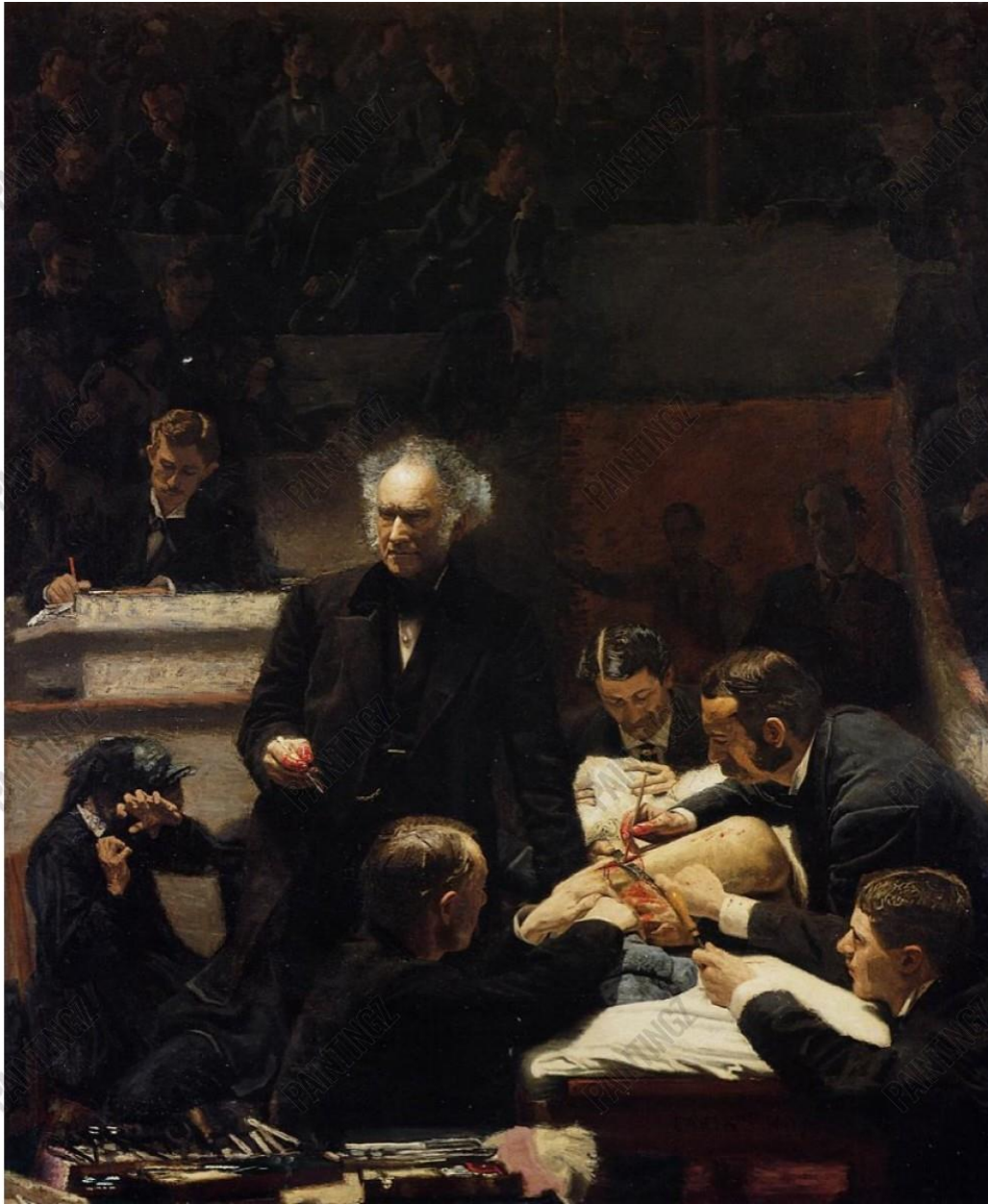


**Thomas Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, 1875**



**\*\*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.

## Thomas Eakins, *The Gross Clinic*, 1875

When a loved one becomes ill and begins the journey of dying, life is instantly altered. Among so many changes is the immediate introduction to the parallel universe of the hospital where the sights, sounds, and smells of mortality reside. This is a world set apart from our “normal” lives, a foreign land filled with uncomfortable realities. Most of us have spent little or no time in this place. And can feel ill-equipped to handle it.

In *The Gross Clinic*, American artist Thomas Eakins uses contrasting light and dark to focus our attention on the bloody mechanics of surgery. The vulnerability of our human flesh is exposed as men with sharp instruments “work” on their patient. The forehead of the central professor, Dr. Gross, is illuminated as if to suggest the mind at work; his assistant busily takes notes over his right shoulder. But the figure at bottom left draws back, covering her face, her hands gripped in horror. While the surgery may be necessary, it is, nevertheless, intensely shocking.

Q.) Do you find yourself replaying frightening moments you or your loved one went through? Try writing through them. Imagine gently lowering your arm from your face and releasing those uncomfortable feelings on the page.