

Open Forum 2

Web Site Transcript

Chapter 4

A = Bruno

B = Kathy

C = Nick

- A: I'm so glad I finally persuaded you guys to come to the Museum of Fine Arts with me. I love this place.
- B: You've talked so much about it, Bruno. We had to see it for ourselves.
- A: Nick, what style of art do you prefer?
- C: I don't know, Bruno. Art that kind of looks like real art, I suppose. Not something my 3-year-old nephew could have done.
- A: Hmm, well . . . let's see if we can find some good abstract art to change your mind.
- B: Yeah, cheer up, Nick. You might like it. Let's go in . . .
- A: This gallery has a particularly unusual organization. In most art museums, each gallery features a different time period. But here we have a sort of summary of about the last 700 years of European and American art, starting with the middle ages.
- B: I love this one—the lady and the knight on his white horse.
- C: Their faces seem strange—it's as if they're flat.
- A: Right: the style in this period—approximately the year 1350—was not exactly realistic. They didn't give their pictures any depth.
- C: If it's windy, that knight is going to fall off his horse.
- A: Perhaps you'll enjoy the Renaissance more. That's the 15th to 17th centuries.
- B: Renaissance means "born again" in French . . .
- C: Even I know that, Kathy! Look, you can see the rebirth of interest in ancient Greek culture in this painting. They must be gods . . . or something like that.
- B: Well, the figure on the left is a god. But the woman on the right is human.
- A: Absolutely. That's Hades, the god of the dead, telling Persephone that she cannot go back to her husband.
- B: You can really feel her pain from the expression in her eyes. What do you think, Nick?
- C: It's a really powerful painting. I like it a lot.
- A: Now, over here we have a famous Botticelli . . .
- C: Isn't that a disease, Kathy?
- B: Stop fooling around. He was an Italian painter.
- A: Ah . . . the nineteenth century realists. This is a famous Rembrandt portrait. You can see the depth and the detail of the face. I'd guess you like this one, Nick.
- C: Sort of, Bruno. I prefer this other painting, though—a Constable landscape. It's as if this is a scene from real life with real people and real action.
- B: I know what you mean. There's so much attention to detail—look at the light reflecting off the surface of the river.
- C: Look over here! At last . . . the Impressionists.
- A: Of course. Every museum has to have a painting by Monet, the great French Impressionist painter. This must be his garden in spring.
- B: Look how he builds up the picture from thousands of dots of color.
- C: But if you stand further away . . . you can't see the dots—it's like everything melts together. I could look at this painting for hours.
- A: Unfortunately, the museum closes in an hour, so we should move on.
- A: Now, we've reached modern art.

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C: What is that, Bruno?!

A: It's a masterpiece. Four squares of color—one red, one blue, one green, one white.

B: Interesting. What do you think it means?

A: It's mysterious, isn't it, Kathy? I think it shows a search for order in a confusing modern world. It's a kind of response to the advance of technology . . . as if the artist . . .

C: . . . couldn't think of an original idea. This isn't art! I could do this!

A: Take a look at this last piece. This is my favorite painting in the museum.

C: I can't see anything. It's white.

A: But can't you see the thin line in a different shade of white running from the top corner to . . .

C: I need this coffee.

A: What was your favorite piece, Kathy?

B: It's so hard to choose one, Bruno! I loved all the Renaissance paintings. They really draw you into the world of the painting. They don't tell a story, but they make you guess what's happened and what's going to happen.

A: And I still haven't persuaded you, Nick, to enjoy looking at modern art?

C: I enjoyed it—I thought they were very funny. Actually, I thought you were pretty funny, too, Bruno . . .