



## — Lesson Plans for Teachers & Writers —

The City of Ventura is pleased to sponsor this seventh annual creative contest open to all writers worldwide in partnership with E.P. Foster Library.

The contest invites imaginative writers of all ages to compose a short story or poem (500 words maximum) inspired by one of the artworks currently on exhibit at the library from the Municipal Art Collection.

These selections from the City Hall collection are rotated annually to a special second floor exhibit space near the library's rear (children's) entrance in an effort to make them more accessible to the community.

### Artworks & Theme

"Nothing reminds us of an awakening more than rain."  
— Serbian poet Dejan Stojanović

"During this year of extreme drought I selected works that 'call for rain' with every piece—acrylic, watercolor or glass—evoking water."  
—Tobie Roach, Public Art Projects Manager

1. Jaquelyn Cavish, California Aqueduct, 2000, oil on canvas
2. Sally Miller, Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper
3. Richard Phelps, Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas
4. Helle Scharling-Todd, Glacial Melt, 2004, laminated glass

### How To Enter

1. Visit E.P. Foster Library, 651 E Main St in Ventura, to view the exhibit, or view the images and the complete contest kit online at [www.cityofventura.net/arttales](http://www.cityofventura.net/arttales).
2. Write an original poem or short story (no more than 500 words in length) inspired by ONE of the artworks there that "calls" to you. Only ONE contest entry per person please.
3. Prepare your entry as an electronic word document, in English or Spanish, in a twelve-point font, including at the top: the author's name, address, phone number, email address, age, title of work and number of words.

4. Submit your entry by April 1, 2015 **BY EMAIL ONLY** to [rnewsham@cityofventura.net](mailto:rnewsham@cityofventura.net) with "Art Tales" as the email subject line – together with a completed release form (see next item below).
5. Complete a savable pdf release form – parents must do this for youth entries under 18 – copy the document to your desktop, fill it in, save and send it along with your entry poem or short story.

### Judging

A committee of professionals, educators, librarians and City of Ventura staff will judge entries on creativity, presentation and correspondence to a specific artwork to select their top three choices for separate poetry and short fiction categories in three age divisions:

- Youth (grades 2-8)
- High School (grades 9-12)
- Adult (ages 18 and up)

### Awards & Library Reading

All winners receive a bound edition of the judges' selection with cash prizes for first (\$30) and second (\$15) place. The Mayor of Ventura presents the awards in April or May during a library reading of works by contest winners: all participants, their families and friends and the public are invited to attend this special event where refreshments are served.

### Contest Rules

Qualified entries shall be (a) either a single short story or poem (one entry per person) (b) no longer than 500 words (c) written solely by the entrant (d) not previously published (e) nor in conflict with trademark, copyright, rights of privacy, rights of publicity or any other rights, of any kind or nature, of any other person or entity; (f) which does not include any language or other content that is indecent or inappropriate as determined by the CITY in its discretion. Entries not satisfying these criteria in any respect will be disqualified.

# If That Picture Could Speak

A lesson plan for teachers & writers of ages 9 and up – adapt for younger students.

## A brief history of ekphrasis

If that picture could speak, what tale would it tell you? An act of writing inspired by looking closely at a work of visual art is called ekphrasis, a Greek word meaning “to speak out.” For over 2,500 years this ancient technique has helped artworks “talk” through writers who use their full imaginative powers to respond directly to art from the past or today’s creative minds.

1. Homer’s “Shield of Achilles” in the Iliad from the 5th century BC acts like a “movie screen” projecting scenes of a wedding, trial, army ambush, lion attacking a bull and a big dance party.
2. Latin poet Horace claims that “poetry is a speaking picture” in the first century AD.
3. 19th century poet John Keats at a museum speaks to a young couple painted on an ancient vase in “Ode on

a Grecian Urn” as if they are still alive today (find his drawing of them on the Internet).

Writers “make great pictures” by using words. The power of images—in poetry and visual art—is what “speaks” to our imaginations. Remember that “image” is the root of the word “imagination.”

## Discuss model poems inspired by art

Project two or three poems and images (from our website) for students to read aloud, taking turns by stanza. A fragment of a statue of Ramses II (aka Ozymandias) in the British Museum inspired Shelley to write his sonnet. For each poem, ask students to say what details they like best, and to identify metaphors and discuss the poet’s approach.

### Poem & Poet

“Ozymandius” by Percy Bysshe Shelley .....	Photo of Egyptian ruins (see below)
“The Great Figure” by William Carlos Williams .....	I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold by Charles Demeuth
“The Man with the Blue Guitar” by Wallace Stevens .....	The Old Guitarist by Pablo Picasso
“Two Monkeys by Breughel” by Wislawa Szymborska .....	Two Monkeys by Pieter Brueghel
“Mojave” by Dahyun Na, Art Tales winner .....	Mojave by Dorothy Hunter
“Blue Trees” by Nadia Connelly, Art Tales winner .....	Blue Trees by Richard Amend

### Artwork



### Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land  
 Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
 Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
 And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
 The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
 And on the pedestal these words appear:  
 “My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
 Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!”  
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.



The Old Guitarist  
by Pablo Picasso



Two Monkeys  
by Pieter Brueghel



*Blue Trees*, by Richard Amend

### **Blue Trees** by Nadia Connelly

Soft sunshine shines through our branches. The soft grass sways as if dancing in the wind.

The sun is as brilliant as a bonfire in the sky. Silver deer gallop so fast it is as if they are flying.

Wicked smiles are carved onto our trunks. We are the keepers of the forest.

Squirrels scamper quickly up our trunks tickling us with their big, bushy tails.

Sounds of lonely bird cries echo off us filling the silent forest with sound.

The smell of crisp leaves fills our noses. The hot sun shines and makes us warm.

But the soft whispery wind sings its song and cools us charming every animal.

If we are quiet you can hear every animal's heart beating. We are all united.

### **Mojave**

by Dahyun Na

Another wrinkle next to my eye  
Disturbance under my misty, barren surface  
Remembering my past  
My heart not yet fully healed  
Bubbling with confusion of mixed colors  
Forced into one place  
Like oil and water that never seem to mix  
Red love for my home  
Red passion for my tribe  
Orange liveliness in traditions from my ancestors  
Orange fascination in growth of my children  
Green joy in peaceful, repeated daily routine  
Orange warning for strangers who harm Mother Nature  
Red rage toward invaders who took away my home  
Dark blue powerlessness like falling through an endless tunnel with no exit  
Orange loneliness in a new environment without my family  
Yellow hope for the return of my old life  
Perplexities under my smooth surface  
Living my life with memories, carrying the past



*Mojave*, by Dorothy Hunter

### **View the artworks at the library or on our website**

Visit the library or project the images from our website links – you may also request a teacher's kit with reproductions of the art for classroom use. Explain the titles, examine the artworks and discuss them briefly.

### **Give students some pre-write advice as they make their choices by saying:**

1. Pick an artwork that causes an immediate reaction in you. Examine it more closely. Look deep inside. Ask yourself: What do I see, feel, or question? Look for details. Use colors. Create your own title for the artwork.
2. Go "behind the painting" or artwork; go beyond what you can actually see; use all your senses; make it personal.
3. Think about how you will make the artwork MOVE as you give the artwork a VOICE, CAPTURE its energy and ACTIONS with words, and add your own life or dimension to the artwork.

### **Discuss four approaches to get "write inside" the artwork**

1. Create your own story about the painting. Let your mind wander, then answer the question: What is going on? How does it end?

2. Create a conversation or argument among the people or even objects depicted; make them speak!
3. Enter the artwork yourself—climb inside—and describe your experiences or "adventures within the frame."
4. Pretend you are the artist. What's on your mind as you work? What happened beforehand? Afterwards?

### **Let the writing begin!**

Ask students to

- jot down "writing bubbles" of what immediately strikes them about the artwork's vivid images, details and metaphors;
- create at ten to twenty lines of poetry or a minimum of five sentences full of clear colors, unusual details and metaphor "discoveries."

### **Share the results!**

Allow at least ten minutes at the end of class for students who wish to read aloud their creations.

### **Revise poems on the computer and email them into the contest**

Teachers can fax or pdf handwritten copies of younger contestants.

## About the 2015 Art Tales art and artists



### **Jacquelyn Cavish (b. 1944)**

**California Aqueduct, 2000,  
acrylic on canvas.**

"I paint from my observations of the contemporary local scene, looking for color, irony, drama, and I find it everywhere," says the artist. Originally a watercolorist, Jacquelyn Cavish became impatient with the requisite drawing preparations. She says, "I began to paint alla prima with acrylic on canvas. The immediacy of the process has a great appeal for me, especially in plein air painting." Her artwork has been described as having a vibrant and dynamic sense of spontaneity with a strong emphasis on color and pattern. This extraordinary gift for brilliant color and unique composition springs, she suspects, from the strong influence of Gauguin and Japanese Ukiyo-e on her work.

Jacquelyn Cavish, who earned an M.F.A. degree from UC Santa Barbara, now teaches art history and studio art classes at Oxnard College. She is also a founding member of the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society, past President of the Oxnard Art Association and is Curator of Art for the Ventura County Maritime Museum. Her work has been widely exhibited.



### **Sally Miller (b. 1923)** **Incoming Sea, 2002, watercolor on paper.**

Because of an early fascination with shape and color, Sally Miller has enjoyed a lifetime of pleasure and personal achievement through

painting. Miller is known for her ability to take something that is visually complex and distill it into simple, clean shapes, using economical and purposeful brushstrokes. She finds painting on location in oils or watercolors exciting and challenging, capturing the subject as quickly as possible and then returning to her studio to complete the work. After many years of sailing and boating, Miller has developed a strong affinity for the ocean and the natural beauty surrounding it. Her painting, *Incoming Sea*, exemplifies her tender understanding of the coastal environment.

Sally Miller has proven to be a significant member of the local art community through her support of artists and arts organizations. She is an active member of the Buenaventura Art Association, the Santa Paula Society of the Arts, the Ventura County Artists Guild, and The Plein Aire Painters, and is a signature and founding member of the California Gold Coast Watercolor Society. A popular instructor, Sally taught adult art for Ventura Unified School District for many years and now gives classes in plein air painting. She offers demonstrations and critiques and occasionally judges for various art groups in the county. Sally's work can be seen at the Buenaventura Art Association Gallery, and Santa Paula Society of the Arts.



### **Richard Phelps (b. 1933)**

**Big Blue, 1993, acrylic on canvas**

Richard Phelps' artistic process is patient, allowing impressions and ideas to incubate – often for years. He is stirred by the delicacies of the mood and environment around him, by the flux of nature, the power

of subtle light changes, the repose or tranquility of a setting. He says, "The form an image takes on canvas is dependent upon the palette I mix, the music around me, and the first few unconscious strokes I make. The flow of the paint makes suggestions and I find myself both acting and reacting to what appears." His work evolves as an abstraction of the forces that move him. *Big Blue* is a serene work, a captured moment of light that is about to fade or move.

Born in Montpelier, Idaho, Richard Phelps expressed an early interest in art, and, except for the years he spent in the military, has continuously painted and been active in galleries and competitions. After receiving an MA in art from San Francisco State University he promptly took a position as an art instructor at Ventura Community College. He considers his twenty-eight years of teaching art a cherished period of time, calling it a "selfish job" because he always drew such inspiration from the students.

Now retired, Richard Phelps lives in Tennessee with a view of the Smoky Mountains and a barn for a studio.



### **Helle Scharling-Todd (b. 1945)**

**Glacial Melt, 2004,  
laminated glass.**

Instead of exhibiting her art in galleries and museums, most of Helle Scharling-Todd's creations have been permanently installed in public places

throughout Europe and the United States, and, because of that, will be viewed and enjoyed by thousands of people. She says, "Public art is a duet with architecture and an inspiration for the public. I want to add a spiritual dimension to a functional place." With a focus on glass, mosaics and murals, Scharling-Todd studied art in Denmark, Germany, Italy and Mexico. She also earned a degree in art history from the University of Aarhus in Denmark. Locally her extraordinary artwork can be found in numerous places, including the Olivas Adobe, Ventura's Urban Encore, and the Port Hueneme Library as well as part of Ventura's Westside Community Enhancement Project.

The work *Glacial Melt* expresses a unique effect created through a process Scharling-Todd developed and calls "erosion." This process of layering the glass and then selectively eroding back through the layers gives this glass piece a strange, rough and sophisticated beauty reminiscent of deep water or ice.