

HIGH

HIGH MUSEUM OF ART ATLANTA



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BUILDING VISUAL LITERACY

LOOK, EVALUATE, ANALYZE, PRODUCE



Francis Criss (American, 1901–1973), *Alma Sewing*, ca. 1935, oil on canvas, 33 x 45 inches. High Museum of Art, Atlanta, purchase with funds from the Fine Arts Collectors, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Schwob, the Director's Circle, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Huber, High Museum of Art Enhancement Fund, Stephen and Linda Sessler, the J. J. Haverty Fund, and through prior acquisitions.

The High Museum of Art offers guided tours, interactive workshops, teacher professional learning opportunities, and resources for pre-kindergarten through twelfth-grade students and educators. Visit **high.org** to book a group visit to the Museum and to request classroom resources.

Visit www.georgiastandards.org to access the professional learning guide and additional teacher resources for *Alma Sewing*.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Francis Criss was born in London and raised in Philadelphia, where his family had moved in 1904. From 1917 to 1921, he attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Criss moved to New York in 1925 and spent the rest of his life there. He earned a reputation as a respected teacher and served on the faculties of the Art Students' League, the New School for Social Research, and the School of Visual Arts.

In 1932, the Whitney Museum selected Criss for inclusion in its First Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting and also purchased one of his artworks for its permanent collection. Criss once observed:

"Artists, being exuberant people, choose to live in the midst of life—not apart from it."

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

In the 1930s, art critics acclaimed Francis Criss for his distinctive blend of realism and abstraction. *Alma Sewing* is his most ambitious and striking work from these years. In this painting, Criss celebrates the artist as worker by including a subtle self-portrait in the lower half of the seamstress's lamp.

While Alma is the artist's model, Criss took care to present her as a skilled professional surrounded by the tools of her trade. He painted *Alma Sewing* while working for the Works Progress Administration's New York City mural division.

LOOK, EVALUATE, ANALYZE, PRODUCE (LEAP)

The Georgia Department of Education in collaboration with Metro RESA developed the LEAP strategy to support students in "reading art as if it's a text."

The following four steps help guide students in drawing inferences from artwork:

Look:

What do you see? What do you notice?

Evaluate:

What is happening in the work of art? What do you see that makes you say that? What message do you think the artist is trying to convey?

Analyze:

How does the painting's subject relate to its title? How do you know? What might be happening before or after the moment this scene took place?

Produce:

What does this painting inspire you to do or create?

SUGGESTED LEARNING TASK

Assign students the following activity: You are the class president and have been asked to write an introduction speech for a person you greatly admire. Imagine that the woman in the painting is the person you have chosen. Write a speech to introduce her to your student body using descriptive language that illustrates her most admirable qualities.

LET'S TAKE THE LEAP!

Use the LEAP strategy to introduce the learning task to your students in their writing assignment.

Look:

Look quietly and closely to mentally organize all that you see. List adjectives to describe everything you see in the painting.

Evaluate:

Jot down nouns and verbs that help you describe the story in the painting.

Analyze:

Who is the man in the light bulb? What purpose does he serve? What clues make you say that?

Turn to your elbow partner and share answers. Be sure to ask, "What do you see that makes you say that?" Once you finish sharing with your partner, complete a quick-write summary of the discussion.

Produce:

Using your adjectives, nouns, verbs, and summary, write a six-word story about qualities that describe the woman in the painting.

Revisit the Learning Task:

Students will use information gathered in the LEAP strategy to complete the task.