

WRITE AT THE CLARK



English Language Arts & Literacy Teacher Resource

1

Introduction

2

What Happens Next?
Grades PK-2

10

Tall Tails
Grades 3-5

19

Imagining the Past
Grades 6-8

28

Abbey Adaptations
Grades 9-12

36

Musical Resources

CONTENTS

Introduction

From ancient poets to contemporary critics, people have written about art for thousands of years. This kind of creative engagement with the visual arts, however, is not just for expert historians or experienced writers.

ANYONE CAN SEEK INSPIRATION FROM WORKS OF ART ACROSS TIME PERIODS, CULTURES, AND STYLES.

Write at the Clark is an ELA-centered curriculum resource designed to help you use the Clark's collection to spark your students' creativity. In this PDF, you'll find four distinct lesson plans (for Grades PK–2, Grades 3–5, Grades 6–8, and Grades 9–12), each complete with background information for educators, discussion questions, primary source prompts (for Grades 3+), writing activities, and lists of relevant Massachusetts standards that our curriculum supports. Images of the featured artworks appear at the beginning of each section, accompanied by links to download high-resolution files from the Clark's website. Feel free to skip ahead to the lesson plan designed specifically for your grade level or read the entire resource to see if other activities could be integrated into your teaching as well.

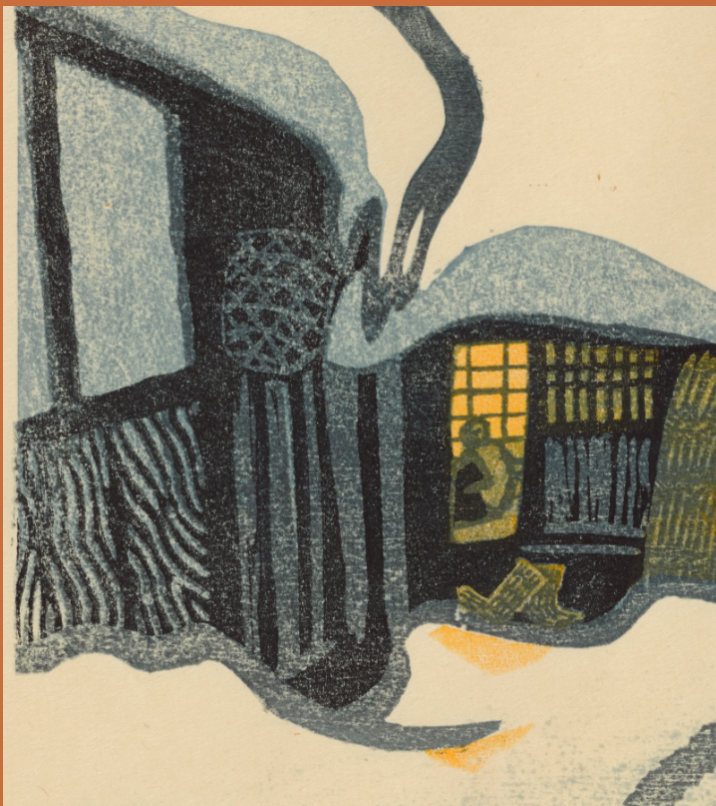
We hope you'll consider extending your experience with a virtual or in-person visit to the Clark. We tailor experiences to suit grade levels, learning objectives, and curriculum standards. Please contact education@clarkart.edu to learn more.

Happy writing,

The Education Department

THE CLARK

GRADES PK-2





Kasamatsu Shirō, *Shadow on the Waves*, 1971. Color woodblock print. Gift of the Rodbell Family Collection, 2014, 2014.16.51



Kasamatsu Shirō, *Snow Country*, 1959. Color woodblock print.
Gift of the Rodbell Family Collection, 2014, 2014.16.49

What Happens Next?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will practice close looking and imaginative thinking skills as they compare two works of art and tell or write stories about the figures in the pictures.

BACKGROUND

These two artworks were made by Kasamatsu Shirō, an artist who lived and worked in Japan in the twentieth century. Kasamatsu Shirō lived to be 93 years old, and created many woodblock prints featuring images of people, buildings, and nature.

Like drawing, painting, or sculpture, printmaking is a way of creating art. Printmaking is special because it lets you make multiple versions of the same picture. The artist used elements of art like shape, color, and line to make these pictures come to life.

DISCUSSION

When people make art about a particular place, they might draw inspiration from what they can see with their eyes and what they can imagine.

Start by asking your students if they have ever experienced a really snowy day. Ask a volunteer to share with the class what they remember about that day. What did they see and do outside? What did the snow feel like? What could they hear, smell, and taste? How did they feel? Then, ask a volunteer to share a memory about a time when they saw a sunset or sunrise. What did the sky look like? What kind of light did they see? How did the colors around them change? How did they feel?

Show students images of Shirō's *Shadow on the Waves* and *Snow Country*. Ask them about the colors and shapes they notice in each print. Where can they see straight lines? Curvy lines? Thin lines? Thick lines? What other people or things do they see in each scene? How would they describe the moods of these prints?

Invite students to imagine that they can step into just one of the pictures and spend time there. Which would they pick?

Writing Activity

FOR PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

Divide the class into two groups: the “Snow” group and the “Waves” group. Tell the class that each group will invent a story about the person in their picture. (Start by looking carefully at each image to identify where the figures are!) They will use their imaginations to decide how that person is feeling and what they are doing.

Before you start telling a story, of course, you need to know your character. Tell or remind students that a character is a made-up person in a story. Your class will work together to create one character for each picture. Pose these questions to volunteers from each group:

- What is our character’s name?
- Where is our character?
- What is our character doing?
- How does our character feel?

Write down the answers to these questions on the board and read them back to the students to make sure everyone knows the details about the characters they created together.

Then, invite students to create comic strips (a series of three pictures) that show what the characters do *after* the scenes that we see in the pictures. Ask each student to start by drawing three squares on their paper and labeling them #1, #2, and #3 (with assistance as needed). In their boxes, students should sketch a sequence of three things that the character does next. Does the person relaxing indoors in *Snow Country* decide to leave the house? Would the person on the water in *Shadows on the Waves* prefer to go to shore? What happens after that? (For an extra challenge, students could also change the sequence by drawing what the characters do before the moment in the picture.)

At the end of the session, each student may use their comic strip to tell their story to the whole class. Let everyone stand up and show their images while they recount what happened first, next, and last.

Writing Activity

FOR GRADES 1-2

Write the word “character” on a board. Ask students if they can define what that word means in the context of a story. Invite them to name some famous examples of characters from stories they have read (or have had read to them).

Remind students that writers use their imaginations to help them figure out what the characters in their stories think, feel, and want. Sometimes things that writers see or people they meet inspire them to come up with new characters!

Invite each student to choose their favorite of the two pictures. Tell them that they are going to write a story with the person in that picture as the main character. Explain that because these pictures don’t tell us a lot about these people, we can use our imaginations to make creative character descriptions. Writing a character description is a good way to prepare to tell a story. Ask each student to imagine and then write down:

- The character’s name
- The character’s age
- The character’s job or favorite activity to do

Encourage students to use these character notes to help them write a story about the person in their chosen picture. Remind them that their stories should have a beginning (in which we meet the character and learn about a challenge they’re facing or a journey they’re taking), a middle (in which the character works to overcome their challenge or complete their journey), and end (in which the character has accomplished their goal). The story can start with or end with the scene in the picture.

Pair each student with a writing buddy and invite them to read their stories aloud to each other. Students can then present their partners’ stories to the class as best as they can remember.

Standards

MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Pre-K Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

4. Describe personal experiences; tell stories.
6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas.

Kindergarten Writing Standards [W]

3. Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or experience, or several loosely linked events or experiences; sequence the narrative appropriately and provide a reaction to what it describes.

Kindergarten Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

6. Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

Grade 1 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives in prose or poem form that recount two or more appropriately sequenced events or experiences; include some details about what happened or was experienced; use temporal words to signal order where appropriate, and provide some sense of closure.

Grade 2 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives in prose or poem form that recount a well-elaborated event or experience, or a set of events or experiences; include details and dialogue to show actions, thoughts, and feelings; use temporal words to signal order where appropriate; and provide a sense of closure.

Grade 2 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

4. Tell a story, recount an experience, or explain how to solve a mathematical problem with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences and using appropriate vocabulary.

Standards

MASSACHUSETTS ART FRAMEWORK

Pre-K-K Visual Arts Standards

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. With prompting and support, identify similarities between multiple pieces of art. (PK-K.V.R.07)

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. Describe what is seen in an artwork, interpret a possible meaning, and explain why the meaning makes sense. (PK-K.V.R.08)

11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding. With support, identify different types of artwork (e.g. paintings, sculpture, performance, fiber arts) within their community. (PK-K.V.Co.11)

1st-2nd Grade Visual Arts

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. With support, identify the basic elements within an artwork (including color, line, shape). (1-2.V.R.07)

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. Categorize artwork by subject matter and mood. (1-2.V.R.08)

11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding. Identify different types of artwork (e.g. paintings, sculpture, performance, fiber arts) within their community and other places they have encountered. (1-2.V.Co.11)

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK

Pre-Kindergarten Content Standards

Topic 3: History: personal experiences and memories [PreK.T3]

1. With guidance and support, recall and describe events that happened in the classroom or in a story, using words and phrases relating to chronology and time, including first, next, last (e.g. describe something that happened yesterday or last week).

Kindergarten Content Standards

Topic 3: History: shared traditions [K.T3]

1. Put events from their personal lives, observations of the natural world, and from stories and informational texts read or read aloud in temporal order, using words and phrases relating to chronology and time, including:

a. sequential actions: first, next, last

b. chronology and time: now, then, long ago, before, after, morning, afternoon, night, today, tomorrow, yesterday, last or next week, last or next month, last or next year

GRADES 3-5





Steven Alonzo Schaff (after Elihu Vedder), *The Sea Serpent*, after 1864. Etching on Japan-type filamented paper. Acquired by the Clark, 1988, 1988.12

Tall Tails

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will explore connections between art and imagination by analyzing a work of art with a fantastical subject and writing their own fictional “folktales.”

BACKGROUND

American artist Elihu Vedder (1836–1923) is known for the contemplative, dreamy, and sometimes magical qualities of his art. *The Sea Serpent* features a mythical monster resting quietly on an ordinary beach.

The Sea Serpent is a print made after Elihu Vedder’s 1864 painting *The Lair of the Sea Serpent* (in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts). In the nineteenth century, it was very common for printmakers to make copies of paintings in the form of printed black-and-white illustrations. People would buy these prints so they could have versions of their favorite paintings in their homes.

DISCUSSION

Show students *The Sea Serpent* without revealing the title. Ask volunteers to describe what they see in the image. Once they identify the sea serpent, ask them to look closely and see how it’s positioned. Where is the serpent’s head? Where does the tail end? Based on what they see, what do they think this sea serpent is doing?

After students look closely at the image, ask them what is missing from it. Considering that this print mostly features hues of sepia and gray, what other colors do they think should be in the scene? How would color change this image? When your discussion concludes, show students *The Lair of the Sea Serpent* from the Boston MFA’s online catalogue (or visit in person if you can!). What colors surprise them? What colors did they expect to see?

BACKGROUND

Why did Vedder paint a sea serpent? Well, sea serpents were surprisingly popular in the 1800s. As science and technology developed in the nineteenth century, people grew very interested in finding out the truth about anything that seemed mysterious or magical. In Massachusetts, where the Clark is located, there was much local lore—and scientific confusion—about a sea serpent supposedly seen off the state’s northeastern coast. Some art historians wonder if legends about this creature, sometimes called the Gloucester Sea Serpent, might have inspired Vedder.

DISCUSSION

Invite students to share examples of sea serpents (or water monsters) that they’ve heard or read about in folktales, fairy tales, or other stories. Ask students to spend some time researching two water monster stories from different cultures before presenting their findings to the class. (A trip to the library or a quick internet search should reveal a wealth of resources on this topic!)

What do all these beasts have in common? Encourage students to help you write a list of traits that are commonly associated with sea serpents (e.g. “very large”; “attack ships”). How many of these traits are present in *The Sea Serpent*?

Primary Source Discussion

In 1817—about twenty years before Vedder was born—a scientific group called the Linnaean Society of New England asked sea captains and sailors to share their sightings of the Gloucester Sea Serpent. These stories give lots of visual information about what the serpent supposedly looked like.

Distribute copies of PRIMARY SOURCE: REPORT BY CAPTAIN SEWELL TOPPAN for students to read. Encourage students to highlight or underline any words they do not recognize so the class can figure out the definitions together. (A glossary of some uncommon words and phrases is included.)

Ask students to compare this description to the creature we see in *The Sea Serpent*. What are some similarities between what Captain Toppan saw and what Elihu Vedder imagined? What sets Captain Toppan’s sea serpent apart from Vedder’s?

Encourage students’ scientific thinking by asking them to consider Captain Toppan’s account in the context of what they know about sea creatures. What are some other real animals that the captain might have mistaken for a monster?

Primary Source

REPORT BY CAPTAIN SEWELL TOPPAN, SEPTEMBER 1, 1817, BOSTON¹

That on Thursday morning the 28th day of August, at about 9 o'clock A.M. at about two miles, or two and a half miles east of the eastern point of Cape Ann, being becalmed, I heard one of my men call to the man at helm, "What is this coming towards us?"; being engaged forward, I took no further notice till they called out again—I then got on top of the deck, and which time I saw a singular kind of animal or fish, which I had never before seen, passing by our quarter, at distance of about forty feet, standing along shore.

I saw a part of the animal or fish ten or fifteen feet from the head downwards including the head; the head appeared to be the size of a ten-gallon keg, and six inches above the water. It was of a dark colour. I saw no tongue, but heard William Somerby and Robert Bragg, my two men, who were with me, call out "look at his tongue." I have been to sea many years, and never saw any fish that had the least resemblance to this animal.

Glossary

CAPE ANN

a coastal point of land on the Atlantic Ocean in northeastern Massachusetts

BECALMED

when a ship stops moving because the wind isn't blowing

HELM

the steering wheel of a ship

SINGULAR

special in a surprising way

TEN-GALLON KEG

a barrel big enough to hold ten gallons of liquid

1. Linnaean Society of New England, Jacob Bigelow, *Report of a committee of the Linnaean Society of New England, relative to a large marine animal, supposed to be a serpent, seen near Cape Ann, Massachusetts, in August 1817* (Boston: Cummings and Hilliard, 1817), 20.

Writing Activity

WARM-UP

Ask students to spend five minutes freewriting about what it would be like to step inside the print and see the sea serpent. Encourage them to keep writing for the full time period as they imagine this encounter. How would it feel to be on the beach with such a massive, mythical creature? What would each student do, and how would they interact with the monster? (You can enhance the experience by playing some instrumental music that relates to the ocean theme—see Musical Resources.)

WRITING

Using their freewriting as a starting point, invite students to write their own stories about *The Sea Serpent*. Considering what they discovered in their earlier research, ask students to craft their tales to include:

- A description of the serpent's appearance (What does it look like?)
- A description of the serpent's habitat (Does it come on land frequently, or does it prefer the seas most of the time?)
- A description of how the sea serpent interacts with humans

SHARING

Divide students into pairs. Ask each student to provide a typed or handwritten copy of their final story for their partner. Using the medium of their choice, each student should illustrate a scene from their partner's story that shows the serpent in action . . . not just sitting still. When the project is complete, ask each student to read aloud their partner's story—as dramatically and energetically as they can—while showing their illustration.

You could also create a classroom book of all the sea serpent stories and illustrations with *The Sea Serpent* on the cover.

Standards

MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Grade 3 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

2. Retell stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in a text.

7. Explain how specific aspects of a text’s illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g. create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).

Grade 3 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives in prose or poem form to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequences.

a. Establish a situation and introduce a speaker, narrator, and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.

b. Use dialogue and descriptions of actions, thoughts, and feelings to develop experiences or events or show responses to situations.

c. Use figurative language to suggest images.

d. Use temporal words and phrases to signal order when appropriate.

e. Provide a sense of closure.

7. Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic.

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grade 3 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

3. Report on a topic, text, or solution to a mathematical problem, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace and using appropriate vocabulary.

Standards

Grade 4 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

2. Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize a text.

7. Make connections between a written story or drama and its visual or oral presentation, identifying where the presentation reflects specific descriptions and directions in the written text.

9. Compare and contrast the treatment of similar themes and topics (e.g. the opposition of good and evil) and patterns of events (e.g. the quest) in stories, myths, and traditional literature from different cultures.

Grade 4 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives in prose or poem form to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequences.

a. Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a speaker, narrator, and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.

b. Use dialogue and description to develop experiences or events or show responses to situations.

c. Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage sequence.

d. Use concrete words and phrases, figurative language such as similes and metaphors, and sensory details to convey experiences or events precisely.

e. Provide a sense of closure appropriate to the narrated experiences or events.

f. For poems, use patterns of sound (e.g. rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, consonance) and visual patterns (e.g. line length, grouped lines as stanzas and verses) to create works that are distinctly different in form from prose narratives.

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grade 4 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

4. Report on a topic, text, or solution to a mathematical problem, tell a story, or recount an experience in an organized manner, using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace and using appropriate vocabulary.

Grade 5 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

8. Compare and contrast stories in the same genre (e.g. mysteries or adventure stories) on their approaches to similar themes and topics.

Standards

Grade 5 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives in prose or poem form to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, descriptive details, and clear sequences.
- Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a speaker, narrator, and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.
 - Use narrative techniques such as dialogue, description, and pacing to develop experiences or events or show responses to situations.
 - Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage sequence.
 - Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences or events precisely.
 - Provide a sense of closure appropriate to narrative experiences or events.
 - For prose narratives, draw on characteristics of traditional or modern genres (e.g. tall tales, myths, mysteries, fantasies, historical fiction) from diverse cultures as models for writing.
10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grade 5 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

4. Report on a topic, text, procedure, or solution to a mathematical problem, or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace and use appropriate vocabulary.

MASSACHUSETTS ARTS FRAMEWORK

3rd-4th Grade Visual Arts

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work. Analyze how aesthetic elements (e.g. color, form, shape, texture) are used to demonstrate intent. (3-4.V.R.07)

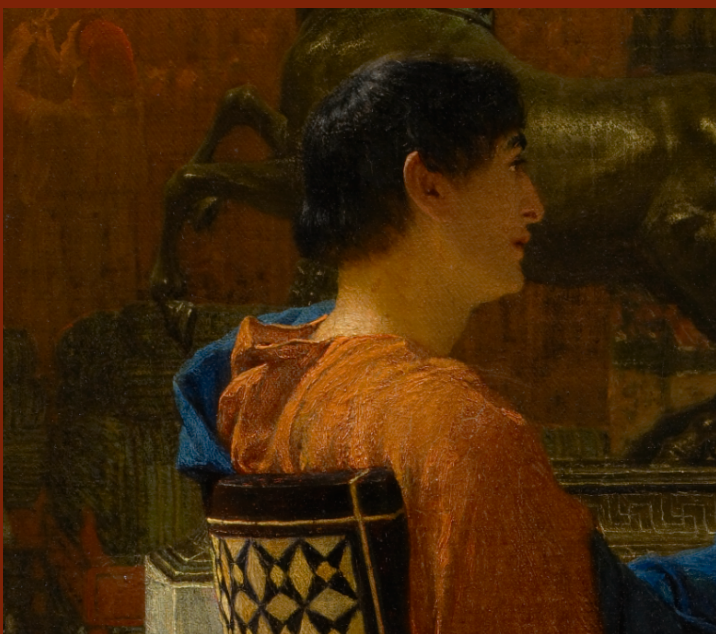
8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. Describe contrasting interpretations of artwork to identify multiple perspectives and diverse community ideas. (3-4.V.R.08)

5th-6th Grade Visual Arts

11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

- Identify influential works of art from different periods and their impact on the artistic world. (5-6.V.Co.11)

GRADES 6-8





Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Preparations for the Festivities (The Floral Wreath)*, 1866. Oil on canvas. Bequest of Madeleine Dahlgren Townsend, 1982, 1982.11

Imagining the Past

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze how artists create informed and imaginative images of history by evaluating the historical content in a work of art and writing their own informed–yet–imaginative historical fiction set in ancient Rome.

BACKGROUND

When archaeologists began excavating the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the eighteenth century, a fascination with Greek and Roman history took Europe by storm. This fondness for all things classical was nothing new—the Renaissance, after all, was considered a “rediscovery” of the wonders of the ancient Mediterranean world—but new archaeological finds provided additional knowledge about these older cultures. While you can learn a lot from a broken column or a buried vessel, envisioning the world of the past requires information *and* imagination.

Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912) was a Dutch-born British painter who specialized in bringing scenes from ancient Greece and Rome to life. He used his knowledge of archaeology and time spent in Rome to inform his art. His naturalistic style of painting—with its lifelike figures and intricate details—made his paintings seem like windows into the past.

DISCUSSION

Ask students to share their impressions of how history is written. Who determines what knowledge is important? What are some of the different types of evidence and information that historians and other scholars gather when drawing conclusions about ancient civilizations?

Invite students to create collages of images of ancient Rome present in popular culture (rather than history books) today. When your students imagine ancient Rome, what pictures and ideas pop into their heads? What are some of the key elements of this ancient Roman aesthetic? How much of this aesthetic is historically accurate? Some of the symbols of Greece and Rome that persist in contemporary culture appeared in and even originated from Alma-Tadema’s paintings.

BACKGROUND

Alma-Tadema completed *Preparations for the Festivities (The Floral Wreath)* in 1866, soon after he came back from his honeymoon in Rome in 1863. This marked one of the first times the artist attempted to paint the subjects that would define the rest of his career.

DISCUSSION

Ask students to examine *Preparations for the Festivities* with a historian's eye. What objects or details in this painting convince you that Alma-Tadema knew a lot about ancient Rome? What makes those specific objects or details so convincing?

Primary Source Discussion

Stories and texts from ancient Rome certainly informed Alma-Tadema's art as well. Provide students with copies of PRIMARY SOURCE: SELECTION FROM *FASTI*. Encourage students to highlight or underline any words they do not recognize so the class can figure out the definitions together. (A glossary of more uncommon words and phrases is included.)

Fasti is the Roman poet Ovid's account of the customs, traditions, and practices of Roman holidays and festivals. In this section about the month of February, he describes particular actions meant to honor the deceased.

After the students finish reading, ask them the following questions:

- What concrete information does Ovid provide about these funerary rituals? What sensory details did you notice? What (if anything) about these practices reminds you of customs from your own life or culture?
- Though Alma-Tadema's painting depicts a different kind of festival, what similarities do you notice between Ovid's account and *Preparations for the Festivities*?
- Reading primary sources is one way to learn about the past. What other types of research do you think Alma-Tadema employed when preparing to make this painting? What kinds of things might he have looked at, read, or studied?

Primary Source

PRIMARY SOURCE: SELECTION FROM FASTI ²

OVID

Honour is paid, also, to the tombs. Appease the souls of your fathers and bring small gifts to the extinguished pyres. The ghosts ask but little: they value piety more than a costly gift: no greedy gods are they who in the world below do haunt the banks of Styx.

A tile wreathed with votive garlands, a sprinkling of corn, a few grains of salt, bread soaked in wine, and some loose violets, these are offerings enough: set these on a potsherd and leave it in the middle of the road.

Not that I forbid larger offerings, but even these suffice to appease the shades: add prayers and the appropriate words at the hearths set up for the purpose.

Glossary

PYRE

a place upon which a body is burned during a funeral

STYX

the river of the underworld in Greco-Roman mythology

POTSHERD

a sharp, small piece of broken pottery

2. Ovid, *Ovid's Fasti*, trans. Sir George James (London: W. Heinemann, 1931), 97.

Writing Activity

WARM-UP

Invite each student to choose their favorite person from the painting. Give everyone one minute to look closely at their selected figures—studying their faces, their clothes, their poses, and their actions—and then ask the class to spend five minutes freewriting about what their characters might be thinking or doing.

Remind them to write using first-person perspective so they can try to get inside their chosen Roman’s head. (You can enhance the experience by playing some instrumental music inspired by ancient Greece and Rome—see “Musical Resources.”)

WRITING

With their freewriting as a starting point, encourage students to craft short works of historical fiction inspired by this painting.

The “historical” elements of their story should include:

- An ancient Roman name for their protagonist (and for any other characters involved)
- A description of at least one ancient Roman object or type of building
- Technology appropriate to the time period

The “fictional” elements of their story can include:

- The character’s background, motivations, and feelings
- The character’s relationships with others
- The “festivities” for which the character and the other figures are preparing in this scene
- The challenge or obstacle that the character must face in the story’s plot

Remind students that historical fiction requires a lot of research. Encourage them to visit their school or local library to find historical texts with information about life in ancient Rome. Reputable online sources are also good references.

SHARING

Encourage students to post their stories on a classroom blog or other sharing platform. Then assign each student someone else’s story. Ask students to read their partner’s historical fiction and post comments in which they identify the historical details that they recognize in the story.

Standards

MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Grade 6 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives or develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.
- d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, figurative and sensory language, and techniques such as personification to convey experiences or events.
- e. Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Grade 7 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

9. Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

Grade 7 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives or develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured sequences.

- a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create an appropriate progression of experiences or events.
- b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
- c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g. a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, resolution).

Standards

- d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and figurative and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate.

Grade 8 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives or develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured sequences.
- a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an appropriate narrative sequence.
 - b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.
 - c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.
 - d. Use precise words and phrases and relevant descriptive details to convey a tone (the writer's attitude toward the subject: e.g., humorous, serious, or ironic) and to convey experiences or events.
 - e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences and events.
7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

MASSACHUSETTS ARTS FRAMEWORK

5th-6th Grade Visual Arts

11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.
- Identify influential works of art from different periods and their impact on the artistic world. (5-6.V.Co.11)

7th-8th Grade Visual Arts

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.
- Analyze elements of a work that are indicative of the historical or cultural context in which it was created. (7-8.V.R.07)

Standards

11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

- Identify visual ideas from a variety of cultures connected to different historical populations (7-8.V.Co.11)

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK

Grade 6 Content Standards

Topic 1. Studying complex societies, past and present [6.T1]

2. Give examples of how archaeologists, historians, geographers, economists, and political scientists work as teams to analyze evidence, develop hypotheses, and construct interpretations of ancient and classical civilizations.

Grade 7 Content Standards

Topic 4. Europe [7.T4]

b. Ancient and Classical Rome, the Roman Republic, and the Roman Empire, c. 500 BCE – 500 CE [7.T4c]

- Describe how scientific, philosophical, and aesthetic ideas diffused throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa as a result of trade, migration, conquest, and colonization.

GRADES 9-12





Joseph Mallord William Turner, [*Melrose Abbey*](#), 1822.
Watercolor on cream wove paper. Gift of the Manton Art
Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton, 2007,
2007.8.106

Abbey Adaptations

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will consider how artists and writers adapt source material across genres by analyzing an artwork inspired by a poem and creating their own adaptations of that artwork.

BACKGROUND

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851) was an artist who transformed the role of the landscape genre in Great Britain and beyond—and he was also passionate about poems. *Melrose Abbey*, a watercolor illustration for a poem by Sir Walter Scott, captures Turner’s twin interests in landscapes and literature.

While today we can talk about genres of music, books, and movies, the word “genre” (a loanword from French to English) was first used in this way to describe categories of European art. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, certain genres of painting were considered more valuable than others. This hierarchy of genres originated from the French Academy, an institution that set standards for art that ultimately proliferated throughout Europe. History paintings (art inspired by historical or mythological stories) were at the top of the genre rankings according to the Academy, while landscape paintings placed near the bottom. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, landscape art started to gain a better reputation.

DISCUSSION

Ask students to define the word “genre.” What are some examples of genres of things in their lives? Invite everyone to spend two minutes thinking quietly about their answers before turning to a partner to discuss their thoughts. After five minutes of talking, call on someone from each pair to summarize their conversation for everyone else.

Encourage students to consider their knowledge of significant societal changes in eighteenth-century France. Ask them to make some educated guesses about why history painting was considered superior to all other genres during this time period.

Then, remind them that Turner was an English painter who lived from 1775 to 1851. What social or cultural movements from this time period might have led to a new interest in landscape painting in England?

BACKGROUND

Turner believed that landscape painters were just as capable of sharing stories and exploring human truths through their art. He declared that “to select, combine and concentrate that which is beautiful in nature and admirable in art is as much the business of the landscape painter in his line as in the other departments of art.”³

Like the dramatic battles or tragic moments often featured in history paintings, Turner’s landscape scenes also tell compelling stories. They just happen to be set against the equally dramatic backdrop of the natural world.

DISCUSSION

Ask students to share their observations about the relationship between the figure and the setting in *Melrose Abbey*. Does this composition—tiny person, vast setting—remind them of any other works of art they know? (The concept of a small figure turned away from the viewer in front of a dramatic landscape was most famously used by Caspar David Friedrich, whose *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog* graces a number of high school literature and history textbooks.) Go around the room and ask each student to share one word that describes how they think this person at Melrose Abbey might feel.

Primary Source Discussion

Turner painted the ruins of Melrose Abbey, a monastery founded in 1136, as a commissioned illustration for a long-form poem by the renowned Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott. “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” begins its second canto—or section—at this very abbey ruin.

Distribute copies of PRIMARY SOURCE: CANTO 2. Tell students that because Scott imagined this poem as a song sung by a fictional minstrel, the poem is best experienced aloud.

Ask nine volunteers to each read a couplet from the poem. Encourage students to highlight or underline any words they do not recognize so the class can figure out the definitions together. (A glossary of some uncommon words and phrases is included.)

After the reading is complete, ask students:

- What elements of this poem did Turner include in his adaptation? What did he leave out?
- How does the atmosphere created by the poem compare to the atmosphere created by Turner?
- Turner places an inscription of the opening lines in the corner of the watercolor. What changes did he make to the text? How do those changes affect the impact of those lines?

3. Jerrold Ziff, “Backgrounds, Introduction of Architecture and Landscape: A Lecture by J. M. W. Turner,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26, no. 1/2 (1963): 124. <https://doi.org/10.2307/750572>.

Primary Source

THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL

CANTO 2⁴

SIR WALTER SCOTT

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moon-light;
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins gray.
When the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruined central tower;
When buttress and buttress, alternately,
Seem framed of ebon and ivory;
When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
When distant Tweed is heard to rave,
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,
Then go—but go alone the while—
Then view St. David's ruined pile;
And, home returning, soothly swear,
Was never scene so sad and fair!

Glossary

ORIEL

the architectural term for a type of window that projects outward from a building

BUTTRESS

the architectural term for a type of support, commonly used in medieval European cathedrals and abbeys, that helps to hold up the building

TWEED

a river on the border between Scotland and England that runs right past Melrose Abbey

SOOTHLY

an older word for “truthfully”

4. Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel: A Poem* (Edinburgh: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-row, and A. Constable and Company, 1805), 34–35.

Writing Activity

WARM-UP

Introduce students to the concept of ekphrasis (the process of creating a vivid, written description of an artwork). Originating in ancient Greece, this writing technique remains popular today! Describing an image is a great way to spark new, creative ideas for prose or poetry.

Give students the opportunity to spend ten minutes freewriting about *Melrose Abbey*. Remind them that freewriting is a chance to think and write privately without worrying about judgement or structure. Encourage them to keep writing without stopping for the full ten minutes. They can describe the image in detail or explore what memories, ideas, or experiences the scene brings up for them. (You can enhance the experience by playing some instrumental music that relates to the theme of ruins—see "Musical Resources.")

WRITING

With their freewriting as a starting point, students can now work to compose a poem inspired by *Melrose Abbey*. If your class has experience with poetry analysis, encourage them to start by identifying the meter and rhyme schemes at play in the poem.

They may choose to challenge themselves by writing in rhymed couplets like Scott did or by experimenting with free verse and other poetic structures.

As they draft their poems, urge them to continue looking closely at the image to help them incorporate visual details from Turner's watercolor into their verse.

SHARING

After students complete their poems, ask each to print their finished draft and swap it with a partner. Each student should now adapt their partner's poem into the creative format of their choice. They might transform the poem into a story in prose, a short film, a dramatic performance, or a work of visual art.

Students will present their finished adaptations to the class and explain the choices they made. What elements of their partner's original poem did they preserve? What did they change, and why? What does their new creation have in common with Scott's poem and/or Turner's visual adaptation?

Standards

MASSACHUSETTS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY FRAMEWORK

Grades 9–10 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

9. Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare.)

Grades 9–10 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create an appropriate progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole.

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and figurative and sensory language to describe settings and characters and establish mood and tone.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Grades 11–12 Writing Standards [W]

3. Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.

a. Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple points of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create an appropriate progression of experiences or events.

b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

c. Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g. a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, resolution).

d. Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and figurative and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

Standards

MASSACHUSETTS ART FRAMEWORK

Foundations Visual Arts Standards

7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.

- Analyze the style of an artist, and how it manifests itself in a given artwork (e.g., examine influences on the artist).

8. Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

- Identify specific elements in a work that connect it to a specific genre or style.

11. Relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural, and historical contexts to deepen understanding.

- Identify the connections between historical and cultural contexts and define stylistic elements of artistic movements (e.g. how the impact of World War II influenced the Western art world and shifted focus from Europe to NYC).

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE FRAMEWORK

High School: World History II

Topic 1: Absolute power, political revolutions, and the growth of nation states, c. 1700–1900

3. Analyze the various political, social, intellectual, and economic causes of the French Revolution (e.g. the influence of Enlightenment philosophy, the development of a middle class, the excesses and growing economic struggles of the French monarchy, the incompetence and corruption of the monarch and government officials).

4. Summarize the main events of the French Revolution and analyze whether the revolution achieved its desired goals.

Topic 2: The Agricultural and Industrial Revolutions in Europe and social and political reactions in Europe

3. Analyze how the Industrial Revolution gave rise to new social, political, and economic philosophies such as feminism, socialism, and communism, including ideas and influence of Robert Owen and Karl Marx.

Musical Resources

Consider playing this themed music during freewriting to add a multi-sensory dimension to students' writing experience. You can find these suggested pieces at your favorite online music streaming service or retailer, or search for recordings on YouTube. (Note: music suggestions are listed by composer, not performer. There are many different performances of each piece out there. Feel free to pick the one you like the most or the version that's easiest for you to access.)

Grades PK–2

Inspired by *Shadow on the Waves* and *Snow Country*

- James P. Johnson, composer. "Snowy Morning Blues." 1927
- Claude Debussy, composer. "De pas sur la neige (Footprints in the Snow)." 1909–10
- Tōru Takemitsu, composer. *Clouds at Sunset*. 1967
- Mesomedes of Crete, composer. "Hymn to the Sun." Ca. second century CE

Grades 3–5

Inspired by *The Sea Serpent*

- Peggy Glanville-Hicks, composer. *Sinfonia da Pacifica*, 1953
- Cecile Chaminade, "L'Ondine (The Ondine)." 1900

Grades 6–8

Inspired by *Preparations for the Festivities (The Floral Wreath)*

- Alan Hovhaness, composer. Op. 245: "The Garden of Adonis." 1971
- Ottorino Respighi, composer. *Roman Festivals*. 1928

Grades 9–12

Inspired by *Melrose Abbey*

- Rentaro Taki, composer. "Kōjō no Tsuki (The Moon Over the Ruined Castle)." 1901
- Arthur Bax, composer. "Tintagel." 1919
- Lilian Elkington, composer. "Out of the Mist." 1920