Discussion and Activities

1. Look closely at Under the Volcano for 30 seconds. Make a list of all of the people and animals you can find. What is each one doing? How do their activities relate—or not relate—to Mount St. Helen’s eruption in the distance? What would you expect people and animals to do during a volcanic eruption? What is the meaning of these figures’ activities?

2. What is the focal point of the work? Are there secondary focal points? How is linear perspective used in this piece?

3. Look closely at the mirrors represented in this image. What is their function visually and symbolically? How does Johanson’s use of mirror imagery compare to the use of mirrors in Isaka Shamsud-Din’s Rock of Ages?

4. Choose one person, animal, or object in Under the Volcano that particularly interests you. Write a short story or poem from their perspective.

5. Create a portrait of the place where you live. Begin by making a list of the defining characteristics of the place. Then, think about how to translate those characteristics into visual form. Consider landmarks, buildings, the natural world, human or animal activity. What makes this place itself? Do you feel its best portrayed in two-dimensional or three-dimensional form? Which medium seems most suited to representing this place?