



Kara Walker

Attend to Your Narrative By Kara Walker

Objective

Attend to your narrative.

Materials

- thin brushes, water-based ink, drawing paper
- old, used typewriters with fresh ribbons and oiled
- 3 x 5-inch index cards
- a cell phone with texting and camera functions

Procedures for version 1: typewriter

- type your story on the cards.
 - use as many cards as you need. let the rhythm of the typewriter sing to you. the rhythm of "running out of space" may influence which words you use. the characteristics of your typewriter may cause you to jump, skip, and edit your words.
- Every day there is a story to tell, sometimes it is a memory, sometimes something overheard, sometimes it is a criticism about a someone or a something, sometimes it's a non sequitur, a joke. sometimes your story is uncouth, dirty or unpopular. consider starting your story from somewhere in the middle of an event.**
- when you are finished typing (with a typewriter) lay your story out in a grid.
 - look it over, read it to yourself, visualize it.

Activity Summary

Topic: Arranging your narrative

Suitable for

- Intermediate level
- Advanced level

Suggested media

- Drawing
- Painting
- Photography
- Text

- read it again, find the right arrangement for the rhythm.
- arrange your cards into a stack—beginning to end—take a deep breath.
- set aside.
- get out paper and brushes.
- use ink and a little water for washes.
- draw a landscape, with brushes and ink. no pencils. no erasers. Just flow.
- the landscape acts as a kind of setting for your narrative. but it needn't be literal.

Procedures for version 2: cell phone

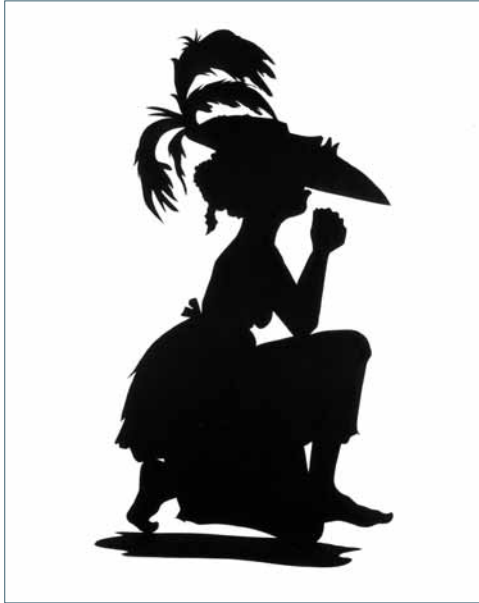
- text message your story—then, have a friend take a snapshot, using a cell phone camera of each "page" you create.
- open the snapshots on the computer, in a photo-editing program
- print and arrange the pages of your story.

Procedures for version 3: cell phone

- student 1 begins the cell phone narrative in text-message form and sends a story to the next student. student 2 adds an element and forwards it to the next student, and so on, until the story feels "complete."
- together, read the final story aloud.
- then put away the phones and try to remember the story. together, the class takes turns telling it.
- as a fun addition, try a group drawing that operates in the same manner, beginning the cell phone story visually and comically, with members of the group adding characters, locations, color, energy, description, ambiance, and space to the composition.

About Kara Walker

Artist's Work



Untitled, Kara Walker, 1998. Cut paper and adhesive, 55.25 x 32 in. (140.3 x 81.3 cm)



Emancipation Approximation, Scene #18, Kara Walker, 2000. Silkscreen, 44 x 34 in. (111.8 x 86.4 cm)

Artist Biography

Born 1969 in Stockton, California

Currently lives in New York, New York

Kara Walker has been telling stories through art since she was a young girl. When she was a toddler, she sat in her father's drawing studio and used chalk and crayons to tell stories. Now she is best known for affixing cut-paper silhouettes directly onto a gallery's walls. Sometimes a projector casts additional imagery onto the scenes, including the shadows of viewers. In this way, viewers can actively participate in—and bear witness to—her thought-provoking narratives. This blurring of the past and present, of fact and fiction, is central to Walker's work.

A 1997 recipient of the MacArthur Foundation's "genius" grant, Walker explores the intersections of power, race, gender, and sexuality in her cut-paper silhouettes. She finds inspiration in romance novels, slave narratives, and the antebellum South. Yet Walker's figures are a far cry from Victorian-era decorum. Her characters are often depicted in bawdy or violent scenes that can be both engrossing and grotesque.