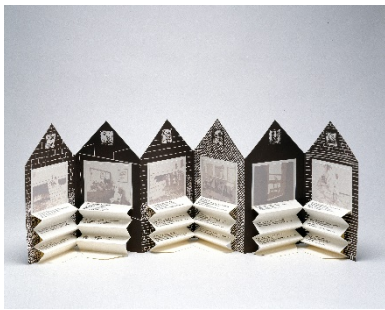


Close Study: Close Viewing Clarissa Sligh

Artist: [Clarissa Sligh](#) (b. 1939, Washington, D.C.)

Work: *What's Happening with Momma?*, 1988; Silkscreen and letterpress on paper, 6 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Clayre Baessler Liammari; © Clarissa Sligh



About the Artwork: Inspired by the artist's memories of the birth of her younger sister at home, this book uses accordion-folded structures to reveal (and conceal) childhood recollections. Sligh says, "This work was created as a small, safe space in which to open the door to what seems like an endless stream of fearful discontinuities. From time to time, I become brave enough to open one of these rooms and bathe in its light."

Target grade range: 6-8

DPCS Curricular Unit: Everyday DC

DPCS Curricular Arc: Interaction/Other

DPCS Curricular Theme: Community and Viewpoint

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: **Create a list of all the things you see in this picture. When you put those elements together, what do you think is going on 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: **How would you describe the overall shape of this object? What about a single panel?**

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, **“If you could hold this object in your hands, how would you be able to manipulate (open, close, move) it? How might what you are able to see change as you maneuver it?”** OR **“Clarissa Sligh only used neutral colors. How would the artwork change if she had incorporated colors from the color wheel?”** 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: **The zig-zag format of *What's Happening with Momma* is known as an accordion book, named after the musical instrument because it opens and closes in a similar way. Why do you think Clarissa Sligh selected this format to present this combination of words and images?**

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: **In *What's Happening with Momma?*, Clarissa Sligh chose to revisit an upsetting childhood memory and illustrate it using family photos. Why do you think she wanted to reconsider a particular memory? How might the passage of time impact how a person feels about or remembers lived experiences?**

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:

- Clarissa Sligh, *Reading Dick & Jane With Me*, 1989; Visual Studies Workshop Press paperback, 24 pages, 8 1/2 x 7 inches, stapled single signature, printed offset; Edition size: 1000; Image from <https://clarissasligh.com/themes/identity/reading-dick-jane/>
- Jennifer White-Johnson with Kevin T. Johnson, *Knox Roxs*, 2018, Artist's book; Published by Homie House Press; Courtesy of the artist; Photo by Emily Shaw, Betty Boyd Dettre Library & Research Center, National Museum of Women in the Arts
- Amy Sherald, *They Call Me Redbone but I'd Rather Be Strawberry Shortcake*, 2009; Oil on canvas, 54 x 43 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of the artist and the 25th Anniversary of NMWA; © Amy Sherald; Photo by Lee Stalsworth

Round 5

Type of Question: Opinion/Application

Sample question: **If you were to use photographs to recreate or illustrate a personal memory, a) would you repurpose photographs you already have or create new ones, b) what structure would you use to present those images, and c) how would you incorporate text or suggest a narrative?**

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.



Clarissa Sligh, *What's Happening with Momma?*, 1988; Silkscreen and letterpress on paper, 6 1/2 x 11 1/2 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Clayre Baessler Liammari; © Clarissa Sligh

More images: <https://clarissasligh.com/themes/memory-history/whats-happening-momma-outside/>



Clarissa Sligh, *Reading Dick & Jane with Me*, 1989; Visual Studies Workshop Press paperback, 24 pages, 8 1/2 x 7 inches, stapled single signature, printed offset; Edition size: 1000; Image from <https://clarissasligh.com/themes/identity/reading-dick-jane/>



Jennifer White-Johnson with Kevin T. Johnson, *Knox Roxs*, 2018, Artist's book; Published by Homie House Press; Courtesy of the artist; Photo by Emily Shaw, Betty Boyd Dettre Library & Research Center, National Museum of Women in the Arts



Amy Sherald, *They call me Redbone but I'd rather be Strawberry Shortcake*, 2009; Oil on canvas, 54 x 43 in.; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Gift of Steven Scott, Baltimore, in honor of the artist and the 25th Anniversary of NMWA; © Amy Sherald; Photo by Lee Stalsworth