From *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Vol. I: The Pox Party,* p. 46 from “I stepped back…” through to “…in his side and palms.”

In this passage Anderson uses Octavian’s reaction to the picture of his mother and the biblical reference he makes to develop Octavian’s reliance on literature to explain his world. In this way Anderson helps the reader to better understand Octavian’s use of literature as a refuge in harsher situations later in the book, such as going over the slave tales of escape and rebellion when living with Mr. Sharpe. (171) The overall tone of the passage is distant and analytical; Octavian describes his mother as ‘still and impassive’ as well as ‘corpse-like.’ By doing this Anderson develops the contrast between how Octavian perceives things as an experiment and his relationships, as his mother is normally described as ‘smiling and gay.’ (7) Anderson portrays Octavian as confused but analytical as he ‘squinted’ at the picture, as if not understanding clearly, and viewing the picture one step at a time from top to bottom. In this passage he also develops in the reader the conception of Octavian as a observer, always analyzing his situation, such as when he is asked to comment whether a daddy long legs in a spider. (10) Anderson sets Octavian up in a confusing situation and ends the passage with Octavian making sense of it with a biblical reference. This is important because it shows the reader that Octavian always draws from his teachings of the classics to understand his situations. By comparing the picture of his mother to Christ he is showing that literature is an integral resource for his understanding and Anderson places Octavian in what normally would be a very personal situation and has him react in a distant and scientific way.