

## The Power of an Image and Its Message

Go to the East Pavilion, Upper Level, Gallery E201, and find the image identified below.



Title: Christ and the Adulteress  
Artist: Valentin de Boulogne (French)  
Date: 1620s  
Medium: Oil on canvas

In this image, the viewer is presented with Valentin de Boulogne's interpretation of the biblical scene in which the Pharisees, an ancient sect of Jews, have brought to Christ a woman caught in the act of committing adultery. When they asked whether she should be stoned, Christ stooped down and began to write with his finger on the ground. When they continued to ask, Christ said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

In this activity, you will examine the power of an image and its message. Answer each of the questions below.

1. This painting has dramatic lighting. Notice the various dark and highlighted sections. Where is the light coming from? Describe where the light falls and which parts are highlighted. What is happening in each of those areas?
2. Look at the composition. In addition to the lighting, what has the artist done to keep your eye moving around the composition? Consider the setting, the arrangement of the figures, their gestures, gazes, and expressions. On the picture above, draw a line to show how your eye moves around the picture.
3. Consider Christ's message: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." What do you think this means? How do Christ's position, gesture, and facial expression reflect the message he is conveying?
4. How do you think the male accusers feel about what Christ said? What evidence from the painting indicates how they feel?
5. How does the artist want you to feel about the adulteress and Christ's message? Why do you think that? Support your answer with specific details from the painting.