WITNESS TO A BRAWL

<http://www.getty.edu/education/teachers/classroom_resources/curricula/stories/lesson01.html>

**Lesson Overview:**

Students write a newspaper article, using visual clues in the painting to imagine how the narrative depicted may have unfolded.

**Lesson Steps:**

Prior to Activity: do “30 second look” activity



[Georges de La Tour](http://www.getty.edu/art/gettyguide/artMakerDetails?maker=500)   
French, about 1625 - 1630   
Oil on canvas

**STEP 1**: HAVE A DISCUSSION AT YOUR TABLE

Divide these questions between your table. One at a time, go around the table and have each student ask the group their question(s) out loud. Everyone should take notes as the group discusses the answers.

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| --- | --- |
| 1  What might they be fighting about?  What evidence in the painting supports your idea? | 2  -Who are the main characters in this painting? What makes you say that?  - The two men in the center are fighting. What is the reaction of the onlookers? What do their facial expressions convey (get across)? |
| 3  -Which figures in the painting hold props? What do the props reveal about the story?  -Which figures are gesturing and how do their gestures add to the story? | 4  Look carefully at the composition (where things are positioned) and use of space in the painting. Where has the artist used these elements to focus our attention on certain parts of this painting?  -What aspects of the story has the artist highlighted using these visual elements? |

**Step 2:** Write a paragraph arguing which of the following 3 possibilities you believe is **most** likely. Use 2 pieces of evidence to support your argument.

*Aside from the clue given in its title, “The Musician's Brawl”, no one is certain what this painting depicts. Though this painting does not tell a known true story, a drama is certainly depicted.*

*Art historians have suggested these 3 possible scenarios for the painting’s origin:*

a. The two musicians are fighting over a good corner on which to play music.

b. The painting depicts a scene from an unidentified contemporary play (some popular play at the time)

c. The painting is meant to illustrate a common proverb from the time:  
 **"Wretched is he who can find no one more wretched than himself."**

This proverb makes the observation that a person who thinks he or she is in a bad situation can always find   
 someone worse off. Street beggars and musicians like those depicted in this painting were examples of how low   
 a person could fall in the social order.

**Step 3:** Consider a fourth possibility for the painting’s narrative. Think of an original storyline based on what you see.

Imagine that you are a reporter who has just arrived on the scene of this painting. You have to file a **news story** describing the incident. NOTE: a news story is written in the past tense, NOT in present tense; it is NOT a play-by-play account; we’re not watching it unfold before our eyes like a sporting event.

Include the following:

- An news article that answers the “Who, What, When, Where and Why” for the story.

- A description of the incident including some background on the main characters.

- Eyewitness accounts from each person at the scene.

- A title for the article.

- reference to at least 5 SPECIFIC props, objects, or other evidence within the painting.