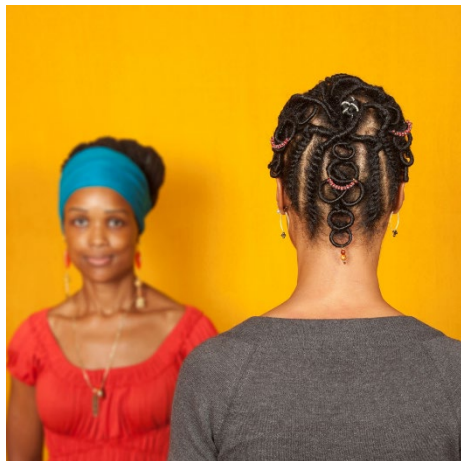


Close Study: Close Viewing

Sonya Clark

Artist: [Sonya Clark](#) (b. 1967, Washington, D.C.)



Work: Sonya Clark, *Hair Craft Project Hairstyles (Ife Robinson)*, 2014; From the series of eleven color photographs, each 28 x 28 in.; On loan from the artist; © Sonya Clark; Photo by Naoko Wowsugi

About the Artwork: In this collective work, Clark partnered with eleven hairstylists working in Richmond, Virginia. Observing that hairdressers, who work with hair fibers, are also textile artists, Clark invited each of them to create a style for her own hair. The photographs show the back of Clark's head as well as the hairdresser who created each design. "I became a walking art gallery of their hairstyles," Clark recalls.

Target grade range: 9–12

DCPS Curricular Unit: Empathy Gap

DCPS Curricular Arc: Interaction

DCPS Curricular Theme: Interviewing and representing another person through photography

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: **How would you describe the subject, setting, and composition of this photograph?**

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 is the role of line, shape, and color in the image?”** OR **“How would you describe the facial expression and pose of the figure on the left?”** OR **“Why are the figures facing opposite directions? How would your response to the work be different if both figures faced forward? Backward?”** 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: **Why do you think Sonya Clark chose to vary the degree of focus between the foreground figure and the background figure? The named subject of the photograph, Ife, is the figure out of focus. How does this choice affect your response to this work as a portrait?**

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 Questions: **Sonya Clark's yearlong, multi-part *Hair Craft Project* (2014) highlights both the skilled hairdressers who collaborated with the artist and the elaborate styles associated with traditions of African and African American hair design. It comprises eleven photographs (*Hair Craft Project Hairstyles*) and an equal number of canvases (*Hair Craft Project Canvases*). The former images document the hairdressers with whom Clark collaborated and the styles they created for her. The series of canvases illustrates how each stylist translated**

their skill with hair using silk thread. When displayed originally at the 1708 Gallery (Richmond, Virginia), each photograph faced the canvas produced by that hairdresser.

Having analyzed *Hair Craft Project Hairstyles (Ife Robinson)* by itself, now consider it in context with the other ten portraits in the series. How are the photographs all similar? How are they different? Does viewing the image of Ife as one of a series of works rather than a singular portrait change how you think about the piece? Why or why not? What do you think is Clark's message in this piece?

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:

- Sonya Clark, *Hair Craft Project Hairstyles*, 2014; Eleven color photographs, each 28 x 28 in.; On loan from the artist; © Sonya Clark; Photo by Naoko Wowsugi
 - **About the artwork:** In this collective work, Clark partnered with eleven hairstylists working in Richmond, Virginia. Observing that hairdressers, who work with hair fibers, are also textile artists, Clark invited each of them to create a style for her own hair. The photographs show the back of Clark's head as well as the hairdresser who created each design. "I became a walking art gallery of their hairstyles," Clark recalls.
- *Hair Craft Project Hairstyles*, installation view, *Sonya Clark: Tatter, Bristle, and Mend*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, March 3–June 27, 2021; Photo by Kevin Allen
- *Hair Craft Project Canvases*, 2014; Silk thread on canvas; © Sonya Clark; Photo accessed from <http://sonyaclark.com/gallery/hair-craft-project-canvases-2/>
- *The Hair Craft Project*, installation view, 1708 Gallery, Richmond, Virginia, February 14–March 8, 2014; © Sonya Clark; Photo accessed from <http://sonyaclark.com/gallery/installation-1708-gallery-2/>

Round 5

Type of Question: Opinion/Application

Sample question: **Sonya Clark believes hairdressing is an art form—the original textile art—though it is not usually featured in museums. If you were to create artwork(s) highlighting a**

creative practice or tradition not typically identified as “art,” what subject(s) would you choose? Why? What form(s), medium(s), and technique(s) would you use to make a work that honored and connected the art form with its maker?

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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Sonya Clark, *Hair Craft Project Hairstyles*, 2014; Eleven color photographs, each 28 x 28 in.; On loan from the artist; © Sonya Clark; Photos by Naoko Wowsugi

Top row, left to right: Anita Hill-Moses, Chaunda King, Dionne James Eggleston, Ife Robinson, Ingrid Riley, Jameika Pollard
Bottom row, left to right: Jamilah Williams, Kamala Bhagat, Marsha Johnson, Nasirah Muhammad, Natasha Superville



Hair Craft Project Hairstyles, installation view, *Sonya Clark: Tatter, Bristle, and Mend*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, March 3–June 27, 2021; Photo by Kevin Allen



Hair Craft Project Canvases, 2014; Silk thread on canvas; © Sonya Clark; Photo accessed from <http://sonyaclark.com/gallery/hair-craft-project-canvases-2/>



The Hair Craft Project, installation view, 1708 Gallery, Richmond, Virginia, February 14–March 8, 2014; © Sonya Clark; Photo accessed from <http://sonyaclark.com/gallery/installation-1708-gallery-2/>