

Musée des Beaux Arts Character

Writer: W. H. Auden | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Characters The Old Masters: These are not characters but painters like Bruegel and other Renaissance artists. Auden personifies them, saying, "About suffering they were never wrong."

They represent human wisdom and artistic truth, showing how art understands life's balance between pain and ordinary events.

Icarus: A mythological figure from Greek legend. He who flew too close to the sun and fell into the sea. In Bruegel's painting Landscape with the Fall of Icarus, which Auden describes, Icarus's fall goes almost unnoticed. He symbolizes human suffering, pride, and tragedy ignored by the world.

The Ordinary People: These include the ploughman, the sailor, the horse, and the ship. They are all seen in Bruegel's painting. They represent everyday humanity like indifferent observers. They keep working while tragedy happens beside them.