

The commentary on contemporary culture, reflections on identity and the diverse use of artistic media and subject matter, make the *30 Americans* exhibition particularly engaging, accessible and relevant for younger audiences. If you are bringing a group of students into the exhibition, you may have questions about how to facilitate conversations and engagement with the works in galleries 27 and 28. Some of the artwork also speaks to past and present injustice, racial violence and other subjects that might be upsetting to visitors. You may be wondering how to facilitate conversations around these topics and if some aspects of the show are inappropriate for younger students.

Here are some general guidelines and considerations for working with students in the *30 Americans* exhibition.

### **Is this work appropriate for children?**

As a general rule, we want to avoid any works containing graphic violence, sexual content or profanity for younger audiences. While these categories are somewhat subjective, to be on the safe side, you might want to steer clear of “The Party’s Over” by Nina Chanel Abney in Gallery 27, and of “Conversations wit de Chirun; Play wit de Chirun” by Kalup Linzy and Glenn Ligon’s two pieces in Gallery 28. If there are pieces that you are uncomfortable with beyond these, feel free to use discretion based on your knowledge of the students you are working with.

At the same time, many of the works in this exhibition provide a format for approaching difficult and painful aspects of history and present-day realities that students are often aware of but don’t have the opportunity to talk about in a supportive space. [The article about the African American Museum](#) in D.C. may provide some helpful context for thinking about these conversations.

### **What are some approaches to engaging students with the works in the exhibition?**

In addition to our usual [strategies for engaging with artwork](#) at the museum, here are two basic approaches that might be helpful for structuring discussions in this exhibition.

- [Visual Thinking Strategies and adding context](#)
  - [Artist quotes](#) can provide context that helps to extend the conversation and which can add to insights developed through visual thinking strategies
  - [Videos and articles](#) can also provide context (The video of Nick Cave’s soundsuits in action is a great one to share)
- Elements Spinners (see description in the docent guide for the [Elements of Art Tour](#), see pages 3 - 5)

Additionally, there are two works that I think are particularly accessible starting points for facilitating discussions about identity, stereotypes and racial injustice:



Kehinde Wiley's *Triple Portrait of Charles I*

These two articles can provide context for discussing this work:

[Kehinde Wiley on Painting Masculinity and Blackness, from President Obama to the People of Ferguson](#) (New Yorker)

[Kehinde Wiley](#)

Students might be interested to learn that Kehinde Wiley painted the official [portrait of President Obama](#) that is found in the National Portrait Gallery. What similarities do students notice in the style of these two paintings?

Showing students the original [Triple Portrait of Charles I](#) that Wiley is referencing might also be an interesting starting point. What similarities and differences do students see?



Hank Willis Thomas' *Ball and Chain* references Nike's Air Jordan ad campaign. Read a quote from Thomas in the [Artist Statements](#) handout and show them the [ad that this photograph was based on](#). How are these two images different? What different emotions do these two images communicate? Why do they think the artist remade this ad with the basketball as a ball and chain?