

# THE CLARK

## IN YOUR CLASSROOM

# WRITING FROM THE ART

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

## INTRODUCTION

The art in the [Clark's collection](#) can tell stories: a long journey, a secretive mystery, or a scary horror. The possibilities are endless! Art of any style, and made from any **medium**, or material, can inspire new tales. Get ready to enjoy some fun with **fiction**, stories with imaginary events and characters.

## GETTING STARTED

You don't need much more than your imagination to craft a short story.

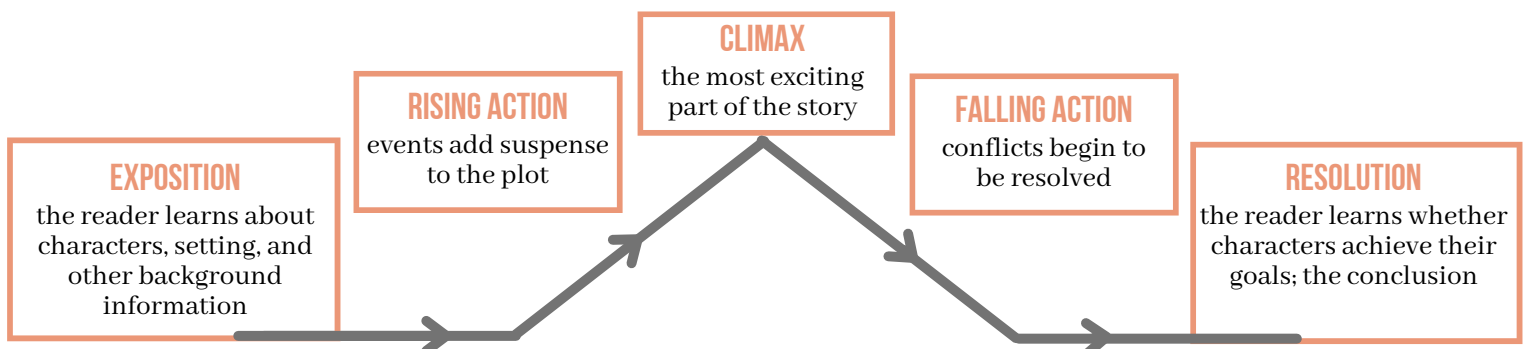
Before you start, warm up with **freewriting**. This is a strategy where you pick a topic and write down *whatever* comes to mind, without worrying about spelling or grammar. **Freewriting** is a great way to spark your creativity and get the words flowing. Follow the steps below:

- 1 Look at the image by Max Klinger on the right, or choose an eye-catching artwork from the Clark's [digital collection](#).
- 2 Set a timer for three minutes.
- 3 Write down *anything* about the image. Don't stop until time runs out! Your only goal is to get words on the paper.
- 4 When the time is up, read what you have written. Is there anything inspirational that you can turn into a story?



Max Klinger, *Intermezzi, Opus IV, Bl. 7: Simplicius Schreibstunde (Simplicius' Writing Lesson)*, 1881. Etching and aquatint on paper. Acquired by the Clark, 1986, 1986.31.

Remember, most successful stories follow this structure:



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## COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

Have you ever heard the expression “A picture is worth a thousand words?” How many words are these pictures worth? Well, let’s see what you come up with!



Winslow Homer, *The Bridle Path, White Mountains*, 1868. Oil on canvas. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1950, 1955.2.

Taking a moment away from her fellow riders, this traveler enjoys the popular nineteenth-century tourist activity of exploring New Hampshire’s White Mountains on horseback.

Go along for the ride by writing three short stories: a story that *begins* with the scene you see in *The Bridle Path*, a story that features this scene somewhere in the *middle*, and a story that *ends* with her trek over the mountains. How does the **plot** change with each new version?

A crowd of locals and visitors gather on a beach in a small French village. This postcard-like painting is fewer than six inches wide. If you saw it in person, you might need a magnifying glass to look at each figure. Download [this image](#) to examine every detail.



Giovanni Boldini, *Return of the Fishing Boats, Étretat*, 1879. Oil on panel. Acquired by Sterling and Francine Clark, 1929, 1955.647.

Imagine you are one of these people. Write a journal entry from their **perspective**. Start with “Dear Diary,” if you like, and try answering these questions to get into character:

- Why were you at the beach?
- How did you feel?
- Did you bring anything with you, or take anything back?
- Who else did you meet there?

WAS THIS A SPECIAL OCCASION FOR YOU,  
OR JUST ANOTHER ORDINARY DAY IN THE VILLAGE?

FEATURED  
VOCABULARY

PERSPECTIVE

THE POINT OF VIEW; WHO IS TELLING THE STORY

PLOT

A PATTERN OF RELATED EVENTS THAT MAKE UP A STORY

SETTING

THE LOCATION AND TIME PERIOD OF A STORY

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In his painting of Melrose Abbey, a medieval ruin in Scotland, Joseph Mallord William Turner includes a quote from Sir Walter Scott's poem *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*. To better understand what might be happening in this painting, take a closer look at the image, and read Scott's poem!

Both Turner and Scott found this **setting** inspiring. Are you inspired too? Write a story that takes place in this **setting**.

Who will your characters be? Your main character could be the mysterious figure in the distance. Why is the person here? What brought the person to this place at this time? How does the person feel about the glimmering light?

**DOES ANYONE ELSE KNOW THAT THIS PERSON IS AT THE ABBEY?**

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.

## OTHER WAYS TO PLAY

### *All in the Details*

While whole paintings are great story starters, you could also focus on a specific detail within a painting for your tale. Or take inspiration from the Clark's decorative arts collection! A unique or unfamiliar object could be key to the **plot** of your story.

### *Sharing Stories*

Writing can be as solitary or collaborative as you like. With a partner, choose an artwork and take turns creating a story, sentence by sentence. Try writing something serious, comedic, adventurous, or heartwarming . . . and watch as your tale unfolds!