

# TOUCHING THE ART

At the Art Institute of Chicago

European Art

Find the painting in the gallery (this image is an excerpt from a larger work). As you answer the following questions, keep asking yourself (or your companions): **“How do I know this? What do I see that makes me say this?”** Make sure to answer the questions in order, then read the background story to learn more.



Gallery 222

## READING:

- What kind of woman is this? A princess?
- What time of day is it? Is she leaving the fields or is she coming to work? (Hint: She's holding a sickle. Is she facing the village?)
- Why has she stopped? What has caught her attention? Is she looking at something? Did she hear something?
- What is her reaction to what she notices? Fear? Annoyance?

## IMMERSION:

- Sounds: What kind of sounds might you hear out in the fields? What do you see in the painting that could make a sound that stops her in her tracks? (Hint: Look in the sky.)
- Quote: What could she be thinking as she listens?

## SITUATION:

- What has she been stopped by on her way to work?

**BACKGROUND:** *The Song of the Lark*. She is a European peasant who would work from dawn 'til dusk in the fields. She doesn't represent any particular character. The lark is considered to have a more elaborate call than most other birds. (Hint: Find a recording of a lark singing, e.g., on YouTube, and play it while you watch the painting.)

**SITUATION:** A young peasant girl on her way to work in the fields one quiet dawn hears a lark singing its beautiful song. When have you noticed beauty in your daily routine?

**REACTION:** Stopping to be awed by the solemn, quiet beauty that can occur around you.

**CONNECTIONS?** *Anne of Green Gables*. *The Sound of Music* (Maria). Your life?

By Jules Breton in 1884.