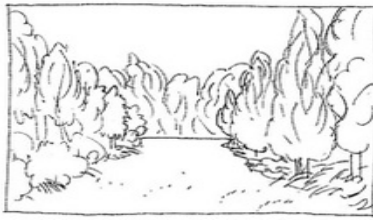
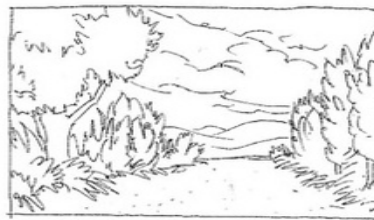


Where to Look for Composition Ideas

Good dramatic movies use all of the tried and true compositional devices that rivet attention. Watch movies with the sound off and pause the DVD on scenes you find compositionally interesting. Go into analytical mode and ask yourself why a scene is effective. Look at its colors, values, spatial depth and point of view. I recommend studying: *Dr. Zhivago*, *Gone With the Wind*, *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *Girl With a Pearl Earring*. Most of the great classics have stunning compositions sprinkled throughout them.



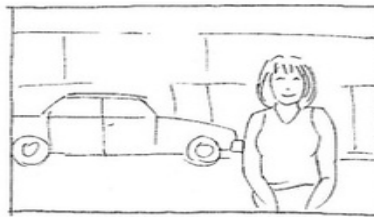
A



B

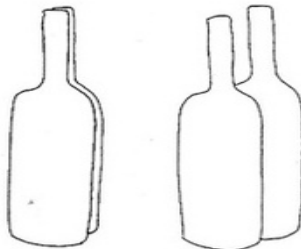
Avoid Distracting Tangents

The bumper of the car touches the woman's arm and draws attention to it unnecessarily. It also confuses the spatial depth. The front of the car appears to exist in the foreground space with the woman, yet the rear of the car is positioned in the background.



Allow Adequate Space Between Objects

Closely aligned objects create confusion about depth (A). Adequate space between objects clearly states what they are and where they are in space (B).



Understanding Flatness

Often when someone says a painting is flat, they are suggesting that it lacks expressiveness, color or character. But, flatness is not necessarily a derogatory description. Flatness is just another visual effect, like depth or texture.

You might also look at abstract art or art that has abstract qualities. It may not be your thing, but it can offer excellent examples of raw composition in which subject matter is secondary or eliminated altogether. Go to www.google.com. Select Images, then enter one name at a time: Matisse, Braque, Kline, Kandinsky and Klee. Click Search.

Avoid Dead Ends

A *dead end* is anywhere the viewer is drawn down a path then has nowhere to go (A). Be cautious about using a wall of trees, mountains or anything that prevents easy eye movement to other areas of the painting. In drawing (B) the eye is drawn farther into the picture.

Things That Add Depth

- Asymmetry
- Low horizons
- Softer edges toward the horizon
- Subtle colors
- Smaller shapes at top and larger ones at bottom
- Larger brushstrokes in the front, smaller ones toward the back

Things That Flatten

- Unnecessary tangents
- Symmetry
- High horizons
- Sharp edges
- Harsh colors
- Uniform-size shapes
- Uniform-size brushstrokes from front to back