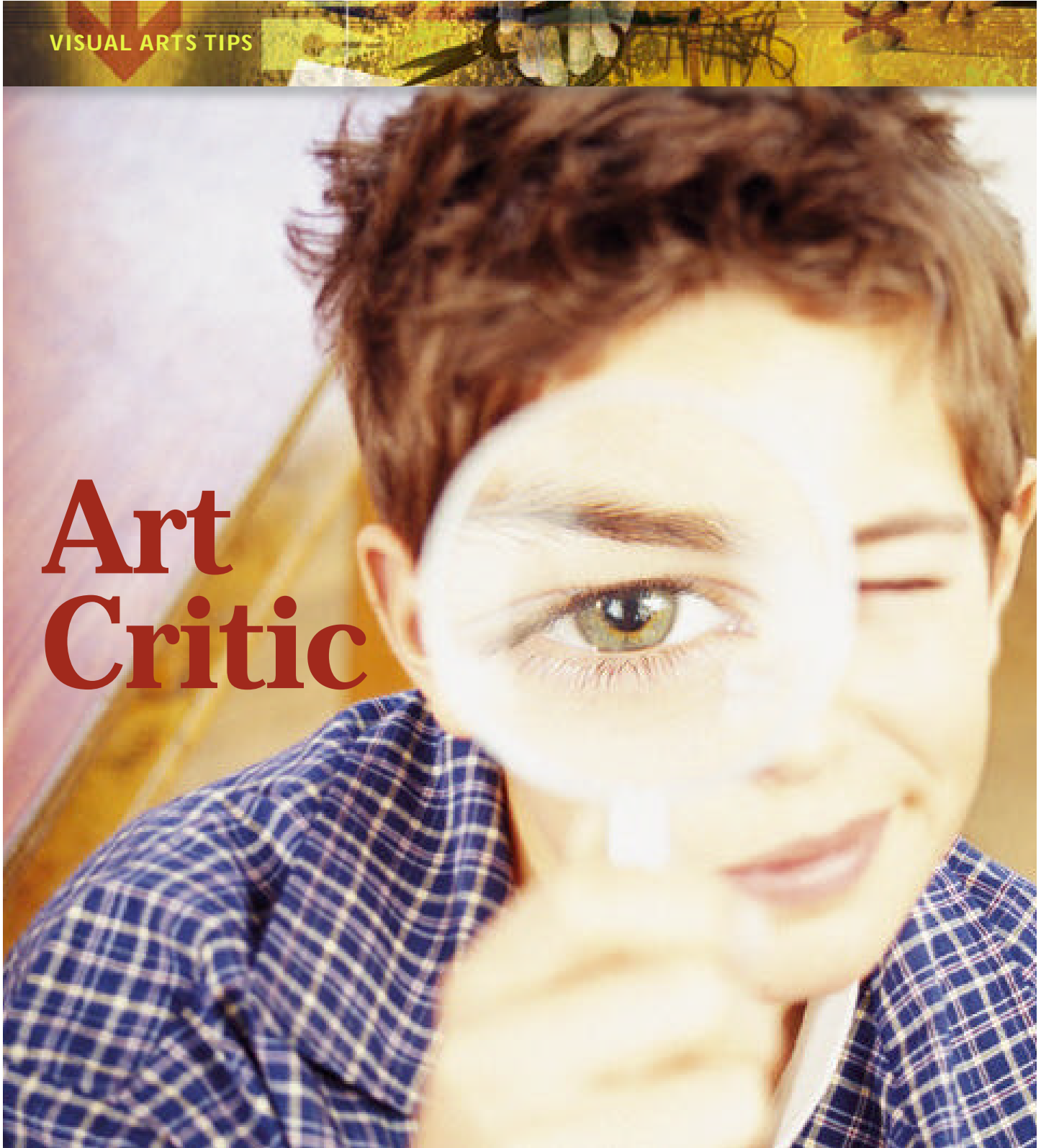


Art Critic



The main objective of the second strand unit in the Visual Arts Curriculum might be summarised as follows: Children should be enabled to look at and respond to their own work, to the work of other children and to the work of artists.

Therefore, as part of our work in visual arts we need to allo-

cate time for children to talk about what they might do in their art and to talk about work they have completed. Reserving a special chair in our classrooms (to be called 'The Artist's Chair') on which children are asked to sit and speak about their own art, is one technique that can be successfully used here.

Organising displays of children's art around our schools

provide opportunities for children to look at art by other children. Working on a theme and inviting other classes into our classrooms to look at and to listen to children speaking about their art might be considered.

Looking at the work of artists may appear daunting to many of us probably because we have looked on it as 'art appreciation' demanding of us a wide

knowledge of such subjects as art theory and art history. If however, we take a different approach and ask the following questions

- | Who is to do the looking?
- | Who is to do the responding?
- | Is there any correct answer?

The task becomes much easier, more informal and more open ended.

Theories of education in general would agree that all



Paul Henry: Launching the Curragh (Courtesy of National Gallery)

education begins from the child's own experience. In looking at the work of artists we need, therefore, to begin with children's visual knowledge and experience. We would suggest the following as a useful framework for thinking about classroom activities in this area of the curriculum:

1. What do you think of?
2. What is the story?
3. What can you see?
4. What can you find out?

Using this approach, let's take a look at some questioning strategies we might use with children in looking at a work by Paul Henry.

What do you Think?

Does this painting remind you of:

- | A place you have been ?
- | A place you have seen in other pictures or on TV ?
- | A story you have read ?

Have you ever been on a boat ?
Have you even been fishing ?
Can you tell us about your trip ?

What is the Story?

- | What kind of art is this ?

- | What materials did the artist use to make this piece of art ?
- | What is happening in the picture?
- | Can you make up a story to tell us what is happening ?

What Can you See?

- | What time of the year do you think it is in the picture ?

n Working on a theme and inviting other classes into our classrooms to look at and to listen to children speaking about their art might be considered.

- | What is the weather like ?
- | What colours has the artist used that make you think this is the case ?
- | Can you find different types of line in the picture?
- | What shapes can you see in the picture ?

What Can you Find Out?

- | Are there any clues in the picture itself that might tell you when and where it was

- | painted and who the artist was?
- | Can you use research tools – art books, encyclopaedias or the internet to find more information ?

Looking at and responding to the work of artists can alternatively be approached from the other end as it were – with the

work of an artist being introduced as a follow up activity to the children making their own art on a particular topic. Children might be asked to think about, discuss and then make art on the topic of their bedroom at home. Then to talk about their art to the other children in their class. Follow up work might concentrate on looking at the paintings done on this theme.

KEY MESSAGE

Looking at and responding to the work of artists can easily be integrated with either the English or Gaeilge curricula – as part of a discrete oral language programme.

KEY MESSAGE

As well as responding to artists' work in oral language sessions, children can respond in

- | **English – write a story about what you think is happening.**
- | **Drama – use the picture as a pretext for your own drama.**
- | **Visual Art – make your own piece of art about the same theme.**
- | **Music – make a story in sound.**
- | **SESE – study cloud formations, etc.**

Opportunities to look at and respond to the work of artists are present in many of the other curriculum areas – if we expand our own thinking on who is the artist!

- | Book/text illustration.
- | Photographs.
- | Diagrams in maths and science.
- | Clothing and fashions in history and SPHE.
- | Posters and advertising.
- | Website design.
- | Local buildings and sculpture.
- | Pottery and household ware, etc.

Use the educational pack issued to all schools by the National Gallery to do look at other work by the artist Paul Henry.

n Compiled by members of the Visual Arts Team of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme. Visit www.pcpsp.ie for further ideas on this strand unit.