

The Treachery of Images Questions

Discuss the questions about *The Treachery of Images* by Rene Magritte with a partner. Then write your answers below.

1. Describe the image of the painting.

The image is a drawing of a brown and black pipe on a simple beige background. It is simple and does not include many details.

2. Why is the caption surprising?

The caption is surprising because it says, "This is not a pipe," directly under a picture of a pipe. When a person looks at the image, they immediately see the picture in front of them as a pipe. However, the artist clearly states directly under the image that this is not the case.

3. What message do you think the author is trying to convey through the painting? Consider the title, the painting image, and caption.

The author is trying to convey the message that this is not a real pipe. In other words, while a person might see this painting and think it is a pipe, they cannot forget that in reality, it is a painting of a pipe and not an actual pipe. The author is hinting at some of the tension between what appears to be true (perception) and what is actually true (reality). The title of the painting is *The Treachery of Images* which further suggests that images are deceiving. While they appear to be real, they are just an image of a real thing or object--they are not the real thing. Thus, what we see is not always real, though sometimes we think it is.