

## Deep

I have a problem. I'm not deep. There I said it. I'm not *deep*. During my time in high school, I've learned that *deep* is a term that describes people who are able to perceive hidden meanings and symbolism in art, poetry, and even prose. These are the people who seemingly find meaning out of thin air. It seems like the less ordered and less logical the subject, the *deeper* it is. This makes it challenging for me. I'm the guy that wonders why people don't say what they think and who looks at poetry and thinks, "this is just a jumble of words." If someone wants something said bluntly, usually he or she comes to me. *Deep* is not a word generally applied to scientists, or number-oriented people. In *When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer*, Walt Whitman indicates that non-deep people are *limited* to numbers and facts and cannot fully experience life.

So, I set out to break through my limitations and experience *depth*. I was at the Rhode Island School of Design's museum. As I walked into the front gallery, I noticed a blue fluorescent light bulb hanging at about eye level in the far corner. It was the kind of light bulb one would see in a classroom or a public building—long and thin. Then I noticed there was a shorter red light bulb on the back of a piece of wood separating it from the blue one. On my way in, I picked up a sheet of light green paper entitled, "Tips for Understanding Art." It contained instructions I was supposed to follow while I looked at the pieces. I thought, "Maybe this is the key to understanding *deep* things. If I follow this sheet perhaps I will become *deeper*."

I walked over to the light bulb and glanced at the placard. "Light Bulb: Blue and red light bulbs," it read. Clearly something was lost in the translation for non-deep people. I looked at my tip sheet and read the first question. "How does this piece make you feel?" I thought to myself. I didn't feel any differently. I wanted to, but seeing two light bulbs just did not evoke an emotional response from me. Perhaps this piece required an advanced level of *depth*.

Then I moved on to Renaissance-style paintings. I saw one with two men counting money. I looked back down at my sheet and decided to try another question.

11: *If there are people in the piece, make the same faces that they are making.*

Although I wasn't sure how this would help me understand the artist's meaning, I did make the faces—while trying to make sure nobody else in the museum saw me. Unfortunately, I didn't gain any insight. I felt the same as I did when I arrived at the museum. Without obvious emotion in the painting—no gray or muted colors, no screaming people a la Guernica, no glowing halos around a baby—I still didn't know what the artist was trying to suggest through the painting.

“Maybe it was a bad question. I'll give it one more chance,” I decided. 12: *Make the sounds you would hear in this piece.* “WHAT! Do people really do this?” I thought. “Do they actually pay to come into a museum and make sounds?” This instruction was too much for me. I didn't make the sounds out of fear of being carted off to a white cell with padded walls. Perhaps I missed my only opportunity at *depth*. Maybe I wasn't enlightened enough to recognize that making those sounds would have connected me to the artist. I suppose we'll never know, but one thing I do know is: I'm still not *deep*. I've come to accept that I may be “confined” to a clear and logical profession—perhaps an attorney or doctor—and that's fine with me.