WRITE A SHORT STORY

Grade Levels: 7–9
Estimated Time: 1–2 hours

Introduction:
Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks* (see page 64) and Archibald Motley Jr.’s *Nightlife* (see page 66) both depict aspects of urban life in 1940s America. *Nighthawks* features four uncommunicative people in a diner, while *Nightlife* depicts a lively evening at a nightclub. While all the figures in these two works are anonymous, the mood, composition, and subject matter of each work are very different from one another.

Lesson Objectives:
- Use visual art to inspire writing.
- Compare and analyze works of art.
- Learn the short-story form.

Key Terms:
- composition
- mood

Instructional Materials:
- pen/pencil
- paper

Procedures:
Discussion:
- Using image 24 and the reproduction on page 66—or the enclosed CD—examine *Nighthawks* and *Nightlife* with the class. Have two students list responses to the following questions on the chalkboard:
  - What adjectives would you use to describe each scene?
  - How did Hopper and Motley use color, line, and composition to create mood?
    - What role does space play in creating the mood? Is the space in each painting crowded or empty? Shallow or deep?
  - What is going on in each scene? What interactions, activities, and conversations are taking place? What are the sounds and smells? What is the temperature?
  - What time of night is it in each scene? How do you know?
  - What visual clues place the works of art in the 1940s? (clothes, dancing style, signs, architecture)
Activity:
- Have students write a short story based on either *Nighthawks* or *Nightlife*. Ask them to consider who the main characters are and what has happened before the scene in the paintings and will happen next. Give them the option to create a conversation between two characters. Tell students to focus on descriptive language in their stories, encouraging them to incorporate the adjectives the class used to describe the paintings.

Evaluation:
Base students' evaluation on their ability to compare and contrast two artworks in terms of subject and pictorial elements, such as line, space, color, and mood from the class discussion, as well as on their ability to employ descriptive terms in their short stories.

**Illinois Learning Standards**
English Language Arts 3
Fine Arts: 25, 27

For more detailed information on the Illinois Learning Standards, see [http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/](http://www.isbe.state.il.us/ils/).