COMMON CORE CONNECTION: RESTORATION OR DESTRUCTION

WORK OF ART: Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints, Michele Coltellini, 1506

COMMON CORE CONNECTION: Reading Language Arts and Literacy; Integration of Knowledge and Ideas
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

OVERVIEW
In this activity, students will gather evidence about the original state of a Renaissance painting. Using an activity from the Walters' arts integration website (thewalters.org/integrating-the-arts), students will consider how and why we conserve works of art. They will follow a conservator (person who cleans and cares for art) through the care of a painting, gather evidence from the conservator's work and debate whether they think the conservator made the right decision in restoring the painting to its original state.

ABOUT THE WORK OF ART
Michele Coltellini created this painting, Madonna and Child Enthroned with Saints, for a church (now destroyed) in Ferrara, Italy in 1506. It shows the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus in the center, Michael the Archangel and St. Catherine on the left, and St. John the Baptist and St. Jerome on the right. Henry Walters purchased this painting in 1912. The 400 year old painting was in fairly poor condition and was placed in storage. In 2003, nearly 100 years later, conservators cleaning the painting revealed that the colors under the grit and grime were in better condition than anyone realized. During this cleaning, the conservators made another discovery: part of the painting was not original! This portion was added after 1506 in an effort to make the painting more attractive to buyers.

ACTIVITY
1. Learn how the conservators discovered that the top part of the painting was not original to the bottom by going to Integrating the Arts: Mummies, Manuscripts and Madonnas (thewalters.org/integrating-the-arts). Click through: Science ▸ Science in the Renaissance ▸ Madonna Enthroned with Saints ▸ Interactive: Painting Conservation.

2. Go through the activity and gather the clues about the original state of the painting. Using the clue gathering sheet, students can take notes about their findings.

3. After gathering all of the clues, students decide whether they agree or disagree with the museum's decision to cut the painting and restore it back to its original state.

4. Question: Would you have made the same decision if you were the conservator? Why or why not? Support your decision with evidence using your own ideas and facts gathered from the Walters' website.
RESTORATION OR DESTRUCTION CLUE SHEET
As you go through the activity, gather your clues and respond to the answers below.

CLUE 1: What did the x-ray reveal?

CLUE 2: What did the microscope reveal?
Sample A
Sample B

OTHER CLUES
What did the Walters’ conservator decide to do?

Do you agree with the conservator’s decision to restore the painting back to its original state? Why or why not? Support your opinion with evidence.