


### ***The Gazer's Spirit Poems Speaking to the Silent Works of Art***

"...The gap between word and image has been the subject of a good deal of contemporary theoretical exploration. It is indeed easy to consider how, for the talky poem, the mute image manifests is otherness, its figurative condition as object of desire, its vivid latency, given another sort of expressive power by having the breath of verbal life blown into it, and so forth. The viewer's gaze which embraces a particular work can long for further consummation—to possess a represented object, whether person or thing, to enter into an interior scene or a landscape. On the other hand, language can long for a further extension of its frail descriptive grasp of fully realized visual representation." Hollander, John. *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems Speaking to Silent Works of Art*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1995. 6-7. Print.

<p><b>Pisa's Leaning Tower</b> by Herman Melville</p> <p>The Tower in tiers of architraves, Fair circle over cirque, A trunk of rounded colonades, The maker's master-work, Impends with all its pillared tribes, And, poising them, debates: It thinks to plunge — but hesitates; Shrinks back — yet fain would slide; Withholds itself — itself would urge; Hovering, shivering on the verge, A would-be suicide!</p>	<p>Upon seeing the tower, Melville wrote "Campanile* like pine poised just ere snapping. You wait to hear crash." * A bell tower</p> <p>How does Melville's impression manifest itself in the poem?</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div>
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**Similarities between Verbal and Visual Arts (Eichler,)** <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/creative-communication-frames-discovering-10.html?tab=4#tabs>

<b>Author's Word Choice</b>	<b>Artist's Brushstrokes, Color, and Medium Selected</b>
<b>Author's Point of View</b>	<b>Artist's Perspective</b>
<b>Author's Purpose</b>	<b>Artist's Purpose</b>
<b>Author's Main Idea</b>	<b>Artist's Subject</b>
<b>Author's Setting—Time, Place</b>	<b>Artist's Period, Time, Place</b>

Before the 20th century, Western art was largely representational (meaning viewers are able to make out shapes, figures, and forms in a work). Abstract expressionist art, such as Jackson Pollock's "Number One," is non-representational, meaning viewers generate interpretations not through recognizable objects, but through the structure of the work's internal form. How does this painting, as a text, speak to you? In other words, what messages or arguments do you find in this style of painting? What do you determine to be Pollock's purpose? Give specific examples from the work. (Hint: Ask yourself what makes this STYLE of painting so vastly different from earlier representational art. What is literally happening with the paint on the canvas? What various choices does Pollock make? How might this technique challenge viewers' assumptions about art?)



**Number 1 by Jackson Pollock (1948)**

Nancy Sullivan

No name but a number.  
Trickles and valleys of paint  
Devise this maze  
Into a game of Monopoly  
Without any bank. Into  
A linoleum on the floor  
In a dream. Into  
Murals inside of the mind.  
No similes here. Nothing  
But paint. Such purity  
Taxes the poem that speaks  
Still of something in a place  
Or at a time.  
How to realize his question  
Let alone his answer?

<https://eng101activitygallery.wordpress.com/2012/08/26/175/>

How does Sullivan interpret Pollock's painting in her ekphrastic poem? What unique or unusual signifiers does she use to give representation to Pollock's non-representational text? How does Sullivan's final question challenge both Pollock's purpose (as you determined in your first response) and the audience's interpretation of that message? In other words, how does Sullivan challenge you to re-evaluate your own interpretation of Pollock's work?

Designed by Mike Sanders



### 'The Starry Night' by Anne Sexton

*That does not keep me from having a terrible need of — shall I say the word — religion. Then I go out at night to paint the stars. —Vincent Van Gogh in a letter to his brother*

The town does not exist  
except where one black-haired tree slips  
up like a drowned woman into the hot sky.  
The town is silent. The night boils with eleven stars.  
Oh starry starry night! This is how  
I want to die.

It moves. They are all alive.  
Even the moon bulges in its orange irons  
to push children, like a god, from its eye.  
The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars.  
Oh starry starry night! This is how  
I want to die:

into that rushing beast of the night,  
sucked up by that great dragon, to split  
from my life with no flag,  
no belly,  
no cry.

What is the contrast of the town and the sky in the first stanza? What does the use of "hot sky" and "boils" suggest?


Why give the moon 'god' like attributes?

What does the imagery "the old unseen serpent" suggest?

What does "no flag" suggest?

<p><b>"Vincent"</b></p> <p>Starry, starry night  Paint your palette blue and gray  Look out on a summer's day  With eyes that know the darkness in my soul</p> <p>Shadows on the hills  Sketch the trees and the daffodils  Catch the breeze and the winter chills  In colors on the snowy linen land</p> <p>Now, I understand, what you tried to say to me  And how you suffered for your sanity  And how you tried to set them free  They would not listen, they did not know how  Perhaps they'll listen now</p> <p>Starry, starry night  Flaming flowers that brightly blaze  Swirling clouds in violet haze  Reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue</p> <p>Colors changing hue  Morning fields of amber grain  Weathered faces lined in pain  Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand</p> <p>Now, I understand, what you tried to say to me  And how you suffered for your sanity  And how you tried to set them free  They would not listen, they did not know how  Perhaps they'll listen now</p> <p>For they could not love you  But still your love was true  And when no hope was left inside  On that starry, starry night</p>	<p>You took your life as lovers often do  But I could have told you, Vincent  This world was never meant for one  As beautiful as you</p> <p>Starry, starry night  Portraits hung in empty halls  Frame less heads on nameless walls  With eyes that watch the world and can't forget</p> <p>Like the strangers that you've met  The ragged men in ragged clothes  The silver thorn of bloody rose  Lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow</p> <p>Now, I think I know what you tried to say to me  And how you suffered for your sanity  And how you tried to set them free  They would not listen, they're not listening still  Perhaps they never will</p>
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<b>Musee des Beaux Arts W. H. Auden</b>	
<p>About suffering they were never wrong,  The old Masters: how well they understood  Its human position: how it takes place  While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking  dully along;  How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  For the miraculous birth, there always must be  Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  On a pond at the edge of the wood:  They never forgot  That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.</p> <p>In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away  Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  Water, and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.</p>	

<p><b>Landscape with the Fall of Icarus</b>  William Carlos Williams</p> <p>According to Brueghel  when Icarus fell  it was spring</p> <p>a farmer was ploughing  his field  the whole pageantry</p> <p>of the year was  awake tingling  with itself</p> <p>sweating in the sun  that melted  the wings' wax</p> <p>unsignificantly  off the coast  there was</p> <p>a splash quite unnoticed  this was  Icarus drowning</p>	
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## Facing It

Yusef Komunyakaa  
(1988)

My black face fades,  
hiding inside the black granite.  
I said I wouldn't,  
dammit: No tears.  
I'm stone. I'm flesh.  
My clouded reflection eyes me  
like a bird of prey, the profile of night  
slanted against morning. I turn  
this way--the stone lets me go.  
I turn that way--I'm inside  
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial  
again, depending on the light  
to make a difference.  
I go down the 58,022 names,  
half-expecting to find  
my own in letters like smoke.  
I touch the name Andrew Johnson;  
I see the booby trap's white flash.  
Names shimmer on a woman's blouse  
but when she walks away  
the names stay on the wall.  
Brushstrokes flash, a red bird's  
wings cutting across my stare.  
The sky. A plane in the sky.  
A white vet's image floats  
closer to me, then his pale eyes  
look through mine. I'm a window.  
He's lost his right arm  
inside the stone. In the black mirror  
a woman's trying to erase names:  
No, she's brushing a boy's hair

### "Reflection on the Vietnam War Memorial" Jeffrey Harrison (1987)

Here is, the back porch of the dead.  
You can see them milling around in there,  
screened in by their own names,  
looking at us in the same  
vague and serious way we look at them.

An underground house, a roof of grass --  
one version of the underworld. It's all  
we know of death, a world  
like our own (but darker, blurred).  
inhabited by beings like ourselves.



**1994** Poems: "To Helen" (Edgar Allan Poe) and "Helen" (H.D.) Prompt: The following two poems are about Helen of Troy. Renowned in the ancient world for her beauty, Helen was the wife of Menelaus, a Greek King. She was carried off to Troy by the Trojan prince Paris, and her abduction was the immediate cause of the Trojan War. Read the two poems carefully. Considering such elements as speaker, diction, imagery, form, and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you contrast the speakers' views of Helen.

**2000** Poems: Siren passage from the *Odyssey* (Homer) / "Siren Song" (Margaret Atwood) Prompt: The story of Odysseus' encounter with the Sirens and their enchanting but deadly song appears in Greek epic poetry in Homer's *Odyssey*. An English translation of the episode is reprinted in the left column below. Margaret Atwood's poem in the right column is a modern commentary on the classical story. Read both texts carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare the portrayals of the Sirens. Your analysis should include discussion of tone, point of view, and whatever poetic devices (diction, imagery, etc.) seem most appropriate.

**2001** Poems: "London, 1802" (William Wordsworth) / "Douglass" (Paul Laurence Dunbar) Prompt: In each of the following poems, the speaker responds to the conditions of a particular place and time--

England in 1802 in the first poem, the United States about 100 years later in the second. Read each poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems and analyze the relationship between them.

The location of the name you're looking for  
can be looked up in a book whose resemblance  
to a phone book seems to claim  
some contact can be made  
through the simple act of finding a name.

As we touch the name the stone absorbs our grief.  
It takes us in -- we see ourselves inside it.  
And yet we feel it as a wall  
and realize the dead are all  
just names now, the separation final.

### **The Vietnam Wall** Alberto Rios

I  
Have seen it  
And I like it: The magic,  
The way like cutting onions  
It brings water out of nowhere.  
Invisible from one side, a scar  
Into the skin of the ground  
From the other, a black winding  
Appendix line.  
    A dig.  
        An archaeologist can explain.  
The walk is slow at first  
Easy, a little black marble wall  
Of a dollhouse,  
A smoothness, a shine  
The boys in the street want to give.  
One name. And then more  
Names, long lines, lines of names until  
They are the shape of the U.N. building  
Taller than I am: I have walked  
Into a grave.  
And everything I expect has been taken away, like that, quick:  
    The names are not alphabetized.  
    They are in the order of dying.  
    An alphabet of – somewhere – screaming.  
I start to walk out. I almost leave  
But stop to look up names of friends,  
My own name. There is somebody  
Severiano Rios.  
Little kids do not make the same noise  
    Here, junior high school boys don't run  
    Or hold each other in headlocks.  
    No rules, something just persists

**2003** Poem: "ΕΡΩΣ" (Robert Bridges) / "Eros" (Anne Stevenson) Prompt: The following poems are both concerned with Eros, the god of love in Greek mythology. Read the poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two concepts of Eros and analyze the techniques used to create them.

**2004** Poem: "We Grow Accustomed to the Dark" (Emily Dickinson) / "Acquainted with the Night" (Robert Frost) Prompt: The poems below are concerned with darkness and night. Read each poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, compare and contrast the poems, analyzing the significance of dark or night in each.

In your essay, consider elements such as point of view, imagery, and structure.

**2005** Poem: "The Chimney Sweeper" (two poems of same name by William Blake) Prompt: The poems below, published in 1789 and 1794, were written by William Blake in response to the condition of chimney sweeps. Usually small children, sweeps were forced inside chimneys to clean their interiors. Read the two poems carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, compare and contrast the two poems, taking into consideration the poetic techniques Blake uses in each.

**2005B** Poem: "Five A.M." (William Stafford) / "Five Flights Up" (Elizabeth Bishop) Prompt: Carefully read the two poems below. Then in a well-organized essay compare the speakers' reflections on their early morning surroundings and analyze the techniques the poets use to communicate the speakers' different states of mind.

**2007** Poems: "A Barred Owl" (Richard Wilbur) and "The History Teacher" (Billy Collins) Prompt: In the following two poems, adults provide explanations for children. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing how each poet uses literary devices to make his point.

Like pinching on St. Patrick's Day  
Every year for no green.

No one knows why.

Flowers are forced

Into the cracks

Between sections.

Men have cried

At this wall.

I have

Seen them.

### "Before the Mirror"

John Updike (1996)

How many of us still remember  
when Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror" hung  
at the turning of the stairs in the preexpansion  
Museum of Modern Art?

Millions of us, probably, but we form  
a dwindling population. Garish  
and brush-slashed and yet as balanced  
as a cardboard Queen in a deck of giant cards,  
the painting proclaimed, "Enter here  
and abandon preconception." She bounced  
the erotic balls of herself back and forth  
between reflection and reality.

Now I discover, in the recent retrospective  
at the establishment,  
that the vivid painting dates  
from March of 1932,  
the very month which I first saw light,  
squinting nostalgia for the womb.  
I bend closer, inspecting. The blacks,  
the stripy cyanide greens are still uncracked,  
I note with satisfaction; the cherry reds  
and lemon yellows full of childish juice.  
No sag, no wrinkle. Fresh as paint. Back then  
they knew how, I reflect, to lay it on.

**2008** Poems: "When I Have Fears" (John Keats) and  
"Mezzo Cammin" (Henry W.

Longfellow) Prompt: In the two poems below, Keats  
and Longfellow reflect on similar concerns. Read the  
poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you  
compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the  
poetic techniques each writer uses to explore his  
particular situation.

**2008B** Poems: "Hawk Roosting" (Ted Hughes) and  
"Golden Retrievals" (Mark Doty) Prompt: The  
following two poems present animal-eye views of the  
world. Read each poem carefully. Then write an essay  
in which you analyze the techniques used in the  
poems to characterize the speakers and convey  
differing views of the world.

**2010B** Poems: "To Sir John Lade, on His Coming of  
Age" (Samuel Johnson) and "When I Was One-and-  
Twenty" (A. E. Housman) Prompt: Each of the two  
poems below is concerned with a young man at the  
age of twenty-one, traditionally the age of adulthood.  
Read the two poems carefully. Then write a well-  
organized essay in which you compare and contrast  
the poems, analyzing the poetic techniques, such as  
point of view and tone, that each writer uses to make  
his point about coming of age.





### "Nude Descending a Staircase"

X. J. Kennedy (1961)

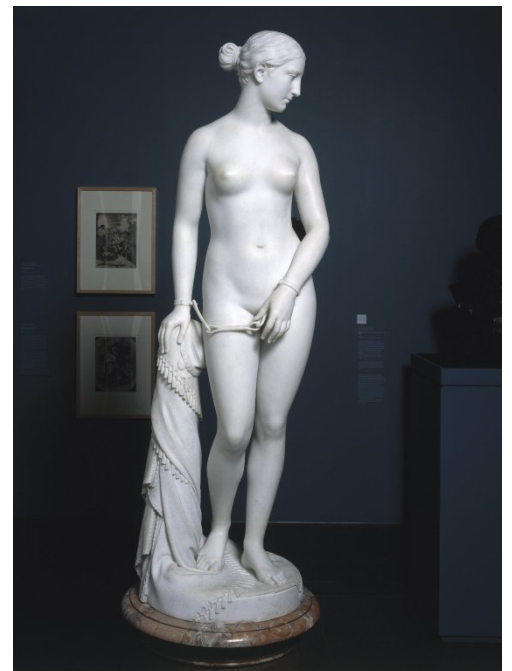
Toe upon toe, a snowing flesh,  
A gold of lemon, root and rind,  
She sifts in sunlight down the stairs  
With nothing on. Nor on her mind.  
We spy beneath the banister  
A constant thresh of thigh on thigh--  
Her lips imprint the swinging air  
That parts to let her parts go by.  
One-woman waterfall, she wears  
Her slow descent like a long cape  
And pausing, on the final stair  
Collects her motions into shape.



### "Hiram Powers' Greek Slave"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1886)

They say Ideal Beauty cannot enter  
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands  
An alien image with enshackled hands,  
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her  
(That passionless perfection which he lent her  
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)  
To so confront man's crimes in different lands  
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the center,  
Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long  
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,  
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!  
Catch up in the divine face, not alone  
East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,  
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.



As you read ***The Red Studio*** on the next page, consider the following: The speaker's attitude/toner? How do you know? Does it change? What literary elements are in the poem? Compare/Contrast the painting and the poem. How do they both create a similar effect? How has the poet interpreted the painting? Does it change your perspective of the artwork? How? How has the painting influenced your interpretation of the poem?

## Matisse: "The Red Studio"

W. D. Snodgrass

There is no one here.  
But the objects: they are real. It is not  
As if he had stepped out or moved away;  
There is no other room and no  
Returning. Your foot or finger would pass  
Through, as into unreflecting water  
Red with clay, or into fire.  
Still, the objects: they are real. It is  
As if he had stood  
Still in the bare center of this floor,  
His mind turned in in concentrated fury,  
Till he sank  
Like a great beast sinking into sands  
Slowly, and did not look up.  
His own room drank him.  
What else could generate this  
Terra cotta raging through the floor and walls,  
Through chests, chairs, the table and the clock,  
Till all environments of living are  
Transformed to energy--  
Crude, definitive and gay.  
And so gave birth to objects that are real.  
How slowly they took shape, his children, here, Grew solid and remain:  
The crayons; these statues; the clear brandy bowl;  
The ashtray where a girl sleeps, curling among flowers;  
This flask of tall glass, green, where a vine begins  
Whose bines circle the other girl brown as a cypress knee.  
Then, pictures, emerging on the walls:  
Bathers; a landscape; a still life with a vase;  
To the left, a golden blonde, lain in magentas with flowers scattering like stars;  
Opposite, top right, these terra cotta women, living, in their world of living's colors;  
Between, but yearning toward them, the sailor on his red cafe chair, dark blue, self-absorbed.  
These stay, exact,  
Within the belly of these walls that burn,  
That must hum like the domed electric web  
Within which, at the carnival, small cars bump and turn,  
Toward which, for strength, they reach their iron hands:  
Like the heavens' walls of flame that the old magi could see;  
Or those ethereal clouds of energy  
From which all constellations form,  
Within whose love they turn.  
They stand here real and ultimate.  
But there is no one here.



The presence of a gazer commenting upon, describing, or reflecting upon what he or she sees, frames a moment of experience and raises the question of what that speaker is doing there, standing before the image.... Acknowledging one creative process, that of painting, then, subtly calls forth another, that of writing.  
<http://engl210-locascio.wikispaces.umb.edu/file/view/The+Ekphrastic+Poem-Kolosov.pdf>

## William Carlos Williams

### The Dance

- 1 In Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess,
- 2 the dancers go round, they go round and
- 3 around, the squeal and the blare and the
- 4 tweedle of bagpipes, a bugle and fiddles
- 5 tipping their bellies (round as the thick-
- 6 sided glasses whose wash they impound)
- 7 their hips and their bellies off balance
- 8 to turn them. Kicking and rolling
- 9 about the Fair Grounds, swinging their butts, those
- 10 shanks must be sound to bear up under such
- 11 rollicking measures, prance as they dance
- 12 in Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess.



How does the repetition in the poem reflect the subject of the poem?

How does word choice reflect the emphasis on movement? Mark specific examples.

How do the "run-on lines" add to the rhythmic movement in the poem?

It has been said that this poem is "...a work of language remaking visual art." In a brief essay explain the connection between the poem and the painting.

## In Goya's Greatest Scenes We Seem to See ...

By Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to see

the people of the world  
exactly at the moment when  
they first attained the title of

'suffering humanity' 5

They writhe upon the page  
in a veritable rage  
of adversity



Heaped up  
     groaning with babies and bayonets      10  
                                     under cement skies  
 in an abstract landscape of blasted trees  
     bent statues bats wings and beaks  
         slippery gibbets  
     cadavers and carnivorous cocks      15  
 and all the final hollering monsters  
     of the  
         'imagination of disaster'  
 they are so bloody real  
                             it is as if they really still existed      20  
 And they do



                    Only the landscape is changed  
 They still are ranged along the roads  
     plagued by legionnaires  
         false windmills and demented roosters      25  
 They are the same people  
                     only further from home  
 on freeways fifty lanes wide  
                     on a concrete continent  
                         spaced with bland billboards      30  
                     illustrating imbecile illusions of happiness  
 The scene shows fewer tumbrils  
                     but more strung-out citizens  
                         in painted cars  
             and they have strange license plates      35  
     and engines  
             that devour America

In the poem "In Goya's Greatest Scenes" Ferlinghetti has in fact drawn details not only from the two pictures that instantly come to mind, the famous large-scale painting "The Execution of the Defenders of Madrid. El Tres de Mayo" and the etching "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters", but from a large number of works by Goya, his etchings and paintings. Falling into the category of *depictive ekphrasis*, the poem refers to unspecified "scenes" painted, drawn or etched by the great Spanish artist, scenes unified by the twin theme of monstrosity and the cruelty of war, thus evoking strongly Goya's series of etchings titled "The Disasters of War".

However, it also alludes to two famous modernist ekphrastic poems - Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Williams's "The Dance". The intertextual link between Ferlinghetti's poem and Williams's "The Dance" is suggested by the opening line: "In Goya's Greatest Scenes", which echoes the initial words of Williams's poem: "In Breughel's great picture, The Kermess". But Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" looms in the background of Ferlinghetti's poem as well, since Ferlinghetti's "suffering humanity" clearly harks back to "suffering" and "its human position" in Auden's poem. Furthermore, both poems refer to disaster, either the individual disaster of Icarus: "how everything turns away / Quite leisurely from the disaster", in Auden's text, or the metonymically presented disasters of war and the direct reference to Goya's "imagination of disaster" in the poem by Ferlinghetti.

[https://www.academia.edu/5133919/Studniarz\\_Ekphrasis\\_in\\_Ferlinghettis\\_In\\_Goyas\\_Greatest\\_Scenes](https://www.academia.edu/5133919/Studniarz_Ekphrasis_in_Ferlinghettis_In_Goyas_Greatest_Scenes)



## The Parable of the Blind

William Carlos Williams

This horrible but superb painting  
the parable of the blind  
without a red

in the composition shows a group  
of beggars leading  
each other diagonally downward

across the canvas  
from one side  
to stumble finally into a bog

where the picture  
and the composition ends back  
of which no seeing man

is represented the unshaven  
features of the des-  
titute with their few

pitiful possessions a basin  
to wash in a peasant  
cottage is seen and a church spire

the faces are raised  
as toward the light  
there is no detail extraneous

to the composition one  
follows the others stick in  
hand triumphant to disaster



The introductory line acknowledges the presence of the poet.  
Why?

William Carlos Williams has stated the following: "In poetry,  
we have gradually discovered, the line and the sense, the  
didactic, expository sense, have nothing to do with one  
another. It is extremely important to realize this distinction,  
between what the poem says and what it means, in the  
understanding of modern verse—or any verse. The meaning  
is the total poem, it is not directly dependent on what the  
poem says." How does that relate to this poem?

The poem contains radically trimmed lines that can only be  
grasped as a member of the whole train of words, the totality.  
How does that relate to the painting?



### "The Great Figure"

William Carlos Williams (1920)

Among the rain  
and lights  
I saw the figure 5  
in gold  
on a red  
firetruck  
moving  
tense  
unheeded  
to gong clangs  
siren howls  
and wheels rumbling  
through the dark city

. \*Note: in this case, the poem inspired the painting,  
not the other way round.



*Some thoughts from experts:*

"In this painting Bruegel is still linked to a medieval tradition which considers the life of man in terms of his dependence upon the cycle of the year." --From Wolfgang Stechow, *Bruegel*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1969.

The painting is part of a series of twelve paintings Brueghel made to represent the twelve months of the year, called *The Twelve Months*, or the "*periods of the year*". Only 5 panels exist today. The bird's-eye view represents the Renaissance humanist practice of placing humans at the center of the universe, but observing them from a distance, allowing the viewer to philosophically contemplate human lives, but Brueghel seems to also invite the viewer into the painting, drawing him or her into his lively landscape.



"The winter scene is the most famous of all the Months and the best example of these landscapes' universal character. Snow-covered landscapes occur in Flemish books of hours from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but there white is used simply as an attribute of winter. Here all the colours are the purest expression of cold; white, icy grey, grayish-green, brownish-black. Writers have described often enough how the impression of cold is repeated in every beautifully observed detail: the muffled hunters trudging silently home, the freezing dogs, the dark forms of the branches and the black ravens amid all the whiteness." --From Alexander Wied, *Bruegel*. Anthony Lloyd. Danbury, CT: Master Works Press, 1984.

"A clearly enunciated diagonal movement, marked by dogs and hunters, and trees, starts from the lower left-hand corner and continues, less definitely but none the less surely, by the road, the row of small trees, and the church far across the valley to the jutting crags of the hills. This movement is countered by an opposing diagonal from the lower right, marked by the edge of the snow-covered hill and repeated again and again in details." --From, Helen Gardner *Art through the Ages*

"The composition moves from left to right, following a diagonal that starts from the group of hunters and their pack of hounds, is reaffirmed by a line of trees and a bird in flight, and is supported by other lines between a roof and the river, a bush, and the mountain. . . . This work presents a synthesis between the infinity of the world the eye embraces -- as winter embraces nature -- and the scale of people in their everyday surroundings" --From Philippe and Françoise Roberts-Jones, *Pieter Bruegel*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2002

The following six poems are all descriptions of Brueghel's *Winter Scene*. Choose two of the poems to compare and contrast the poetic techniques each writer uses to make his/her point.

<b>Brueghel's Winter</b>	<b>Winter Landscape</b>
<p>Walter de la Mare</p> <p>Jagg'd mountain peaks and skies ice-green  Wall in the wild, cold scene below.  Churches, farms, bare copse, the sea  In freezing quiet of winter show;  Where ink-black shapes on fields in flood  Curling, skating, and sliding go.  To left, a gabled tavern; a blaze;  Peasants; a watching child; and lo,  Muffled, mute--beneath naked trees  In sharp perspective set a-row--  Trudge huntsmen, sinister spears aslant,  Dogs snuffling behind them in the snow;  And arrowlike, lean, athwart the air  Swoops into space a crow.</p> <p>But flame, nor ice, nor piercing rock,  Nor silence, as of a frozen sea,  Nor that slant inward infinite line  Of signboard, bird, and hill, and tree,  Give more than subtle hint of him  Who squandered here life's mystery.</p>	<p>John Berryman</p> <p>The three men coming down the winter hill  In brown, with tall poles and a pack of hounds  At heel, through the arrangement of the trees,  Past the five figures at the burning straw,  Returning cold and silent to their town,</p> <p>Returning to the drifted snow, the rink  Lively with children, to the older men,  The long companions they can never reach,  The blue light, men with ladders, by the church  The sledge and shadow in the twilit street,</p> <p>Are not aware that in the sandy time  To come, the evil waste of history  Outstretched, they will be seen upon the brow  Of that same hill: when all their company  Will have been irrecoverably lost,</p> <p>These men, this particular three in brown  Witnessed by birds will keep the scene and say  By their configuration with the trees,  The small bridge, the red houses and the fire,  What place, what time, what morning occasion</p> <p>Sent them into the wood, a pack of hounds  At heel and the tall poles upon their shoulders,  Thence to return as now we see them and  Ankle-deep in snow down the winter hill  Descend, while three birds watch and the fourth flies.</p>

### Hunters in the Snow: Brueghel

Joseph Langland

Quail and rabbit hunters with tawny hounds,  
Shadowless, out of late afternoon  
Trudge toward the neutral evening of indeterminate form  
Done with their blood-annunciated day  
Public dogs and all the passionless mongrels  
Through deep snow  
Trail their deliberate masters  
Descending from the upper village home in lowering light.  
Sooty lamps  
Glow in the stone-carved kitchens.

This is the fabulous hour of shape and form  
 When Flemish children are gray-black-olive  
 And green-dark-brown  
 Scattered and skating informal figures  
 On the mill ice pond.  
 Moving in stillness  
 A hunched dame struggles with her bundled sticks,  
 Letting her evening's comfort cudgel her  
 While she, like jug or wheel, like a wagon cart  
 Walked by lazy oxen along the old snowlanes,  
 Creeps and crunches down the dusky street.  
 High in the fire-red dooryard  
 Half unhitched the sign of the Inn  
 Hangs in wind  
 Tipped to the pitch of the roof.  
 Near it anonymous parents and peasant girl,  
 Living like proverbs carved in the alehouse walls,  
 Gather the country evening into their arms  
 And lean to the glowing flames.

Now in the dimming distance fades  
 The other village; across the valley  
 Imperturbable Flemish cliffs and crags  
 Vaguely advance, close in, loom  
 Lost in nearness. Now  
 The night-black raven perched in branching boughs  
 Opens its early wing and slipping out  
 Above the gray-green valley  
 Weaves a net of slumber over the snow-capped homes.

And now the church, and then the walls and roofs  
 Of all the little houses are become  
 Close kin to shadow with small lantern eyes.  
 And now the bird of evening  
 With shadows streaming down from its gliding wings  
 Circles the neighboring hills  
 Of Hertogenbosch, Brabant.

Darkness stalks the hunters,  
 Slowly sliding down,  
 Falling in beating rings and soft diagonals.  
 Lodged in the vague vast valley the village sleeps.



**The Hunter in the Snow**

William Carlos Williams (1962)

The over-all picture is winter  
icy mountains  
in the background the return

from the hunt it is toward evening  
from the left  
sturdy hunters lead in

their pack the inn-sign  
hanging from a  
broken hinge is a stag a crucifix

between his antlers the cold  
inn yard is  
deserted but for a huge bonfire

that flares wind-driven tended by  
women who cluster  
about it to the right beyond

the hill is a pattern of skaters  
Brueghel the painter  
concerned with it all has chosen

a winter-struck bush for his  
foreground to  
complete the picture

**Brueghel's Winter**

Rutger Kopland - Translated from the Dutch by  
James Brockway

Winter by Brueghel, the hill with hunters  
and dogs, at their feet the valley with the  
village.

Almost home, but their dead-tired attitudes,  
their steps  
in the snow—a return, but almost as  
slow as arrest. At their feet the depths  
grow and grow, become wider and further,  
until the landscape vanishes into a landscape  
that must be there, is there but only

as a longing is there.

Ahead of them a jet-black bird dives down. Is  
it mockery  
of this labored attempt to return to the life  
down there: the children skating on the pond,  
the farms with women waiting and cattle?

An arrow underway, and it laughs at its target

**Brueghel's Snow**

Anne Stevenson – (c. 1955 – 1995)

Here in the snow:  
three hunters with dogs and pikes  
trekking over a hill,  
into and out of those famous footprints -  
famous and still.

What did they catch?  
They have little to show  
on their bowed backs.  
Unlike the delicate skaters below,  
these are grim, they look ill.

In the village, it's zero.  
Bent shapes in black clouts,  
raw faces aglow  
in the firelight, burning the wind  
for warmth, or their hunger's kill.

What happens next?  
In the unpainted picture?  
The hunters arrive, pull  
off their caked boots, curse the weather  
slump down over stoups. . .

Who's painting them now?  
What has survived to unbandage  
my eyes as I trudge through this snow,  
with my dog and stick,  
four hundred winters ago?