

Objects and artworks at the Ashmolean provide inspiration for developing stories and plots showing people in action, reacting to events and to each other. Images from different times and cultures transport the viewer to intriguing places and events. They act as wonderful starting points for imagining a story as it unfolds or as inspiration for developing a plot.

### Starting questions:

- Choose 3 words to describe the picture.
- Explain the mood and atmosphere.
- Describe the picture to someone who hasn't seen it.
- Find the smallest detail. Why might the artist have included it?
- Are there any figures? Who stands out? Why?
- What are people doing?
- Who would you most like to talk to?
- What might you ask them? What might their reply be?
- What sounds would you hear if you were there?
- If you could make one change what would it be – colour, lighting effects, relative sizes, composition or the way people are facing. How could this tell a different story?
- Put an item from today into the picture. What might happen?
- Are there any big ideas or themes such as love, loss, grief, success, conflict, uncertainty, war or power?



### Key Galleries:

Gallery 43: Italian Renaissance

Gallery 67: 19th-century Art

Gallery 45: Dutch Art

Gallery 66: Pre-Raphaelites

Gallery 63: Sickert and his Contemporaries

Gallery 65: Pissarro

Gallery 62: Modern Art



## Warm up activities

- Give the picture a new, one word title.
- Tell the story of the picture in a small group, with each person adding a word or sentence.
- Imagine this is a scene from a film. What happened just before? What will happen next?
- Create a storyboard or story map including: opening- build up- problem- resolution- ending.
- Role play one of the characters who writes to or phones an 'agony aunt' to ask for advice.
- Imagine a choice or dilemma facing people in the picture. How will they resolve it?

What kind of transformation could happen in your story? Here are some possibilities:

ragged - rich  
loneliness - friendship  
sad - happy  
angry - calm  
cruel - kind  
illness - health  
imprisoned - free  
badly treated - looked after  
liar - truthful  
violent - gentle  
empty - full  
afraid - safe

## 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, 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.

Write the opening paragraph of the story. Hook the reader in by hinting at a mystery or giving a clue about the future.



Brighton Pierrots c. 1915, Walter Sickert (1860-1942)  
WA2001.29

### Further resources

Ashmolean Education Learning Resources:  
[www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources](http://www.ashmolean.org/learning-resources)

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