**Ekphrastic Poetry**

**Intro**

An Ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a scene or work of art. Through the imaginative act of narrating and reflecting on a scene, the poet may amplify and expand its meaning.

**Page 1:**

**Landscape with the Fall of Icarus**

Let’s start off by looking at a few examples of ekphrastic poetry. Take a look at the poem below by William Carlos Williams and note how the author positions himself with regards to the scene in the image above:

*Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*

According to Brueghel

when Icarus fell

it was spring

a farmer was ploughing

his field

the whole pageantry

of the year was

awake tingling

near

the edge of the sea

concerned

with itself

sweating in the sun

that melted

the wings' wax

unsignificantly

off the coast

there was

a splash quite unnoticed

this was

Icarus drowning

**Page 2:**

**Not My Best Side**

Another approach is giving voices to the characters. Take a look and listen to the excellent reading of “Not My Best Side" by U A Fanthorpe (read by Tom O'Bedlam).

**Page 3:**

**Nude Descending a Staircase**

Yet another method is by putting yourself inside the scene. A good example of this is in the poem below by X. J. Kennedy on Marcel’s Duchamp famous cubist painting. Here the author puts himself directly in the painting, rendering this abstract image more realistic.

*Nude Descending a Staircase*

Toe upon toe, a snowing flesh,

A gold of lemon, root and rind,

She sifts in sunlight down the stairs

With nothing on. Nor on her mind.

We spy beneath the banister

A constant thresh of thigh on thigh--

Her lips imprint the swinging air

That parts to let her parts go by.

One-woman waterfall, she wears

Her slow descent like a long cape

And pausing, on the final stair

Collects her motions into shape.

**Page 4:**

**Over to you, young Bard!**

Your turn to tilt your pen towards a frame. Pick one of the images above and try to write an ekphrastic poem using one of the methods we explored earlier. You have around 10mins. Let’s see what you can come up with.