

# Visual Writing Notebook

Create your own anthology of art and words

*This book belongs to:*

.....

VISUAL VERSE



## WRITING CHALLENGE 1: WRITE A VISUAL VERSE

### *The Challenge*

Write 50-500 words, within one hour, in response to this image. You can write in any genre or style, as long as it is written within these constraints.

### *Background to this Challenge*

The purpose of this writing exercise is to get you writing spontaneously and instinctively. The strict word count (50-500 words) and the time limit (one hour) are designed to help you master the craft of writing within very specific constraints.

This exercise is the basis of *Visual Verse*, an online anthology that uses art and visual prompts to inspire new writing. Founded by publisher and visual literacy advocate Kristen Harrison, and acclaimed British author Preti Taneja, *Visual Verse* has published over 6000 pieces of new writing and created a global community of writers and artists.

We invite you to submit your writing for publication online at [visualverse.org](http://visualverse.org).







## WRITING CHALLENGE 2: AUTOMATIC WRITING

### *Your Challenge*

Use “automatic writing” to produce 50-500 words in response to this image.

### *The Method*

Study this image quietly for a minute or two, then set a timer for three minutes. As soon as the clock starts, begin to write and do not stop until the timer sounds. Write as quickly as you can, without hesitation, and let the words flow. Do not be afraid of what your subconscious delivers – you can discard the writing afterwards.

### *Background to this Challenge*

Automatic writing involves writing a continuous flow of thoughts without stopping. In the mid 1900s, Surrealists used this technique to encourage new ways of thinking and working. They saw it as a way to access their subconscious mind and conjure up thoughts they may not have otherwise – a bit like a drug-free LSD.

Nowadays, automatic writing is both a writing exercise and a literary device. As an exercise, it is used by writers to clear the mind before a day’s work (sometimes called “morning pages”) and this often involves discarding the writing without ever reading it. As a literary device, it manifests in stories as a “stream of consciousness” to reveal a character’s inner thoughts. By describing an event in continuous, unpunctuated language writers can create a “real time” element to a scene and enable reader to get inside the mind of a character.

What is lurking in the depths of your mind?









### WRITING CHALLENGE 3: A SHAKESPEAREAN SONNET

#### *The Challenge*

Write a Shakespearean sonnet inspired by this image.

#### *Background to this Challenge*

A sonnet consists of 14 lines which follow an alternating rhyming scheme right up until the last two lines. The last two lines are called a couplet and they should rhyme with each other. The couplet is a device used to bring together all the ideas in the rest of the sonnet, giving it a tidy ending. Most regular sonnets tend to be love poems but they can also be used to explore many other themes. Shakespeare's own sonnets may seem to be about love, but they are often about so much more.

A	_____	} rhyme every second line
B	_____	
A	_____	
B	_____	
C	_____	
D	_____	
C	_____	} rhyme every second line
D	_____	
E	_____	
F	_____	
E	_____	
F	_____	
G	_____	} couplet rhyme
G	_____	







## WRITING CHALLENGE 4: WRITE A SPEECH

### *The Challenge*

Write a short, compelling speech.

### *Background*

Visual vocabulary is one of the most powerful ways to get people to really hear, feel and remember what you are saying. The best speeches in the world are full of visual references and emotive language that paint a picture in the minds of listeners.

### *Method*

Study this image carefully and choose one figure from around the table to stand and deliver a speech. Decide what the purpose of this speech is. Before you begin to write, brainstorm words that might be considered “visual vocabulary”, e.g. words that:

- **Physically describe something** (i.e. help others visualise that thing) like size, colour, shape etc and more abstract descriptions like movement, direction and texture.
- **Create deeper meaning** (i.e. help others visualise a concept). Think about figures of speech such as: “If you can look into the seeds of time, and say which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me.” *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare.
- **Evoke an emotional response** (i.e. get people on board with your idea). In Martin Luther King’s famous “I have a dream” speech, he first unites his audience (“symbolic shadow”), then creates a sense of hope (“beacon of light”), then reinforces the need to be strong and united (“seared in the flames”) and again offers hope (“joyous daybreak”).







This is a collaboration between Visual Verse and M-Museum Leuven, published on the occasion of the 51st conference of the International Visual Literacy Association, Belgium, 2019.

### *Image credits*

The images within this book are from the Body Language exhibition at M-Museum Leuven. Photographer © Alexandra Colmenares.

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4. Medallion depicting a scene from the parable of the Prodigal Son: The feast in honour of the prodigal son's return, Brabant, ca. 1525-1574 with 19th century modifications. © M Leuven

*Visual Verse: An Anthology of Art and Words* [visualverse.org](http://visualverse.org)

Visual Verse is an online ekphrastic writing project founded by Kristen Harrison and Preti Taneja in 2013. We publish a monthly visual prompt and invite writers – published or unpublished – to submit a piece in response.

*M-Museum* [mleuven.be](http://mleuven.be)

Proud of its roots and collection, M dares to experiment. The combination of contemporary art and old masters makes the museum unique in Flanders.

*International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA)* [ivla.org](http://ivla.org)

The International Visual Literacy Association (IVLA) is an interdisciplinary organization of professionals working toward a fuller understanding of the way we derive meaning from what we see and interact with our visual environment.

*Written by Kristen Harrison and Preti Taneja*

