



Flowerfield Historic School

ART LESSON

*To see beauty and love it  
Is to possess  
One of the chief requisites  
Of a happy and contented life.*

# HISTORIC SHOOOL

LESSON TIME: 10 minutes

## ART LESSON

### OBJECTIVES:

Students will learn the historical background of an artist and critically examine a reproduction of his work for its artistic elements, and aesthetic appeal.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A love of beauty is instinctive to every child, but it requires direction and teaching to lead him to see beauty. Take the muddy pond. If you look deep enough, you may see reflected the passing of pure clouds. It is at your own will that you may see either the refuse of the street or the image of the sky.

It is to this kind of seeing that we wish to lead pupils through our picture study. Ruskin says, "I am impressed with the fact that the greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion - all in one."

Conditions and environment must always shape the work of the teacher. A teacher in an ungraded school or one of many grades has neither the time nor opportunity to do the work which can be done in a school of a single grade. The work must also be regulated by the age of the pupils. But pictures appeal to children of all ages, and while the older ones may learn more things from this work, there is cultural value for all.

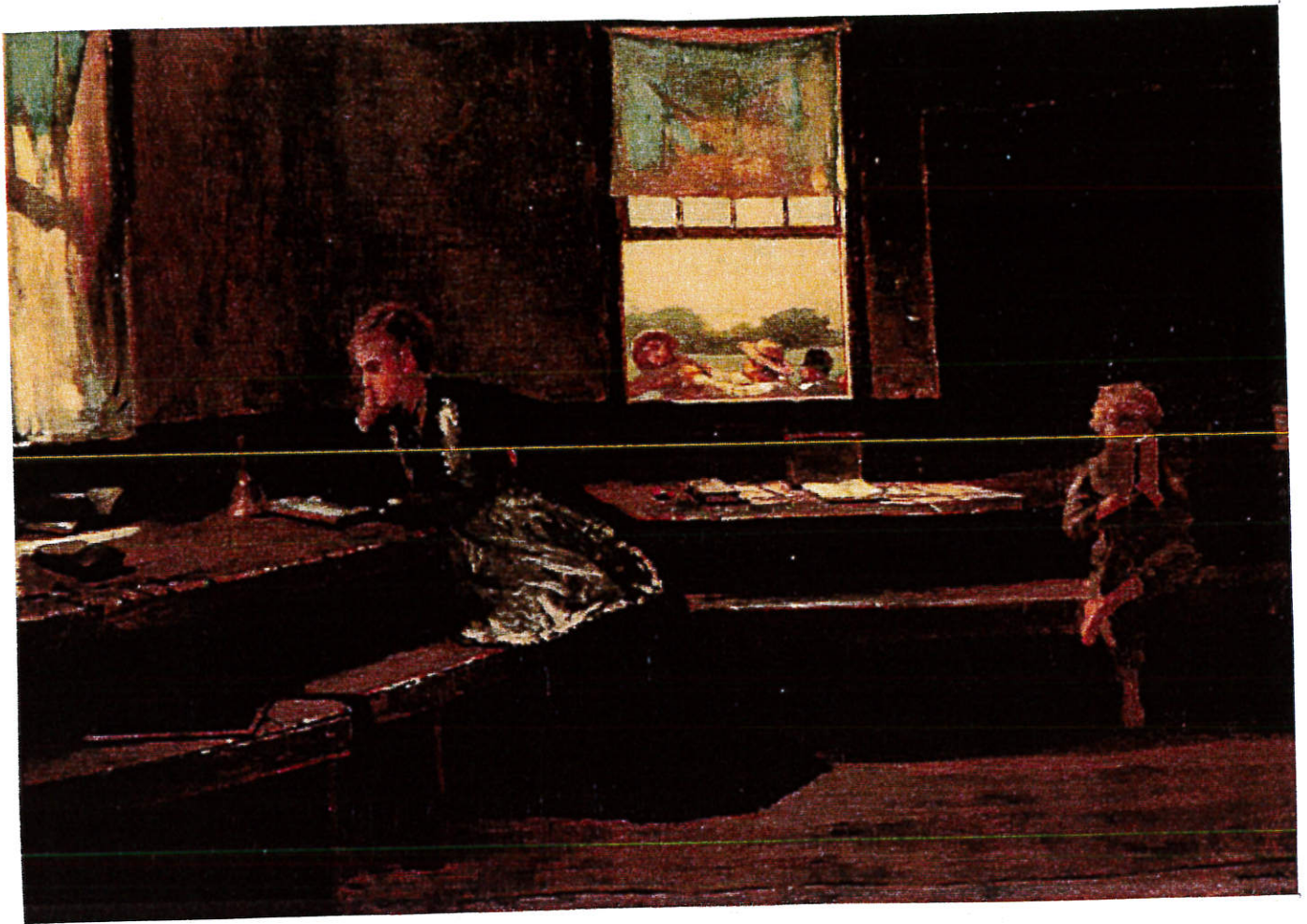
The most beautiful things in life are not the things which are remote and difficult to access; they are the things which lie all about us - sky and cloud and sunset, leaf and bloom and fruit, field and forest and mountain. To bring the child into harmony with his surroundings and to help him see and enjoy beauty in his environment, we employ every agency possible.

According to Practical Methods, Aids and Devices for Teachers published by Owen Publishing in 1916, teachers should demonstrate that in looking at paintings they should be seen at a considerable distance, at least four or five times their greatest width or height. He sometimes goes nearer to note simplicity of execution and to see the few touches which produce multiplicity in effect.

Every landscape, however small, should be a suggestion of the possibility of its being indefinitely extended on either side.

The artist makes you feel that you are looking at a bit of nature peculiar to that locality. Your mind is then carried outside the limits of the picture to that which is lying to the right and the left beyond the horizon. The artist's first task is to find an arrangement that will give a full and striking expression to his ideas. It may be only the side of a hill, a road and a few trees. Much must be learned before a painter can arrive at the command of his powers.

Pictures take us into the world of make-believe where everything is in the right place, in the right light and of the right colors.



## HISTORIC SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

1. The Historic School teacher will show an art reproduction and discuss its history with the students. Available reproductions include "The Gleaners" by Jean-Francois Millet and "Shoeing the Horse" by Landseer. Background information is included in this guide.
2. The teacher will conduct a picture study exercise.

What all his surroundings mean to a child will be no more than you have put into his soul.

## Picture Study-The Gleaners-Jean Francios Millet

As it was with the ancient Hebrews, so the custom of leaving some grain from the harvest for the poor is observed in France. The owner of a grain field in France feared bad luck if he ignored the custom of leaving some grain. So the artist Jean-Francios Millet must have often seen the peasant women gathering the left over wheat. This great painter loved these simple country scenes, and they were the subjects of his famous paintings.

Millet was born in 1814 and died in 1875. His parents were poor people in the small village of Greville in northwest France. There were nine children in this family, and while the parents tried to make a living in the fields the grandmother helped care for the children. She was a very religious woman and she would wake Millet up when he was a small boy by saying, "Wake up, my little one, the birds have long been singing the glory of God."

One Sunday he noticed the stooped figure of an old man coming from the church. He drew an exact picture of the old man on a wall. The picture was so good that, even though Millet was only 18 years old, his father decided to send him to Cherbourg to study to become a painter. He had only been there a few months when his father died, but his Grandmother used the tiny sum she had saved to send him back to school. Later he left Cherbourg and went to Paris to study with some of the great painters. It is said that he was so poor that at one time he sold six drawings for a pair of shoes.

Millet was homesick for the French countryside and the people he had grown up with. He left Paris and moved to Barbizon, a small village 30 miles from Paris. It was while living here that he painted his most famous pictures.

Some of Millet's most famous works are "The Sower," and "The Angelus." "The Gleaners" was purchased by the French government and hangs in a museum in Paris called the Louvre.

Sample questions:

1. What is the subject of this painting?
2. What is the subject doing?
3. What are some of the details in the background?
4. What colors are used?
5. Where do you see curving shapes?
6. What time of day is it? How did you decide?
7. What age do you think the three women are? Why?
8. What is the proportion of the figures to the background?
9. What does this painting seem to say about field work?

## Picture Study - Shoeing the Horse - Lanseer

Betty was a beautiful young mare that belonged to a well-to-do friend of Mr. Landseer. She was very spirited and independent and very early made it known that she didn't wish to be hitched to anything or kept in the barn. Gradually she acquired the habit of wandering about at will. But the most unusual thing about her was that whenever she needed new shoes she would trot down to the blacksmith shop. She would stand quietly while the smith did the work and then trot back to her barn.

Some of the things the children may notice in the picture are: the mare's glossy coat, the hard working smith, the other animals, the blood hound, Laura, and the little donkey. But the most important thing for us to notice is the act of labor upon all eyes are focused.

Landseer was an English artist who lived from 1802-1873. He became very famous and wealthy from his art work. He was a favorite artist of Queen Victoria. Landseer's brother, Thomas, was an engraver who made prints of his work. His work was some of the first to decorate the homes of ordinary people.

Landseer studied with his father. But at the age of only 13 his work was so impressive that he was accepted as a student in the Royal Academy. In 1830 he was made a member of the Royal Academy and in 1850 he was knighted. He is known for his drawings and for his oils of the Highland landscapes. He also sculpted the four lions at the base of Nelson's corner in Trafalgar Square in London.

### SMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the center of interest in this picture? What does the artist do to point out the main idea of the picture, the "Act of labor"?
2. Why do we call this style 'realistic'?

## PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES FOR ART

1. SOAR/ESU #13 has a Power Media site on the life and works of Winslow Homer. Also available is a large reproduction of his paintings, "Snap the Whip", and "The Country School", in SOAR office. Homer is considered one of the leading American realists. In addition to his scenes of nature, he portrayed the life of America in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A discipline-based art education (DBAE) study guide was prepared to accompany these works.
2. Other American artists that were painting during the late 1800's and were later recognized as America's finest of that era were:
  - Thomas Cole
  - Thomas Pkins
  - Albert Pinkham Rogers

Famous American artists of an earlier period, but whose works may have been known to teachers and students of the 1800's were:

- John Singleton Copley
- George Caleb Bingham
- Albert Bierstadt
- Charles Willson Peale
- Gilbert Stuart
- John Trumball

Artists who later became popular painting pictures showing life in the late 1800's and early 1900's are:

- Charles M. Russell
- Harvey Dunn
- Thomas Hart Benton
- Grant Wood
- Fredrick Remington
- Wysocki

3. Take a moment during travel time to the Historic School to let children experience the vast expanse of the prairie. Note the simple horizon and proportions of sky and land. Discuss the feelings one has facing the infinite prairie. Plan to follow up with water color renderings.

## FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES FOR ART

1. Develop drawing ability by sketching native plants such as soapweed, goldenrod, cottonwood trees, or grasses. Scientific detail may be included.
2. Silhouettes were popular during this time period. Paper cutting skills are again popular, and many ideas are available in craft stores.
3. Investigate DBAE and introduce art to your classroom. A sample aesthetic scanning exercise is included in this guide to aid you in directing picture study.



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**DISCIPLINE-BASED ART EDUCATION (DBAE)**  
**AESTHETIC SCANNING EXERCISE**  
**SENSORY PROPERTIES**

- Where can you see actual (not implied) lines?
- Are they straight, curved, vertical, horizontal?
- Where do you see curving shapes?
- Where do you see angular shapes?
- Do you see similar shapes in varying sizes?
- What appears to be the nature of the tactile and visual textures in this painting?
- What is wet? dull/shiny? solid/not solid? prickly/smooth?
- Textures are sometimes manipulated by the artists' brush. What has sharp/blurred edges?
- What areas take up the most space? What areas are overlapping?
- Are examples of shortening included in this work?
- Where are the different textures located?
- Where is the strongest dark and light contrast?
- What colors do you see used in the persons portrayed?
- What colors are in the background?
- How do these differ in terms of warm and cool colors?
- Where is white used? Does it provide contrast and drama?
- What is the nature of the special illusion-deep, shallow, or equivocal space?

**FORMAL PROPERTIES**

**Balance**

- Does the repetition of color appear to unify this work?
- What appears to be the dominant sensory property in this work? color? shape? texture?
- Where are these dominate qualities located?
- How is a sense of balance achieved? Through a formal-symmetrical arrangement of elements?
- Through a dynamic-asymmetrical arrangement?
- What is the nature of the implied movement in this work?

**Theme**

- What is the subject of the painting?
- Does the title relate to the work?
- What mood does the color or shading express in the work?

**EXPRESSIVE PROPERTIES**

- What is the emotional feeling depicted? moody? safe? loneliness?
- What in the painting evokes this mood?
- Is the work primarily agitated or quiet? full of tension? tranquil?
- What symbols, ideas, or ideals can be associated with it?
- Is the painting moving or still?
- Does it show an aggressive or passive mood?
- How does the artist use things such as deep colors, wavy lines or diagonal lines to create energy?

**TECHNICAL PROPERTIES**

- What kind of paint is used?
- Is it applied with a brush or palette knife? Thick or thin? Can you see brush strokes?
- Does the artist show his knowledge of perspective, foreshortening and paint application?
- Read the label to discover some information about this work. When was it executed?
- What do you know about the world at that time in history?
- How does this work relate to that era?
- What other works does this one remind you of? Why?