

Exploring Storytelling through Painting

Time: 20 minutes, plus drying time

Difficulty level: Easy

Messy level: Medium

Inspired by the art of Clementine Hunter, as seen in the exhibition *Afro-Atlantic Histories*, this activity will guide you in exploring how to document your everyday experiences and moments of your life through painting.

To view a hi-res image of the work, visit the [MFAH Collection online database](#).



Investigate the Work of Art!

Born in 1886, Clementine Hunter lived to age 101, creating more than 5,000 works of art. During her long life, she worked mainly as a farm laborer and house servant at the Melrose Plantation in northwestern Louisiana and began making artwork in her late fifties, after she discovered several tubes of used oil paints. She often said she simply painted what came to mind, usually scenes from life in rural Louisiana crop gatherings, baptisms, funerals, revival meetings, fish fries, and still-life paintings on the materials she had at hand, including discarded window shades, cardboard boxes, and brown wrapping paper.

1. Think about being outside, looking into the distance, and noticing the size of objects you see around you. These are often referred to as perspective and scale. Do you think that Clementine Hunter was concerned about making her paintings look realistic?
2. Considering that most known artists during this time were white men, what do you think these artists were choosing to show in their art? Do you think there were many artists choosing to show the everyday lives of African Americans in rural areas?
3. Hunter was born in 1886 and lived until 1998. With this in mind, why was it important for her to document her daily life?

Let's Make Some Art! Gather These Art Materials

- Acrylic or tempera paint
- Paintbrushes
- Water cup
- Paper towels
- Choose cardboard, a milk jug, or craft paper as your painting surface
- Paper

Step-by-Step Artist Instructions

1. Gather your materials.
2. Prep your space for painting.
3. Think of two activities that you do with your community. Think of two activities that you do with your family. Think of two moments that stand out as being important in your life. If it helps, write these on a piece of paper.
4. Close your eyes and visualize each one. Then pick which one you would like to paint.
5. Use your pencil to draw your scene onto your surface (cardboard, a milk jug, or craft paper).
Note: Clementine Hunter had a wonderful way of covering every inch of surface with vibrant imagery. Be sure not to leave the background blank.
6. Paint your background.
7. Paint everything else.
8. Allow to dry and sign your work of art.



Clementine Hunter, *Untitled*, oil on cardboard, 1970, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Anne Wilkes Tucker in honor of Alice C. Simkins, 2008.224.

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