

Examine the painting below and answer the questions that follow



- 1) The painting portrays a Confederate soldier embracing a dying Union soldier whom it appears he just killed. Artist Constant Mayer named this painting "Recognition" . Why do you think he chose that name? Be specific.

- 2) How do we know the dying soldier is part of the Union army? Give at least two reasons? What else is the artist trying to communicate through the condition of both soldiers' uniforms?

- 3) According to artist Constant Mayer the two men are brothers. How can we tell this is true? Which brother is older? How do you know this?

- 4) Examine the background of the painting. What is behind or around each soldier? Why do you think different backgrounds are used and what could they represent?

- 5) It appears that the dying Union soldier has his gun and other supplies around him. What gear does the Confederate soldier have? What happened to his gun? Why do you think the artist made this contrast?

- 6) The painting uses a form of light-play created during the Italian Renaissance, called **sfumato**, where there is an overall smokiness to the work. Why might the artist have used this technique? What could the smokiness represent?

- 7) In your opinion what is the overall point or moral of this painting? What lesson if any is the artist trying to teach people who examine this work?

- 8) What is your overall impression of this artwork? What do you like or dislike about it? What emotions if any does it evoke?

Answer Key

- 1) You might want to have the class look up the definition of the word recognition or write the definition on the board for them to examine. Recognition means to acknowledge someone or something. In other words it means validation. As people choose sides in the Civil War (as with any dividing issue) they tend to forget the opposition is also part of the human race and deserve respect. It appears in the painting that the Confederate soldier immediately regrets his decision and recognizes his opponent not as an enemy but as his brother.
- 2) The Union Soldier is wearing blue and his belt buckle says US which stands for United States. The Union Soldiers uniforms seem nicer and cleaner while the Confederate uniform seems dirty and tattered. You can ask the students why they think the soldiers are presented in this way to encourage further analysis.
- 3) The Confederate soldier's embrace seems more like something a brother would do for his relative, especially an older brother who should know better. Older siblings are often taught to look after their younger brothers and sisters. The confederate soldier's expression seems to show instant regret for not looking after his younger sibling. The posture of the Confederate soldier appears to be rushing to the other soldier's aid. A stranger would be less inclined to worry about a dying opponent. The beard and the posture mentioned above would suggest the Confederate soldier is the older brother.
- 4) The background behind the Confederate soldier is a lush forest while the Union soldier is dying around a desolate area. This could suggest who won the battle (Confederate) or who lived and who died (Union). Students' answers will vary.
- 5) The fact that the Union soldier's gear is all around him might suggest the sudden nature of this demise. He was shot and started falling immediately. The fact that the Confederate soldier had nothing might suggest he was less supplied (historical fact) or that he dropped his weapon and ran to his dying brother.
- 6) The smokiness effect of the work could represent the canon or gunsmoke of the battle raging around them or it could represent the darkness of the brother's decision to shoot his own family (if he did is unknown).
- 7) With the name of the painting being recognition and the posture of the older brother communicating regret, the moral of the piece could be that our actions have dire consequences. The ideas and beliefs we fight for might not be worth the cost or we have to be willing to count the cost before we decide to take a stand on principle.
- 8) Students' answers will vary.