

**American Museum of Western Art – The Anschutz  
Collection Writing the West: Season 5, January 2024  
*Storytelling to Scale***

[Story Map](#) pairing: **Voice**.

The scale or scope of a scene—whether grand and expansive or closed in and tight—can influence a character’s thoughts and emotions, thus affecting a poem’s or story’s voice, its style. Use the three paintings in the prompt guide to practice different combinations of scale and voice.



***Mountain Landscape* – Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902):**

The expansiveness expressed in this painting is difficult to deny. A character inside this landscape would need to walk miles to get to its farthest point. Imagine a character’s reaction to this place. How is the scale of this scene impacting them? How is their personality effected by grandeur and expansiveness?



***My Kitchen* – Jozef G. Bakos (1891-1977):**

Opposite of *Mountain Landscape*, the painting *My Kitchen* offers a scene whose scale is closed in and tight. Every object in this room is within arm’s reach. Knowing that does a character find comfort or feel boxed in? Do they yearn for more space, or are they content inside their little adobe house? Describe a character’s thoughts and feelings for small-scale living.



***Summer Shower, New Mexico* – Russell Cowles (1887-1979):**

Between small scale and large scale lies the middle distance. Notice how in this painting the rain shower veils the mountains in the background and how trees and dark colors in the foreground pull your gaze to the group of horses in the middle distance. What does a character do with a scale that is both accessible to move into yet too far away to touch? While witnessing a midground, does a character feel invited closer, or do they wish only to observe it? Do they enjoy the in-between feeling the middle distance offers, or prefer instead to abandon it?