

Ferdinand Hodler, *The Dream*, 1897



****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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She is shutdown, boxed in with grief. His death accompanies her below, within its own defined borders. She is graceful in her mourning, folded in on herself, her hair falling in limp rivulets like a shroud. Looking down, looking inward. Holding the rosebud . . . or is it a poppy, the bloom of sleep and dreams? Alone in a field of reverie, but for her lost love. I pray this is her choice, and not her burden, this claustrophobic isolation. I pray she has not been forced into this space from external pressures bent on denying, fixing, or ignoring her broken heart. She is so beautiful in grief. And ghostly spent.

How we define isolation is relative to our personalities and circumstances. For some it may feel like a healing retreat, while to others more like solitary confinement. We may travel this same spectrum in ourselves as we notice last week's peaceful spaciousness changing into this week's loneliness. To be alone or with another is an ever-shifting emotional question. These competing needs ask us to keep tuned to their subtle nudgings. Grief will signal what is necessary.

Q.) Do you recognize yourself in this figure? Or not? What does *your* self-isolation look like?