



ART UK

Write on Art

Support young people to write about your artworks and enter Write on Art

OUR SUPPORTERS



INTRODUCTION TO THE TOOLKIT

Write on Art is a national writing programme for young people (14–19 years old). It champions young people's voices by encouraging them to explore and share their personal response to art through the power of writing.

We see the competition as a great way for museums and galleries to reach out and engage new, young audiences.

This toolkit provides suggestions for inspiring and supporting young people to write about an artwork in your collection. It includes information about useful resources you can use on Art UK, as well as a social media pack for promoting Write on Art.

<https://artuk.org/learn/write-on-art>

CONTENTS

1	Step-by-step guide	PAGE	2
2	Additional resources	PAGE	9
3	Contact details	PAGE	14

Step 1: Select artworks to engage young people

- Which artworks in your collection might engage or inspire young people to use their creative voices?
- The artworks could relate to your local area, be by local artists – or address issues that young people feel are important to them.
- Previous Write on Art entries have explored themes including identity, colonialism, equality, and the LGBTQ+ community.
- If any of your selected artworks are on display, you could include information about Write on Art alongside them, and display a QR code for the Write on Art programme.

<https://artuk.org/learn/write-on-art>



Gabe, 2022, digital photograph by Alice Hawkins (b.1979). © the artist. Image credit: courtesy of Hartlepool Museums and Heritage Service

Step 1: Prepare artwork information for young people

Prepare some simple texts about each of your selected artworks, voiced to young people. These might include:

- Brief biographical information about the artist (if known)
- Information about the subject of the artwork
- An outline of key themes that the artist references or addresses in the work
- A quotation by the artist if you feel this may provide extra insights or be inspiring.

Consider collaborating with your youth networks or with local schools in making a selection of artworks. Ask young people which artworks they find inspiring and would like to write about.



A group of young visitors looking at art in a gallery. Image credit: Chris Ison

Step 2: Share your artworks with your networks

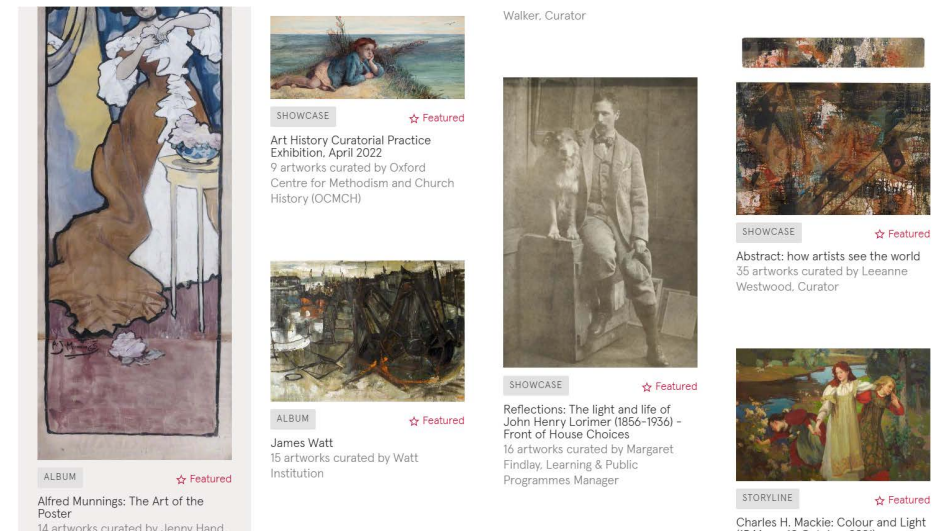
Get your artworks out there and encourage young people to enter Write on Art!

Here are some ideas:

- Share your selection of inspiring artworks on your platforms and social media channels. We have created a handy social media pack with suggested posts and links for Write on Art. You can find this in the additional resources at the end of this toolkit.
- Consider making a Curation (an online exhibition) of your selected artworks on Art UK's website. Send the Curation link to your teacher and youth networks so that they can explore the artworks.

<https://artuk.org/discover/curations>

Take a look at our Curations toolkit for a step-by-step guide on how to successfully build a Curation.



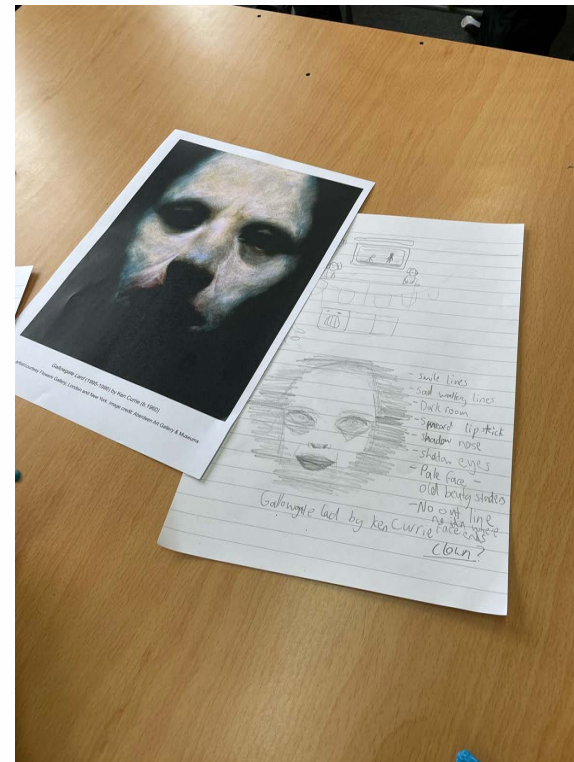
Curations on Art UK.

Step 3: Organise a Write on Art tour or workshop

It can sometimes be intimidating for young people to visit a museum or gallery and look at art.

They may be overwhelmed by the artworks on display or feel that they don't have the knowledge or confidence to look at and respond to art. They may also feel that their opinion isn't valid.

- Organise a gallery tour or workshop for young people focusing on the selected artworks you have chosen to highlight.
- Spark conversations about the artworks and encourage young people to share their thoughts.
- For ideas on how to approach exploring an artwork and encouraging close looking and discussion see the additional resources at the end of this toolkit.



Workshop notes from a Write on Art workshop at a school in Aberdeen. Image Credit: Shane Strachan.

Step 4: Share our useful Write on Art resources

Let your youth and school networks know about some of the helpful resources we have on Art UK.

These provide tips for finding inspiring artworks on our website and ideas and suggestions for writing about art and submitting it to Write on Art.

Art UK's Discover tool

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks>

Use Art UK's Discover tool to find inspiring artworks. It allows you to search for artworks in collections near you (click the 'location' button) or to search for artworks by topic medium or style.

Write on Art hub

<https://artuk.org/learn/tips-for-writing>

Some brief tips for writing in the Write on Art competition hub.

Write on Art learning resource

<https://artuk.org/learn/learning-resources/write-on-art>

This in-depth resource is packed with useful ideas and videos for writing about art. It includes tips from past winners about their approach.

Creative writing learning resource

<http://artuk.org/learn/learning-resources/use-art-to-inspire-poetry-and-creative-writing>

A learning resource for students with suggestions for using art as inspiration for poetry and creative writing.

Writing ideas and examples

Explore examples of writing in response to art and essays written by past winners:

Creative writing inspired by art:

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/whole-half-quarter-a-poem>

A review of an artwork:

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/an-ode-to-lea-valley-alan-potters-gateway-to-oliver-road>

Essays by past winners:

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/write-on-art-the-winners-2024>

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/write-on-art-the-winners-2023/>

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/write-on-art-the-winners-2022>

Looking at your chosen artwork



You will draw upon your observations of the artwork in your writing, so, as previous second-place winner Felicity Mackenzie points out in her video, you need to **really look** at the artwork you have picked. Editor of *Apollo* art magazine Thomas Marks' advice on writing about art is to 'start with the experience of your eyes', but the average time a gallery visitor will spend looking at one artwork is 32 seconds, so looking long and hard doesn't come naturally to most of us. Here are some exercises you can try to practice your observation skills.

Our Write on Art resources include tips from past winners.

Step 5: Follow up, feedback and stats

Let's grow Write on Art together and encourage more young people from across the UK to be inspired by art in their local collections!

- Stay in touch with the young people who engaged with your collection for Write on Art. Encourage them to apply again next year (if they're still within the competition age range).
- We would love to hear about how you engaged with young audiences for Write on Art. It would also be useful to know about any thoughts, feelings or ideas young people had about the programme.
- We can tell you how many people wrote about artworks in your collection and what they wrote about. This information may be helpful to you in developing future projects and resources for young audiences.
- Get in touch with our learning team. Contact details are included at the end of this toolkit.



Write on Art graphic from the social media pack.

Additional resource 1: Write on Art social media pack

This pack includes go-to links, tags and suggested posts. Help spread the word about Write on Art on your platforms and social media channels and encourage young people to write about art in your collection.

Images

- Use artworks from your collection that might inspire young people. Make sure they are copyright-free or have copyright permissions in place for social media.
- Or use one of our Write on Art graphics, which you can find in this Dropbox. You can use your own Dropbox log-in to access these:

<https://tinyurl.com/57ssh4u9>



Write on Art graphic from the social media pack.

Useful links

Links to the prize:

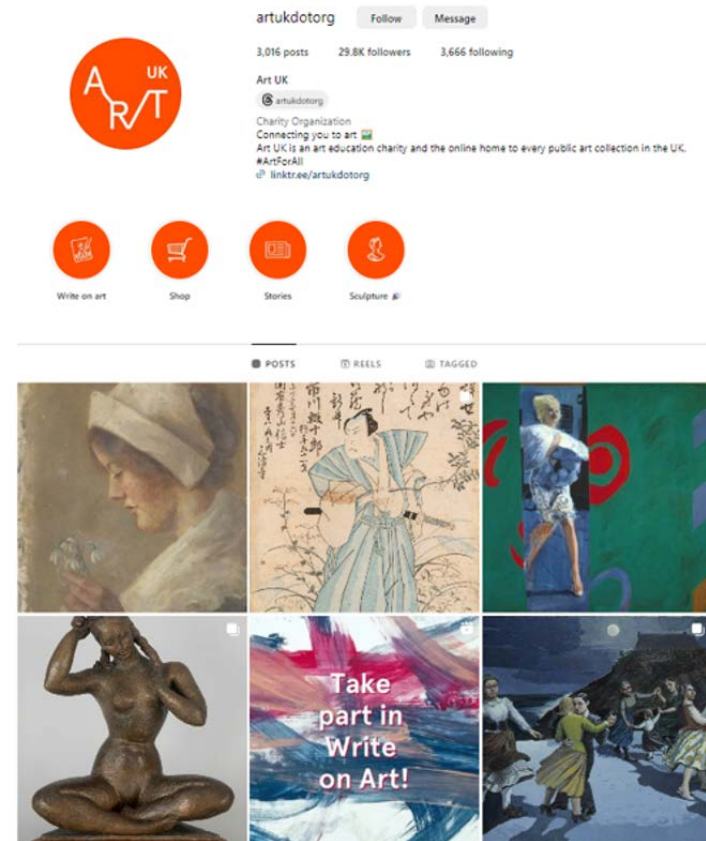
- On Art UK's website: <https://artuk.org/learn/write-on-art>
- On Paul Mellon Centre's website: <https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk/learning/about-write-on-art>

Paul Mellon Centre on social media:

- X: @PaulMellonCentr
- Instagram: @paulmelloncentr
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ThePaulMellonCentre>

Art UK on social media:

- X: @artukdotorg
- Bluesky: @artukdotorg.bsky.social
- Instagram: @artukdotorg
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/artukdotorg/>
- TikTok: @artukdotorg



Art UK's Instagram page.

Suggested posts

Instagram / Facebook suggested post

[Don't forget to add emojis for extra impact!]

Calling all young people aged 14-19! Does art inspire you? Do you see it as a way of addressing important issues? Share your ideas and creativity by entering Write on Art – the national art writing programme for young people in the UK.

We have lots of artworks in our collection to inspire you – take a look! [insert your website address or link to your Art UK collection page].

Write on Art is an annual writing programme organised by @artukdotorg and @paulmelloncentr. It encourages young people to share their passion for art and art history and to showcase their writing skills.

Win a place on a creative writing workshop at the Royal College of Art, have your work published in a bespoke zine and on the Art UK and Paul Mellon Centre websites.

Sound good? Find out more and apply at writeonart.org

X suggested post

Enter Write on Art

Choose an artwork you love from our collection to write about

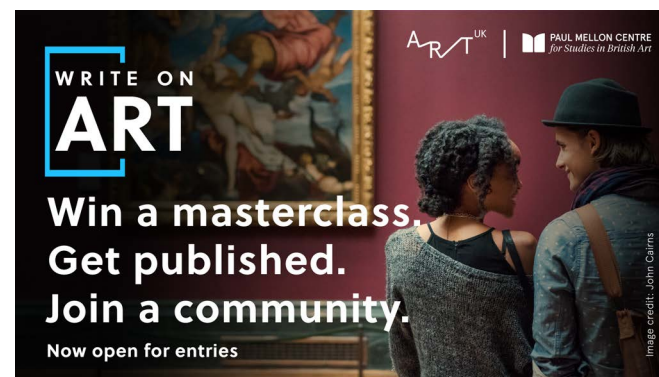
Win a place on a writing workshop at the RCA

Be published on @artukdotorg and @PaulMellonCentre websites

Open to young people in the UK aged 14 -19

Find out more and apply:

<https://artuk.org/learn/write-on-art>



Write on Art graphic from the social media pack.

Additional resource 2: Workshop ideas

Inspiring young people to look closely at artworks

These videos, made by poet and writer Shane Strachan in Collaboration with the Grampian Hospitals Art Trust, provide lots of ideas for looking closely and write about art.

Reading Art: Looking closely at an artwork

<https://vimeo.com/547441612>

Writing Art: Inspiration and tips for looking closely at art

<https://vimeo.com/548061804>



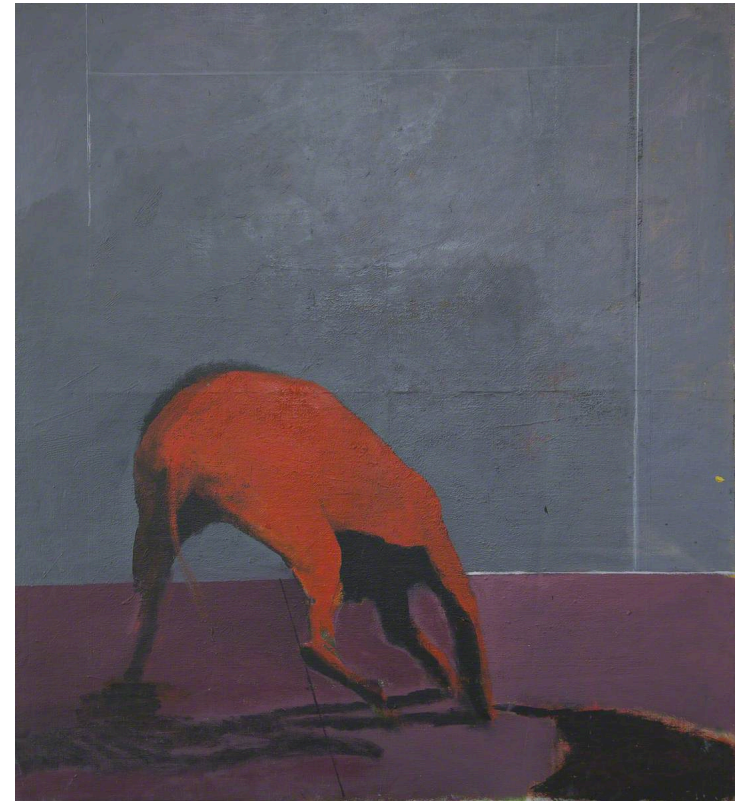
'For many of us, being confronted by art can cause anxieties about whether it's really something for us... I want to share with you how I go about writing a creative response to an artwork to inspire you to have a go at writing your own.'

Shane Strachan

Suggested discussion prompts

To get the conversation going, it often helps to use some prompts. Below are examples of the type of prompts you could ask young people in a workshop.

- Describe the artwork – what can you see?
- What is your initial response? Does the artwork interest you? Do you love it or hate it? (Or have no thoughts either way?)
- How does it make you think or feel? (It might help to think of words to describe it.)
- What does this artwork say to you about the time it was made in, the person who made it, or the subject?
- Do you find it relevant today?
- How does it relate to the things you are interested in, or feel are important?
- Do you discover anything about yourself from looking at the artwork?
- How has the artist used visual elements such as composition, colour, brush marks, tone (light and dark) to depict their subject or put across their message?



Wild Animal, c.1980, oil on canvas by Albert Adams (1929–2006). © the artist's estate. Image credit: University of Salford

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any questions, please contact:

learning@artuk.org

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