

THE CLARK

IN YOUR CLASSROOM

LABEL THIS!



Best for Grades 4 and up
Links to ELA and Visual Art

INTRODUCTION

One of the pleasures of experiencing art can simply be to look carefully, wonder, admire, and explore how the art makes you feel or what it reminds you of. Maybe your observations and questions will leave you hungry for some information, like . . .

- *Who made this artwork?* • *What did they call it?* • *What is it made out of?* • *When did they make it?*

That's where a **label** can help. **Labels** are tags that hang near a work of art on the walls in museums. A **basic label** tells you the *Who, What, When,* and *Where* of the artwork. Some labels share additional information that might tell us more about the art and its history or meaning. An **extended label** can share biographical information about the subject in a painting, some explanation of an artistic technique, or an interpretation from the people who work at the museum (or others who have seen the artwork). . .you name it!



George Inness, *Home at Montclair*, 1892. Oil on canvas.
The Clark Art Institute, 1955.10.

LOOK CLOSELY

Although it is the same color as the wall, you can see the label posted to the right of this painting.

This label tells the viewer that the artist, George Inness, produced many paintings, including this one, featuring his property in Montclair, New Jersey. He made this painting at **twilight**, the time of day when the sun is setting.

At the Clark many of our labels share some studied knowledge about the artwork that you might not know without doing research. All of our art—and many of the labels that you would see in the galleries—are online in our [digital collection](#). Take a look and get a flavor for labels at the Clark.

TYPES OF LABELS

BASIC

TELLS THE VIEWER BRIEF, GENERAL INFO LIKE WHO MADE THE ARTWORK AND WHEN

EXTENDED

ALSO CALLED A "CHAT LABEL," AND TELLS THE VIEWER INFORMATION IN 100 WORDS OR LESS

DESCRIPTIVE

TELLS THE VIEWER ABOUT WHAT CAN BE OBSERVED, LIKE COLORS AND SHAPES

Often an artwork's label is a combination of these types, like descriptive *and* extended!

INTERPRETIVE

TELLS THE VIEWER ABOUT FEELINGS AND MOOD, AND IS BASED ON THE LABEL WRITER'S OWN IDEAS

SIX WORD

TELLS THE VIEWER ABOUT THE ARTWORK IN JUST SIX KEY WORDS

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HOW TO PLAY

The most important thing you'll need to write a label is time to spend thinking about and looking closely at a work of art. Most artworks in the Clark's [digital collection](#) have high-resolution images that will let you enjoy details you might not even see in a gallery!

Your label can be as long or as short as you like. In most museums, [extended labels](#), sometimes called "chat" labels, are typically shorter than 100 words.

Remember that even if you've studied a particular work of art for a long time, people who read your label might not have all the information that you do. As you write, it might be helpful to pretend you are telling a friend or family member about something they've never seen before. What questions do you think they'd ask you?

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

Discover three different types of label writing as you explore *Sunrise in the Woods*, *Preparations for the Festivities (The Floral Wreath)*, and *The Chatterers*.

Interpret this!

The American painter George Inness wanted to capture the [essence](#), or quality, of nature through his art rather than depicting things exactly as they are in real life. Focus on your experience of *Sunrise in the Woods* by writing an [interpretive label](#) about Inness's painting.

What does *Sunrise in the Woods* mean to you? Interpreting a work of art and exploring its meaning takes time, and there are no wrong answers. It all depends on how you respond to the art. Be sure to observe the details of the landscape as closely as possible. And remember, write fewer than 100 words!

How do you feel when you view this painting?
What kind of atmosphere does Inness create?
What does this painting make you think about?
What do you wonder about this painting?



George Inness, *Sunrise in the Woods*, 1887. Oil on canvas. Gift of Frank and Katherine Martucci, 2013, 2013.1.6.

WHAT BIG IDEAS OR UNIVERSAL TRUTHS
DOES THIS ARTWORK EXPRESS?

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COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

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Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Preparations for the Festivities (The Floral Wreath)*, 1866. Oil on canvas. Bequest of Madeleine Dahlgren Townsend, 1982, 1982. 11.

ELEMENTS OF VISUAL ART

- COLOR
- FORM
- LINE
- SHAPE
- SPACE
- TEXTURE
- VALUE

Study the painting to the left. What can you say about each of the Elements of Art?

Describe this!

Geometric floor tiles, lush fabrics, and a carved marble fountain bring the ancient Roman city of Pompeii to life in *Preparations for the Festivities (The Floral Wreath)*. Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema carefully studied historical objects—down to every last detail—to make his depictions of the past look as **authentic**, or real, as possible. Follow his lead by observing the many details in this painting as you write a **descriptive label**!

Your **descriptive label** should focus on objective observations about the painting—things that anyone else who could see this artwork would agree with. Generally speaking, who or what is the artist depicting? Which colors, textures, and shapes do you see? How are the figures and objects arranged in the scene?

IF YOU WANTED TO HELP A FRIEND FIND THIS PAINTING IN A BUSY MUSEUM GALLERY,
WHAT WOULD YOU SAY ABOUT IT?

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Harry Wilson Watrous, *The Chatterers*, 1913. Oil on canvas. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1942, 1955.894.

Summarize this!

Both clad in feathers and resting on a settee bench, this elegant woman and her bird companion make a fine pair. What are they chattering about? Harry Willson Watrous lets you decide! Like *The Chatterers*, many of the works Watrous painted in the 1910s are a little mysterious.

Express what matters most about this painting by composing a **six word interpretation**—a short label that captures its most important qualities. This time, use exactly six words: no more, no less.

To start, you might consider writing an **interpretive label** and a **descriptive label** about the *The Chatterers*, and then distilling ideas from both into just a few key words. What do you find most memorable, compelling, or exciting about *The Chatterers* that you want to share?

YOU CAN WRITE SIX DISCONNECTED WORDS,
A COMPLETE SIX-WORD SENTENCE, OR ONE OF EACH!

OTHER WAYS TO PLAY

Invite a friend to join you in writing all three types of labels for any work of art from our collection. When you're done, share what you've written, and be sure to take a look at the Clark's label, too! Which label gives you the best sense of the artwork? (The answer may be different for each of you!) How does your experience of the artwork change after you've read so many different perspectives?

Try creating labels for art that you have made! Remember to include the *Who* (the artist), *What* (the type of artwork and materials used to make it), *When* (the date), and *Where* (the place it was made). What other information would you share about your creation?