Visual Analysis

The excerpt from a student paper about *Death Reaches for a Child* by Kathë Kollwitz relates the composition, or design, of the drawing to the meaning, or content.

The *placement of the figures in space* plays an essential role in the picture. The three figures fill most of the composition. The woman technically occupies the most space; however, the figure of Death dominates and controls the space of the other figures. His head almost touches the uppermost border, but he does not strain against it. In a sense, the figure of Death becomes the top part of the frame. The vertical placement of Death over the mother and child makes the compression of space all the more menacing. The woman strains against the borders of the paper; there is nowhere she can hide. She attempts to break out free with her extended elbow, which pushes against the right-hand edge of the picture, but resistance is futile. *Her arm is attached to the arm of Death, as all three figures are bound both physically and symbolically.*

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In this descriptive analysis, the student observes the way everything is placed on the paper and finds meaning in the decisions the artist chose. She is interpreting those decisions in her own way based on what she sees in the drawing.