

PICTURING AMERICA

at the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts



KALAMAZOO INSTITUTE OF ARTS

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Some of the art featured in this guide is not currently on display.
If there is a particular work you would like your students to view,
arrangements must be made in advance to show the work
in a classroom during your visit.

Please contact the Museum Education Department at 349-7775, michelles@kiarts.org.

This educator's guide was researched and written by Intern Lauren Pawlak Denny.

What is Picturing America?

Picturing America is a part of *We the People*, the flagship initiative of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The teachers Resource Book accompanies a set of 40 large-scale reproductions of American art, which are awarded as grants to K-12 schools, public libraries, and other entities chosen by the National Endowment for the Humanities. To learn more about Picturing America: www.picturingamerica.neh.gov, 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C. 20506

Not a Picturing America school?

You can borrow a set of Picturing America posters plus the Teachers Resource Guide from the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts library or check the Picturing America website for a public library or participating school near you!

How can the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts and Picturing America complement Michigan's 5th grade through high school U.S. history curriculums?

- Works of art are effective tools to help students connect with our unique and rich history.
- Students will be viewing primary documents from United States history. The artists featured in the program demonstrate how people of the past interpreted the world around them.
- Using the visual arts to teach about history encourages creative and critical thinking. Students are expected to ask questions, seek answers and establish connections.
- The NEH Picturing America posters and Teacher Resource Guide uses American art as primary source documents to explore important themes of American history covered in history curriculums.
- Subjects such as colonial America, the American Revolution, and the development of our government system are just a few of the topics explored in Picturing America that correspond to Michigan's Social Studies GLCE's and the Common Core.

Why would students benefit from a guided tour of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts?

- The Kalamazoo Institute of Arts has an outstanding collection of American art, dating from the eighteenth century to the present.
- The tour allows students to interact and engage with works of art and their classmates.
- Numerous works in the collection discuss similar themes as the Picturing America program, even using many of the same artists like John James Audubon, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Dorothea Lange, and Jacob Lawrence, among others.
- Students will be able to apply and expand upon concepts learned through the Picturing America program with original works of art.
- An engaging, interactive, and inquiry-based tour of the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts is a wonderful conclusion to any American history unit.

JOHN SINGLETON COPLEY (1738-1815)

Mars, Venus and Vulcan: The Forge of Vulcan, 1754

John Singleton Copley always knew he wanted to be an artist. However, as an artist living in the colonies, Copley was surrounded by people (Puritans) who believed art was either blasphemous or frivolous. Due to the lack of art schools, Copley taught himself to draw with help from his step-father Peter Pelham (an engraver), a few local artists, and by studying European engravings. Copley began working as a professional artist at age 15, developing a highly personal style rooted in New England portrait art as was the current fashion. Copley, however, was also fascinated by European art and history paintings. His works were praised by the Europeans and he was encouraged to go to Europe to study. However, Copley's desire for money and social advancement lead him to remain in the colonies until 1774. Copley left, not only to pursue his art, but also because tensions were rising in America. Unlike his loyalist family, Copley had friends on both sides and wanted to escape the danger posed to his family by the revolutionaries.

His work *Mars, Venus and Vulcan: The Forge of Vulcan* is an



John Singleton Copley (1738-1815). *Mars, Venus and Vulcan: The Forge of Vulcan*, 1754. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

excellent example of one of Copley's earliest paintings, completed when he was only 16. The scene depicts a classical subject matter; Vulcan sets a trap to expose his wife Venus' affair with the god Mars. The full-rounded modeling and precise contours of the figures combine with strong contrast of light and dark values to create an almost 3D effect. His attention to detail, especially in the textiles, creates a feeling of realism in a painting with mythological subject matter. This subject matter would have been accepted by the Europeans, who were often educated in classics and would have viewed the work as an historical painting. The colonists/Puritans, who were not as educated in this subject matter, would have considered the work immoral and blasphemous.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Copley is known for sharp definition and contrast of values. Where can these qualities be seen in this painting?

The contrast between the figure of Venus and the background. The definition in the lines and folds of the figures' clothing.

Although this work is not a portrait in the traditional sense, what similarities can be seen to portraiture?

Rounded figures; figures in poses; the use of objects as "props"—the scene seems somewhat staged, as portraits often were at the time.

What sort of color scheme was used in this painting? How does the placement of color relate to the specific figures?

The colors are fairly monochromatic, except for pops of color in the fabric of the figures. The blue of Venus's robe may relate to her being born of the sea. The red of Mars's cap may relate to his position as god of war (bloodshed, etc.).

How does Copley create such fluid motion in this painting?

Even though the figures are technically static, they seem to move due to the use of curved lines and the positions of the arms and legs of the figures. Every figure seems to be about to do something. These curved lines help move the viewer's eye continuously around the piece.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Colonial America, Puritans, 18th century American art, Loyalists, American Revolution

Geography: Boston

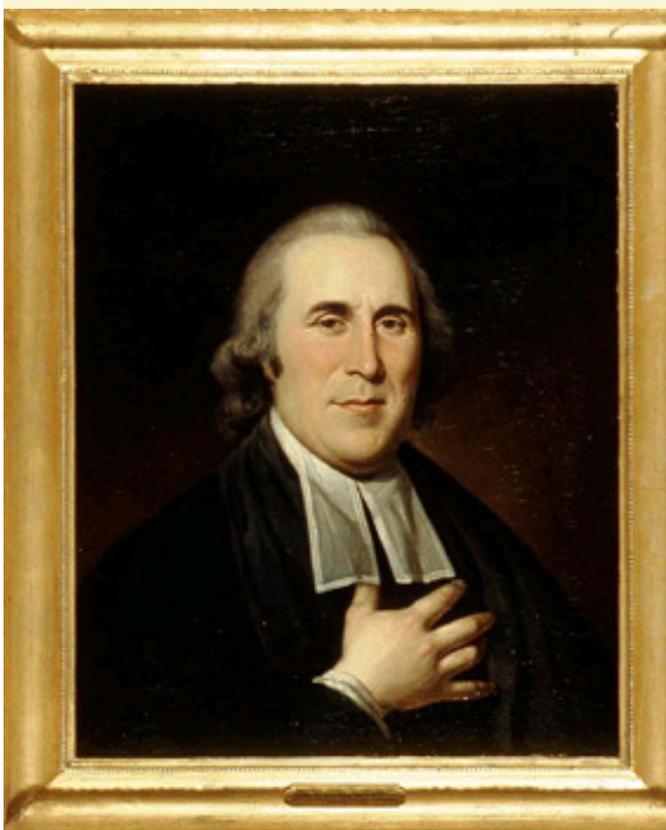
Arts: Portraiture; Mythology; European vs. American art

CHARLES WILLSON PEALE (1741-1827)

The Reverend Joseph Pilmore, 1787

Charles Willson Peale was an American painter best known for his portrait work. As a young man, he joined the Sons of Liberty in support of the American Revolution and fought under the command of George Washington. Peale continued to paint on the battlefield and many of his art subjects are figures from the war. In 1782, Peale opened a portrait gallery to display the faces of Revolutionary heroes. Four years later he opened Peale's Museum (later known as the Philadelphia Museum). This institution was meant to offer a wide-range of historical collections and make them accessible for the public to view.

Portraits were a practical trade of the time and Peale made a successful career for himself. In his lifetime he painted over a thousand portraits, including such historical figures as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams. His neoclassical style of painting creates images that are both strong and simple. His traditional portraits show the strength and personality of the sitter; as seen in the painting of *Reverend Joseph Pilmore*.



Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827). *Reverend Joseph Pilmore*, 1787. Oil on Canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

Joseph Pilmore was appointed as a missionary for the colonies by John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist church in England. Pilmore arrived in Philadelphia in 1769 and began "Methodism in America". He formed religious societies for people of all denominations who "earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come" and who want to "walk according to the Oracles of God."

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

How has Peale drawn our attention to the Reverend's face?

The background is very dark. Notice the light outlining the Reverend's shoulders and head. This backlighting creates a rim around the sitter and visually separates him from his surroundings.

How old do students think the Reverend appears in this painting? Why? Explain that he was in his forties.

Notice the posture and facial expression of Reverend Pilmore. What does this suggest about his personality?

That he is caring; happy; peaceful

Why did the artist place so much emphasis on the Reverend's hand?

A hand placed on the chest is often used to symbolize devotion, honesty, and awareness. The Reverend was fully committed to his missionary work of organizing Methodism in America.

Compare and contrast Peale's portraits of Reverend Joseph Pilmore and George Washington. Notice the differences between presidential portraits and those of everyday individuals.

CONNECTIONS

Historical: U.S. portraiture; presidents; Sons of Liberty

Civics: U.S. Constitution; Revolutionary war; 3 branches of government

Geography: Philadelphia

Arts: Museum history (Peale's museum)

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON (1785-1851)

White Headed Eagle, 1828

John James Audubon is known for his extensive studies of American birds. His influential *Birds of America* consists of nearly five hundred life-sized prints and hand-colored engravings. He remains one of the most reputable wildlife artists to this day. The paintings appeared in four volumes between 1826 and 1838. His work was innovative for the time because he captured the vibrant display of birds in their natural state.

Audubon was born in Haiti but went to school in France, where he took interest in birds, nature, and drawing. As a young man, he immigrated to the United States and worked on his family's estate at Mill Grove, near Philadelphia. Much of his time was spent studying and sketching various birds. His fascination grew and he was determined to find, collect, and illustrate every native bird in America. Photography did not exist yet, so Audubon's method was to study a bird in its natural environment before killing it, using the finest shot to minimize damage of the bird. He then took thread wire and guided it through the internal cavity. This step allowed him to manipulate the pose and position of the bird to recreate the lifelike scene. Audubon's work is shown at eye level so that distinctive characteristics of each bird can be seen more clearly.



John James Audubon (1821-1872). *White Headed Eagle*, 1828. Hand colored engraving with aquatint on paper. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Why is the bird called a white-headed eagle?

It's a young white-headed eagle whose feathers have not yet changed color. The white feathers develop at full maturity.

What is the more common name for a white-headed eagle? *The bald eagle. The term "bald" doesn't mean this bird lacks feathers. Instead, it comes from the word, piebald, meaning "marked with white."*

Where can we find this bird? What does it symbolize?

The Founding Fathers wanted to select an animal that was unique to the United States. In 1782, the bald eagle became the national bird and symbolizes the strength, courage, and freedom of this country. The image of the eagle can be found on the Great Seal, the President's flag, and the one-dollar bill.

Identify some of the different types of lines on the bird.

The lines on the wings are shorter and closer together at the top and get larger near the bottom. Long and straight lines illustrate the tail feathers. The lines on the head of the eagle are thin and they make the texture appear softer than the rest of the feathers.

Why is the bird positioned like this?

Eagles are usually found in areas like this one. Perched high and awaiting their prey. Audubon wanted to portray the birds in their natural habitats.

What makes this print a true piece of art and not just a scientific illustration?

The life-like pose; compositional beauty; use of color and technique.

Does the subject look alive or dead?

Students may think that the pose and setting make it appear to be alive. Audubon's method of wiring the subjects allowed him to manipulate the poses and take his time painting them.

Why did Audubon and other artists spend so much time documenting American wildlife?

America was still being developed. There was a growing interest in science and many were eager to learn about various plant and animal species. Artists commonly went on expeditions to explore the natural environment and later documented what they saw through their paintings.

CONNECTIONS

Historical: Jacksonian era; US symbols; westward expansion

Geography: Natural habitats of species

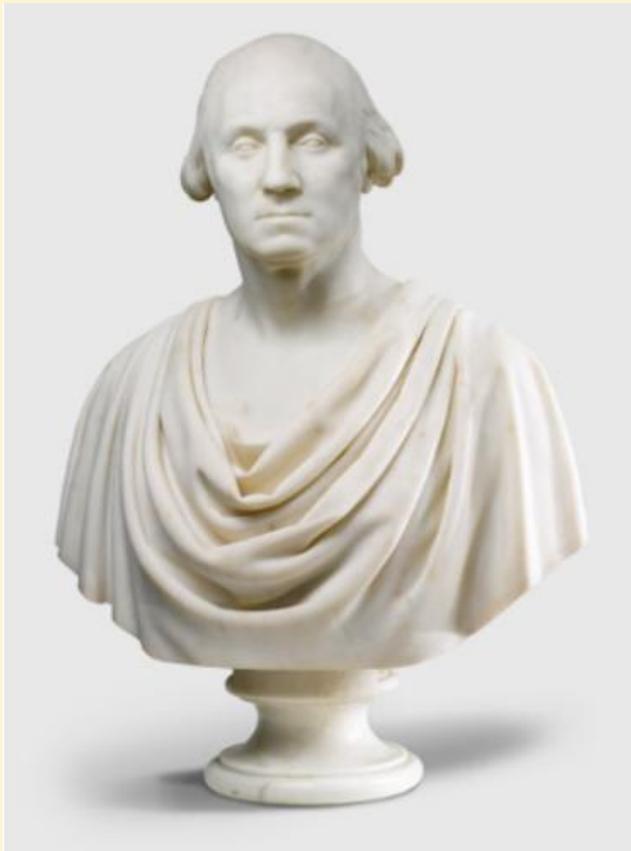
Science: Classification of species; environmental movement; conversation and protection of species; bird's habitat; scavenger

HIRAM POWERS (1805-1873)

George Washington, 1838-1844

Hiram Powers was the son of a farmer who, at 17, became an assistant to Luman Watson, a clock maker in Cincinnati, OH. There Powers gained valuable experience with the technical aspects of modeling. In 1826, he began to spend time in the studio of Frederick Eckstein and developed a strong love for the art of sculpture. Powers began studying modelling and casting and eventually ended up in Washington D.C. in 1834. He continued to gain attention for his work, but decided to leave for Italy in 1837. Powers remained in Florence until his death, due to the unparalleled access to marble and stone-cutting traditions and materials.

Powers was incredibly talented at modeling figures. While in Italy, in addition to working as a teacher at the Florence Accademia, he sustained a thriving portraiture business, often carving “fancy” parlor busts. He also created life-sized, full-figure, idealized subjects, often isolated as busts. His bust of George Washington offers a perfect example of this tendency. Powers based *George Washington* on a portrait of the man by French sculptor John Antoine Houdon. Powers' neoclassical style is evident in his choice to show Washington in a toga; this clothing choice allows the viewer to see Washington as a noble sage, or even a hero from Ancient Greece or Rome.



Hiram Powers (1805-1873). *George Washington*, 1838-1844. Marble. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Just as he was receiving notoriety in the U.S., Hiram Powers left for Italy where he remained until his death. What types of resources were available to him in Italy which tempted him to stay?

Access to sculpting tradition and materials. Italy has a great history in the genre of sculpture, extending all the way back to Ancient Rome. As a neoclassical sculptor, in Italy, Powers had access to the traditions of Ancient Roman Sculpture and the marble and other materials used in the past.

What does it mean to say that Hiram Powers was a neoclassical sculptor?

Neoclassicism was a 19th century cultural movement that extended through visual art, literature, music, theater, and architecture. The movement drew inspiration from the “classical” art and culture of Greece and Rome. To say that Powers was a “neoclassical sculptor” means that he used elements and techniques from Ancient Greek and Roman sculpture in his own work and often applied them to contemporary subjects.

What evidence is there of Ancient Greek and Roman influence in Powers' *George Washington*?

Washington appears dressed in a toga, his features appear idealized, and his bust is rendered in marble. By dressing Washington in a toga and giving him idealized features, Powers draws connections not only to the tradition of portrait sculpture in Ancient Rome, but also to the subject of those Roman portraits. Washington seems much like a Roman emperor, a sage, or even a hero from ancient times.

What effect do the classical components of Powers' portrait have on the viewer?

George Washington is portrayed as an idealized figure, allowing the viewer to see him as an “unflawed” or “heroic” type.

CONNECTIONS

Historical: U.S. Presidents, George Washington

Geography: Italy, Florence, sculpting resources

Art: Neoclassical sculpture, portraiture, John Antoine Houdon, ex-patriate artists, George Washington portraiture

SEVERIN ROESEN (1815-1872)***Still Life with Fruit and Bird's Nest,*
n.d.**

Not much is known about the artist Severin Roesen. He is thought to have been baptized in Boppard, Germany in 1816. He married and moved to Cologne where he began his artistic career painting flowers on decorative porcelains and enamelware, exhibiting his work at the Cologne local art club in 1847. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1848 where he settled in New York and established himself as a painter of elaborate still lifes. In 1858 he moved to Pennsylvania, eventually settling in Williamsport in 1860. There he continued working and taught still-life painting, inspiring artists like John Francis. Roesen's paintings continued to grow in popularity and he created between 300-400 known works throughout his lifetime. He is believed to have died in 1872.

In this painting, Roesen was inspired by 17th century Dutch still-life tradition and his earlier work as a decorative artist. *Still Life with Fruit and Bird's Nest* showcases Roesen's meticulous realist style with its rich color, painstaking detail, high finish and emphasis on botanical accuracy. The abundance and optimism conveyed by his lavish and opulent arrangements reflect the views of pre Civil-War America. The great number of objects present represent the richness and



Severin Roesen (1815-1872). *Still Life with Fruit and Bird's Nest*, n.d. Oil on Canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

abundance of the land, God's bounty in the New World and his blessings upon the New Eden.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES**What is perhaps most striking about Roesen's still life painting?**

The extensive amount of detail. The way Roesen treats his subject matter is extremely realistic and detail-oriented.

How do students think Roesen completed such large paintings with incredible accuracy?

Explain that Roesen most likely worked from actual objects, but because his works were so large, the objects would spoil before he finished them. So, he may have had templates that he rearranged from painting to painting, explaining the often repetitive elements in his work. Roesen may also have based some of his compositions on already published prints.

Because most of his paintings are undated, how do students think Roesen's work can be organized somewhat chronologically?

Explain that there are a few details which indicate the time period the works were created. Roesen switched from grey marble to white marble tabletops in his later work and also may have switched from a neutral background to a landscape background.

Compare and contrast Roesen's *Still Life with Jasper Francis Cropsey's *Autumn Sunset at Greenwood Lake, NY (1876)*. 19th century American landscape painting and still-life painting often attempted to convey similar messages. Note the differences between the two paintings and their messages.*

CONNECTIONS

Historical: U.S. exploration, documentation, pre Civil-War America

Science: Botany

Arts: Still life painting, realism, decorative painting

JOHANN MONGELS CULVERHOUSE (1825-1895)

Union Army Encampment, 1860

Johann Culverhouse was born in Rotterdam, Holland. Around the age of twenty-four he moved to the United States and resided in New York. Culverhouse devoted himself to domestic scenes and romantic scenery because he knew they would appeal to the American audience. Although those genres of artwork were popular; Culverhouse revisited his roots of Dutch art. That particular style is known for realist approach to subject matters of landscapes, night markets, taverns, and busy street scenes. The styles of his best known works are a true reflection of his European background.

Culverhouse's life in America is documented primarily through exhibition records including: the American Academy of Fine Arts in 1849, the Boston Athenaeum and New Jersey Art Union in 1851, and the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1852. The American Art Union in New York acquired a few of Culverhouse's paintings to distribute to its members. When the American Art Union sold more of his paintings at a public auction in 1852, it was reprimanded and called an unlawful lottery. Near the time of the Civil War, Culverhouse returned to Europe and participated in a number of Paris Salons. By the mid 1860s, he returned to New York and continued exhibiting his work. Although he is said to have died in 1895, the exact date and location are unknown.



Johann Mongels Culverhouse (1825-1895). *Union Army Encampment*, 1860. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

What is a civil war? A war that occurs between groups of people who belong to the same country. The American Civil War was fought between Union states (North) and Confederate states (South) over the issues of slavery.

Who was President during the Civil War? What was his goal? *Abraham Lincoln. He wanted to abolish slavery in the south and unite the Union.*

What visual clues did the artist use to show the painting was of an army? *The tents are perfectly aligned and all of the men are dressed in the same color. Uniformity is very characteristic of the army.*

The soldiers are shown in blue. Tell the students that uniforms during the Civil War helped distinguish the Union soldiers in the north from the Confederate soldiers in the south. Blue eventually became the official color for the north and gray for the south.

Have the students guess how many men stayed in a single tent. *Tents housed 5 or 6 men.* The space was tight but they were only there to sleep. Point out the cabin in the background. Log cabins replaced tents in the winter months to keep soldiers out of the harsh weather.

Notice all of the small fires. Why are there so many? What are they for? *Most of the cooking was done outdoors.*

How would the soldiers contact their family?

They could only write letters to their family members. A lot of the soldiers became homesick. Ask the students how they would feel if they could only write letters to their loved ones for months.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Civil War; slavery; Union army vs. Confederate army; Reconstruction; military life

Historical Figures: Abraham Lincoln

Geography: American North vs. South

Literature: Civil war soldiers letters; other primary sources

Arts: Domestic scenes; Landscapes

WILLIAM GAY YORKE (1817 -1892?)

The Great Republic, 1861

Clipper ships were developed around the time of the American Revolution. They were designed for speed and to carry small cargo of high value. After the American Revolution, the United States was able to trade more actively in Europe and the Far East because of the clipper ship.

The Great Republic was launched on October 4, 1853. It was the largest wooden clipper ship ever constructed and was projected to be the most profitable wooden sailing ship. The ship sailed from Boston to New York and its first cargo was loaded in December of 1853. Tragedy struck when buildings near the Great Republic's docking station caught fire which spread to the ship. Salvaged pieces of the ship were sent to Captain Nathaniel Palmer. He rebuilt the Great Republic and had her back in service by February 1855 to voyage to Liverpool. In 1869, she was sold to the Merchants' Trading Company of Liverpool, renamed Denmark and put into the East India Trade. Her expeditions continued until March of 1872, when a massive hurricane off Bermuda caused a great deal of damage to the ship and she was abandoned due to the amount of water that was leaking aboard. During its nineteen year merchant career, the Great Republic proved to be one of the fastest ships, averaging 17 knots and moving 413 nautical miles in a single day.

William Gay Yorke was a self-taught artist who was born in Canada. He spent his earlier years as a shipwright and painted in his spare time. In his 30s, he gave up his trade and made painting his top priority. Ships, private yachts, tugboats,



William Gay Yorke (1817-1892?). *The Great Republic*, 1861. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

and steam vessels were his favorite art subjects. Later in life, Yorke sailed to the United States and lived in New York aboard his sailboat.

His painting of *The Great Republic* captured the beauty and splendor of its launch into the Atlantic.

American poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, later wrote a poem about the Great Republic. A section from the poem is shown below:

Thou, too, sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great!
Humanity with all its fears
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on the fate!
We know what Master laid the keel,
What Workmen wrought thy ribs of steel,
Who made each mast, and sail, and rope,
What anvils rang, what hammers beat,
In what forge and what a heat
Were shaped the anchors of thy hope!

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Why did the artist place the ship in the center of the composition?

Placing it in the center and making it the largest object emphasizes its importance.

How can you visually measure the scale of the Great Republic?

Compare the size of the figures on the deck with the size of the boat.

Why would Yorke choose to paint a boat?

The Great Republic symbolized the developing economy and the increased commercial strength and international reputation of the United States.

Read the poem aloud to the students while they look at the painting of *The Great Republic*. Ask them whether or not the poem is a good description of what they see. Ask the students if they think the poem would be as exciting without the painting. Discuss how writing can enhance or detract from the painting.

CONNECTIONS

History: Clipper ships; East India Trading Company

Economics: Commerce; sea transportation; global trade

Literature: American poets (Longfellow)

Arts: Ship portraits

EASTMAN JOHNSON (1824-1906)

The Boy Lincoln, 1867

After the Civil War and the assassination of President Lincoln, America was in complete despair. Many artists and poets mourned through their work and helped the healing process of America through expressive words and heart-felt images. Family life became the focus of many artists, including Eastman Johnson.

Eastman Johnson was born in Maine and was the youngest of eight siblings. At age fifteen he moved out of the family home and took his first job in New Hampshire, only to realize art was his true passion. A few years later, he returned home and became quite successful as a portrait artist. Determined to improve his skills, he left the U.S. to study at the Royal Academy in Germany. He was highly influenced by Rembrandt's style and later became known as the "American Rembrandt".

The death of Johnson's mother brought him back to America in 1855. While visiting a sibling in Wisconsin, Johnson was exposed to the frontier life of the Ojibwa Indians. He became compassionate toward the Ojibwa and made sure to illustrate their daily lives truthfully in his art. Like the Ojibwa paintings, much of his work encourages viewers to reflect on the life



Eastman Johnson (1824-1906). *The Boy Lincoln*, 1867. Oil on panel. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

of the individuals being portrayed. Audience reflection led Johnson to focus on painting African Americans for nearly ten years of his career. In the aftermath of war, his work shifted to domestic scenes of American families and communal relationships. Johnson's painting, *The Boy Lincoln*, portrays Abraham Lincoln as a young boy. Determined to catch the light of the fire, the boy leans back and carries on reading his book. The image shows the young Lincoln's modesty and determination for greatness. Johnson created many works about the intellectual potential of children.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Why do you think Johnson chose to portray Lincoln as a young boy rather than showcasing him as a strong presidential leader? *The potential for greatness was always within Lincoln. He was humble, even as a child, and always had a strong desire to learn.*

Johnson chose subjects like the Ojibwa and African-Americans. Why is this important?

Although people had conflicting views on slavery and Native Americans, they were brought together as viewers of art. It allowed them to communally reflect on the subject matter and consider a reality other than their own.

Following the war, why would Johnson turn his subject matter to domestic life?

In times of grief, we tend to turn inward and spend time with those we love most. Domestic paintings were something that everyone could relate to in some way.

Describe the composition of the painting. Where is the subject placed? What is he doing?

The glow from the flames weakens as the eyes wander from the young boy. Lincoln is leaning against the stone fireplace to be near the light. His posture creates a dynamic line that cuts across the picture plane. Note how the lighting and the lines of the figure work together to keep the eyes moving from left to right and top to bottom.

What is the color scheme?

Monochromatic. This means that one color is used in a full range of lighter tints and darker shades.

CONNECTIONS

History Connections: Civil War; assassination of President Lincoln; Native Americans (Ojibwa); slavery; importance/development of educational system

Historical Figures: Rembrandt, Abraham Lincoln

Literature: Poems about Lincoln (Walt Whitman)

Arts: Portraiture; domestic life; realism

ROBERT SCOTT DUNCANSON (1821-1872)

Heart of the Andes, 1871

Robert Scott Duncanson was born to an African American mother and Scottish Canadian father. He was raised in Canada with his father to escape slavery and racism in the United States. As a teenager he devoted much of his time teaching himself how to paint. His passion for art only grew stronger with age and he aspired to turn it into a full time career. In 1841, he moved to Ohio with his mother. Cincinnati was in the Golden Age of painting and considered to be “the Athens of the West”. Duncanson immediately made his mark within the cultural hub and exhibited numerous paintings throughout the city.

He studied independently as a landscape painter but found much of his inspiration from masters like Thomas Cole and other Hudson River School artists. The Hudson River School was a group of artists who focused primarily on painting America’s backwoods. Duncanson’s *Heart of the Andes, 1871* was painted in homage to Frederic Edwin Church, another Hudson River School artist, and his 1859 masterpiece, *Heart of the Andes*.

Duncanson spent an extensive amount of time travelling in search of new inspiration. He became one of the first African Americans who established a career as an artist in the nineteenth century. His paintings are romantic depictions of exploration, discovery, and settlement of the natural world. They often contain moral messages and explore the relationship between humans and nature.



Robert Scott Duncanson (1821-1872). *Heart of the Andes*, 1871. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Find the following objects. What do they mean? Why are they there?

Rainbow: *It is found in the upper right hand corner.*

Cross: *It appears on the left, in the lower part of the painting.*

Birds: *Found throughout the painting.*

American flag: *It appears on the right hand side of the painting.*

Small village: *Appears near the middle of the composition.*

Pilgrims: *They are near the cross, on the left hand side of the painting.*

Union soldiers: *They are on the right, across the river from the pilgrims.*

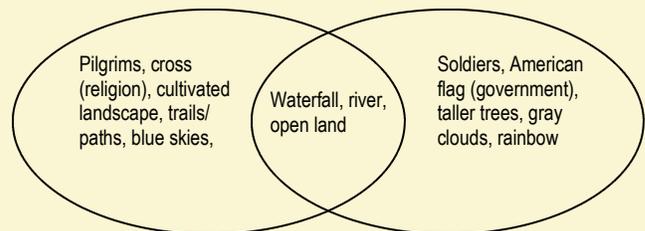
Where is the light coming from?

The upper left hand corner.

Have the students consider the experiences of Duncanson as an African-American artist. Does his lack of technical training show in the artwork?

He looked to established artists for inspiration. Using the style of the Hudson River School, he was able to replicate the ideas of other artists and put his own creative spin on them.

Compare and contrast the left, right, and middle sections of the painting.



Compare and contrast Duncanson’s work with Church’s. What are the differences? Are they significant?

CONNECTIONS

Historical: World travel; exploring/conquering new places

Historical Figures: Frederick Edwin Church; Emerson; Thoreau; Alexander Von Humboldt

Environmental Movement: Conservation; power of nature (God in nature); Civil war, slavery; North v. South; free blacks

Literary: Essay on American Scenery (Cole); Nature (Emerson); Democracy in America Vol. 1,2 (Alexis de Toqueville)

Arts: Hudson River; landscape paintings; Romanticism; sublime; panorama; art for home; arcadia

ALBERT BIERSTADT (1830-1902)

Mount Brewer from Kings River Canyon, 1872

(oil sketch)

Albert Bierstadt was born in Germany but his family moved to Massachusetts when he was just two years old. In 1853 he returned to Germany to study at Dusseldorf. While in school, Bierstadt refined his skills as an artist and spent a great deal of time painting the Alpine landscapes. After returning to America in 1857 he got the opportunity to go on a survey expedition to the West. In the mid 1800s, few Americans had explored beyond the Mississippi so this voyage was an excellent opportunity. Bierstadt was fascinated by the majestic landscapes and made countless sketches to record what he saw. Oil sketches were made on site and would have been referred to later for larger, more elaborate works. It was important for the sketches to be small so they could be easily transported back to his studio.

After returning home he produced an abundance of landscape paintings including the large *Mount Brewer from Kings River Canyon*, for which the KIA painting is a oil sketch. The paintings immediately gained popularity among the East Coast audiences. The public was captivated by the jagged and romantic settings. Bierstadt became internationally known for his monumental paintings of the American west. His art was sold for record prices for the time and his wealth accumulated. His popularity came to a halt when public interest turned to the emergence of the Boston School and Impressionism. These groups were influenced by European styles that focused on soft, feathery brushstrokes and vibrant colors; very different from the dramatic and naturalistic paintings of Bierstadt. Despite everything, his success as an artist speaks for itself. He was a devoted artist and produced well over 500 works in his lifetime that clearly demonstrated his passion for art and love of nature.



Albert Bierstadt (1830-1902). *Mount Brewer from Kings River Canyon*, 1872. Oil on paper. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Ask students what they notice first when they look at this painting. They might mention the tree or the large boulder and rock formations.

Does the light add drama to the scene?

The hazy background makes the rock formations look very grand.

How has Bierstadt shown distance or depth?

The mountains in the background look foggy because they are less detailed and lighter in color than the rocks in the foreground.

This landscape was painted less than a decade after the civil war. How could a scene like this be used a sign of hope for Americans?

Many viewed the West as a new beginning. A peaceful scene like this would have reminded them of the beautiful country waiting to be explored.

What role did Bierstadt's paintings play in the development of tourism to the West?

Bierstadt's paintings made people want to see the western scenery for themselves. Within a few years, the number of railroad systems to the West increased and tourism grew immensely.

Bierstadt, like many artists of the time, painted some rock formations larger than they actually were. Why?

To impress those who had not yet travelled west.

Ask the students if they think this was dishonest. Have them explain why they do or do not believe it is okay for an artist to exaggerate a scene.

Look at an image of the final painting, *Mount Brewer from Kings River Canyon*. Can the students locate this oil sketched scene within the painting? If not, why not?

CONNECTIONS

Historical: Transcontinental Railroad; California Gold Rush; conservation movement; national parks; Westward Expansion

Geography: California; Kings River Canyon

Science: Ecology; conversation; geology

Arts: Hudson River School; compare with the works of Frederic Church, Thomas Moran and Robert S. Duncanson

EDMONIA LEWIS (1840-1907)

The Marriage of Hiawatha, 1872

Little is known about Edmonia Lewis. Her Haitian-American father died soon after she was born. She grew up in the Ojibwa tribe with her mother and siblings. In 1862, Lewis left for Boston and studied briefly with sculptor Edward Brackett. She found various patrons for whom she created and sold portraits of antislavery figures. The funds she received from these sales allowed her to travel to England, France, Italy, and Rome. Edmonia Lewis was the first African American sculptor to gain an international reputation. She practiced her art with a group of American female sculptors in Rome. The classical influences of studying abroad are evident in her work. Most sculptors during that time hired carvers to create their clay models into a marble form but Lewis carved her own to prevent skeptics from calling her work unoriginal.



Edmonia Lewis (1840-1907). *The Marriage of Hiawatha*, 1872. Marble. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

The Marriage of Hiawatha, depicts the union of Hiawatha and his lover, Minnehaha. The submissive appearance of the woman and the defensive posture of the man is a reflection of the traditional gender roles of the time.

The neoclassical sculpture was inspired by the 1855 poem, *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The poem narrates the story of a mythical Ojibwa hero, Hiawatha. Longfellow's heroic character believed that the changes brought by white men would lead to a better way of life for Native Americans. The epic tale reflects the negative stereotypes of native people during that era.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Have students stand like Hiawatha and Minnehaha with their weight resting on one leg and with the other leg slightly bent. Notice how this feels more relaxed than standing on two feet. Explain that this is a classical *contrapposto* pose. Students might view ancient Greek and Roman sculptures where this type of pose originated.

After comparing the pose to ancient sculptures, ask the students what else about this work resembles Greek or Roman sculpture? Point out the material and fabric choices. *White marble; draped fabrics; exposed shoulder of the male; full figures*

Describe what the figures' are wearing.

Decorated dresses; feathers in their hair; necklaces; boots

Ask students what the poses of Hiawatha and Minnehaha say about their character.

Hiawatha is standing strong and confidently. His arm is over her shoulder like he's protecting her. Minnehaha looks calm, knowing that Hiawatha is going to take care of her.

Hiawatha and Minnehaha are idealized images of Native Americans that were invented by a white American author and sculpted by an African/Native American artist. Discuss the significance of cultural interaction with your students. Ask them why they believe it's important to learn about other cultures.

CONNECTIONS

Historical: American Indian tribes and histories; cultural interactions; African Americans

Historical Figures: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Geography: Lands of American Indian tribes; Midwest region

Literature: *The Song of Hiawatha* (Longfellow)

JASPER FRANCIS CROPSEY [1823-1900]

Autumn Sunset at Greenwood Lake, NY, 1876

Jasper Francis Cropsey grew up in Staten Island, New York. He was a child of poor health so he was often stuck at home. While absent from school, he taught himself how to draw and copied different architectural drawings and landscape paintings. His interest in art grew immensely as he got older. Much of his influence came from French landscape painter, Claude Lorraine and other Hudson River School artists like Thomas Cole.

Cropsey painted directly from the landscape. He focused on the treatment of light and the radiance of the sun. A favorite subject of his was the changing of seasons. He is especially famous for his autumnal landscapes, set in northeastern United States and often idealized with vivid colors and gleaming light. Cropsey believed that landscape paintings were a way to expand America's cultural independence from Europe.

Autumn Sunset at Greenwood Lake, NY was painted after Cropsey returned from a trip to Europe and it clearly displays his artistic gifts at their finest. Greenwood Lake is where he met his wife Maria Cooley; perhaps that meeting inspired this romantic and joyful scene of a perfect fall day.



Jasper Francis Cropsey (1823-1900). *Autumn Sunset at Greenwood Lake, NY, 1876*. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

What did the artist do in order to make the sun look like it is setting?

He used rich hues of orange, pink, and red. Challenge the students by asking what the artist could have done to represent a sunrise in the painting. Usually, a sunrise gives off lighter pastels of color.

How did Cropsey show depth in the painting?

The mountains in the background are less detailed and blurred compared to the foreground.

Where do you see rough textures?

The trees and rocks.

Where do you see smooth textures?

In the sky and clouds; mountains in the distance; water.

Explain that using a variety of textures helps bring a work of art to life. It becomes more visually appealing.

There is a lake in the middle of the composition. How did the artist represent water?

He painted reflections from trees and the sun to achieve the glossy finish of water.

How did the artist represent autumn?

Changing colors of the leaves. Many of the trees are bright red, indicating that it is well into the fall season.

Describe the mood of the scene. How does it make you feel?

Peaceful; calm; quiet; romantic

How does the artist achieve those feelings?

Golden light; soft clouds; use of saturated colors and pastels

Many 19th century artists felt that the essence of their country was reflected in the landscape. Unlike European artists, the American artists were interested in the land that was unmarked by man's presence and aimed to capture the spirituality of nature. Have the students discuss the diversity of American landscapes (farms; cities; forests; deserts; mountains). How do they feel to live in such a geographically diverse country?

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Expansion and reform; time of urbanization and idealization of country life

Arts: Landscape; Hudson River School

HENRY OSSAWA TANNER (1859-1937)

The Visitation, 1890-1900

Henry Ossawa Tanner was born in 1859 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. His father was a college-educated teacher and later became a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. His mother was a former slave who came to Pittsburgh through the Underground Railroad. As a young teenager, Tanner uncovered his artistic niche and spent a great deal of time drawing and visiting art galleries. His parents were opposed to his interests in art and tried to redirect his focus elsewhere. Eventually, they realized painting was his true passion and encouraged him to pursue his dreams.

In 1879, his parents enrolled him in the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts under the leadership of Thomas Eakins; who would later prove to have a lasting affect on Tanner's artistic style. He left the academy after a few years and set up his own studio in Philadelphia. As an African American, he was faced with racial discrimination and had a difficult time establishing a career. With the generous patronage of Bishop and Mrs. Hartzell, Tanner made enough money to sail to Paris. Paris was not only a breath of fresh air but it served as an escape from the prejudices in America. Suddenly, he was being judged on his artistic talent rather than the color of his skin. His work was accepted into several French salons and art galleries and he became one of the first African Americans to receive international honors.



Henry Tanner Ossawa (1859-1937). *The Visitation*, 1890-1900. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

One of Tanner's first submissions into the Paris Salon was *The Banjo Lesson*. Like many of his early paintings, it captured the unseen tenderness of African Americans in their daily lives. The painting gained little interest even though its social message was screaming for attention. Tanner changed his focus from African Americans to biblical figures. Some believe he did so because people in France weren't buying his work. Others argue that he had a hard time painting American scenes so far away from home.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

How is the painting like an impressionist?

Unblended brushstrokes; lack of detail.

What is the focal point of this painting? What are your eyes drawn to first?

The woman in blue.

Why is our attention drawn to this area?

She is the largest of the two figures. The light is shining directly on her and casting a dark shadow.

The woman on the left is barely inside of the picture plane.

Why? *It creates the scene. The eyes are drawn to the woman in blue. Once we see her shocked expression, we are encouraged to search the room for what has surprised her. We then find it is the presence of the woman entering the home.*

Can you locate the shadows in this painting?

Right wall; items on the table

Where does the light seem to be coming from? *From the left. What kind of light would cast such a strong shadow indoors? A fire?*

How is the composition of this painting similar to a picture taken with a camera?

It's asymmetrical, the figures or objects continue outside of the picture.

Does the painting appear flat? Explain.

Yes. The artist used broad areas of color and odd angles.

Why is the table out of perspective?

Tanner wanted to emphasize the items on the table and he achieved that by flipping the table upward so the viewer could see.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Slavery; Underground Railroad; Racism; civil rights

Civics: Emancipation Proclamation

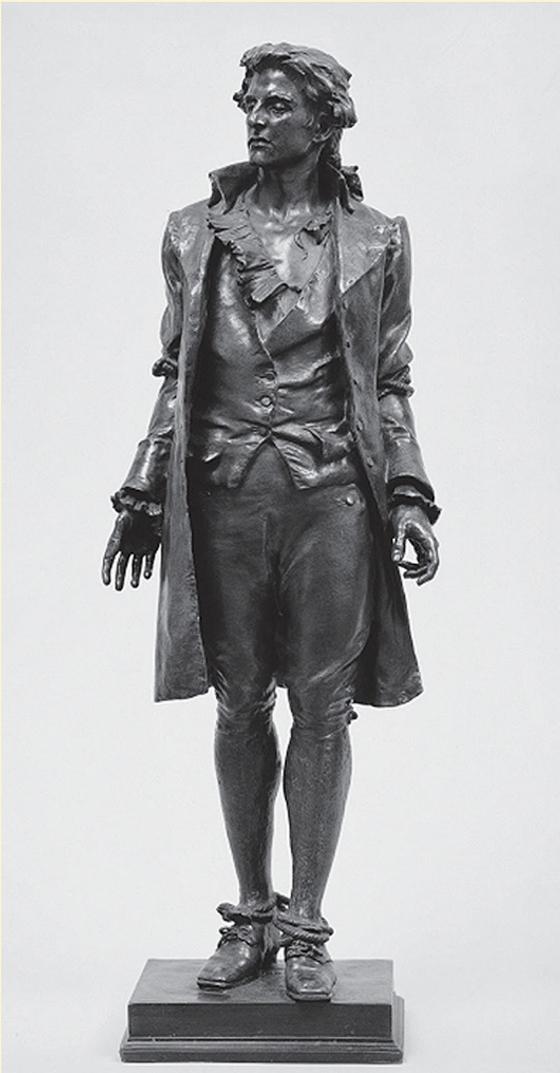
Arts: Impressionism, realism; biblical subjects

FREDERICK WILLIAM MACMONNIES (1863-1937)

Nathan Hale, 1890

Frederick William MacMonnies was born in Brooklyn on September 28, 1863. He became fascinated with art at a young age because his mother was related to the famous American painter, Benjamin West. In 1884 he left his New York home for Paris to study sculpture at the Beaux-Arts school. MacMonnies excelled and received many honors and awards. He became one of the best-known Americans who attended the school.

MacMonnies was commissioned by the Sons of the American Revolution of the State of New York to create the monument of the Revolutionary War hero, Nathan Hale. The bronze cast of Hale at the KIA is a maquette (small model) for the life-sized statue in New York; located near the site where Hale is thought to have been executed.



Frederick William MacMonnies (1863-1937). *Nathan Hale*, 1890. Bronze with brown patina. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

Nathan Hale was a lieutenant in the Continental Army. In September 1776, Hale volunteered to go to Long Island and spy on the British and learn where the upcoming invasion was going to take place on Manhattan Island. The British quickly discovered him and after long interrogations he was executed without trial. The news of Hale's death was passed to General George Washington's headquarters by a British officer carrying a flag of truce.

The bronze figure captures Nathan Hale after boldly speaking the words, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." MacMonnies didn't design the figure around Hale's execution but chose to emphasize the acts of heroism that preceded his final moments. The ropes around his ankles and elbows become an afterthought as his assertive posture takes center-stage. MacMonnies sculptural work is a memento of the Founding Fathers; who believed that no matter the circumstance, it's important to stand firmly for what is right.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Hale stands straight, with his shoulders back and his head held high. Have the students stand tall like Nathan Hale. How does it make them feel? *Confident? Strong?*

Hale is standing confidently but what does his face reveal? *Sadness. His eyes are pointed toward the ground, his head is turned to the side, and it looks like he is frowning.*

Describe Nathan Hale. What is he wearing?
Long coat; blouse; vest; stockings

Does he look a bit untidy?

Yes, his shirt is tattered and his neck is exposed. An 18th century man would never appear in public looking so disorderly.

What are around his ankles and arms? Why?

Ropes. He is not a free man. He's being held captive and awaiting his fate of death.

Why would a sculpture like this be commissioned? What would be its purpose? Why would it be placed in a public area?

CONNECTIONS

Historical: Revolutionary war; Colonies

Historical Figures: Nathan Hale; Benjamin Franklin; George Washington

Civics: Founding Fathers; Articles of Confederation

Arts: Bronze sculpture; public sculpture/monuments

WILLIAM MERRITT CHASE (1849-1916)

A Study in Pink (Mrs. Robert McDougal), **1895**

William Merritt Chase was born in Indianapolis and was the oldest of six children. His father hoped that he would one day follow him in the women's shoe business but Chase desired to be an artist. As a young man, he left to study at the National Academy of Design in New York. Chase travelled to Europe in 1872 and attended the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Munich. After spending six years improving his artistic skills he returned to New York to establish his art career. He took a number of different teaching jobs before settling in as a full-time artist. He purchased one of the finest studios available in the respected Tenth Street Studio Building in New York and devoted his time promoting American art. Chase was known for his flashy style and charming personality. His studio attracted diverse crowds of artists and social figures.



William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). *A Study in Pink (Mrs. Robert McDougal)*, 1895. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

Chase painted a variety of landscapes and still lifes, but he is best known for his portraits. His Impressionist style allowed him to capture the true nature of his subjects. He especially favored painterly brushstrokes because the swiftness gave his art an openness of form. The works of art are composed through bright palettes and attention to detail.

Robert and Ida McDougal were a married couple. Robert got involved in the cotton trade industry and became quite successful. *A Study in Pink* was commissioned by the McDougal's to demonstrate their affluent lifestyle and high social status.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Was Mrs. Ida McDougal a wealthy woman? How do you know? Yes. *The dress she is wearing looks very expensive.* You could also point out to the students that a portrait crafted by such a well-established artist would have cost a couple thousand dollars.

What kind of fabric is Ida wearing? *Satin? Lace?*

Why was the detailing of fabric so important?

The types of fabric that people wore were associated with their wealth. Ask the students if they think the dress is stealing the spotlight from Ida.

Why is she not wearing any jewelry?

A lot of the jewelry that is worn today was considered unfashionable until the late 1800s.

What is Ida holding in her hands?

A Egret feather fan. Egret feathers were very expensive. By 1900, the plumes of egret's had become more valuable per ounce than gold. Millions of birds were being killed, especially in Florida, to meet the fashion demands. Finally, in 1900 the Lacey Bird and Game Act outlawed the trade in plumage.

Ask the students to look at the body language and facial expression of Ida. What do they notice?

Sadness; loneliness; discomfort; gentleness

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Near the turn of the century (1900); new wealth in America; cotton industry

Arts: Portraiture, Impressionism

ALFRED STIEGLITZ (1864-1946)

The Steerage, 1907

Alfred Stieglitz moved around quite a bit as a young boy. He was born in New Jersey in 1864, moved to Manhattan with his family in 1871, and then Germany in 1881. While attending high school in Berlin, Stieglitz took a photochemistry class and became fascinated with the subject. From that point on, he was involved with photography in some way. When the family moved back to America in 1890, Stieglitz became an advocate for the school of pictorial photography. He felt that photos were a valid art form and believed that photographers should not be overshadowed by 'fine artists'. In 1896 he became the editor for *Camera Notes*, a journal for the Camera Club in New York. In time, Stieglitz left the club to pursue his own projects. He established the Photo Secession group in 1902 and created a photographic journal called *Camera Works*. The new undertaking was different from previous clubs because it emphasized the craftsmanship of photographs. Stieglitz intended to remove himself from the Pictorialism trend. He didn't want to manipulate a photo to make it appear more painterly, he wanted to capture the natural beauty of a scene.



Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946). *The Steerage*, 1907. Photograph on vellum. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

In 1905, Stieglitz established an art gallery at 291 5th Avenue in New York called the Little Galleries, and later simply 291. He finally had the space to showcase the work of photographers published in his magazine, *Camera Work*. Stieglitz held a number of exhibitions in the studio and was able to improve the status of photography to the same level as paintings and sculptures. Gallery 291 accepted works of art that were rejected by other institutions including works by Picasso, Rodin, Matisse, and Cézanne. His rationale behind the 'open door' policy was to test photography against work in other media to prove it could stand on its own. Stieglitz, whether he knew it or not, began forging the path to modernity long before the 1913 Armory Show in America. His intentions weren't to be avant-garde and shock the public, he simply wanted to prove that photographers deserved to have a voice in the art world.

Stieglitz captured *The Steerage* during a trip to Europe with his wife and daughter. The family travelled first class. The steerage was located on the lower deck of the ship and housed the individuals returning to Europe after being rejected by immigration officials in America. The photograph portrays the economic separation of society. The starkness is shortly interrupted by a white ramp meant to connect the two floors; in this context however, it only separates them further.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Notice the shapes, lines, and forms in this photograph. Stieglitz focused less on the social separations of class in the scene and more on the aesthetic composition. What elements/ideas make this photograph so dynamic?

Diagonal lines vs. straight lines

Dark vs. light

Moving figures vs. stationary objects

Space vs. mass

Immigration vs. leisurely travel

Where do you see patterns of activity?

The individuals on the upper deck are very static and those on the lower deck seem scattered and busy.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Sea travel, immigration; class divisions; Armory Show; avant-garde

Arts: Photography; Modern Abstract art; Pictorialism

LOUIS COMFORT TIFFANY (1848-1933)***Woodbine Table Lamp, 1910***

Louis Comfort Tiffany was one of the most celebrated American artists of the 19th century. He declared his life goal was “the pursuit of beauty”. That very pursuit drove his experimentation of a variety of art media.

The Gilded Age, following the Civil War and Reconstruction era, introduced the modern industrial economy. The economy grew incredibly fast and many Americans who achieved wealth celebrated with lavish purchases. Tiffany’s father, Charles Lewis Tiffany, was the founder of Tiffany & Company in New York. The upscale company was known for its fine jewelry and silver products. Although the jewelry business was booming, Tiffany chose to pursue a career based on his own interests.

Tiffany began his career as a painter. His financial stability enabled him to travel throughout North America and Europe. After returning home from a trip to Paris, Tiffany decided there was more to art than paintings. He continued to paint but



Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933). Woodbine Table Lamp, 1910. Leaded glass and bronze. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

became interested in the decorative arts and interior spaces. Colored glass was a medium that had remained untouched since the Middle Ages but made a major comeback in the nineteenth century. After many trials, Tiffany established new techniques for manipulating glass. The first interior design project was his New York apartment—which also served as a studio. He fashioned a leaded-glass window in the front entrance that resembled brushstrokes in a painting. However, the range of visual effects that were achieved in glass would not be possible with paint alone.

Tiffany’s career blossomed and he became a leading figure of Art Nouveau and the aesthetics movement in America. He progressively wandered into furniture construction, window designs, mosaics, lamps, jewelry, and ceramics. The range of Tiffany’s work made him quite successful and his artistic versatility allowed people from all levels of society to enjoy his products.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES**Where did Tiffany repeat colors on the lamp?**

Cool, earthy hues are near the top. Warmer colors are concentrated on the bottom of the lamp.

What do you notice about the shapes of glass and the colors that are used for those shapes?

Similar shapes have similar colors.

Now that students are aware of the correlation between shape and color on the lamp, challenge them further.

What does this technique create? *Focal point; background and foreground; texture; rhythm; balance.* Discuss how these elements are used in Tiffany’s other work.

Discuss how tangible items can take advantage of techniques used in paintings. *Both have the ability to create a visual experience.* Using the lamp as an example, the red woodbine becomes the focal point with its rich hues. It wraps around the base of the lamp shade—similar to the way it would wrap a tree in nature.

Glass is a dynamic medium. Why?

The color of glass changes depending on the kind of light (natural vs. artificial) that is shining on it.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: the Gilded Age; rise of middle and upper classes

Arts: Art Nouveau.; aesthetics movement; decorative art

DOROTHEA LANGE (1895-1965)

Migrant Mother, 1936

The onset of the Great Depression was due to the market crash of October 1929, which changed the nation dramatically. Artists were strongly affected because the market for art virtually disappeared. Many artists met their financial means by working for the federal government, which had established a number of programs to provide relief and promote reform. The Resettlement Act, one of the relief programs, focused on capturing the lives of farming families and migrant workers who had been displaced during the Great Depression.

Dorothea Lange was hired by the Resettlement Administration in 1936 to capture the lives of migratory pea pickers in California. In Nipomo Valley, Lange came across a camp where workers were struggling with hunger because their farms were frozen from harsh weather conditions. The photograph that is now referred to as *Migrant Mother* was taken by Lange while she was in Nipomo. The woman in the photograph was California native, Florence Owens Thompson and her young children. The next day, the photograph was published in the *San Francisco News* and quickly spread nationwide. The public became sympathetic toward the devastation of poverty and food was rushed into Nipomo to feed the hungry workers.



Dorothea Lange (1895-1965). *Migrant Mother*, 1936. Black and white photograph. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Ask the students what they first notice when looking at this image.

They will probably notice the woman's facial expression.

What emotions are being portrayed by the woman?

Her eyes reveal sorrow and frustration but she remains strong in character, comforting her children and hoping things will change for the better.

How does this work compare to painted portraits the students have seen? *Photography allows an image to be more rugged and accurate. The sitters in the painted portraits were displayed at their very best, almost in a romanticized way. In *Migrant Mother*, the photograph does not conceal the wrinkles of her face, the fly away hairs, or the tattered clothing.*

Lange was hired to capture images of pea farms. Why did she take this photograph when the farm isn't even presented in the image? Share the quote of Dorothea Lange from the February 1960 issue of *Popular Photography*:

"I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions. I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it."

Would images of the landscape have been as effective?

Probably not. An image of the farm would have hinted towards poverty and hunger but using an actual person strings our chords of emotion. We see the effect of the harsh landscape in a much more intimate way.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Great Depression; the Dust Bowl; Farm Security Administration; Works Progress Administration

Civics: The New Deal

Geography: Western migration

Arts: Photography

WALKER EVANS [1903-1975]

Farmhouse, 1936

Walker Evans' fascination with photography began at the age of twenty-five. He was living in New York and began experimenting his camera by capturing city life and architecture. After viewing his snapshots, he realized he had captured some truly amazing scenes. His first images were published shortly after returning home to New York.

Like Dorothea Lange, Evans worked closely with the Resettlement Administration, which was later called the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA was a part of the New Deal program. The focus of the governmental project was to document farming families. He used the 8x10 view camera to capture the images. The larger view allowed for a more detailed image to be produced. Evans and his boss, Roy Stryker, often got into arguments about the photographs. Evans strived to create a pure record of what he saw and Stryker was focused on publishing photographs that would help promote political and social changes. Their conflicting standards came to a halt when Evans left and returned to New York.

In 1936, he was hired to collaborate with the writer James Agee and complete an article for *Fortune* magazine concerning the lives of American tenant-farmers. The article received a lot of attention after it was published and James Agee later inspired to write the book, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Evans was hired by *Fortune* as the full time staff photographer. He worked for *Fortune* for twenty years before leaving in 1965 to become a professor at Yale University. He taught photography and graphic design at Yale for the remainder of his life.



Walker Evans [1903-1975]. Farmhouse, 1936. Black and white photograph. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

Walker Evans said that the purpose of his work was to capture images that were “literate, authoritative, transcendent”. His images captured the realities of the rural south and completely transformed the way photography was used for historical evidence. Evans had the ability to create images that spoke for themselves. His work always appeared to be objective and allowed the viewer to interpret the context of the images.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

What do the students notice first when they look at this photograph? *Is it the car?*

Discuss why our attention is immediately drawn to this part of the image.

The car is placed in the middle of the photograph. It is placed in front of the stark, white house and creates a silhouette image.

Describe the setting.

It seems to be fairly isolated. There aren't any other buildings in view, so it's probably a home in the country or in the outskirts of town.

Why did Evans decide to take the photograph without people in the scene?

The viewer is encouraged to focus on the building itself and imagine all of the other elements.

What kind of people do you think lived in this home?

Farmers? The family was probably not living in poverty. We can guess this from the size of the home and the car parked in the front.

The longer we look at the image of the home, more of its beauty is revealed. Ask the students if they notice all of the lines and patterns on the house. Discuss the visual textures and shadows and have the students think about how this enhances the photograph. These give an otherwise tranquil setting character and life.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: The Great Depression; Farm Security Administration

Historical Figures: James Agee, Franklin Delano Roosevelt; Roy Stryker

Civics: The New Deal

Literature: *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, James Agee

Arts: Photography

CHARLES HENRY ALSTON (1907-1977)***Untitled (Couple)*, 1945**

Charles Henry Alston was born in Charlotte, North Carolina. His father died when he was just three years old. Later, his mother moved the family to New York and married Harry Bearden (the uncle of artist Romare Bearden).

Alston attended Columbia University where he received his degree in fine arts and history. After graduation, he took a job teaching art at a local boys camp called the Utopia House. Jacob Lawrence (an artist featured in the KIA collection) was one of his students at the camp. Alston loved teaching so much that he decided to go back to Columbia and earn his Masters in Art Education. During that time, he illustrated a number of album covers for local musicians and poets including Duke Ellington and Langston Hughes.

Mexican muralists like José Clemente Orozco and Diego Rivera influenced Alston's artistic endeavors. The artists used murals to inspire people and promote social activism within the community. Alton was determined to be a major figure in the Harlem Renaissance Movement and later became co-director of the Harlem Art Workshop during the Great Depression. As part of the New Deal program of the 1930's, the workshop artists painted a number of murals around Harlem with the sponsorship of the Work Program Administration. The Harlem Art Workshop became so popular that Alston had to move the program to a different facility at 306 West 141st Street. The space became the center for the Harlem art community and a meeting place for a variety of artists, writers, actors, and musicians.



Charles Henry Alston (1907-1977). *Untitled (Couple)*, 1945. Oil on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

During World War II, Alston worked for the Office of War Information and drew a number of cartoon images to encourage African Americans to support the war. Still, his work received little attention even though he was such a central figure in Harlem. In the 1950's, one of his paintings was awarded first place in a national juried competition and later purchased by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This was a pinnacle moment in his career and he was finally able to establish himself in the art community.

Family, music, and African themes were displayed all throughout Alston's career. Although his styles varied, his subjects were always connected to African American culture. In *Untitled (Couple)*, Alston fused Cubist, Abstract, and Figurative styles of art. The setting was likely a New York City jazz café, which the artist frequently visited.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Ask the students if this painting is realistic (life-like) or abstract (simplified). Explain. *It is abstract. The artists used basic shapes and few details.*

What shapes do you see in this painting?

Rectangles; triangles; trapezoids

Although this painting is an abstraction, we can still recognize the characters as a man and woman. Have the students point out the clues that help us distinguish the genders.

Man in the background is wearing a suit vest and a tie. The woman in front appears to be wearing a dress with laced fabric around the arms and collar.

Discuss why abstract art became popular in the United States. *Following WWII, the United States became an active world leader. Abstract art exposed the new energy in America. It demonstrated that in a democracy artists could express themselves freely, unlike artists in totalitarian countries who had to create art that supported government ideas.*

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Harlem Renaissance; Great Depression; World War II; the Jazz Age

Historical Figures: Duke Ellington; Langston Hughes; Jacob Lawrence; Diego Rivera; José Clemente Orozco

Civics: The New Deal

Music: Jazz; blues

Arts: Murals; Cubism; Abstract; Figurative

HUGHIE LEE-SMITH (1915-1999)

The Spectators, 1957

Hughie Lee-Smith was born in Florida but his family later moved to Cleveland, Ohio. At age 10, he began taking classes at the Cleveland Museum of Art and quickly uncovered his passion for the arts. After receiving a Bachelor of Arts from Wayne State University, he began to teach the subject. Lee-Smith trained extensively as an artist but devoted some of his time to study theater and dance. The dramatic scenes of theater can often be found as underlying tones in his work.

In 1953, one of Lee-Smith's paintings was awarded first place by the Detroit Institute of Arts. After winning that award he saw immense changes in the way people treated him. People began to look past the color of his skin and focus on the brilliance of his creative work.

In the course of his fifty-year career, Lee-Smith developed a style unlike anyone before him. His characters are usually placed in open settings, unaware of their surroundings. The compelling narratives told in his work are created by playful



Hughie Lee-Smith (1915-1999). *The Spectators*, 1957. Oil on masonite. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

juxtapositions of light and movement. He was often called a Social Realist because of his interest in bringing social concerns to a public audience. Lee-Smith's work contained powerful moral messages, but his quiet approach challenged viewers to interpret it on their own.

As an African American artist, he offered a unique perspective of the 20th century America. His career spanned the Great Depression, World War II and the Civil Rights Movement. Those life experiences greatly influenced Lee-Smith as an artist.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Ask the students to describe the scene.

It seems isolated and it looks as though the boys are standing on a block, surrounded by water.

What purpose does the empty background serve?

It makes the boys stand out and become the focal point.

What do you notice about the group of boys?

They are all fairly young; three of them are white and only one is African American

Is the artist portraying a group of friends or is there some disconnection within the group?

The three boys on the left are standing much closer to each other and looking straight ahead. The boy on the right appears farther away and is looking in a different direction. Explain to the students that this image reflects the issues in America during that time.

Martin Luther King Jr. believed that self-determination among the black community was a key part of the civil rights movement. Discuss how the image of the African American boy reflects the goals of Dr. King.

Books are important symbols for education amongst African Americans. Education was a way for them to strengthen their position within the community. Perhaps the boy is looking in a different direction because he is determined to prove himself as an educated, independent human being.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Great Depression; World War II; Civil Rights Movement; Segregation in education; Brown vs. Board of Education

Historical Figures: Martin Luther King Jr.

Arts: Social Realism

ERNEST WITHERS (1922-2007)

Various Photographs, 1960-68

Ernest Withers lived in Memphis, Tennessee and captured pivotal moments of the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of his camera. Withers' photographs were documenting history in the making. He witnessed the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Integration of Little Rock High School, the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. assassination and funeral. His work created a liaison between the struggles and triumphs of African Americans during the 60s and 70s. Withers was a genius at capturing human emotions and the shocking images evoke the injustices of America's past.



Ernest Withers (1922-2007). Sanitation workers assemble in front of Clayborn Temple for a solidarity march, 1968. Black and white photograph. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.



Ernest Withers (1922-2007). William Edwin Jones pushes daughter during protest march on Main St., Memphis, TN, 1961. Black and white photograph. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Imagine the noises, the chants, and the feelings of those involved in each of these images. Discuss your thoughts as a class.

Many images, like these, flooded into the media and began to raise the public consciousness about the denial of rights to African Americans. Why did the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement use photographs and involve the media?

Many became sympathetic and angry at how African Americans were being treated. Media was, and continues to be, a powerful domain. When an issue is saturated with the media's attention, it becomes visible to a larger audience.

Discuss why photography played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement.

Some of the dramatic events would have been difficult to communicate without an image. The powerful images rallied supporters and helped create a political identity for the Civil Rights Movement.

Have students think about the influence of media on their life today. We become connected to issues that we would have been unaware of without the media.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Civil Rights Movement; black history; protests/marches; media

Historical Figures: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Arts: Photography



Ernest Withers (1922-2007). Young woman receives her voter registration card, Fayette County, TN, 1960. Black and white photograph. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

ANDY WARHOL (1928-1987)

Various Works, 1975-86

As a young boy, Andy Warhol took interest in the arts. He loved watching films, taking photographs and drawing. His parents encouraged him to take free art classes offered at the Carnegie Institute (now the Carnegie Museum of Art) so he could refine his drawing skills. Warhol's father died shortly after he entered high school. His father had been saving money to pay for college so Warhol honored his father's wishes and attended the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University). He earned a degree of fine arts in hopes of becoming a commercial illustrator. After graduation, Warhol moved to New York City and made his debut in September 1949 in an issue *Glamour* magazine. That exposure allowed his career to flourish and he became one of the most celebrated illustrators of the 50s. He had an eccentric style that separated him from his counterparts.

In the 1960s, Warhol developed his first series of Pop paintings based on comic strips and advertisements. His famous Campbell's Soup Cans followed shortly after. These images made Warhol a celebrity. His climb to stardom allowed him to better understand the role of visual language and mass media. Throughout his career he underscored the culture of mass production; even naming his artist studio "The Factory".



Andy Warhol (1928-1987). *Gerald Ford*, 1975. Synthetic polymer and acrylic on canvas. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts

Warhol continues to be one of the most influential artists in contemporary art and culture. He created relationships with various celebrities, socialites, and cultural leaders. Long before the innovations of social networking, Warhol used photographs, screen prints, paintings, and graphics to overcome conventional boundaries and reach a wider audience. Warhol's playful nature and endless curiosity created a global connection between people, media, and the art world.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

General Custer is inspired by a famous black and white photograph of Custer from the 19th century. Show the students the photograph and have them compare the original image with Warhol's representation. Which one emphasizes Custer as an icon of American history?

Why? *Warhol separated Custer from the background and created a contrast between dark and light. The new image resembles a neon sign, which is often used for advertising products and services. In effect, the illuminated image of Custer becomes relevant in the modern day.*

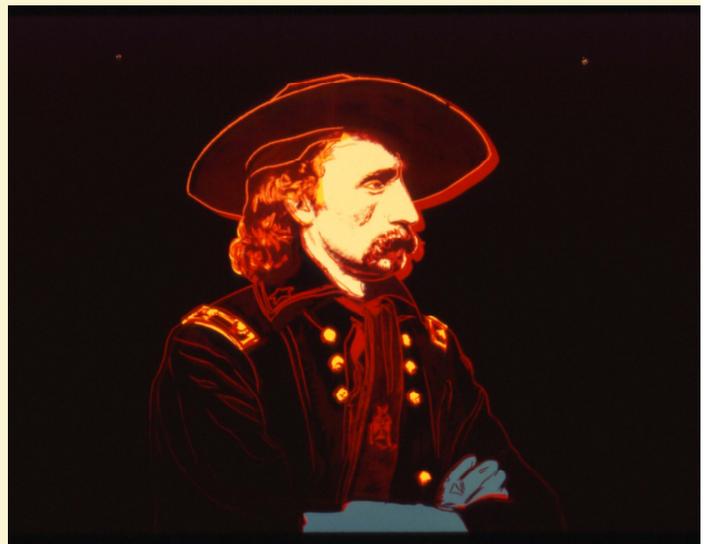
Why would presidential figures be subjects of Pop Art? *Warhol's images of powerful individuals reveal the connections between politics and pop culture. Both, politicians and celebrities, shape their image in front of an audience and establish their careers on public popularity.*

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Consumerism; pop culture; Civil Rights; 7th cavalry; Little Bighorn; Watergate

Historical Figures: Gerald Ford; General Custer; Richard Nixon

Arts: Pop art



Andy Warhol (1928-1987). *General Custer*, 1986. Screenprint. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

JACOB LAWRENCE (1917-2000)

The Legend of John Brown, no. 11: John Brown Took to Guerrilla Warfare, 1978

Jacob Lawrence considered himself to be a child of the Great Migration. Like many African American families, his parents moved from the south to the north, specifically to New York during the peak of the Harlem Renaissance. Lawrence was introduced to art at a young age after his mother enrolled him in an afterschool program called the Utopia House. He thrived in the Utopia House and began attending various art programs at the Harlem Art Workshop and the Harlem Community Art Center. His involvement in those programs enabled him to meet leading African American artists of the time, including Charles Henry Alston (an artist featured in the KIA) and Augusta Savage. Charles Alston encouraged students to see art in the world around them and open themselves up to art's expressive possibilities.

Lawrence considered himself to be an artist and an educator. He was always fascinated with history but felt that public schools weren't doing an adequate job teaching black history. He couldn't understand how the history of the United States could be discussed without including the stories of African Americans. As a result, Lawrence devoted much of his career to educating the public about the struggles and triumphs of African Americans. Art became a way to give voice to the past and make it relevant in the present day.



Jacob Lawrence (1917-2000). *The Legend of John Brown Panel no. 11.*, 1978. Screen print on woven paper. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

Lawrence used vibrant colors and patterns to express his feelings and ideas. His work was usually displayed in a series of panels to create a dynamic narrative. *The Migration of the Negro* became one his best known series. He also painted collections based on the lives of important abolitionists including Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and John Brown.

The Legend of John Brown is a series of twenty-two paintings. Lawrence wished to reexamine the story of John Brown and his important role in American history. John Brown was an abolitionist who wished for nothing more than to lead slaves to eternal freedom. He was, and continues to be, a controversial figure. His actions were daring and resulted in many violent battles and defeats. Although John Brown died as a result of his efforts, his methods played an important role in the onset of the Civil War, where his goals to abolish slavery were ultimately achieved.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Ask the students if they can guess which of the three figures is John Brown. Have them explain their reasoning. *John Brown is most likely the man in the black coat. The other two figures are dresses in similar colors and recede into the background. Also, the figure in the black coat has the lightest colored horse. Traditionally, the heroic figure in a story rides a white horse.*

Show the students a couple other panels from the series.

Mention that Lawrence created all the panels for *The Legend of John Brown* at the same time, one color at a time. How did this affect the way the series looks?

The panels seem unified because the same colors are used throughout the series.

Have the students discuss where Lawrence repeated colors in this painting. Is it important to use similar colors when working in a series? Explain.

Yes, the patterned colors help our eyes flow from one panel to the next. Discuss how this technique allows the series to become like a story. The colors slowly progress with the narrative.

How do you think Lawrence learned about John Brown?

The stories were told by older adults in the Harlem community. Lawrence thought the men and women in the stories were heroic and connected with them through his art.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: the Great Migration; Harlem Renaissance; Black History; Siege at Harpers Ferry; slavery; Civil War; Bleeding Kansas; Fugitive Slave Act

Historical Figures: John Brown

Arts: Art presented in series

ROMARE BEARDEN (1911-1988)

The Lantern, 1979

In 1914, when Romare Bearden was still a young boy, his family joined the Great Migration to pursue a better life and more opportunities. They left their home in North Carolina and travelled north to Harlem, New York. During the 1920's Harlem became a vibrant center of African American culture.

Bearden's mother was the editor for a popular newspaper in Harlem. She became a prominent social and political figure in New York and many well-known artists, writers, and musicians made frequent visits to Bearden's home. It is from those gatherings that Bearden gained an interest in music and literature.

Bearden graduated with an education degree from New York University. While studying at NYU, he took a number of art courses and became quite the cartoonist. He later joined the Harlem Artists Guild and became fully devoted to studying art. He found inspiration from various masters including Duccio, Giotto, Cezanne, and Picasso. He was also influenced by his love for literature. His studio was crammed with books on poetry, philosophy, religion, politics, and ancient art. He also wrote books and articles about African Americans.

In 1940, Bearden entered his first solo exhibition in Harlem. The show captivated audiences and he came established in his artistic career. Bearden became known as one of the most



Romare Bearden (1911-1988). *The Lantern, 1979*. Lithograph. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts.

innovative artists of the twentieth century. He experimented with various mediums and artistic styles but is renowned for his textured collages. After the 1960's he worked primarily with abstract collages but continued to paint. His work became more socially conscious during the Civil Rights Movement and many identified him as a Social Realist. The imagery of his art came from the contrasting lives of African Americans in the rural south and urban life in the north. These portrayals were combined with other themes like religion, myths, literature, and music to create visual metaphors from life experiences as an African American.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

Ask the students how they perceive the environment around them. Do they see everything at once or do they focus on a few elements at a time?

We see things in fragments as they catch our attention.

How is Bearden's collage like the way we take in a scene in real life?

The scene is presented in layers and we are encouraged to focus on individual elements while appreciating the composition as a whole.

Ask students to describe the setting.

In the country, maybe on a farm.

Who is the man? What is he doing?

He appears to be a slave working on a plantation in the South.

If the man in the print is a slave, what could the light of the lantern symbolize? Think about the saying "there's a light at the end of a tunnel." Why do people use this idiom? What does the light symbolize?

It's used as encouragement to keep moving forward. Many times it means that a person's goal is within sight. The lantern could be symbolizing motivation, encouragement, and hope for the future of African Americans.

Bearden wanted to portray African American life in America from an African American point of view. Ask students if they think he accomplished that in this collage.

CONNECTIONS

Historical Connections: Great Migration; Jim Crow laws; Civil Rights Movement; North vs. South

Literature: Bearden, *The Little Drummer Boy: A Civil War Story*, 1983

Music: Jazz

Arts: Collage; social realist; print making