

Joan Miró, *People and Dog in the Sun*

Discussion Questions

Style:

1. How did Miró draw these funny people?

Automatic drawing

Miró drew from his imagination. He closed his eyes and made lines automatically, without looking at what he was drawing. In an **automatic drawing**, accidental lines become shapes.

2. How many people are in this painting?

Abstract

Miró arranged lines and colors into a balanced **composition**, and then turned his abstract doodles into a story with two people, called “People and Dog in the Sun.” These **abstract** figures have arms, legs, heads, and bodies. They don’t look like real people. There is one figure standing upright and another that is upside down. There are also other figures at the bottom of the picture. Which head is part of two figures?

Line:

3. How do lines make a story in this picture?

Expressive

Miró drew **expressive** lines and shapes with his eyes closed. After he drew several lines, he opened his eyes and added other lines. Then he filled in some spaces with expressive colors.

Whimsical

The doodles are **whimsical**, or playful, not realistic. Here is a whimsical story about this picture:

Today, I saw the strangest people under a red sun. They had three strands of hair, and funny eyes and noses made with a curving line ending in two dots. The one with a tiny head was wearing a colorful jacket, and the other was upside down and wearing a black dress, colorful stockings, and a funny hat. With them was a dog with a curling tail. They were surprised to see me in the middle of the day. Can you find me in the picture? (I’m the star.)

4. Where do the lines outline figures?

Outline

Some of the lines become the **outlines** of figures, a sun, and a star.

Curving

Curving lines form soft, *circular* bodies and heads. Some end in *spirals*.

Straight

Straight lines form sharp, triangular shapes that look like necks, arms, legs, and skirts. Some lines make hair, eyes, and noses. Some lines divide the larger shapes.

Design:

5. What other figures are hiding in this composition?

Composition

Does the dog share a head with the upside-down person? What is the skinny figure wearing a red and blue skirt? Are the big black dots its eyes, or the legs of another creature walking up the side of the picture? Turn the picture upside down to see if it still makes sense. Where is the dog? At the bottom of the painting several doodles have two legs.

6. How did Miró balance the colors and shapes in this painting?

Balance

The circular sun is balanced by the big round head. Many black lines outside of the figures are balanced by the red sun. The two bodies balance each other. Black and red are balanced throughout the picture. The blue and red are balanced in the multicolored dress. If Miró had painted the sun yellow, would the colors feel balanced?

Repetition

Repetition of the color red keeps our eyes moving around the painting. He repeated green twice, once in each figure. He used yellow only once. If If Miro had repeated more yellow spots, would the painting feel balanced?

Color:

7. How do the colors create a mood in the painting?

Primary

Miró played with colors to make the picture more interesting. He painted with mostly bright **primary** colors: red, blue, and yellow, with only two spots of green. The colors show the figures and make the sun important. They add balance to the picture.

Mood

The bright colors create a happy **mood**. How would the mood change if red sun were green? What if the sun were yellow? What mood would we feel if the sun were blue?

Portrait:

8. What makes the figures look like people?

Facial features

The **facial features** are a curving line for the nose connecting two dots for the eyes. There is no mouth. Both faces also have three strands of hair.

Shape:

9. How are Miró's figures different from real people? 1.3

Organic

Most of the figures are irregular, **organic** shapes. One is bean shaped with long curving arms and a triangular skirt. Another is bell shaped with candy cane legs and puffy arms.

Geometric

We see **geometric** shapes in the circular heads, eyes, and sun.

Space

10. Why does Miró leave some shapes as negative spaces?

2-D

The figures are **2-D** or flat, like paper dolls. There is no shading to give them form and make them look 3-D like real people. The background is empty, in contrast to the many colorful shapes.

Negative

The figure's heads are the **negative**, or empty space, of the background, which is the canvas he painted on.

Positive

The colorful figures have **positive** shapes. The negative space of the large head balances the positive shape of the sun. Would the picture be balanced if the head were a color? What would it feel like if the sun were a negative space?