Many of Rubens’s oil sketches and paintings depict mythological stories. Rubens was a great lover of the classics, so it is certain that he was very familiar with the ancient Roman poet Ovid. In his oil sketch Clytie Grieving, Rubens captures a powerful scene from Ovid’s Metamorphoses entitled “The Story of Leucothoe and the Sun.”

In this lesson, students will participate in a focused Reading Art activity looking at Rubens’s oil sketch Clytie Grieving. Students will then read the portion of the Metamorphoses that tells the story of Clytie. As a culminating activity, students will write a myth of their own. Students will choose one powerful moment from their poem and illustrate it, as Rubens did with Clytie Grieving.

**Objectives**

Students will participate in a focused Reading Art activity looking at Rubens’s oil sketch Clytie Grieving.

Students will read the portion of the Metamorphoses that tells the story of Clytie.

Students will discuss the powerful emotions that Rubens captured in Clytie Grieving.

Students will write a work of creative writing that expresses emotion.

Students will illustrate a powerful moment from their work of creative writing.

**Lesson Activity**

**Materials**

- Ovid’s “The Story of Leucothoe and the Sun” from the Metamorphoses
- Image of Rubens’s oil sketch Clytie Grieving
- Reading Art Worksheet
- Paper
- Pencils
- Drawing materials

**Teacher Preparation**

1. Download and print class set of the oil sketch Clytie Grieving.
2. Download and print background information on Clytie Grieving.
3. Print class set of Ovid’s “The Story of Leucothoe and the Sun” (pp. 5–6 of this guide).
4. Print class set of the Reading Art Worksheet (p. 4).
5. Review background information on Rubens.
6. Review Ovid’s Metamorphoses, particularly “The Story of Leucothoe and the Sun.”
CLASS PROCEDURE

1. Explain to students that they are going to learn about a mythological story as recorded by Rubens.

2. Review with class the life of Rubens, highlighting the various mythological events he recorded in his works.

3. Discuss with students Rubens’s fascination with classical art and literature.

4. Project the image of Clytie Grieving by Rubens onto a screen. Do not give students any information about the painting.

5. Pass out the Reading Art Worksheet to students.

6. Ask students to answer the questions on the Reading Art Worksheet as they pertain to the projected image. Give students five minutes to look at the painting. (Note: There is some nudity in this sketch; teachers should inform students that this sketch depicts a mythological story and this is how people in myths are often portrayed.)

7. Once students have completed their worksheets, open a discussion with students about this oil sketch. Ask them what they thought of the person depicted and encourage them to share their worksheet answers.

8. Once you have completed this activity, students should be eager to know who is depicted in this oil sketch.

9. Share with students the background information on Clytie. Tell students that Clytie is a mythological character from the epic poem Metamorphoses and that its author was the ancient Roman poet Ovid.

10. Pass out copies of “The Story of Leucothoe and the Sun.” Ask students to read through the poem as homework.

11. During the next class period ask students what they thought of “The Story of Leucothoe and the Sun.” Ask students whether they had trouble reading the poem and encourage questions.

12. Read through the poem again as a class, stopping after each break to analyze the story.

13. Upon completion of this activity, students should understand the story of Clytie and how the sunflower/heliotrope came to be.

14. Now have students look at Rubens’s Clytie Grieving again. Ask students which scene from the story he portrays. Is it a powerful scene? What emotions does Rubens capture in his oil sketch? Is Clytie happy? Sad?

15. Students should look closely at Clytie’s image and reflect on how she is feeling and how that is portrayed in the oil sketch. Discuss with students that this image of Clytie depicts her as a human with deep feelings instead of a mythic creature. Explain that Rubens creates an air of sadness around Clytie and that her emotions are to be deeply felt.

16. Students will now create a work of creative writing (poem, song, short story) that expresses a sense of emotion. Students should choose a central figure for this writing activity and create a scene which causes the figure to have an emotional reaction. Note: Even though Clytie is very sad in the oil sketch and the poem, that does not mean the students writing need to use sadness as their emotion.

17. Students should be encouraged to look at other myths, stories, poems, and song lyrics for ideas and inspiration.

18. Upon completion of their story, students should choose one powerful scene and illustrate it, as Rubens did with Clytie Grieving.

19. Once students have completed their stories, each student will present their work of creative writing and illustrations to the class.
**NATIONAL STANDARDS: LANGUAGE ARTS**

**READING**

Standard 6—Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of literary passages and texts
- Understands the use of specific literary devices
- Understands the use of language in literary works to convey mood, images, and meaning
- Understands inferred and recurring themes in literary works

**WRITING**

Standard 1—Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process

- Prewriting: Uses a variety of prewriting strategies
- Drafting and Revising: Uses a variety of strategies to draft and revise written work
- Editing and Publishing: Uses a variety of strategies to edit and publish written work
- Uses content, style, and structure (e.g., formal or informal language, genre, organization) appropriate for specific audiences (e.g., public, private) and purposes (e.g., to entertain, to influence, to inform)
- Writes narrative accounts, such as short stories
- Writes in response to literature

Standard 2—Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing

- Uses descriptive language that clarifies and enhances ideas (e.g., establishes tone and mood, uses figurative language, uses sensory images and comparisons, uses a thesaurus to choose effective wording)
- Uses paragraph form in writing (e.g., arranges sentences in sequential order, uses supporting and follow-up sentences, establishes coherence within and among paragraphs)

Standard 3—Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions

- Uses simple and compound sentences in written compositions
- Uses pronouns in written compositions
- Uses nouns in written compositions
- Uses verbs in written compositions
- Uses adjectives in written compositions
- Uses adverbs in written compositions
- Uses prepositions and coordinating conjunctions in written compositions
- Uses interjections in written compositions
- Uses conventions of spelling in written compositions
- Uses conventions of capitalization in written compositions
- Uses conventions of punctuation in written compositions
- Uses appropriate format in written compositions

**VIEWING**

Standard 9—Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

- Understands a variety of messages conveyed by visual media
- Uses a variety of criteria to evaluate and form viewpoints of visual media
- Understands how symbols, images, sound, and other conventions are used in visual media
**READING ART**
Answer the following questions about the Clytie Grievinger oil sketch:

**FACIAL EXPRESSION AND POSE (OR BODY LANGUAGE)**
What does the subject’s physical being tell you?

**CLOTHING**
What does her attire tell you about her job, values, etc.?

**PROPS OR ACCESSORIES**
What can you learn about the subject from looking at the things that are included around her?

**SETTING**
What impression does the place where she is located create for you?

**EXTENSION**
If you could add one additional element to this oil sketch that would enhance its appearance, what would it be?

**OTHER COMMENTS**
Anything else that really strikes you about this oil sketch?
The Sun, the source of light, by beauty's pow'r
Once am'rous grew; then hear the Sun's amour.
Venus, and Mars, with his far-piercing eyes
This God first spy'd; this God first all things spies.
Stung at the sight, and swift on mischief bent,
To haughty Juno's shapeless son he went:
The Goddess, and her God gallant betray'd,
And told the cuckold, where their pranks were play'd.
Poor Vulcan soon desir'd to hear no more,
He drop'd his hammer, and he shook all o'er:
Then courage takes, and full of vengeful ire
He heaves the bellows, and blows fierce the fire:
From liquid brass, tho' sure, yet subtile snares
He forms, and next a wond'rous net prepares,
Drawn with such curious art, so nicely sly,
Unseen the mashes cheat the searching eye.
Not half so thin their webs the spiders weave,
Which the most wary, buzzing prey deceive.
These chains, obedient to the touch, he spread
In secret foldings o'er the conscious bed:
The conscious bed again was quickly prest
By the fond pair, in lawless raptures blest.
Mars wonder'd at his Cytherea's charms,
More fast than ever lock'd within her arms.
While Vulcan th' iv'ry doors unbarr'd with care,
Then call'd the Gods to view the sportive pair:
The Gods throng'd in, and saw in open day,
Where Mars, and beauty's queen, all naked, lay.
O! shameful sight, if shameful that we name,
Which Gods with envy view'd, and could not blame;
But, for the pleasure, wish'd to bear the shame.
Each Deity, with laughter tir'd, departs,
Yet all still laugh'd at Vulcan in their hearts.

Now in thy face thy love-sick mind appears,
And spreads thro' impious nations empty fears:
For when thy beamless head is wrap't in night,
Poor mortals tremble in despair of light.
'Tis not the moon, that o'er thee casts a veil
'Tis love alone, which makes thy looks so pale.
Leucothoe is grown thy only care,
Not Phaeton's fair mother now is fair.
The youthful Rhodos moves no tender thought,
And beauteous Porsa is at last forgot.
Fond Clytie, scorn'd, yet lov'd, and sought thy bed,
Ev'n then thy heart for other virgins bled.
Leucothoe has all thy soul possesst.
And chas'd each rival passion from thy breast.
To this bright nymph Eurynome gave birth
In the blest confines of the spicy Earth.
Excelling others, she herself beheld
By her own blooming daughter far excell'd.
The sire was Orchamus, whose vast command,
The sev'nth from Belus, rul'd the Persian Land.

Deep in cool vales, beneath th' Hesperian sky,
For the Sun's fiery steeds the pastures lye.
Ambrosia there they eat, and thence they gain
New vigour, and their daily toils sustain.
While thus on heav'nly food the coursers fed,
And night, around, her gloomy empire spread,
The God assum'd the mother's shape and air,
And pass'd, unheeded, to his darling fair.
Close by a lamp, with maids encompass'd round,
The royal spinster, full employ'd, he found:
Then cry'd, A-while from work, my daughter, rest;
And, like a mother, scarce her lips he prest.
Servants retire!-nor secrets dare to hear,
Intrusted only to a daughter's ear.
They swift obey'd: not one, suspicious, thought
The secret, which their mistress would be taught.
Then he: since now no witnesses are near,
Behold! the God, who guides the various year!
The world's vast eye, of light the source serene,
Who all things sees, by whom are all things seen.
Believe me, nymph! (for I the truth have show'd)
Thy charms have pow'r to charm so great a God.
Confus'd, she heard him his soft passion tell,
And on the floor, untwirl'd, the spindle fell:
Still from the sweet confusion some new grace
Blush'd out by stealth, and languish'd in her face.
The lover, now inflam'd, himself put on,
And out at once the God, all-radiant, shone.
The virgin startled at his alter'd form,
Too weak to bear a God's impetuous storm:
No more against the dazling youth she strove,
But silent yielded, and indulg'd his love.
This Clytie knew, and knew she was undone,  
Whose soul was fix’d, and doated on the Sun.  
She rag’d to think on her neglected charms,  
And Phoebus, panting in another’s arms.  
With envious madness fir’d, she flies in haste,  
And tells the king, his daughter was unchaste.  
The king, incens’d to hear his honour stain’d,  
No more the father nor the man retain’d.  
In vain she stretch’d her arms, and turn’d her eyes  
To her lov’d God, th’ enlightner of the skies.  
In vain she own’d it was a crime, yet still  
It was a crime not act’d by her will.  
The brutal sire stood deaf to ev’ry pray’r,  
And deep in Earth entomb’d alive the fair.  
What Phoebus could do, was by Phoebus done:  
Full on her grave with pointed beams he shone;  
To pointed beams the gaping Earth gave way;  
Had the nymph eyes, her eyes had seen the day,  
But lifeless now, yet lovely still, she lay  
Not more the God wept, when the world was fir’d,  
And in the wreck his blooming boy expir’d.  
The vital flame he strives to light again,  
And warm the frozen blood in ev’ry vein:  
But since resistless Fates deny’d that pow’r,  
On the cold nymph he rain’d a nectar show’r.  
Ah! undeserving thus (he said) to die,  
Yet still in odours thou shalt reach the sky.  
The body soon dissolv’d, and all around  
Perfum’d with heav’nly fragrances the ground,  
A sacrifice for Gods up-rose from thence,  
A sweet, delightful tree of frankincense.

Tho’ guilty Clytie thus the sun betray’d,  
By too much passion she was guilty made.  
Excess of love begot excess of grief,  
Grief fondly bad her hence to hope relief.  
But angry Phoebus hears, unmov’d, her sighs,  
And scornful from her loath’d embraces flies.  
All day, all night, in trackless wilds, alone  
She pine’d, and taught the list’ning rocks her moan.  
On the bare earth she lies, her bosom bare,  
Loose her attire, dishevel’d is her hair.  
Nine times the morn unbarr’d the gates of light,  
As oft were spread th’ alternate shades of night,  
So long no sustenance the mourner knew,  
Unless she drunk her tears, or suck’d the dew.  
She turn’d about, but rose not from the ground,  
T’ill fix’d to Earth, she strove in vain to rise.  
Her looks their paleness in a flow’r retain’d,  
Yet still in odours thou shalt reach the sky.  
The body soon dissolv’d, and all around  
Perfum’d with heav’nly fragrances the ground,  
A sacrifice for Gods up-rose from thence,  
A sweet, delightful tree of frankincense.