

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Street, Dresden, 1908*



****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.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Street, Dresden, 1908*

“Stop all the clocks.” So begins W.H. Auden’s poignant poem, “Funeral Blues.” Too soon after our loved one’s death – and to our horror – our grieving heart is dealt another blow. Life continues in all its mundanity. The clocks continue to tick, the dogs continue to bark. Our kids and animals continue needing to be fed. And we must step out the door even though our stomachs knot at the prospect.

Going to the grocery store, post office, or bank can feel like walking into an emotional minefield. We bargain with ourselves: Can we make it through until tomorrow? There’s surely enough milk to last if we ration it throughout the day. Yesterday’s coffee grounds will still be ok.

In the early days, running into acquaintances, and even some friends, can feel overwhelming at times. We’ve hardly enough energy or focus to choose the right yogurt or remember to buy stamps, much less answer the bomb of a question, “How *are* you?” We don’t feel like ourselves, we don’t look like ourselves. We are living in the land of survival now. And that calls for some strategy.

Q.) If you *must* go out today and hope to “shop and run,” what gentle response might you have ready in answer to that well-intentioned inquiry? It might be thought of as a social mask to put on and take off when necessary. It is not a false face, but a comfortable kindness given to yourself and your community during this time.

It must also be said that this same heartfelt question, “*How are you?*”, may be just the opening needed on another day.