

Two friends are visiting a museum/art gallery. From *Harry Stottleirer's Discovery* by Matthew Lipman, pages 72-73

As they traced their way back through the rooms of the museum, Suki stopped in front of a portrait. “He’s pretty, isn’t he?” she said with a smile.

“That’s Titus,” replied Anne. “He was Rembrandt’s son. I believe he was about eight years old when this was painted, and I think he died a while later.”

Suki was no longer smiling. “Poor man,” she said, “it’s hard to lose someone you love very much.”

As they walked home through the park, Anne said, “It’s funny, to me that was always just a nice painting. But to you, it was like it was a real person.”

“Oh, no,” replied Suki, “I know the painting wasn’t a real person. In fact, I guess that’s why I’ve never liked paintings much, because they’re not alive. I really like it when you point out the colors to me and how they’re arranged, but to me, paintings have always been just big smeary squares of canvas. It’s only when it’s got something to do with life or with people that I can find any interest in it.” Suki smiled when she saw Anne frown at her remarks. “After all,” she concluded, “people and things are very different, and to me a painting is just a thing.”

“But you like plants,” protested Anne, “and plants are just things.”

“Well, but they’re living things,” Suki countered.

“Maybe they’re living,” said Anne, “but they’ve got no feelings, and they don’t show any kind of expression. And yet paintings, even though they’re just things, *do* show expression. So it’s not as simple as you thought.” To herself, Anne added, “It’s not as simple as I thought either.”

Suki said softly, “I’ve always thought of paintings as just pretty things, like bracelets—you know; something ornamental. I never thought of them as having feelings.”

“Well, they don’t *have* them,” replied Anne, “but they do *show* them. And not only feelings, but ideas too. Lots of times I can just look at a painting **and** it’s as if I knew right away what the painter’s **thought** was.”

Suki considered what Anne said, **then** she responded, “So plants are part of nature and don’t show feelings. And **paintings are man-made**, and they do show feelings. But what about the human face and the **human body**? They’re not man-made, and yet they do show feelings. So that’s a third **type** altogether, isn’t it?”

Anne put her arm around Suki’s shoulder and gave her a little hug, and though she didn’t say a word, she smiled as if to say, “Yes, Suki, that’s it, yes...yes...yes.”