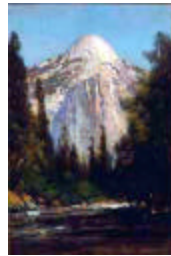




Images of the West



Thomas Hill (born England 1829-Yosemite 1908)

North Dome from the Bridge, c. 1870

Oil on canvas

SBMA (1991.96)

William H. Jackson

Untitled (Mountain and Stream/North Dome), c.1872

Albumen print photograph

SBMA (1983.69.64)

Grades/Level: Upper Elementary (3-5)

Subjects: Language Arts, Visual Arts, Social Studies (Grade 4)

Time required: One to two class periods

Lesson Overview:

- Students compare and contrast a painting and photograph of North Dome, Yosemite Valley, both made in the 1870's
- Students learn how to "read" images: observe, describe, analyze, articulate ideas, form conclusions
- Students create a "portrait" of a place that is important to them

Discussion Questions: Compare and Contrast

Similarities: What do they have in common?

1. Subject
2. Point of view (i.e. the artists are standing in almost exactly the same place.)

Differences:

1. **Medium:** how can you tell that one is a painting and one is a photograph?
Photograph: sharp focus, black and white, smooth surface
Painting: colors, the feel/texture of the paint, can see individual brushstrokes
2. **Time of year:** were these view made in the same season? How do we know they were made in different seasons?

Look at the water levels of the stream: higher in winter, lower in spring/summer.

3. **Emphasis:** the artists have emphasized different aspects of the view.
What is your eye drawn to first in each image? What is the focal point?
What is in the foreground of both images? Water, rocks, plants, trees
How much of each image is “foreground” (foreground: the part of the scene that is closest to us); how much middle ground? How much background?
In the photograph, almost half the surface is “foreground.” The stream leads our eye into deep space where we see a row of spiky trees. When do you notice the mountain? How big is it in relation to the stream and the trees? Compare with the Hill painting.
4. **Scale:** what is the biggest element in the painting? Compare and contrast the size and importance of the trees in relation to the mountain.

Making Judgments

- Which do you think is a more accurate view of North Dome, the painting or the photograph?

How could a painter manipulate a view in a way that the photographer could not?

- Why do you think the painter chose to emphasize a different aspect of the view?
- Which view do you prefer? Why?

Writing Projects:

Grade Four

Imagine you are a landscape painter 140 years ago. You have been given the assignment of making the difficult trek from the east coast to west coast before the construction of the transcontinental railroad, to capture the topography of this largely unknown landscape. Which of California’s main geographic regions (the coast, the mountains, the deserts, or the Great Central Valley) would you like to explore? Write a story that takes place in this setting. Keep in mind the water, landforms, vegetation, and climate of each region. Use concrete, sensory details to make the landscape part of the story.

Grades Three and Five

Write a story that takes place in this setting. It can be historical, during the time of Hill and Jackson, when people were first discovering Yosemite, or it can take place in the present. Use concrete, sensory details to make the landscape part of the story.

Art Making Project: Portraits of Place

Grade Four

Create a portrait of place inspired by one of California's four main geographic regions: the coast, mountains, desert, or Central Valley. Optional: the portrait can be an illustration for the above writing projects.

Grades Three and Five

Take students outside the classroom and ask them to select a scene that interests them. Have them make several pencil sketches. These drawings can be very rough, simply lines indicating the features of the foreground, middle ground, and background. Notes on details should be made – late morning, sun breaking through clouds, dew blanketing the grass, yellowish green leaves, etc. that can be incorporated into the final painting. Back in the classroom have students create more detailed pencil drawings using their sketches and notes. Color with crayons or watercolors.

Content Standards Addressed

Visual Arts Standards

Grade Three

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.3 Identify and describe how foreground, middle ground, and background are used to create the illusion of space.

1.4 Compare and contrast two works of art made by the use of different tools and media (e.g. watercolor, tempera, computer).

1.5 Identify and describe elements of art in works of art, emphasizing line, color, shape/form, texture, space, and value.

2.0 Creative Expression

2.3 Paint or draw a landscape, seascape, or cityscape that shows the illusion of space.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

3.2 Identify artists from his or her own community, county or state and discuss local or regional art traditions.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

4.1 Compare and contrast selected works of art and describe them, using appropriate vocabulary of art.

5.0 Connections, Relationships, Applications

5.2 Write a poem or story inspired by their own works of art.

Grade Four

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.1 Perceive and describe contrast and emphasis in works of art and in the environment.

1.5 Describe and analyze the elements of art (e.g. color, shape/form, line, texture, space, value, emphasizing form, as they are used in works of art and found in the environment.

3.0 Historical and Cultural Context

3.1 Describe how art plays a role in reflecting life (e.g. in photography, quilts, architecture).

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

4.1 Identify and describe how a person's own cultural context influences individual responses to works of art.

4.3 Discuss how the subject and selection of media relate to the meaning or purpose of a work of art.

4.5 Describe how the individual experiences of an artist may influence the development of specific works of art.

Grade Five

1.0 Artistic Perception

1.3 Use their knowledge of all the elements of art to describe similarities and differences in works of art and the environment.

2.0 Creative Expression

2.6 Use perspective in an original work of art to create a real or imaginary scene.

2.7 Communicate values, opinions, or personal insights through an original work of art.

4.0 Aesthetic Valuing

4.1 Identify how selected principles of design are used in a work of art and how they affect personal responses to and evaluation of the work of art.

Language Arts Standards

Grade Three

2.0 Writing Applications

2.1 Write narratives:

- a. Provide a context with in which an action takes place
- b. Include well-chosen details to develop the plot
- c. Provide insight into why the selected incident is memorable

2.2 Write descriptions that use concrete details to prevent and support unified impressions of people, places, things, or experiences.

Grade Four

2.0 Writing Applications

2.1 Write narratives:

- a. Relate ideas, observations, or recollections of an event or experience.
- b. Provide a context to enable the reader to imagine the world of the event of experience.
- c. Use concrete sensory details.
- d. Provide insight into why the selected event or experience is memorable.

Grade Five

2.0 Writing Applications

2.1 Writing Narratives

- a. Establish a plot, point of view, setting, and conflict.
- b. Show, rather than tell, the events of the story.

Background Information for Teachers

Thomas Hill made about 5,000 paintings of Yosemite Valley during his lifetime. He was the best known painter of the subject and his paintings were very popular in the 1870's and 1880's, bought by wealthy Californians and by clients around the world.

Hill was born in England, but moved to Boston with his family when he was fifteen years old. He lived in Boston, Philadelphia and Cambridge before moving to San Francisco in 1861. He was one of the first painters who opened the West to artists. He, William Keith, Thomas Moran, and Albert Bierstadt are sometimes referred to as the "Rocky Mountain" school of painters. Hill made the difficult overland route to San Francisco before the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. He first visited Yosemite in 1862, and in 1883 established his first summer studio there; in 1886 he moved to Wawona, 15 miles southwest of the valley where he lived the rest of his life.

Beginning in the 1870's Hill painted many large Yosemite panoramas for wealthy California clients. In his business notebook, he listed his standard subjects, like "Morning in Yosemite Valley. Clients often requested specific seasons and times of day, which Hill recorded in his notebook; eg. "mid-day springtime" or "sunset with Indians."

William Henry Jackson was one of the best-known 19th century western landscape photographers. He was born on the east coast, but by 1869 he was traveling westward along the Union Pacific Railroad line. In 1870 he was hired as the official photographer for the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories. Jackson's were the very first photographs of Yellowstone to be published. They were shown in Washington D.C. and helped influence Congress to establish Yellowstone National Park. He was an intrepid explorer-adventurer; traveling to remote and never-before-seen parts of the West, with his trusty donkey "Hypo" carrying hundreds of pounds of photographic equipment. Jackson took tens of thousands of negatives during his long career. His aesthetic preference was for dramatic landscapes that extend miles into the distance. "I loved my work" Jackson exclaimed late in his career, which was to record the "incomparable beauties, grandeurs, and wonders" of the American West.