

SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE CITY

Grade level: elementary
Works of art: *Roof, Summer Night* (slide 13)
Nighthawks (slide 19)
Nightlife (slide 20)
Trolley, New Orleans (slide 22)

Suggestions for exploring sights and sounds:

1. Using the slides, have students describe the urban images. If they could step inside each scene, what would they see and hear? What clues in the works of art influenced their responses? Have them imagine each "slice of the city" extending beyond what the artist depicted; what might be above, below, to the left, and to the right of the scene? Have students describe their "extended view" in written or pictorial form.

2. Have students spend time outside, preferably in an area with considerable activity. Have them list the sounds that they hear -- airplanes, trucks, horns, wind, children's voices, etc. Back in the classroom, have students cut from colored construction paper shapes and lines that suggest the different sounds. What color expresses a particular sound? What type of line suggests a loud noise versus a quiet sound? Arrange all the different cut-outs on a bulletin board and discuss with students their creations. Can classmates guess other students' interpretations of sounds?

3. Take a bus ride or walk with students to explore the sights of a city. Have each student record as many observations as possible, such as "woman in red hat", "stop sign", "beeping horn", and "shoe store". Back in the classroom, have each student compose a poem about the city from his/her list of observations. Can students structure their poems to reflect the spontaneity, unpredictability, and excitement of their urban experience?

4. Using the slides, discuss the images as "snapshots" of urban life. What vantage point (the angle from which a scene is observed) does the viewer have in each work of art? Have students imagine how different each scene looked either before or after the moment "captured" by the artist.

If the students have cameras, assign them the project of taking snapshots of life in their neighborhoods. Encourage them to experiment with vantage point and with capturing the overlooked and/or unplanned happenings of daily life.

Adapted from exercises introduced during the music and creative writing workshops of Museum Classroom.