

ISOLATION PORTRAIT

Subject: Visual/Language Arts

Grade Level: Grades 6-12

Guided Instruction

Display the image “*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*” *Might Not Hold True For Much Longer* by the artist Njideka Akunyili Crosby. The image is on page two or viewable online here:



Discuss the image by asking:

- What is going on in this picture?
- What do you see that makes you say that?
- What more can we find?

Review the term *setting*.

Describe the setting depicted in this work of art.

What can we infer or guess about the person based on their setting?

What can we guess about their emotions based upon what we can see?

What might be the importance of some of the objects included in this portrait?

Guided Practice/Application

Ask students to discuss the feelings they are having about current events and “social-distancing” with the people they are isolating with OR via online chats with teachers, classmates, peers, family, etc.

Have students make a list of objects in their space that they would include in an “isolation portrait” that might help communicate to viewers how they are feeling. Ask students to include a short description about each object and tell why they would include it in their portrait.

If possible, encourage students to create a setting in their home and have a helper photograph them in this space and with the objects on their list.

The students may then send their “Isolation Portrait” to a peer and ask them to answer some of the discussion questions used with the original work of art.



Njideka Akunyili Crosby, *"The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born" Might Not Hold True For Much Longer*, 2013. Acrylic and transfers on paper, 64 × 82 7/8 inches (162.6 × 210.5 cm). Collection of the Nasher Museum of Art. Gift of Marjorie (P'16, P'19, P'19) and Michael Levine (T'84, P'16, P'19, P'19). © Njideka Akunyili Crosby. Photo by Peter Paul Geoffrion.

Label Text:

In this work, Njideka Akunyili Crosby combines Xerox transfers of images pulled from popular Nigerian magazines, family photos, album covers, and other sources in a unique approach to collage. These pictures appear almost as projections or shadows on the surface of a rug, table leg, radiator, and baseboard. Their ghost-like, transparent quality makes them seem as if they could be the embodiments of the thoughts and memories floating through the mind of the woman sitting on the floor with her back to the viewer.

The first half of this work's title—*The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*—comes from the title of a 1968 novel by Ghanaian writer Ayi Kwei Arman. The "Beautiful Ones" in this book have been interpreted to be those who were willing to stand up to the rampant corruption that made up post-independence African politics in the mid- to late 1960s. By stating that this phrase "might not hold true for much longer," Akunyili suggests that people who are willing to stand up to corruption have been born and are ready to take action. This implies that change might be on the way for a more hopeful future.