

## Close Study: Close Viewing Mary Ellen Mark

**Artist:** Mary Ellen Mark (1940, Elkins Park, PA—2015, New York City)

**Work:** Mary Ellen Mark, *Tashara and Tanesha Reese, Twins Days Festival, Twinsburg, Ohio*, 1998 (printed later); Gelatin silver print, 20 x 24 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Robert and Kathi Steinke; © Mary Ellen Mark/The Mary Ellen Mark Foundation

**Target grade range:** 3-5

**DPCS Curricular Unit:** Make a Wish

**DPCS Curricular Arc:** Identity/Becoming

**DPCS Curricular Theme:** Growth in nature and personal growth

Note: Annotation is a key feature of Close Study, ensuring that students are engaged in the process of evidence gathering. Annotation can take a range of forms across grade levels and disciplines. Annotation can provide assessment information as to each student's depth of comprehension. Additionally, it can be a useful tool for launching critical discussions. Encourage students to annotate this work physically or virtually.

### Round 1

Type of Question: General Understanding/Responses

Sample Question: **What do you see in this artwork?**

Guidance: The goal of this conversation is to generate a range of student responses to the work. There is no wrong answer, but rather the idea is to open the conversation and create an environment in which students see the value of both their own opinion and the possible range of opinions.

### Round 2

Type of Question: Key Details

Sample Question: **What similarities and differences do you notice about these two girls?**

Guidance: The conversation should focus on gathering evidence from the image; formal and technical evidence, as well as evidence based on the imagery. Student responses should include discussion of specific visual aspects of the work. You may ask guiding questions such as, **“What are the girls wearing?”** OR **“What emotions do their facial expressions suggest?”** OR **“How would you describe their poses?”** pushing students to focus on the visual aspects of the work and how they might begin to support the responses discussed in Round 1.

### Round 3

Type of Question: Structure

Sample Question: **What parts of this photograph seem symmetrical? What parts seem asymmetrical? What do you think Mary Ellen Mark is suggesting through these compositional choices?**

Guidance: This discussion should focus more specifically, on how the structure of the work is supporting the students' interpretations of the work. This conversation might be around compositional strategies, the use of evocative visual designs, or the inclusion of distinct features.

### Round 4

Type of Question: Intent/Inferences

Sample Question: **Through Mary Ellen Mark's photograph of these twin girls, what do you believe about their identities?**

Guidance: Unlike the intentional omission of information in other rounds, prior to asking students to respond to this question, the teacher should provide some context for the work. This context should come in the form of another visual work. The nature of the context should promote the goals of the overall lesson or unit. This work might be:

- Another work by the same artist
- A work that serves a similar purpose in a more familiar context
- Another work from the same school, movement, or genre

Possible Contextual Works:

- Mary Ellen Mark, *Classroom, Kiev, Ukraine, U.S.S.R.*, 1987 (printed later); Gelatin silver print, 16 x 20 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Robert and Kathi Steinke; © Mary Ellen Mark/The Mary Ellen Mark Foundation
- Hung Liu, *Sisters*, 2000; Lithograph with chine collé on paper, 22 x 29 3/4 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of the Harry and Lea Gudelsky Foundation, Inc.; © Hung Liu

- Angela Strassheim, *Untitled (Prayer)*, 2005; Chromogenic color print, 30 x 40 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Heather and Tony Podesta Collection; © Angela Strassheim; Photo by Lee Stalsworth

## Round 5

Type of Question: Opinion/Application

Sample question: **The people in our lives often help shape our identity—who has influenced you? If you were creating your self-portrait, what details might you include to show their influence on your identity?**

Guidance: This round is asking students to internalize the knowledge and information built in the previous rounds by using the concepts generated to visualize a work that applies to a personal goal of communication. The direction of this question is directly related to the broader thematic goal of the lesson or unit.



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