

Additional creative writing activities from the Beach Museum of Art:

Join us on our Facebook page [/BeachMuseumofArt](#) for weekly writing prompts from the exhibition *Inspirations: Art for Storytelling*

Coming Soon: Talking About Art (TAP) <https://beach.k-state.edu/explore/apps/>

MARIANNA KISTLER  
**BEACH**  
MUSEUM OF ART

FREE admission and parking  
14th & Anderson, Manhattan, KS  
785.532.7718 | [beach.k-state.edu](http://beach.k-state.edu)  
Tues., Wed., Fri. 10-5 | Thurs. 10-8 | Sat. 11-4  
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"Some of the stories told in paint are rather straightforward, easily read by most viewers: simple pictures. Others convey content through more obscure symbols, using details freighted with personal, often cryptic meaning—complex images that perhaps reflect the complex circumstances of their creation. But all suggest a basic and enduring fascination with a story well told, with a tale well painted."

Prologue, *Tales from the Easel: American Narrative Paintings from Southeastern Museums, circa 1800 – 1950*, University of Kansas Art Historian Dr. Charles Eldredge, University of Georgia Press, 2004

***Use this journal for your own writing adventures with art.***

***Use the blank pages in the back to write from your heart about art in the galleries!***

***Exercises in the front will help build your visual vocabulary, develop visual thinking skills, and employ your creative thinking. You can view larger images by searching for the piece on our website at***

<https://beach.k-state.edu/explore/collection/>

***Kathrine Schlageck, Associate Curator of Educations***

## **Bibliography:**

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**Ekphrasis: a literary description of or commentary on a visual work of art.**

The practice of using words to comment on a piece of visual art is an ancient one. One of the earliest and most commonly cited forms of ekphrasis occurs in *The Iliad*, when Homer provides a long and discursive account of the elaborate scenes embossed on the shield of Achilles.

One of the most famous examples of ekphrasis is *Ode on a Grecian Urn* by John Keats. A more recent example is the song *Vincent* by Don McClain:

*Starry, starry night  
Paint your palette blue and grey  
Look out on a summer's day  
With eyes that know the darkness in my soul  
Shadows on the hills  
Sketch the trees and the daffodils  
Catch the breeze and the winter chills  
In colors on the snowy linen land*



Although ekphrasis is most often found in the form of poetry, non-fiction prose and narrative fiction can be used to write about art, as evidenced by recent novels *Girl With a Pearl*

*Earring* by Tracy Chevalier (1999) and *The Goldfinch* by Donna Tartt (2013).

## Sensory Circle

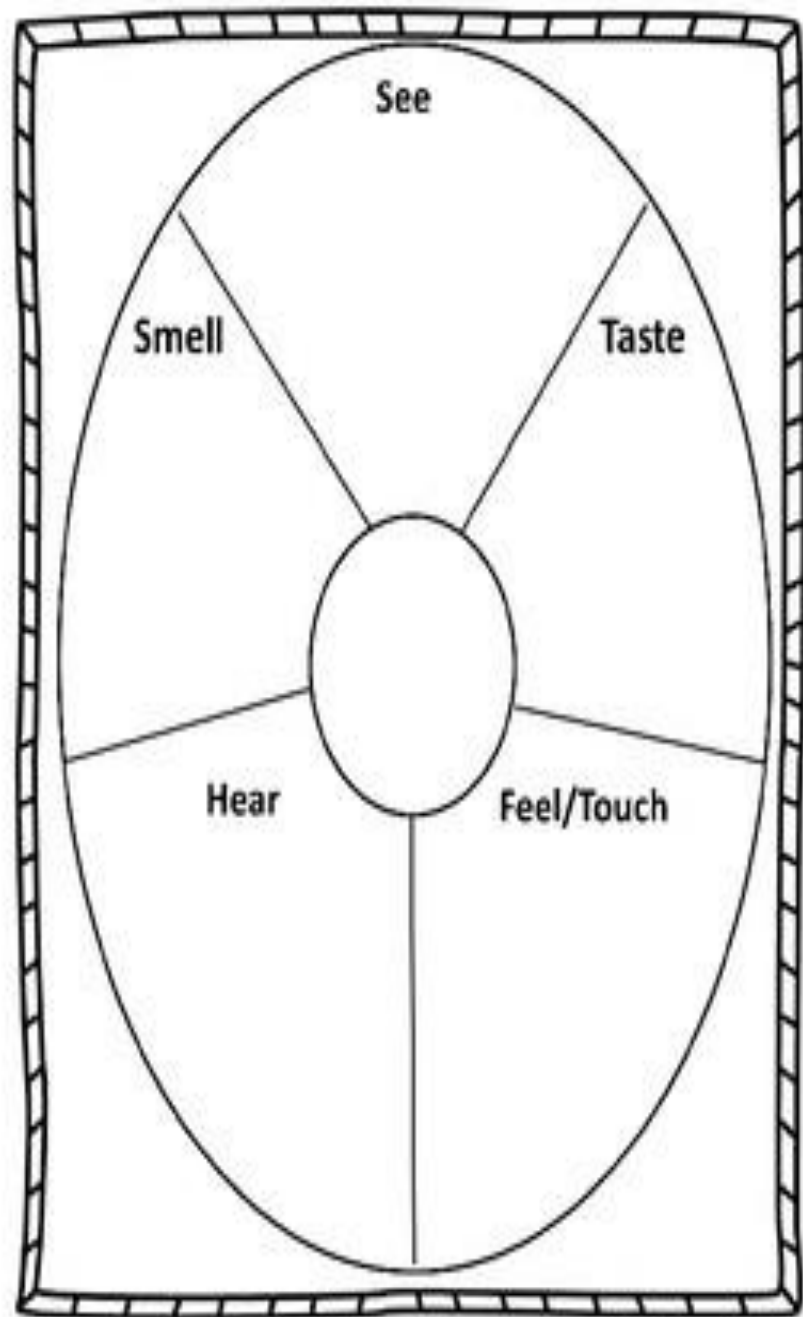
We employ our senses to interpret the world around us and observation is at the core of many disciplines, including the sciences. In science we refer to descriptive attributes like shape, size, temperature and textures. In language arts we use adjectives and adverbs to describe what we observe. In works of art we look for visual aesthetic qualities such as line, shape, color, texture, movement, and contrast – referred to as the elements of art and composition. Use the painting below and fill in the sensory circle on the next page. You will have to use your imagination!



Robert Newton Sudlow (1920-2010)

Blackbirds, 1960 Oil on canvas

KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Dakin Cramer in memory of Nancy Lee Foster, 1996.87



## Color Pairs

If you look at the labels on crayons or the names of colors on commercial paint chips you will notice that someone has been very creative! Examples are “midnight blue” or “spinach green.”

Use the painting by Lindsborg, Kansas artist Sven Birger Sandzén below and create a name for each of the colors you see.



Sven Birger Sandzén (1871-1954)

*Fall in the Mountains*, 1927

Oil on canvas

KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of the artist, 1929.2

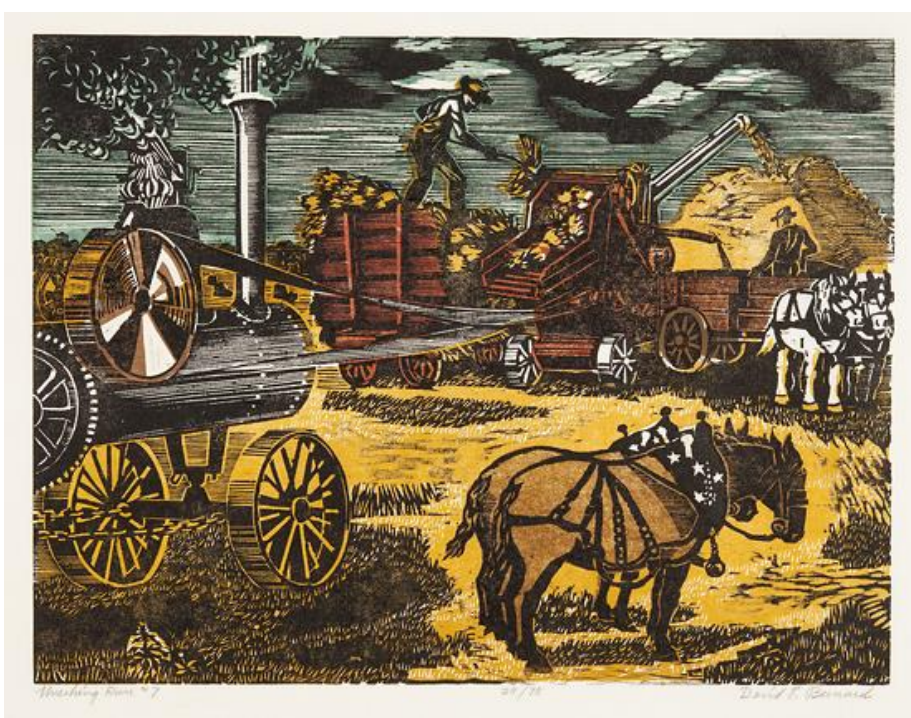
**My New Colors for Crayola!**



## Looking for Sounds and Movements

Look at the woodcut below and make a list of sounds and movements. The sounds can be words you invent, as well as onomatopoeia. Choose one or two of the words in your list and think about the visual clues that the artist provided to help you to “see” that sound or movement.

Use the list of words to write a paragraph related to what is happening in the scene.



David Edwin Bernard (1913-2006)

*Threshing Run #7*, 1984

Color woodcut on paper

KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Eloise Bourque

2001.108



**Word List**

**Descriptive Paragraph**

## Compare and Contrast

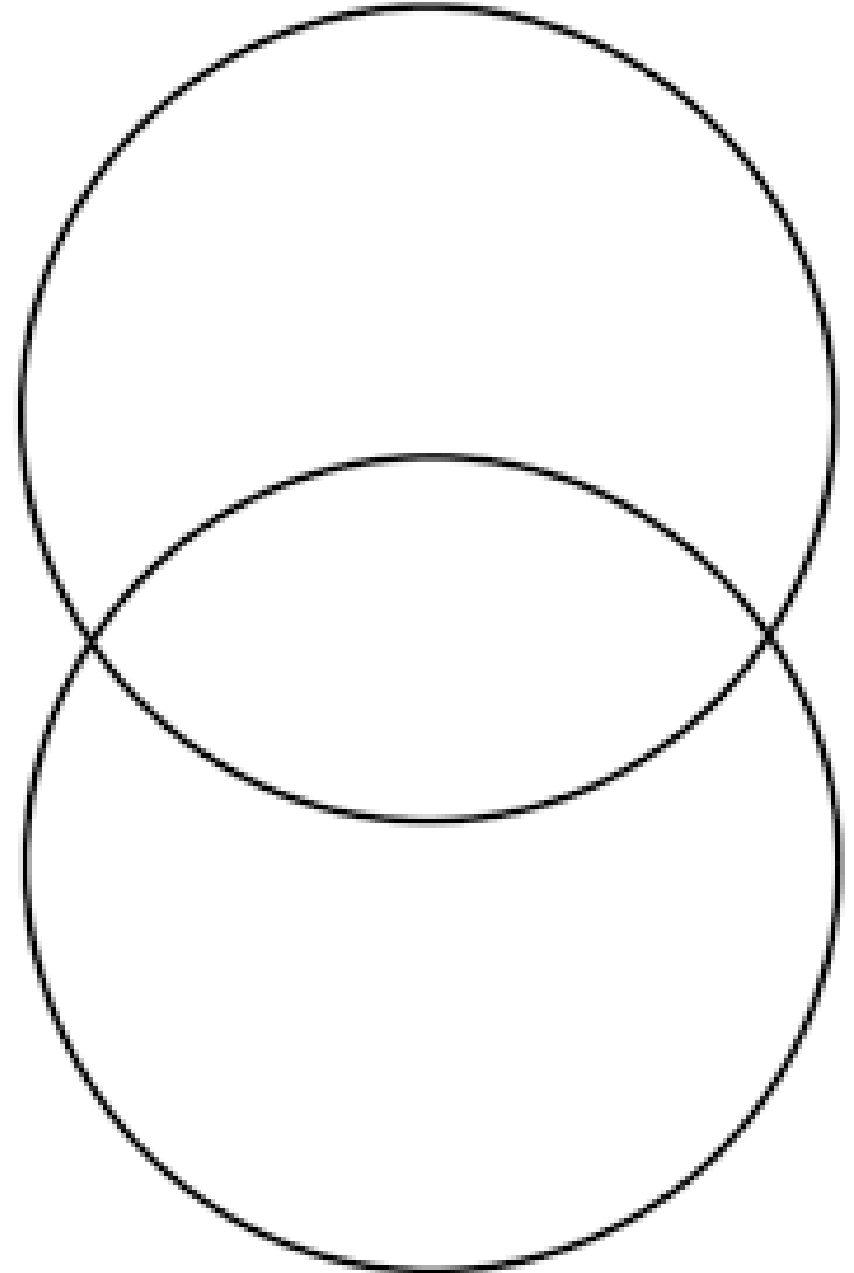


John Stuart Curry (1897-1946)

Sunrise (Sunrise Over Kansas) 1935 Oil on canvas KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, Friends of the Beach Museum of Art purchase 1996.18

Sun Dogs, 1930 Oil on Canvas KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, acquisition made possible with funds provided by K-State students, faculty, and members of the Manhattan community, 1933.3

Use the Venn Diagram to compare and contrast the two paintings.



## Acrostic Poem

One model for creating an ekphrastic poem is the acrostic. Start by choosing a word that relates to the work of art and writing it vertically. This will give you a title and the letter for the first word of each line. It's up to you whether your line is one word, several words with the same letter, or a sentence starting with that word.

One way to do this is to take each letter and generate as many words as you can for that letter inspired by the artwork. This will give you a word bank for your poem.

Here is an example:

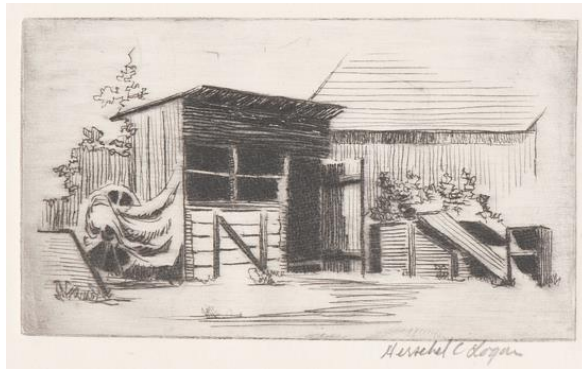
Shed

Silver slivers splinter.

Hard, heavy hunks -

Evenly edged.

Dry, dead dwelling.



Herschel C. Logan (1901-1987)

*Old Shed*, mid-20<sup>th</sup> century

Etching with drypoint on paper

KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Peggy L. Sondergard &

Samuel H. Logan, 2002.128

Larry W.  
Schwam  
(Born 1944)

Earth, Fire,  
and Water, Z-  
Bar Ranch,  
1994

Chromogenic  
print

KSU, Marianna  
Kistler Beach  
Museum of  
Art, Friends of  
the Beach  
Museum of Art  
annual  
reception  
purchase,  
2001.73



**Word list**

## Acrostic Poem



## Dialogue

Imagine the dialogue in the photo below. Give the characters names and write down what they are saying.



Gordon Parks (1912-2006)

Untitled, 1955 Chromogenic print

KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Gordon Parks and the Gordon Parks Foundation, 2017.419

## Portrait Autobiography

Pretend you are the person in the portrait and, using the clues the artist provided, answer the following questions to write your "autobiography." Be prepared to back up your statements with information in the portrait.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

I live in \_\_\_\_\_.

The year is \_\_\_\_\_.

What hints helped you determine the above information?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My job is \_\_\_\_\_.

In my spare time I like to \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite thing is \_\_\_\_\_.

I have a little/ some/ a lot of (circle one) money. How can we tell? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

People use the following words to describe me (think about personality as well as looks).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I am thinking about (use facial expression to help)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I like the way the artist portrayed my \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

I don't like the way the artist portrayed my \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

What else can you say about yourself based on the portrait? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Roger Y. Shimomura (born 1939)  
Kansas Samurai, 2003 Color lithograph on paper  
KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, G. E. Johnson Art Acquisition  
Fund, 2005.3

## What Am I Thinking?



Paul Calle (born 1928)

Waiting, late 20th century

Color lithograph on paper

KSU, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, gift of Gilbert E. Johnson,  
2017.40