

**Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, 1440-45**



**\*\*First Question First\*\***

What is *your* immediate reaction to this artwork?

Trust it. Write about it. Use the guide sheet for help.

Continue reading for another perspective and journal questions.

## **Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*, 1440-45**

Whether sudden or anticipated, the death of a loved one strikes us down. It is a moment in time that declares, “Your life has changed forever!” A shock to our system, our heart broken open.

Empty space is central to Fra Angelico’s *The Annunciation*. While we understand the context of what we’re seeing, (Mary in her traditionally humble pose interrupted while reading her Bible, the Angel Gabriel appearing before her announcing her Virgin Birth), it is a bare bones scene. It was usual for an Italian Renaissance artist to assist the viewer in “reading” the relative importance of a figure by positioning him or her in the center of the composition. Yet, it is empty space that is central here.

Mary’s sanctuary is void of objects or ornament. There is nothing extra here. Quiet calm fills this chamber. She is in her own company, receiving this news with spaciousness, humility, and faith. She goes inward, undistracted by the external world. Her life-changing experience necessitates this retreat. She’s been given the gift of space and time.

Q.) Are you giving yourself the quiet space to feel the full impact of the shock you have experienced? How can you make more space and time for grief to call, having faith in this sacred time of loss? Can you create your own sanctuary dedicated to this mourning time? Your own room or corner of a room designated yours to enter, rest, and feel.