE-ADRESSE
by Claude Monet



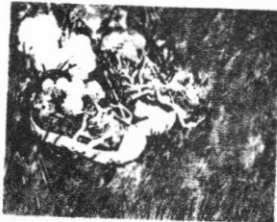
1.b.
TROUBLE BRUIN'
by Phil R. Goodwin



2.a.
PLANET BASE
STATION
by August Holland



2.b.
VILLAGE STREET
by Lyonel Ferninger



3.a.
LISA'S SHOES
by Bruce Bond



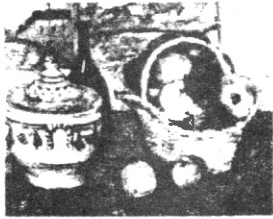
3.b.
THE BLUE VASE
by Paul Cezanne



4.a.
IN THE CIRCUS
FERNANDO: THE
RING MASTER
by Henri deToulouse
Lautrec



4.b.
PONY EXPRESS
by Judy Berkowitz



5.a.
STILL LIFE WITH
TUREEN
by Paul Cezanne



5.b.
SEPTEMBER



6.a.
YOUNG GIRL
READING
by Jean-Honore
Fragonard



6.a.
SMALL TALK
by Kathryn Bachman



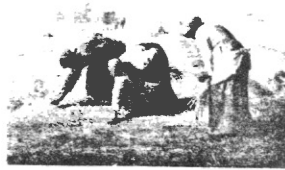
7.a.
HI! NEIGHBOR
by Harry Moeller



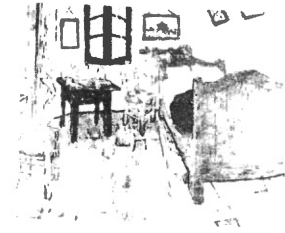
7.b.
THE PEACEABLE
KINGDOM
by Edward Hicks

APPENDIX C

ART PRINTS USED WITH DISCUSSION
OF FELDMAN'S CRITICAL
ANALYSIS METHOD



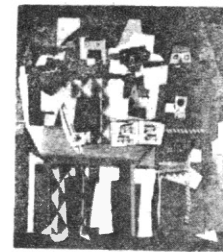
THE GLEANERS
by Jean Millet



BEDROOM AT ARLES
by Vincent Van Gogh



AMERICAN GOTHIC
by Grant Wood



THE THREE
MUSICIANS
by Pablo Picasso

APPENDIX D

ANSWER SHEET FOR PRE-TEST

AND POST-TEST

Name: _____ Homeroom Teacher's Name _____

Look at each pair of pictures and place an "X" on the line following the number of the picture that you like best.

- | | |
|------------|------------|
| 1.a. _____ | 1.b. _____ |
| 2.a. _____ | 2.b. _____ |
| 3.a. _____ | 3.b. _____ |
| 4.a. _____ | 4.b. _____ |
| 5.a. _____ | 5.b. _____ |
| 6.a. _____ | 6.b. _____ |
| 7.a. _____ | 7.b. _____ |

VITA

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