Selected Questions from “How to Read a Work of Art”

I. DESCRIBE

- What objects do you see?

- What incidents are represented?

II. ANALYZE

COLOR

- What colors are important to this work?

- Does color lead your eye anywhere?

- Would the effect of this work be different if the colors were changed?

- What connotations, associations or symbolic meanings might the colors in this work have?

SPACE

- How do we travel through this painting?

- How deep does the space appear to be in this work?

- How is our eye drawn across the surface of the work?

- Is it slow, fast?

- Does it move straight, diagonally, zigzag?

LIGHT AND CONTRAST

- Does the light in this work come from a source, or is it ambient?
- Are parts of the work emphasized by light?

- Does the light seem to be painted as it was seen, or has it been invented by the artist?

### III. INTERPRET

- What does everything in the painting add up to?

- What does it seem to mean?

- Have my feelings about this work changed as a result of the formal analysis?

### IV. EVALUATE (For history class)

What can this painting tell us about the genesis of knowledge and the role of the teacher in Tibetan Buddhism? In the Scholastic movement of Medieval Europe? To what extent does it reflect power and authority (What are the sources of knowledge? What gives authority to those truths? To those teachers? Is there a relationship between political power and knowledge?)