



A guide to slow looking

With objects from Kelmscott Manor

What is slow looking?

Slow looking is the practice of pausing and spending time looking closely at something. Museums and galleries are particularly good places to practise slow looking, but you really can do it anywhere, with any object, in any place – it is simply about taking a longer look at the world.

Slow looking is for everyone and no prior knowledge is needed. When you choose museum objects as your focus, you do not have to know about the history of the object or its maker. It's about taking time to look slowly and carefully, to make your own discoveries, and to form a more personal connection with the object or artwork.

Why practise slow looking?

There are lots of benefits to slow looking. Slowing down, turning on your senses, and engaging deeply with an object, can help you to feel relaxed and refreshed, improve your wellbeing, and reduce stress. Slow looking also fosters curiosity and creativity and with time and practice can help you to notice more – wherever you are and whatever you're looking at.

How do I get started?

Choose an object. If you're new to slow looking, start by spending **3-5 minutes** observing your object. As you develop a practice, you might want to spend longer – maybe 10 minutes, half an hour, even an hour!

As you observe the object, let your eyes wander. Look closely at the whole object and focus on small details. What do you see? What do you notice? What are you wondering about? Keep looking. How does it make you feel? It can be helpful to describe the object to yourself or to make a mental list of the things you notice. You could jot down some notes or perhaps make a drawing. If you're with other people, share what you have each observed.



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'The Blue Silk Dress (Jane Morris)' by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

You can use these prompts to help you explore and look slowly at Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 1868 portrait of Jane Morris, 'The Blue Silk Dress'. You can use the prompts as an individual or in a group. You can also use them with children to explore the artwork together.

We are going to explore the painting for 3-5 minutes. You may find it helpful to set a quiet timer on your phone.

- ▶ Begin looking at the painting. Allow your eyes to travel across it, taking in the whole composition and looking closely at the details. What do you see? How might you describe the painting?
- ▶ Continue to look. What else do you notice about the painting? You might consider texture, colour, shape, symbols, story, perspective.
- ▶ Ask yourself what questions does this painting prompt for you? What are you wondering about?
- ▶ Step back. Look again at the whole painting. How do you feel about the painting now you have looked slowly at it? Try and summarise or share your thoughts. This could be in your head, with friends, or with the strangers looking at the painting with you.

Option: Focus on the figure of Jane Morris

- ▶ Look closely at the figure of Jane. What do you notice about how she is sitting? What do you notice about where she is sitting? What conversations or decisions do you think Jane Morris (subject) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (artist) might have had or made?



Portrait of Jane Morris wearing a blue silk dress by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
Oil on canvas, 1868.



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'The Homestead and the Forest', cot quilt, by May Morris and Jane Morris

You can use these prompts to help you explore and look slowly at this cot quilt, designed in 1900 by May Morris and embroidered by her mother Jane. You can use the prompts as an individual or in a group. You can also use them with children to explore the object together.

We are going to explore the quilt for 3-5 minutes. You may find it helpful to set a quiet timer on your phone.

- ▶ Begin looking at the quilt. Allow your eyes to travel across it, taking in the whole composition and looking closely at the details. What do you see? How might you describe the quilt?
- ▶ Continue to look. What else do you notice about the quilt? You might consider texture, colour, shape, symbols, story, perspective.
- ▶ Ask yourself what questions does the cot quilt prompt for you? What are you wondering about?
- ▶ Step back. Look again at the whole piece. How do you feel about the quilt now you have looked slowly at it? Try and summarise or share your thoughts. This could be in your head, with friends, or with the strangers looking at the quilt with you.

Option: Focus on place

- ▶ Look at the homestead contained by the river. What do you see? Now look outside the river, at the forest. What do you notice? How are the two spaces different? What sort of place do you think the quilt shows? How might it feel to be in a place like this?

