

AS TIME PASSES OVER THE LAND: WHITE MOUNTAIN ART

An Integrated Middle School Visual Arts Activity

Introduction: The White Mountain Painters

The White Mountains have been a center of tourism, industry and artistic inspiration for decades. The earliest explorers and settlers of the region related its beauty to those who had never experienced it, one of the earliest explorers, Philip Carrigain, called the White Mountains the “Switzerland of America”. The landscape experienced by the early explorers and farmers would not stay the same and eventually change due to the impact of the groups that came to the area to take advantage of its resources.

The land of the New Hampshire valleys and mountains were greatly transformed during the early nineteenth century by farmers and loggers. Farmers cleared wooded areas for farming and loggers cleared timber for industry further south. As the nineteenth century progressed, more roads and rail lines were built that brought more industry, travelers and tourists into the region. The transformation of the landscape opened vistas and scenery that was attractive to tourists. The increased interest brought with it larger and more developed hotels for travelers and tourists and the protection of wooded areas by individual landowners who wanted to develop trails and wooded areas to accompany their hotels.

Despite the interest and travel to the area, it was a disaster that brought the first artists to the region. The Wiley family was wiped out by a rockslide in August 1826 that left their house standing. It was this disaster that brought artists Thomas Cole and Henry Cheever Pratt to the region. Cole’s artwork showed other artists the beauty and potential of the landscape of the White Mountains. More artists soon followed Cole and Pratt. Among the artists and tourists traveling to the region were many prominent transcendentalists such as Henry David Thoreau and well know authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson.

With the increased development of the area the landscape became less rugged and wild. The White Mountain painters moved away from depicting the wild and undeveloped landscape seen early in the century. In addition, they did not paint the devastated landscape left by unregulated logging. The painters edited the compositions they created by excluding manmade structures or the effects of industry they did not want to depict. The landscape they were painting became a romantic, peaceful countryside. People, light and atmosphere became more important in their paintings. More and more the artists were making their paintings for sale to the tourists. The depictions of the White Mountains’ landscapes, small towns and villages, and people helped the preservation movements that sought to save the White Mountains and its forests. The paintings showed Americans the importance and beauty of the region whether the artwork was truly accurate or not.

The activities and essential questions of this curriculum have been designed to meet a range of ages and abilities. They are foundations that may be modified and changed to meet the needs of educators in their classroom and community.

EDITING THE LANDSCAPE: PERCEPTION OF PLACE AND IMPORTANCE

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What do paintings tell us about a place?
- Why would an artist choose to not paint a part of a landscape that they feel is not attractive?
- How does the impact of industry on the natural landscape change how we view natural areas?
- How can artwork change our feelings of importance of natural areas?

MATERIALS (*materials and resources may be modified to meet the needs of students and teachers*)

Pencil
Paper
Paint
Paint Brushes
Paint Trays
Water Containers
Images of Places in the Community

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

- Identify, discuss and describe the impact that industry and humans have on natural environments.
- Investigate and analyze the physical and aesthetic qualities that may attract an artist to a place and identify and describe the ways an artist visually expresses the beauty and importance of that place.
- Visually communicate and express their personal views of the importance and beauty of an area through an artwork that expresses the aesthetic qualities they see.
- Analyze and interpret the application and impact of editing images and aesthetic qualities from a landscape they feel does not express their personal feeling of the beauty and importance of a place.

DESCRIPTION OF LESSON

The first artists who came to the White Mountains came because of their attraction to a tragedy that happened in the region. The paintings they made of the landscape showed the beauty and aesthetic qualities of the White Mountains. It was this beauty that attracted more artists to come to paint the landscape, but not all of the White Mountains were untouched by the affects of industry. Areas had been devastated by unregulated logging and transformed by tourism. These artists edited the landscape by leaving out the affected areas and making their images more peaceful and beautiful. This lesson is an exploration, investigation and discussion of that transformative action many White Mountain Painters undertook. It will make connections between the landscape and region of the White Mountains during the 19th century and the region and landscape of the students' community and the changes and effects that industry and development have had on it. The students will discuss the ways that industry and development have changed the aesthetic qualities and perceived importance of place. Students will identify and discuss changes that have taken place and how they affect how they see and perceive the area. They will imagine what the identified place may look like if edited and discuss how and why they would make certain edits. Each student will choose a place in their community that has been changed by industry and development and investigated and explore edits they would make to it to express its beauty.

ANTICIPATED LENGTH OF THE LESSON

** Class time may vary from school to school. The sequence may be modified to fit to a school's instructional schedule.*

Estimated Class Length: 45 minutes

Estimated Length of Lesson: 4 to 5 days

SEQUENCE OF DAILY LESSONS

The following is an outline of the possible sequence of procedure for the activity. This is a foundation that may be modified as needed by the instructor.

Day 1: The teacher will introduce the history of the White Mountains and investigate and discuss the impact of industry and tourism on the landscape of the White Mountains with the class. Students will explore, investigate and discuss the paintings of the White Mountain painters and the choices they made to depict the landscape without the effects of industry and tourism. They will investigate and discuss what the painters edited from the landscape and why. Students will explore and discuss the effect that not depicting or depicting man-made effects on the natural environment may have on the viewer and the how this may alter the viewer's feeling and perception of a place. Students will identify places that they feel are beautiful and important and discuss the effects that industry has had on them in terms of physical and aesthetic qualities. They will investigate and

discuss the physical and aesthetic qualities that appeal and do not appeal to them and investigate ways to express the beauty and importance of the place through editing and altering their composition. The class will discuss the possible effects that will have on changing perceptions of that place. The students will choose a place they feel is beautiful but has been altered negatively by industry. They will explore ways to visually express the beauty and importance of the place by editing and composing their composition to focus on the positive aesthetic qualities they are attracted to and identify.

Day 2: The teacher will refocus the students on the painters of the White Mountains and the students' discussion of their place and the aesthetic qualities they find attractive and not attractive and the ideas of editing the landscape. The teacher will introduce and demonstrate painting processes as a basis to express their feelings of the aesthetic beauty of a landscape. This process will be used to create a composition that expresses the students' personal feelings of the aesthetic qualities of a landscape that has been composed and edited to promote their feelings. Students will begin working on the development of their artwork.

Day 3: The teacher will refocus the students on the topic of the lesson and the activity. The students will work independently on their artwork.

Day 4: The teacher will refocus the students on the topic of the lesson and the activity. The students will work independently on their artwork. Students will be nearing completion of their artwork.

Day 5: The teacher will refocus the students on the topic of the lesson and the activity. The students will complete and then discuss their artwork in class as a group focusing on the choices they made in terms of editing and composing the landscape to express and promote the aesthetic qualities they felt were most beautiful.

** Modifications: The teacher may predetermine a local community area for the activity. An urban or suburban area or neighborhood may be substituted for a natural area within the community.*

ART HISTORY COMPONENT

Teacher selected images from *As Time Passes Over the Land: White Mountain Art*.

** Additional materials and resources may be researched and added by the teacher.*

ASSESSMENT PLAN

Teachers may assess students formally and informally and design those assessment strategies using this lesson as a foundation and additionally tailoring them to their needs based upon their classroom profiles.

VOCABULARY

Editing
Composing
Beauty
White Mountains
Tourism
Industry
Aesthetic Qualities
Landscape
Place

STANDARDS

Visual Arts Standards

Standard 1. Apply appropriate media, techniques, and processes
Standard 2. Identify and apply the elements of visual art and principles of design
Standard 3. Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas
Standard 4. Understanding the arts in relation to history and culture
Standard 6. Making connections between the visual arts, other disciplines and daily life

New Hampshire Curriculum Frameworks

- SS - 3.10.6.8 - Employ photographs to classify areas as rural, suburban, and urban, and to identify similarities and differences in land use in those areas.
- SS - 3.11.6.2 - Identify and discuss the human geographic features of neighborhoods and places including population density, economic activities, forms of shelter, and modes of transportation and communication.
- SS - 3.11.6.4 - Discuss the attachments people have for a particular place and region as well as their sense of belonging in certain places and regions.
- SS - 3.13.10.4 - Evaluate, take, and defend positions concerning the ways changing population patterns can influence the environment and society.
- SS - 3.14.6.1 - Identify and discuss ways people depend upon, use, and alter the physical environment.

- SS - 3.15.10.1 - Evaluate sites within their community or region in order to identify the best location for a particular activity (for example, school, factory, shopping area, waste treatment plant).
- SS - 3.15.10.4 - Use the concept of sustainable development to analyze how different countries respond to changes in population and the needs of society.
- SS - 4.16.6.6 - Demonstrate an understanding that people, artifacts, and documents represent links to the past and that they are sources of data from which historical accounts are constructed.
- SS - 4.16.6.10 - Discuss the importance of individuals and groups that have made a difference in history, and the significance of character and actions for both good and ill.
- SS - 4.16.10.4 - Examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; analyze change over time; and make logical inferences concerning cause and effect.
- SS - 4.16.10.6 - Develop and implement research strategies in order to investigate a given historical topic.
- SS - 4.16.10.11 - Utilize knowledge of the past and the processes of historical analysis to carry out historical research; make comparisons; develop and defend generalizations; draw and support conclusions; construct historical explanations, narratives, and accounts; solve problems; and make informed decisions.
- SC - 4.3.10.1 - Investigate how human activities, such as reducing the amount of forest cover and increasing the amount and variety of chemicals released into the atmosphere have changed the Earth's land, ocean, and atmosphere.
- SC - 4.3.10.3 - Describe possible consequences of reducing or eliminating some of the Earth's natural resources.