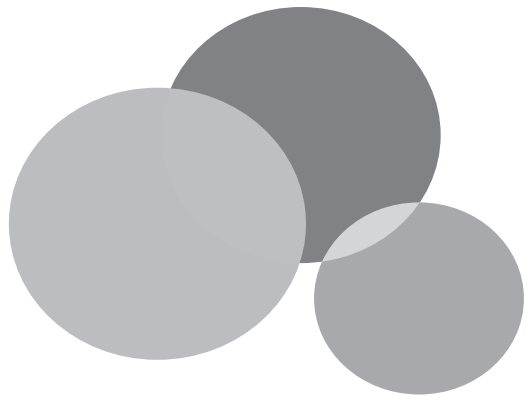


SEVENTEEN



Possible answer

Content and context

This is a 1947 painting by Salvador Dali; two human head-like images and a human head-like tree image are shown. The first head has been cut off at upper shoulder level and rests on bloody flesh on yellow desert sand/earth, facing away from the viewer, its grey hair curly and resembling a cloud of rising smoke. The second head mirrors the first one except it is set in the far distance and placed on a blue mountain range and its hair is whiter, more ash-like, in colour. The middle image is that of a tree (head shape) with green yellow foliage like hair and a partially transparent trunk through which the blue mountains can be seen. The title of sphinx refers to the head of a human but the body of a lion except there are no bodies evident.

Symbols

Severed head – disembodied, decapitated – no longer alive, ritually beheaded for wrongdoing or revenge, loss of connection with humanity (symbolic).

Clouds smoke, hair – head in the clouds no longer grounded (symbolic).

Mushroom clouds – (indexical) for atomic explosions, symbolic of war, danger, destruction.

Tree – knowledge (iconic – wisdom) and symbolic (linked to power).

Mountains – (iconic) obstacles to be climbed , higher self (symbolic).

Sphinx – metaphor of silence and loss (loss of animals, loss of feelings, communication and connection).

Interpretation

Humankind has lost contact with physical and higher selves and with nature and humanity and has used knowledge for destructive purposes. This destruction has the capacity to destroy nature and humankind.