

## The Challenge

Write a poem or short story about *Still Life*, a sculpture by Paloma Varga Weisz.

## The Inspiration

All artwork has a story behind it. Sometimes the artist will tell us what their work means, but often they want us to make up our own minds. Art is subjective – it means something different to all of us – so there are no wrong answers, and we can all find our own meanings in it.

People have been writing poetry about art for thousands of years. *Ekphrasis* is an Ancient Greek word for a poem written about a piece of art. In an ekphrastic poem, the writer describes what they see in the painting or sculpture, and what they think is happening.

## How to Complete the Activity

Watch the ***Art Encounters: Still Life*** video, and use this worksheet alongside it to complete four **'free-writes'** to gather ideas for your poem or short story.

When asked to, pause the video and write your responses in the box. Everyone has their own ideas about art – so remember – **there are no wrong answers.**

Watch the first part of the video and pause it when told to. Then, do a 'free write' for the following four questions.

In a free write, you should write down as many things as you can think of in a short time. Don't think too much, or worry about what you're writing. It doesn't need to rhyme, or even make sense! Spend a minute on each question (you can time yourself if you like).

1. **What can you see?** Write down a list of as many words or phrases as you can to describe the shapes, forms, objects, textures and materials in the piece.



All images: Paloma Varga Weisz, *Still Life*, 2017

2. **How does it make you feel?** Stare at the image and write down whatever words or phrases pop into your head.



3. **What does it remind you of?** Complete the sentence in the box as many times as you can.

It's like...

4. **What's it about?** Write down as many words or phrases as you can that describe what YOU think this sculpture is about. Remember it doesn't need to make sense, or go together - come up with lots of different ideas!



Now, watch the next section of the video and pause the video again when instructed.

The artist chose to include several objects passed down from her mother, and create a carving of her son.

**Why do you think she did this?**

**What does the piece tell us about her feelings about her family, or families in general?**

**Does this new information change your perception of the piece? How?**



Stuck for ideas? Look at these words to get you started...

Asleep  
Traditions  
Future  
Magic  
Awaken  
Young  
Memories  
Heirlooms  
Still  
Death  
History  
Repetition  
Life  
Old  
Lifeless  
Birth  
cycles  
Lineage

The wooden boy in the piece wears an old fashioned nightgown.

**Why do you think the artist chose to do this? What effect does this have?**

**How would the piece change if he was wearing modern pyjamas, or a t shirt and jeans?**



Some of the items in the piece are quite old, but the glass table and bench are simple, geometric (possibly inspired by Minimalist sculpture) and modern.

**What effect does this have?**

**Why do you think she chose this design?**

**Do you see similar shapes anywhere else in the piece?**

**How would the piece look different if the table and bench were old fashioned?**



## **Now gather your ideas and write your poem or story.**

Look back at your free-writes on the first few pages. Read through them, collect your favourites, add to and develop them. Use a notebook or new document to note down your ideas.

Now use these ideas to write your poem or short story.

You can use any style or format for your piece. If you're writing a poem, remember that they don't always need to rhyme! It doesn't need to be long, but try to write at least 6 lines.

## **Share your work with us!**

We'd love to see what you make. Ask your teacher to send your work to us, or share it with us on social media on:

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