

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: **The Persistence of Memory (painting) by Salvador Dali**

Ideas, Values: Time, Reality, Perception, Experience

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Scavenger Hunt for Time: Have all the members of the group (family & friends) go around the house and identify all the different tools you use for “keeping” time: watches, clocks, phones, calendars, etc. See how many you can find. Talk about how all the various tools are alike and different. Then, based on your scavenger hunt for time, define what time actually is.

1st Read:

Display a large version of Salvador Dali’s painting, “The Persistence of Memory,” for a few days prior to the discussion, either with a print or by leaving it up on a screen. Allow family members to discuss and write about various aspects of the painting as “time” permits.

Vocabulary:

Discuss with family members any vocabulary that they will need to interpret the painting. Consider including some or all of the elements of art: **line, shape, color, value, form, texture,** and **space.** Discuss the idea of **perspective.** In addition, with younger children, talk about **experience** and **memory**—perhaps what you as an adult remember from when you were their age.

2nd Read:

Distribute smaller prints of the painting, one to each pair of participants (perhaps pair an adult with a child). Have each pair pick out two details from the painting to focus on: one that is very important and one that is very mysterious.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
  + What title would you give this painting? (Each person share their response, maybe starting with the youngest person in the group if they’re comfortable and advance by age. Don’t tell “why” until after everyone has had a chance to answer.)
* What in the painting made you choose that title? (spontaneous discussion)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
* What is interesting to you in this painting? What is most mysterious?
* Did the artist really see this picture? (Follow-up: In what sense is it real; if it’s not real, is it meaningful?)
* What parts of the painting relate to time?
* The artist titled this piece *The Persistence of Memory.* How does this title relate to time?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
* Can you think of an experience that seemed to take longer or shorter than it usually does? What was that experience? What do you think caused time to speed up or slow down?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Together, talk about what you learned about time from the seminar discussion.

* Writing:

After examining and discussing Salvador Dali’s “The Persistence of Memory,” write a paragraph in which you define “time.” Refer to the painting if it helps.

First, plan your paragraph and have each person write a definition (perhaps have one adult work with one child)

Then, after you’ve written your paragraph, have every member of the group describe a machine they would invent - if they could - to measure time (something different from the clocks and watches you found in the house to begin with).

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79018>