

The Ashmolean's collections are full of real, mythical and imagined people and characters in classical statues, sculpture, paintings and objects. Some have well known backgrounds; others are unknown, and offer the opportunity to invent a completely new history. Each one provides an inspirational starting point for creating a character for a story or piece of creative writing.

Starting questions:

Choose a person in a picture. Build your character using these questions:

- What is your first impression of this person?
- What is the main thing you notice?
- Describe their face in detail.
- Describe their clothes. What do they reveal?
- Describe their pose. What does this show about them?
- Where are they?
- What is happening to them? What might happen next?
- What question would you ask them?
- What might they tell you?
- What are their hopes and fears for the future?
- Do they have a secret. What is it?
- Are they facing a big choice or decision?
- Is there another person in the picture? How do they feel about them? If they are alone, how do they feel?
- What do they want or need?
- Give them a name reflecting an aspect of their character.



Key Galleries:

Gallery 43: Italian Renaissance

Gallery 44: European Art

Gallery 67: 19th-century Art

Gallery 66: Pre-Raphaelites

Gallery 63: Sickert and his Contemporaries

Gallery 65: Pissarro

Gallery 62: Modern Art

Bringing the character to life

- 'Hot seat' or interview a character.
- In a picture with multiple characters, work in a small group. Give each person a character and role play their conversation.
- Find a partner who has chosen a character from a different object, sculpture or painting. Imagine where they might meet and role play their conversation.
- Tell this person's story. Engage your audience with eye contact, add a sense of mystery and secrecy and include an unexpected, dramatic climax.



The Artist's Mother, Marie Laurencin (1883-1956) WA 1978.64

Starting to write

Write down every idea and thought that comes to you about an object or picture: words, phrases, sentences, pieces of dialogue, images, a feeling, memory, smell or taste, the name of a character, or a description of a person or place.

Share ideas with a partner and ask them questions about their object or picture. Choose your favourite ideas and work with them.

- Keep a diary for your character. Include their hopes, fears and dreams.
- Write a poem through the eyes of your character.
- Use your characters to develop a play script with stage directions
- Create a monologue for your character.



Rouleau vase with underglaze blue decoration of immortals China, 1640-1660 EA 1978.135

Further resources

Ashmolean Education Learning Resources:
www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources

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