

# BARRETT'S PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

1. Artworks have "aboutness" and demand interpretation.
2. Interpretations are persuasive arguments.
3. Some interpretations are better than others.
4. Good interpretations of art tell more about the artwork than they tell about the critic.
5. Feelings are guides to interpretations.
6. There can be different, competing, and contradictory interpretations of the same artwork.
7. Interpretations are often based on a worldview.
8. Interpretations are not so much absolutely right, but more or less reasonable, convincing, enlightening, and informative.
9. Interpretations can be judged by coherence, correspondence, and inclusiveness.
10. An artwork is not necessarily about what the artist wanted it to be about.
11. A critic ought not to be the spokesperson for the artist.
12. Interpretations ought to present the work in its best rather than its weakest light.
13. The objects of interpretation are artworks, not artists.
14. All art is in part about the world in which it emerged.
15. All art is in part about other art.
16. No single interpretation is exhaustive of the meaning of an artwork.
17. The meanings of an artwork may be different from its significance to the viewer. Interpretation is ultimately a communal endeavor, and the community is ultimately self- corrective.
18. Good interpretations invite us to see for ourselves and to continue on our own.