

Picking up the Signals: Active Listening and Communicating in the Workplace or Community

Grade

● 11–12

Teacher-In-Residence

● Justin Riddle

Subjects

● Career and College
Readiness

Carnegie
Museum of Art

Goals

- Learn about active listening and nonverbal communication.
- Discuss two paintings, video clips, and participate in an exercise to experience what it feels like to listen and have someone listen to them.

Objectives

- Students will reflect on the power of listening to others, and the power of being listened to in a classroom, in the community, or in the workplace.
- Students will understand the definition of active listening.
- Students will learn and practice tips for active listening and communication.

Standards

- **13.2.11.A** Apply effective speaking and listening skills used in a job interview.
- **13.3.11.B** Evaluate team member roles to describe and illustrate active listening techniques:
 - Clarifying
 - Encouraging
 - Reflecting
 - Restating
 - Summarizing

Materials

- Smartboard or other means of projecting images and videos
- Active listening video and handout
- No Need of Speech thought bubble worksheet
- Gallery crawl analysis worksheet

Vocabulary

- Active listening
- Attentive
- Passive
- Verbal/nonverbal communication
- Body language
- Unspoken

Artwork



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *No Need of Speech*, 2018, Purchase, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard M. Scaife, by exchange, 2018.49 © Lynette Yiadom-Boakye. Courtesy of the artist, Corvi-Mora, and Jack Shainman Gallery

Lesson

Warm-up Activity: Telephone (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that the purpose of this warm-up is to get them thinking about what it means to listen well.
- Ask students to stand or sit in a circle.
- Explain that you will be playing the game of Telephone. Ask if any student is familiar with the game and would like to explain how to play.
- Start by whispering the following sentence into a student's ear: "I want to learn how to actively listen and pick up on nonverbal cues."
- This first student will then whisper what they think they heard into the next student's ear. Students will repeat this process until the last person is reached. The last student will then say the word or phrase they heard out loud for the whole class to hear.

Class Discussion (5 minutes)

Facilitate a short discussion using the following prompts:

- What happened to the original message?
- Was it easy or difficult to hear the message? Why do you think it might

have been difficult?

- If the original message changed, what steps could have been taken to ensure it stayed the same?

Activity: Active Listening Video and Discussion (12 minutes)

- Explain that today students will explore the power of listening to others, as well as being listened to ourselves.
- Explain to students that they are going to begin this exploration of an active listening video.
- Facilitate a short discussion using the following prompts after watching the video:
 - Which tips are verbal and nonverbal strategies?
 - Which are examples of other tips for active listening?

Activity: What Is Active Listening? (5 minutes)

- Reiterate to students the moments of active listening in the video.
- Pass out printed copies of the Power of Active Listening: Student Handout.
- Ask a student, or multiple students, to read each definition of active listening aloud for the class.

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- After each definition, provide students with brief examples or short demonstrations.

Class Discussion (5 minutes)

Facilitate a short discussion using the following prompts:

- Why is listening to others powerful for us personally?
- Why is being listened to powerful for us personally?
- Why is listening to others difficult sometimes?
- What are some things we can do to make others feel like we're really listening to them?
- Can you think about an example from your life when you engaged in active listening with someone? What about a time you didn't?

Activity: *No Need of Speech* Analysis (7–10 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will now analyze a piece of art through the lens of active listening and communication
- Project the painting *No Need of Speech* on the Smartboard.
- Engage students in a brief discussion of the painting using the following questions:

- Who do you think these two men are?
- What might their relationship be?
- Describe the methods of communication they are using (i.e. body language, eye contact, etc.).
- Hand out the *No Need of Speech* Thought Bubble Worksheet and have students fill in the bubbles with the thoughts and feelings the two men might be having.
- Facilitate a group discussion on their work and thoughts.

Group Discussion (5 minutes)

Applying the active listening skills and terminology from the previous lesson steps, facilitate a group discussion using the following prompts:

- In what ways does this painting exemplify active listening?
- What type(s) of body language are being used by the two men?
- Although they are not speaking, how can we analyze their methods of communication?

Activity: Gallery Crawl (25 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will now do a gallery crawl (in-person at the Carnegie Museum of Art or virtually on the Carnegie Museum

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website) and find a piece of art that show two or more people engaging in communication, either verbal or nonverbal.

- Students will use the Gallery Crawl Analysis Worksheet to record their thoughts and analysis on the communication being used in the pieces of art.

Prompts for students to consider are:

- How is the artist communicating to us through their artwork?
- Take time to use active listening to communicate your thoughts to another student.
- How did you feel listening to your classmate? How did you feel talking to your classmate?

Group Discussion (10 minutes)

Students will share out their analyses of their pieces of art and their active listening and sharing experiences.

Activity: Application (10 minutes)

- Tell students that they are now going to try another exercise to practice active listening strategies, particularly using short silences and not interrupting.
- Explain that students are going to interview each other, using the

following prompt: Tell me a story of either great joy or great sadness from your life.

- Tell students they will get into the same positions as the two people in the painting *No Need of Speech*. While in this position, they will practice the active listening and communicating of the two men in the painting.

- Further explain that when they interview each other, they should practice using short silences. This means that whenever the narrator stops speaking, the interviewer should pause for six to eight seconds (counting quietly to themselves) before asking a follow-up question. This will be called the “No Need of Speech” moment. During this period, the narrator is free to add any details to their story. The interviewer will then need to wait for another opportunity to ask a follow-up question.

- Student 1 will tell their story for five minutes total, with Student 2 pausing before they ask any follow-up questions.
- After you call time, students will switch roles.

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Group Discussion: Debrief (5 minutes)

Facilitate a brief discussion on how the interviews went using the following prompts:

- What was it like/how did it feel actively listening to someone?
- Were there any challenges when trying to actively listen?
- What types of body language and nonverbal communication did you notice in the other person?
- How could you apply active listening in other aspects of your life, including talking to a classmate or fellow student, participating in a job interview, or interacting in your community?

Lesson Extensions and Modifications

- Emotion cue cards can be used for students that are more visual learners, or want a different method of expressing feelings.
- A shared Google doc could be set up for students to share the picture they chose. Students can comment on each other's pictures as well.
- If students run into problems with finding a picture to focus on, either in the museum or using the online platform, the teacher can provide students with images to work with.

Gallery Crawl

Artwork #1:

Artwork #2:

Artwork #3:

Artwork #4:

No Need of Speech Thought Bubble Worksheet

