

# Literary Still Life

Week 1:      Content Focus:              Metaphor  
                 Technique Focus:          Underpainting Shadow Areas

Some of the devices we use to make language more “colorful” are also appropriate when we want to make our art be more than simply a literal description of objects.

Metaphor – the substitution (or description) of one thing for (or as if it were) another based on a similarity of characteristics – is one of those devices. It assumes that the two things being compared are alike or interchangeable because they have something in common. In art, this might be because they share a similar shape, texture, or color or because their literal meaning/function suggests a broader abstract concept.



*“Waterfall”, watercolor by Ellen Fountain, image 24” x 22”*

So, in my painting at the left, I used the fluid, shiny characteristics of ribbon to suggest the fluid, shiny nature of water, and the stacked layers of fabric as a metaphor for the layers of rock one might find when water has carved down through it over eons of time.

One might say that any time we attempt to put down three dimensional objects on a flat space we are using metaphor, because no matter what illusions we use to create that three dimensional space, we are still painting or drawing on a flat piece of paper or canvas. But the metaphor I would like you to explore is one that takes us a bit farther than that. I want you to make some more interesting and imaginative “connections” between dissimilar objects.

## Painting Exercise:

Set up a still life arrangement that includes at least one piece of draped fabric. Use whatever other objects you wish to create your visual metaphor.

Underpaint all the shadow areas first with some variety of gray using one or more of the following mixtures. Varying the proportion of each color in the mix can change the gray from cool to warm or bias it toward one of the colors:

- ultramarine blue and burnt sienna
- permanent alizarin crimson and Winsor green
- Winsor blue and scarlet lake

Let your shadow areas dry completely, then glaze additional layers of color, working from light to dark, unsaturated to saturated, letting each layer or glaze of color dry completely before painting over it.