

**History**  
**Norton Simon Museum**

**Food for Thought**

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**Time:** One class period

**Grades** K-2

**California VAPA Standards**

**Visual Art**

Grade K: 3.3 Discuss artworks from a variety of times and places.

Grade 1: 3.2 Identify and describe various subject matter in art.

Grade 2: 2.1 Demonstrate beginning skill in the use of basic tools and art-making processes.

**California History-Social Science Standards**

K.6.3 Understand how people lived in earlier times and how their lives would be different today.

1.4.3: Recognize similarities and differences of earlier generations in such areas as work (inside and outside the home), dress, manners, stories, games, and festivals, drawing from biographies, oral histories, and folklore.

2.4.3: Understand how limits on resources affect production and consumption (what to produce and what to consume).

**Indicators of Achievement**

- Student participates in class discussion
- Student completes a drawing of at least one food item
- Student places drawing on group artwork according to agreed-upon organization of items

**Materials**

Overhead transparency of Frans Snyders' *Still Life with Fruit and Vegetables* (provided), one fruit or vegetable per student (provided by students or teacher), pencils, colored pencils, and/or crayons, construction paper, butcher paper on a roll

**Vocabulary**

Estate, fruit, pantry, peasant, produce, texture, vegetable

**Preparation/Background**

During the 17<sup>th</sup> c. the Spanish Netherlands was known for its produce. Scenes of well-stocked pantries—like Frans Snyders' *Still Life with Vegetables*—became very popular with wealthy estate owners. In this painting, a variety of local fruits and vegetables are presented in a large format (5.7 x 8.4 feet) to demonstrate the abundance of the land, and therefore, the prosperity of an estate.

The main subject in this painting is food, and its arrangement is particular. Large vegetables like red cabbage, squash and carrots, staples of the peasant meal, topple over each other on the floor. More expensive vegetables like peas and mushrooms lie in bowls or baskets. Just left of the center of the painting, two melons have literally burst open from ripeness. However, most of the fruit, which was more precious than vegetables, is placed on the table. Bowls tilt toward us to display their contents, while

grapes and pears hang over the table's edge. Snyders depicted the various textures with care: the grapes look waxy, the cabbage crinkly, the pears dimpled, and the flowers silky.

This painting depicts a feast to be eaten, but its bright colors and overflowing detail also makes a feast for the eyes. Snyders appealed to the other three senses as well, including flowers for smell, birds for sound, and the tender gesture of a child's hand on a woman's arm for touch.

### **Activity**

1. Begin with a discussion of Snyders' *Still Life with Fruit and Vegetables*, using the transparency. Questions to ask:
  - Where does food come from?
  - How is the food arranged? Think about the size of the objects, their shapes, colors, and textures.
  - If you could walk into this painting, what could you smell, hear, taste and touch?
  - The painting includes a woman whose job it is to take care of children. What other kinds of work are related to this painting? (farmers who grew the fruit, artisans who made the bowls and baskets, the artist himself)
  - This painting is over 400 years old. Do people eat the same things today? What fruits and vegetables are in this painting that you would see at the grocery store today?
2. Next, students should discuss the kind of foods that are eaten today. If we made a painting like this one but included things we buy at the grocery store now, what might it look like?
3. Homework: Students should be asked to bring 1-2 food items from home which will be traced and copied for a larger group artwork.
4. Spread the items out on a table. How many different ways can they be grouped? By color? Shape? Food group? Decide as a class how to organize the painting after trying out a few scenarios.
5. Next, each student should trace his or her food object(s) onto a piece of construction paper. The object should be made to resemble the real thing in color and texture to the best of the student's ability.
6. The teacher should attach a length of butcher paper to the wall and draw a table on it.
7. Students can then place their drawings on the wall, according to the agreed-upon scheme.

### **Extensions**

This painting was originally hung in a hall with three others of similar size: one was of a game stall, and the other two were fish stalls, depicting open-air markets. Classroom "market scenes" such as these could address the importance of hunting and fishing in life long ago.

**Contact Information**

School groups can visit the Norton Simon Museum during open hours for free! Visit [www.nortonsimon.org](http://www.nortonsimon.org) or call (626) 844-6980 to make a reservation. You can also download Study Guides from the “Education” section of the website for more lesson ideas.