

Reading Questions

Sometimes students like having a series of questions to keep in mind as they read. Here are some for Linda Nochlin's 1971 essay. In some places this article kind of opens a window for us to that moment in the 20th Century. Pay attention to what we can tell about it by reading the article. There also seem to be a couple of typos in this transcription of the article onto the internet. Maybe you will find them.

Nochlin is not the first to ask the titular question—she is responding to a question already present in the culture. What does she say are the assumptions while lie beneath it?

Nochlin writes that there were two ways that feminists first responded to the question. What were they? Does Nochlin think these are responses are adequate? Why or why not?

By this point, Nochlin has mentioned a dozen artists. Google some of them to see what is out there on the web about them now and what their art looks like.

How do definitions of femininity and art muddy the question further?

Nochlin mentions some of the reasons that have been given for why there have been no great women artists. Which does she see as inadequate? Which seem to make sense to her?

She also refers to a kind of way of describing social issues as the "_____Problem". What patterns does she see in this formulation?

Why does she write that looking at the qualities or intentions of individuals is not really useful in establishing women's equality?

How does the definition and cultural understanding of "genius" shape the debate she is addressing? Do we still subscribe to this view of art and genius?

What is the "Great Artist" myth? Does this narrative remind you of any other common stories in our culture? What does this myth not take into account?

Nochlin provides a thought experiment where we ask a similar question about class—how does this address the myth of genius?

What is the status of the question of the Great Woman Artists now? Look at this both in terms of the Canon (maybe with help from Avery's class) and current art and museum practice.