

# REYNOLDA

EXPLORE REYNOLDA (AGES 8+)

## A Meditation Voyage



Albert Bierstadt, *Niagara*, 1869 Oil and Canvas. Wake Forest University, Simmons Collection.

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## WHAT YOU NEED

- Albert Bierstadt's *Niagara* on this card, in the exhibition *The Voyage of Life: Art, Allegory, and Community Response*, or on the Wake Forest collections website.
- A comfortable place to sit, either in Reynolda House or elsewhere
- Openness

## WORDS TO KNOW

**Landscape art:** art that shows or represents a nature scene

**Meditation:** a spiritual or thought practice using the body and mind together, oftentimes involving quiet focus and being attentive to the present moment

## THE MEDITATION ACTIVITY

### Connecting with the artwork

Sit with your feet flat on the ground, if possible. Spend at least a minute looking at Albert Bierstadt's *Niagara*, letting your eyes move across the image. Start by asking yourself the following questions while continuing to look at the work.

- How does the work make you feel? What can you hear? What do you see?
- Can you imagine yourself standing in this scene observing the falls? As you imagine being in this scene, look around with your mind's eye and see what else you notice. Take a moment to think about this image and the questions above before moving on.

### Clearing your mind

Close your eyes and step into the role of being the watcher of your thoughts. Observe any thoughts that enter your mind without judging them or dwelling on them. Allow thoughts to float into and out of your mind effortlessly.

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## **The Meditation Exercise**

Return back to your feelings about Bierstadt's *Niagara*. Think about the calming, therapeutic sound of rushing water. Breathe slowly in and out.

Begin by relaxing the muscles around your eyes. Focus on this for a while, consciously willing your eyes to relax. Expand upward to your forehead, temples, and the rest of your face, relaxing each muscle as you mentally move across your face. Begin to move this conscious relaxation downward throughout your body, focusing on every part individually.

Continue to engage with *Niagara* as you move through this process. Take as long as you need to get into a warm, relaxed state and remain in that as long as you like. Allow this exercise to help you set aside any worries or thoughts you may have circling in your mind.