



LIKE BREATH ON GLASS

Gallery Guide for Families

THE CLARK

S. Hennessy 1891

The title of this exhibition is **LIKE BREATH ON GLASS**. Think about that for a moment. When you breathe on a mirror, for example, what happens to your reflection? Does it start to get **FUZZY** and **SOFT** around the edges? This is like the effect that these artists achieved in their paintings. They had different reasons for making pictures in this way, and they didn't all use the same way of painting to achieve that look. This guide will help you look closely at some of the pictures in the galleries and explore why and how the artists made them.

“The true poem is walking the edge between what can be said and that which cannot be said.” – Gary Snyder

The paintings in **LIKE BREATH ON GLASS** can be compared to poetry. Poetry uses language to stir up a certain mood or feeling, just as some of the artists in this exhibition do with their paintings. At the bottom of each page of this booklet you will see a piece of ruled paper. This is a place to write any words that come to mind as you look at the art. On the back, you will find a page to gather all of your words into a “Collage Poem” titled *Like Breath on Glass*, which will reflect your experience of visiting this exhibition.



NOCTURNES

Four of the paintings in the first gallery of the exhibition have the word “Nocturne” in the title, which means they are night scenes. Imagine when you’re looking at these pictures that you’re walking outside into the darkness. Spend some time and let your eyes adjust. Allow the pictures to emerge through the mist.

What details do you start to notice? _____

What are some similarities and differences between the four paintings? _____



PORTRAITS

As you continue through the exhibition, you will see four large portraits. Portraits aren't just pictures that show what people looked like; they also try to tell us something about the people in them. The artists used different painting techniques in these pictures in order to influence how we perceive the people in them. Some of the techniques they used include:

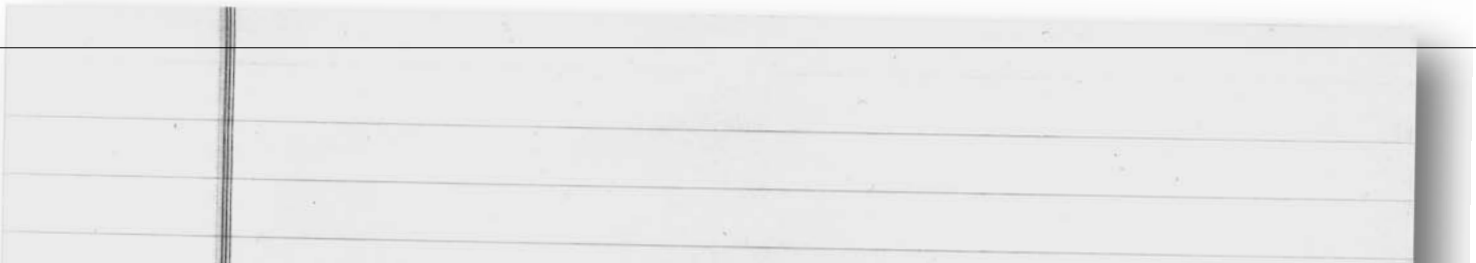
- choosing soft or muted colors (colors that are not bright or bold)
- obscuring details
- blurring the edges of shapes and objects
- creating a sense of looking at the painting through a veil

Choose one of the four portraits and look at it carefully. Write down the name of the portrait here: _____

Circle the techniques that the artist used in the list above.

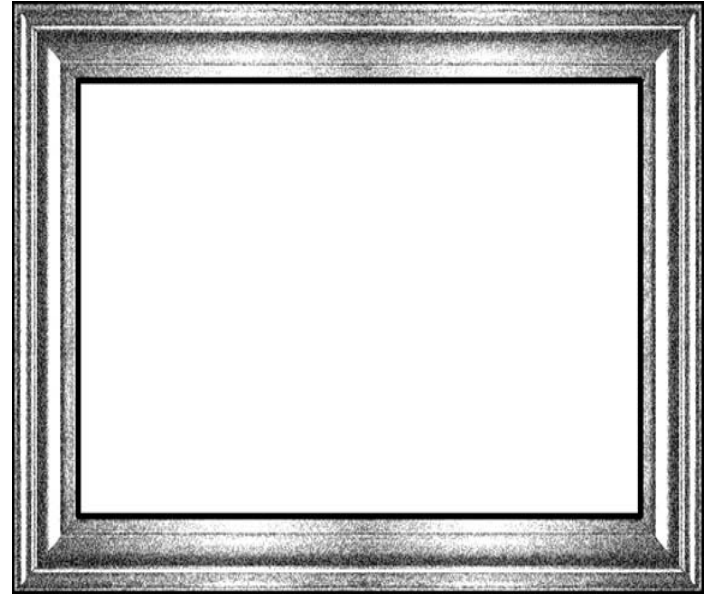
Based on how the artist painted the portrait, what do you think this person was like? What might the artist have thought of him or her?

Write a few sentences describing the person here: _____

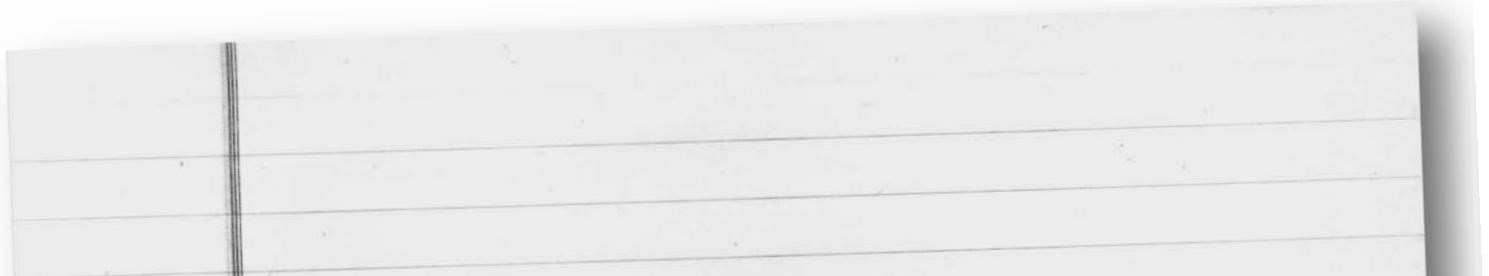


MEMORY

Places that were special to the artist provided the inspiration for many of the pictures in this next gallery. Do you have a place like that? How does it make you feel to remember that place? For these artists, it was important to capture the feeling of being in these special places rather than provide a record of the scenes exactly as they were. One of the ways these artists captured the feeling of a place was by painting it from memory. They believed that what you remember most is a way of picking out what's most important about that place. They trusted their memories to filter out the details that weren't as important, leaving only the essential details.



Take a good look at George Inness's *Hazy Morning, Montclair*. First, note the major shapes and tones (areas of light and dark) in the painting. Then turn your back to it and draw what you can remember in the space above. When you're finished, turn back around and compare your drawing to the painting. Did you miss any details? Do any of the objects look different? Does the composition of your drawing change the mood of the picture?



DREAMS

Thomas Dewing has given his paintings a dreamlike feel by placing his figures in hazy landscapes. The figures look mysterious and ethereal (not quite like real people, spiritlike). This invites people to project their own feelings and memories onto what they see on the canvas. Do his pictures remind you of any of your dreams?

What happened in your dream? _____

Where did your dream take place? _____

Did the place look like it does in real life, or were certain things different or exaggerated? _____

Were there any people in your dream? Who were they? _____

Did they look like themselves? Describe them: _____



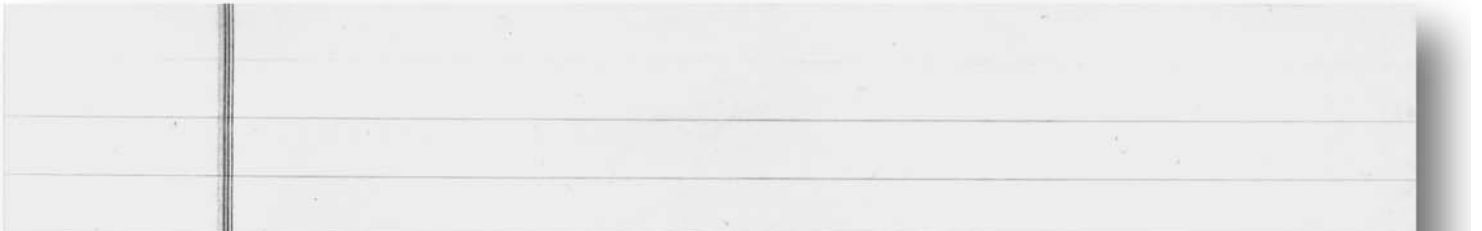
IMAGINATION

In the last gallery, find the moonlit landscapes by Eduard Steichen. Do you remember the Nocturnes you saw in the first gallery? What is similar and/or different about these paintings? _____

Steichen was a photographer as well as a painter. He experimented with making his photographs look like paintings and his paintings look like photographs. Look at Steichen's photograph *The Pond—Moonrise* printed on this page. What do you notice when you compare this photo to his paintings?

What can an artist do with a painting that can't be done with a photograph?

What can an artist do with a photograph that can't be done with a painting?



COLLAGE POEM

Here is the space to gather your words to create a poem. You can write your words in the order that you recorded them, with each line representing a gallery, or you can put your words together creatively in whatever order you choose. Either way, your poem will reflect your experience of the exhibition.

LIKE BREATH ON GLASS

BY _____

A large sheet of white paper with horizontal lines, intended for writing a collage poem. The paper is oriented vertically and has a vertical margin line on the left side. The lines are evenly spaced and cover most of the page area.

We would appreciate it if you would be willing to share your poem with the Clark community. Please visit clarkart.edu/exhibitions/whistler to submit your work.

**THE
STERLING
AND
FRANCINE
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INSTITUTE**

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Cover: Detail of *Wood Gathers: An Autumn Afternoon*, 1891, by George Inness
(Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute)