



1976

Acrylic on canvas
78 x 48 inches (198.1 x 121.9 cm)

ALMA THOMAS
American, 1891–1978

LET'S LOOK

Describe the shapes and lines you see in this painting. How are they different from each other?

What do they remind you of?

Where are the shapes and lines closer together?
Where are they farther apart?

LET'S LOOK AGAIN

In what direction do the blue marks seem to be moving?
How can you tell?

Read the title of the painting.
How is this painting similar to flower petals and leaves?
How is it different?

HYDRANGEAS SPRING SONG

In this painting, lively blue lines and shapes seem to float, twist, and turn. Each one points in a different direction and encourages our eyes to explore the entire picture. Look closely and you'll notice that the lines intersect to form letters, punctuation marks, and other **symbols**. Together, these separate marks evoke flowering **hydrangeas**. Instead of painting the plant exactly as it looks in real life, the artist Alma Thomas used **abstract** lines and shapes to capture the feeling and movement of the hydrangeas' leaves and flower petals.

Thomas found beauty in nature—from the fields she explored as a child in Georgia to the plants in her backyard and the public gardens in her adopted home of Washington, D.C. Later in life, she said that she was always “inspired by watching the leaves and flowers tossing in the wind as though they were dancing and singing.” This painting's title, *Hydrangeas Spring Song*, reflects that inspiration and gives us a sense of a crisp spring day, filled with the sounds of birds chirping and winds blowing plants and trees to and fro.

Although Thomas painted for much of her life, she didn't become a full-time artist until she was sixty-nine years old. For thirty-five years, she taught art at Shaw Junior High School in Washington, D.C. After her retirement in 1960, she became well-known for her paintings. In 1972, Thomas was the first African American woman to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

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