Space, in a work of art, refers to appearance of depth or three dimensions. It can also reference the artist’s use of space on the canvas.

In this painting, the artist used the space by placing four figures together at the front of the picture plane. The figures themselves occupy the positive space, defined as the main focus of an image. The area behind and in between the figures is undefined and dark. This dark space around the figures is called negative space, which is simply defined as the space that surrounds an object in an image.

In this work, the dark background contrasts sharply to the well-lit figures and their vividly colored attire. This distinction helps to draw attention to the figures and to make the work seem more dramatic.
Negative Space Nature Stencils

Negative space can be hard for students to visualize – seeing the space around something can be a difficult concept to grasp. The following activity can be done at home to make that visualization easier – and to create some fun art in the process!

**Supplies:**

Diluted Paint in a Spray Bottle (we recommend using washable liquid watercolors)

Absorbent paper (we recommend watercolor paper)

Found natural objects

**Process:**

1) Gather natural materials from outdoors, such as leaves, sticks, rocks, or flowers.
2) Arrange these objects flat on top of the paper.
3) Discuss how the area around the objects (anywhere you can see the paper) is the negative space. The next step will help reveal it even more clearly
4) Spray the objects with the diluted paint. Let the paint dry for a few minutes before removing the objects.
5) Remove the objects and discuss how the negative space was colored by the paint while the positive space was not.

This activity was adapted from the book *Stencil Craft: Techniques for Fashion, Art, and Home* by Margaret Peot.
Positive and Negative Space

On this side of the worksheet, we have removed the characters from our painting to leave only the black NEGATIVE SPACE. We invite you to fill in the positive space (the white area) with figures, patterns, or images from your imagination!
Positive and Negative Space

On this side of the worksheet, we have removed the black negative space from our painting to leave only the characters and objects in the POSITIVE SPACE. We invite you to fill in the negative space (the white area) with a background scene from your imagination!