

THE CLARK

IN YOUR CLASSROOM

LIVING PICTURES

✓ Best for Grades 3 and up
🔗 Links to Drama and Visual Art

INTRODUCTION

Actors, people who perform on stage, in movies, or on television, bring characters to life in many ways. Sometimes they use **physical gestures** and **props**. You can make a copy of a painting from the Clark's collection using **physical gestures** and **props**! Bring art to life by **posing** like the **subjects** of an image. This is called **tableau vivant**, and it has been enjoyed by art lovers of all ages for hundreds of years.



Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril*, 1899, Lithograph. The Clark Art Institute, 1955.1453.

In the 1800s you might see **tableaux vivants** where actors dressed up in costumes to make a show about famous paintings. Back then, some people also enjoyed making “living pictures” at home.

These days, museums around the world are interested in **tableaux vivants**. People are encouraged to share their works of art on social media. Search the hashtags #MuseumFromHome and #BetweenArtAndQuarantine for inspiration as you get ready to create your own **tableau vivant**!

HOW WOULD YOU **POSE** TO LOOK LIKE THE WOMAN IN THIS ARTWORK?
WHAT CLOTHES WOULD YOU WEAR? WHAT **PROPS** COULD YOU USE?

FEATURED VOCABULARY

PHYSICAL GESTURE

A MOVEMENT OF PART OF THE BODY TO SHOW AN IDEA OR MEANING

PROP

AN OBJECT USED BY ACTORS TO HELP TELL A STORY

POSE

A BODY IN A POSITION THAT SHOWS AN ATTITUDE OR FEELING

SUBJECT

THE FOCUS OF THE ARTWORK, OR THE MAIN IDEA

TABLEAU VIVANT

FRENCH WORDS MEANING “LIVING PICTURE”

MOOD

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

BRUSHSTROKE

MARKS ON A PAINTING MADE BY THE PAINTBRUSH'S BRISTLES

WE'D LOVE TO SEE YOUR RECREATIONS!

TAG @CLARKART AND USE #CLARKART ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

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HOW TO PLAY

Start by browsing the Clark's [digital collection](#) to decide which artwork you want to bring to life. Once you've found something to copy, spend some time looking at it carefully. What colors, textures, or shapes stand out the most? What do you have available (or can find outdoors) that reminds you of this artwork? Will you work with [posed](#) people or [props](#)? Don't worry too much about matching the image exactly. Have fun making it your own. When you have put together your *tableau vivant*, it's time to take a photo!

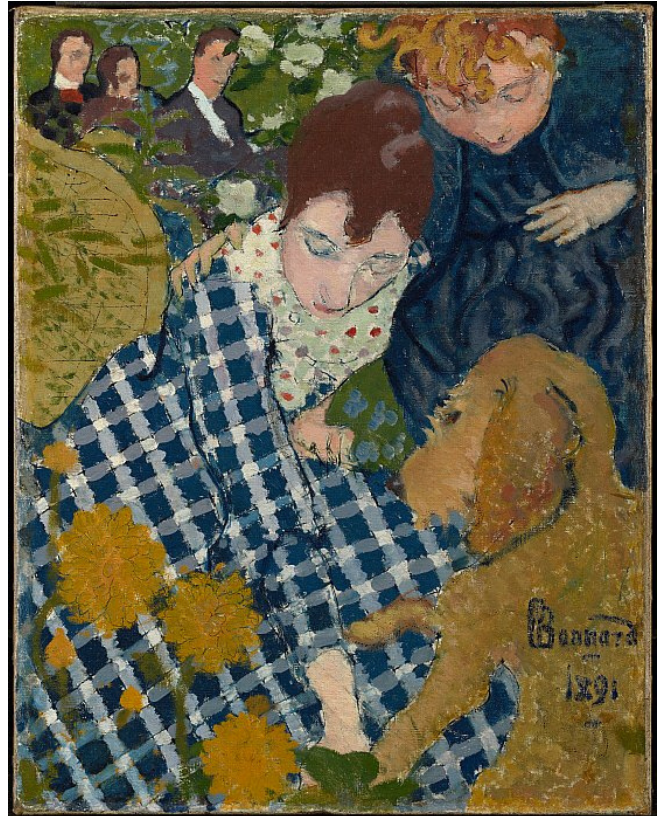
COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

Take a close look at *Women with a Dog*; *View Off Margate, Evening*; and *Various Objects*, and then try to bring them to life. *Women with a Dog* shows a scene that might have been close to home for the artist, Pierre Bonnard.

In this painting, Bonnard's sister (left), cousin (right), and family dog join three finely-dressed people for some fresh air in the garden.

If you like to play dress-up, this is the *tableau vivant* for you! Whether you prefer a simple blue outfit, a patterned scarf, or an elegant red tie, these five figures have fashionable looks to copy.

Remember to pose like the people in the painting. The women and the dog are in the front and take up a lot of space. When you take your photo, make sure they are very close to the camera.



Pierre Bonnard, *Women with a Dog*, 1891. Oil and ink on canvas. Acquired by the Clark, 1979, 1979.23.

HOW DOES THE SCENE CHANGE IF YOU TAKE YOUR PHOTO FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE?

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LIVING
PICTURES

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



Joseph Mallord William Turner, *View off Margate, Evening*, c. 1840. Oil on canvas. Gift of the Manton Art Foundation in memory of Sir Edwin and Lady Manton, 2007, 2007.8.117.

Joseph Mallord William Turner painted many **seascapes**, artworks that show the ocean. In *View off Margate, Evening* there are big, choppy **brushstrokes** and overlapping colors, so it is hard to see details. Can you see the woman and two children on the shore or the ghostly boat on the horizon? This style of painting wasn't liked by everyone. An art critic once said Turner's stormy seas looked like "soapsuds and whitewash."

Can you copy Turner's painting? Create a landscape or **seascape** using pieces from nature or other unusual materials. (Using actual soapsuds is optional, of course.)

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE **MOOD OF YOUR LANDSCAPE OR SEASCAPE?**

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT FROM THE **MOOD OF TURNER'S PAINTING?**

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LIVING PICTURES

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



What do you see in this painting? Letters under a piece of string. An old artwork with torn edges. Flowers that look like you could lean in and smell them. This painting is called *Various Objects*. It is an example of a *trompe l'œil* painting, or art that fools your eye into thinking that the objects are real and right in front of you.

We don't know exactly why Louis Léopold Boilly chose to paint these specific objects. Perhaps he was inspired by the people to whom the letters are addressed. Little is known about them and their relationship to these things.

Louis Léopold Boilly, *Various Objects*, c. 1785. Oil on canvas. Acquired by the Clark, 1981, 1981.1.

WHAT STORY MIGHT BOILLY'S OBJECTS TELL?

HOW ABOUT YOUR VARIOUS OBJECTS?

Find your own “various objects” to make a copy of Boilly’s painting. Pin photographs, notes, flowers, and anything else that is meaningful to you to a bulletin board, or place a piece of paper on the floor and lay the objects on top before taking a picture.

Want a challenge? Try selecting objects from just one drawer, desk, box, or room in your home.

OTHER WAYS TO PLAY

Work with a team to make *tableaux vivants*. Choose a group portrait from the Clark’s collection and have each person pick their favorite figure to bring to life. Show off your costumes or **props** on a group video chat. Don’t forget to take a screenshot to create a portrait of everyone!

Pick a landscape from the collection, recreate it in your own way, and invite someone else to do the same. When you’re finished, compare your versions to the original work of art. How are they the same? How are they different?