

Vincent van Gogh, *Chair*, 1888



****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.

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The empty chair at the dinner table. If this symbolic image holds meaning for you at this moment, please stop reading and follow your heart down this road. Write it out.

Van Gogh's *Chair* might suggest another realm of emptiness altogether. He has created a self-portrait of sorts in this humble still-life. His worn cane chair holds his pipe and tobacco. It sits alone in the corner, a bin of sprouting onions next to it. His name "Vincent" is easily made out on the bin, indicating both artist and subject of the painting. He is absent in body here. His objects lay unused, lifeless in their lack of function. Van Gogh's spirit lies dormant in its nonexistence. Is there a yearning in this empty chair? A cry of the artist missing a part of himself?

In the face of grief there may be times of deep yearning for our "old" selves. Our energy, focused minds, carefree hearts that feel out of reach, residing only in the distant past. *We may miss ourselves*. And feel the sorrow of our own absence.

Q.) What are you missing in yourself? How can you be gentle and patient with yourself during your mourning time?