

Woman Weighing Pearls

The works of Jan Vermeer are unique in that each one tells a story that is very complex and yet not at first clear to the observer. His “Woman Weighing Pearls.” at first seems like a rather plain portrait of a woman, but with a keen eye and some patience, her story unfolds before you.

My eyes are first drawn towards the glowing white of her face and trim of her coat. The room is dark, but there is an open window that spills sunshine onto the subject of the painting. It divides the view in half making two right triangles. Everything in the scene is left in the shadows except for her. The walls are tinged a dreary blue-green.

She is serene. Her face is soft, smooth, and glowing with rosy cheeks. She is focusing on her work with her head slightly tilted and her face angled down. But she is not starchy or serious. Her eyes are almost shut and her mouth hides a faint smile with the corners gently curving upward. She is almost angelic with the glowing cloth hiding every strand of hair and her skin also glowing a pale white.

It is not warm where she lives, for she is suited in a velvet-like coat with white fur trimming. She is also wearing a long, rather heavy skirt. All of her clothing is dark except for the white trim of her coat, which traces her front side and parts only to reveal a pregnant belly clothes in bright red.

She is not simply standing there. She is weighing two pearls with a tiny balance. One could speculate about the symbolism of this act. She could be weighing “good and evil” or true happiness and material things.” Another item that would likely bring on misinterpretations is the painting in the background. It seems to be a religious scene resembling Christ’s Asuncion. I notice that her head is in just above the earthly people and just below Christ and heaven. This could suggest that she is likened to the Virgin Mother. Her pregnancy also supports this theory.

Jan Vermeer is a very talented and famous artist. His ability to capture **life** in a tiny picture has inspired many other artists. This picture is just an example of how real meanings are captured in a two dimensional world.