

Art: Representation

Madame Tussauds Sydney — Schools Resource

NSW Syllabus: Visual Arts 7–10, Drama 7–10 (2023), Music 7–10 | **Stage:** Stage 4 (Years 7–8)

Note for teachers: Please cross-check exact outcome codes against your school's current syllabus documentation.

About this resource

This resource introduces critical and historical analysis across the creative arts, using Madame Tussauds Sydney figures as case studies in artistic representation, craft and meaning-making.

Curriculum outcomes addressed

- VA4-AMP-01 – uses aspects of Practice in artworks
- DR4-APP-01 – explains how creative choices shape works and experiences through dramatic contexts, processes and elements
- VA4-CHP-01 – explains aspects of Practice to represent Art critical and historical perspectives

Key inquiry question

What separates a technically accurate representation of a person from an artistically meaningful one?

Exercise 1: What Makes Art "Work"? (Classroom — Pre-Visit)

Format: Classroom-based | 20 minutes

1. Show students two portraits or performances of the same subject (teacher's choice) — one more technically accurate, one more expressive or stylised.
2. Discuss: which is more "successful," and does that depend on the artist's intention?
3. Introduce the idea of critical analysis — using evidence to support a judgement about an artwork.

Exercise 2: Critical Response Worksheet (Excursion — In-Venue)

Format: Excursion-based | Individual worksheet

Choose two figures from the gallery.

1. Describe the materials, techniques and level of detail used to create each figure.
2. Analyse the artistic choices made in styling, pose and setting — what mood or message do they create?
3. Form a critical judgement: which figure do you find more artistically effective, and why? Support your view with specific evidence.

Exercise 3: Critical Response Piece (Classroom — Post-Visit)

Format: Classroom-based | Extended task

Write a critical response (350–450 words) analysing and evaluating one figure from the gallery as an artistic work. Address technique, representation choices, and overall effectiveness, using appropriate artform terminology.

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Exercise 1: What Makes Art "Work"?

Classroom Activity — Pre-Visit

In this activity, you will explore the difference between technical accuracy and artistic expression.

You will consider how an artwork can look realistic, but still feel less meaningful than a more expressive representation.

Art is not only about copying reality, it's also about making choices (materials, style, tone, pose, context) that communicate ideas and emotions. By comparing two different representations of the same subject, you will identify the decisions each artist has made.

You will use what you notice to explain how those artistic decisions shape the viewer's experience and interpretation.

Activity Instructions

1. View two portraits or performances of the same subject — one technically accurate, one expressive or stylised.
2. Discuss which is more "successful" and whether this depends on the artist's intention.
3. Learn about critical analysis — using evidence to support judgements about artworks.

1. Describe the two artworks you viewed:

Artwork A:

Artwork B:

2. Which artwork do you find more successful? Why?

3. How does the artist's intention affect your judgement?

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Exercise 2: Critical Response Worksheet

Excursion Activity — In-Venue at Madame Tussauds Sydney

In this activity, you will apply your critical analysis skills to real artworks in the Madame Tussauds gallery.

Critical analysis means closely examining an artwork's materials and techniques, and the artistic choices used to shape meaning for an audience. You will then form a judgement about how effective the artwork is, based on what you can observe and describe.

Choose **two figures** from the gallery and analyse each one using the criteria below.

Be specific: describe what you can see (details, textures, pose, clothing, setting, lighting) rather than using general words like "good" or "cool."

Use evidence from the figure and its display context to support every observation you make.

Key Concepts to Consider

- **Materials and techniques:** What is the figure made from? How detailed is the craftsmanship?
- **Artistic choices:** How is the figure styled, posed, and positioned? What setting or context surrounds it?
- **Mood and message:** What feeling or idea does the figure communicate to viewers?
- **Effectiveness:** How well does the figure achieve its artistic purpose?

Figure 1 Analysis

Name of figure/person represented: _____

Describe the materials, techniques and level of detail:

Analyse the artistic choices (styling, pose, setting):

What mood or message does this figure create?

Figure 2 Analysis

Name of figure/person represented: _____

Describe the materials, techniques and level of detail:

Analyse the artistic choices (styling, pose, setting):

What mood or message does this figure create?

Critical Judgement

Which figure do you find more artistically effective, and why? Support your view with specific evidence from your observations above.

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Exercise 3: Critical Response Piece

Classroom Activity — Post-Visit Extended Task

In this activity, you will write a formal critical response that analyses one figure from the gallery as an artistic work. A critical response explains **what** you can see, **how** it has been made and presented, and **why** those choices matter to meaning and audience impact.

Your writing should include a description of technique (materials, craftsmanship, detail), analysis of representation choices (pose, styling, setting and context), and evaluation of overall effectiveness.

Use appropriate artform terminology from the Visual Arts and Drama syllabuses to make your analysis specific and accurate.

Your judgement must be supported by **specific evidence** from the artwork and its display context—avoid general comments that are not backed by observations.

Write in complete paragraphs and use a formal, academic tone appropriate for a critical review.

Your response must be **350–450 words**.

Writing a Critical Response

A strong critical response follows a clear structure.

Begin with an introduction that identifies the figure and explains the artist's purpose or intention (what the figure seems designed to communicate).

In the body, analyse materials/techniques and artistic choices, using evidence from what you observed in the gallery (details, textures, pose, styling and setting).

Finish with a conclusion that evaluates the figure's overall effectiveness for an audience and briefly justifies your judgment.

Remember to use subject-specific vocabulary and maintain a formal academic tone throughout.

Key Terminology to Use

- **Visual Arts terms:** composition, form, texture, scale, representation, realism, stylisation, medium, craftsmanship
- **Drama terms:** characterisation, gesture, expression, presence, dramatic tension, audience engagement, performance elements

Planning Your Response

Which figure will you analyse?

What is the artist's purpose or intention with this figure?

List 3-4 key techniques or artistic choices you will discuss:

Your Critical Response (350-450 words)

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