

## Painting – A reading form

### Step 1: How to proceed when you are in front of an art work.

- You identify the type: a painting, a fresco, a carving.
- Then you look for the name of the author.
- Find out the title of the work and the date of its composition.
- Usually the identifying card states the technique (oil, water-colour, etching, stencil, spray paint, etc.) and the surface (paper, papyrus, canvas, wood, metal, glass, plaster, etc.) used to make the painting.
- If you are looking at a copy or a photo, not at the actual painting, it is interesting to know its real size (miniature, life-size, small, medium, large).

### Step 2: Having collected these pieces of information, you begin observing the painting more closely fixing your attention on the following points.

- The subject of the painting: say whether it represents a cityscape, a landscape, a seascape, a portrait, still life, a human figure, a god, an animal, or it is abstract.
- The style of the painting: say whether it bears the typical features of the Renaissance, of Impressionism, Cubism, Pop Art, Graffiti etc.; or if it is characteristic of a country (Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, etc.).
- The harmony of the whole created by the symmetrical distribution of the visual weight of objects, colours, texture and space (balance) as well as by the correct relationship between objects and sizes (proportion).

### Step 3: Then you proceed with the stylistic analysis of the painting focusing on the following aspects.

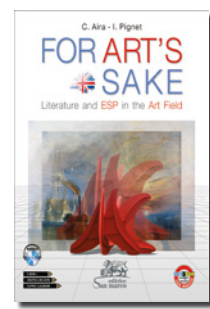
- Space: illusion of profundity and distance.
- Lines: definitions of forms and creation of rhythmic patterns.
- Colours: creation of forms and point of attraction for the eye.
- Light/Shade: illusion of form and depth.

### Step 4: At this point you can express your opinion, interpret and evaluate the painting.

- Interpretation: reflection about the meaning of the artwork and the message the artist wants to convey.
- Evaluation: personal opinion on the artwork and the emotions you feel in front of it.



Jack Vettriano, *The Singing Butler*, 1992, oil on canvas, 28x38 inches.



Look at the painting by Vettriano and complete the form.

Identification	
Type	
Author	
Title	
Technique	
Size	
Observation	
Subject	
Style	
Harmony	
Stylistic analysis	
Space	
Line	
Colour	
Light/Shade	
Your opinion	
Interpretation	
Evaluation	