

INTRODUCTION

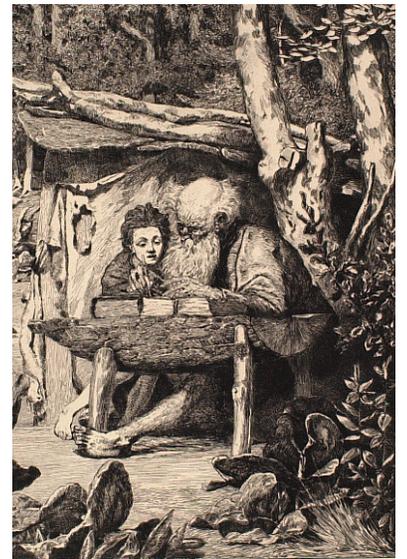
An ancient romance, a remarkable journey, and a tempestuous tragedy are just a few of the stories that art in the Clark's collection can tell. Art of any medium and style can also inspire new tales that are worth telling. Try out these artful short story prompts to enjoy some fictional fun!

GETTING STARTED

You don't need much more than your imagination to craft a short story. If you hope to share your story, though, you might want to write it down, so be sure to have a pen or pencil and paper (or a computer) handy.

Before you start, stretch your storytelling muscles with some freewriting. This kind of automatic, unstructured writing is a great way to spark your creativity and get the words flowing. Try to be open to whatever this inspires!

- 1 Take a look at the image by Max Klinger on the right, or choose the first work from the Clark's [digital collection](#) that catches your eye.
- 2 Set a timer for five minutes.
- 3 Write *anything* about your image. Don't stop until time runs out! Your only goal is to get words on paper.



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.

When you finish, read whatever's on the page. There may be a seed of a future story in your freewriting. In any case, you might feel a little more relaxed and inspired . . . and ready to write more!

THE CLARK CONNECTS

WRITING FROM THE ART

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

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



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 Bridle Path*, a story that features this scene somewhere in the *middle*, and a story that *ends* with her trek over the mountains.

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

HOW DOES YOUR INTERPRETATION OF THE PAINTING CHANGE WITH EACH STORY?

A crowd of locals and visitors alike 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, but you can download [this image](#) to examine every detail at home!

Get to know one of these people by writing a journal entry in their voice. Start with “Dear Diary,” if you like, and try answering these questions to get into character:

Why were you at the beach today?
What did you wear?
How did you feel?
Who else did you meet there?



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

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

COLLECTION CONNECTIONS



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 writing!

Both Turner and Scott found this setting inspiring, so why not stay for a while? Write a story contained within the painting—in other words, your main character could be the mysterious figure in the distance.

Why are they here? What brought them to this place at this time? What significance does that glimmering light have to them?

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 particular 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 companionable as you like. With a partner, choose an artwork as a prompt and take turns creating a story, sentence by sentence. Try writing something serious, comedic, adventurous, or heartwarming . . . and watch as your tale unfolds!