

Between the Two my Heart is Balanced – Lubaina Himid (1991; Tate)

<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/himid-between-the-two-my-heart-is-balanced-t06947>



- Where do you think these two women are? And where are they going? **They are on a boat but it is impossible to tell where they are going.**
- Can we tell where they are travelling from? **Also not possible but their clothes and headdresses look similar to those worn in some African countries.**
- How has the artist shown that the boat is moving? **The boat gets larger towards the front giving the impression of distance. The wide, white brushstrokes in the water imply waves and movement.**
- What are they doing? **The one in red is holding a couple of small blue objects. The one in the checked dress looks as if she has been holding similar objects but has thrown them in the water.**

- What do you think the object or piles of objects in between them is? Are there any connections between this pile and the objects the women are holding or throwing away? **The same blue is seen in the pile of stripes in the middle. The pile represents charts, maps and books. The women are gradually tearing out the pages and throwing the pieces overboard.**
- Why are they doing this? One way to work out what the artist wants us to think about is to look at another painting, created over 100 years before this one by the French artist James Tissot (show the painting by Tissot). What are the similarities and differences between the two paintings? **They are similar in the way that there are two women in a boat. They are different because there is a man between them, the fashions are very different and there are other boats in Tissot's painting.**



<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/tissot-portsmouth-dockyard-n05302>

- Return to the main painting. Now that you have seen an earlier one that the artist had also looked at, why do you think she came up with the idea for her painting? **There are many potential reasons she altered it so much. Tissot's work is about a man who is torn between choosing a lover – a very old-fashioned, male-centric take on gender roles. In Lubaina Himid's painting the women are taking control of their own destiny. The man is no longer there and they are tearing up the rules – the maps, charts and books, written by and for men – and navigating their own path. According to the Tate, the work suggests "the struggles for identity and belonging faced by migrants travelling across oceans and seas." Himid often looks back at**



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older art and reinvents it. Here, the women are not conforming to the roles traditionally laid out for them but are free to choose their own story.

Follow on ideas

- Think about the conversation(s) these two women would be having on their journey and turn it into a short piece of dialogue. Maybe you could include the voice of other people in the boat. Maybe you are one of the other people so think about what you would say to them.
- Imagine what their final destination looks like. Paint a painting in the style of Lubaina Himid that shows the women in the place you have come up with. Take into account the technique – thick brushstrokes, large-scale figures that fill the painting, solid blocks of strong colour, not much detail etc.
- Choose a painting you like. What elements of it would you change?
- Life in Lockdown discussion: If people are leaving the house at the moment it is mainly to walk to the shop or to have some exercise. Where and how would you travel if you were able to go further?

Topic Links

- Immigration
- Travel/Journeys
- PHSE: Racism and gender politics