

# Hey! What's the BIG Idea?

- Big ideas are broad, important human issues characterized by complexity, ambiguity, contradiction, multiplicity
- Is Subject Matter the same as a Big Idea?  
Not necessarily. A Big Idea refers to the artist's concept, which is not always just what you see
- Big ideas extend beyond the subject matter in an artwork
- The big idea assumes primary importance
- The big idea should provide a conceptual foundation for artmaking, while subject matter should provide a context for examining the big idea

## Artist Examples

- **Van Gogh:**  
Subject Matter: included landscapes, portraits, and still lifes  
Big Idea: portrayal of human emotions
- **Andy Warhol:**  
Subject Matter: silkscreened images of soup cans, coca-cola bottles, dollar bills, and Marilyn Monroe  
Big Idea: The taking away of the sacred values and ideals of "high art"
- **Henri Matisse**  
Subject Matter: interior spaces, still lifes, figures, colorful abstract paper-cut-outs  
Big Idea: Depiction of an ideal world untroubled by the imperfections of the real world (war 1940's)

## SOME EXAMPLES OF BIG IDEAS

- Dreams & nightmares
- Life cycles
- Interdependence
- Individual identity
- Aging
- Power
- Community
- Life & death
- Ritual
- Views of reality
- Conflict
- Social norms
- Spirituality
- Fantasy
- Emotional life
- Relationships
- Suffering
- Human diversity
- Materialism
- Heroes
- Family
- Idealism
- Celebration
- Uncertainty
- Nature & culture
- Social order