

# An Exercise for the Imagination

By Finley Eversole

Back in my university teaching days I would give the following assignment to my art students in an effort to stimulate the free play of imagination. It often produced amazing results. One student who said she “didn’t know how to write” wrote such a beautiful story that she was invited to read in on a children’s TV program. If you are a teacher and wish to use this assignment, please feel free.

## THE OUTLANDERS

Once long ago in a time now almost lost to human memory, there lived a strange and beautiful people in a tiny kingdom called Outland. They were a rare breed of folk, most of the population living in the tiny village of Absurd high in the Ludicrous Mountains. By our concepts of life today, everything these people did seems strange, illogical, topsy-turvy. It is because of their quaint ways that today we refer to people who behave in an incomprehensible manner as “outlandish”.

Now the people of Outland were different from any other race or nation of people who have ever walked the Earth. For one thing, their way of live was gentle and playful. Nothing was ever so serious to them that they could not see its humorous side, and they laughed and played a great deal which made them especially pleasant to be around. The Outlanders, though few in number, were so ingenious of imagination and so strange of habit – if, indeed, one can say these people ever had habits, as everything they ever did seemed to defy logic and predictability! . . . as I was saying, these Outlandish people have come to be known the world over, and their reputation has lived down the ages, though their existence seems more a myth today than true historical fact. But it is because of this strange, beautiful and humorous people that folks today, who dress or behave in “far out” way, are spoken of sometimes as being “outlandish” or, with reference to the Outlanders’ principal village, as behaving “absurdly”.

I would now like to tell you a most unusual story about these strange, beautiful people....

**NOTE: At this point students were assigned to write a story of any length, pushing the limits of their imagination.**



Joan Miró, *Ciphers and Constellations, in Love with a Woman*, 1941 Art Institute of Chicago